



Tempe Center for the Arts

# vital signs

A Guide for  
Understanding  
the Exhibition

Gallery @ TCA

Detail of artwork by Daniella Napolitano





Art Image Credit: Shachi Kale

**Vital Signs** is a juried exhibition that focuses on the connections between people and the environment. The theme covers a variety of global and local topics including climate change, health and wellness, natural resources, wildlife conservation and more. Thoughtfully selected artists, artworks and programs aim to spark conversations about nature and humanity's responsibilities as stewards of the earth.

**Jury Panelists:** Laura Spalding Best, Artist and Exhibitions Manager at SMoCA and TCA residency alumna; Jacob Meders, Artist, Assistant Professor at ASU: Interdisciplinary Arts and Performance and Founder of Warbird Press; Caroline Hudson-Naef, Visual Arts Assistant, City of Chandler and William Carr, Artist and City of Tempe Arts Commissioner.

**Artists-in-Residence:**

David Emmitt Adams, Edgar Bahau Fernandez and Shachi Kale.

**Exhibiting Artists:** Diana Creighton, Matthias Duwel, Lex Gjurasic, Heidi Hogden, Daniella Napolitano, Rebecca Padilla-Pipkin, Kendra Sollars and Hyewon Yoon.

**Contact Us:**

Gallery at Tempe Center for the Arts  
700 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe, AZ 85281  
480. 350. 2867

[tempecenterforthearts.com/Gallery](https://tempecenterforthearts.com/Gallery)

Learn more about the Gallery at TCA's exhibitions, programs, workshops and free online education resources for teachers and parents.

**Purpose of the Guide:**

- To provide easy-to-use tools and inquiry strategies to enhance visitor engagement and understanding of the art on display.
- To help people develop questions that start "informal conversations" about artworks and artists.
- To help visitors learn to read an artwork. Like a book, art can be interpreted and understood in a variety of ways.
- To opens pathways through which we can explore each other's ideas and viewpoints.

# Inquiry Strategy with Tactical Questions

The following 4-question strategy is an easy to use tool for investigating the layers of context and meaning in visual art.

## What Can I See? Facts about the artwork.

- Subject Matter
- Design Elements & Principles
- Technical Features
- Function
- Reproduction versus Original
- Care/Condition



## What Else Can I Learn?

Contextual facts.

- Artists' Lives
- Physical Environments
- Cultural Context
- Artworlds (Art Experience)



## What Does It Mean?

Conclusions about meanings.

- Personal & Cultural Viewpoints
- Artists' Intentions
- Art Specialists' Understandings



## How Does It Compare?

Conclusions about connections among artworks.

- Style
- Art Influence (From Other Art)
- Themes



# Hints for Asking Good Questions

Hints for a well-rounded conversation: You'll often learn more from open-ended questions than close-ended questions.

A **closed-ended question** is answered with a one-word response such as yes or no or another single word. *Example:* Is this an oil or acrylic painting?

*Closed-ended questions* start with verbs like "Is? Do? and Can?"

An **open-ended question** requires more explanation.

*Example:* How is painting in oil different from painting with acrylics?

*Open-ended questions* start with "Why? and How?"

Some words can be used for **both types of questions** such as:

What?

Who?

Where?

When?

Both open and close-ended questions are valuable. The construction and phrasing of a question shapes the kind of information you can expect to receive.

**For Practice:** Write down 3 open-ended questions. Pretend you are meeting someone for the first time. You need to ask questions to get to know that person better.

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

# What Can I See?

## Tips for looking carefully at an Artwork



**Subject Matter:** Some artworks have subject matter and others do not. Subject matter refers to anything real or imaginary that is shown in an artwork (such as people, places and things).

**Elements of Design:** Traditional elements in Western art include:  
(“D” represents “dimensional.”)

### ***2D Elements***

line  
shape  
value (light and dark)  
color

### ***3D Elements***

form or mass  
space  
texture

### ***4D Elements/Time***

sequence  
duration

**Design Principles:** Ways artists organize elements of design to create interesting and unified compositions. Some Traditional Principles include:

Balance	Variation	Focal Point	Pattern
Harmony	Repetition	Movement	Transition
Emphasis/Focal Point	Rhythm	Direction	Proportion
Contrast			

**Technical Features:** Careful viewing of an artwork usually reveals evidence of how it was made. (Indicators might include art making tools, materials and processes.)

**Function:** Artists make artworks that serve a great many functions such as:

Capturing the beauty of nature	Memorializing an important event
Celebrating or criticizing a person, event or group	Exploring visual possibilities
Sharing a vision	Promoting a belief or cause
Celebrating the artist's heritage	Making the ordinary extraordinary
Stimulating action	Many more

## What Can I See? continued



**Reproduction Vs Original:** Some reproductions can look pretty different from the originals. Common differences between originals and reproductions are:

Size	Colors	Surface Texture	Luminosity
Angle of View	Lighting	Other	

**Care/Condition:** The condition of artworks can deteriorate over time for many reasons, among them:

Perishable or fragile materials	Damage in storage
Matting, mounting, or framing	Temperature and humidity
Accidents	Vandalism

**Now, practice looking carefully at an artwork.**

**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “what you see.”



David Emitt Adams, *Desert Combine #1*, found objects (steel cans), tintype photography

1. What does this artwork depict? Please describe. [SUBJECT MATTER]

2. The old cans used in this piece were found in the desert and are rusted. What may continue to happen to the cans and photo over time? [CARE/CONDITION]

3. What design principles best describe the overall look of this artwork and how it is put together? Hint: Is it balanced? Does it have repeating forms? [ELEMENTS OF DESIGN]

# Now You Try! *What Can I See?*



David Emitt Adams, *Power Distribution* Torrance California, oil drum lids

**Look at this additional artwork by Adams. List 3 quick descriptions about what you see:** (Example: “large sculpture, depicts a woman and is made of bronze.”)

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, based on your observations, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork.**

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

# What Can I Learn?

## Tips for investigating an Artist's Background



**Artist's Life:** The personal lives of artists can affect their work, including such factors as:

Family	Work	Education	Travel
Personal life experiences		Other	

**Physical Environment:** The physical world, both natural and human made) can inspire their work:

Natural environment (plants, animals, climate, landforms, etc.)

Constructed environment (buildings, roads, bridges, vehicles, furniture, consumer goods, etc.)

**Culture:** Artists can draw ideas for their work from their cultures:

Values and beliefs	Hobbies and entertainment
Politics	Economic situation
Language	Heritage and/or ethnicity
Other	

**Art Experience (Artworld):** Artists get ideas and support from other people involved in art, through:

Art education/Apprenticeships

Insights from specialists in the art form (ceramics , painting, etc.)

Representation by art galleries

Contact with art patrons and collectors

Acknowledgement through art awards, prizes, grants, commissions.

Art included in museum collections



# What Can I Learn?

## Practice investigating an Artist's Background



Matthias Düwel, Geografica Nervosa #32,  
acrylic on paper

**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about "what I can learn."

1. How were Düwel's childhood experiences in post WWII Berlin similar to those he had in New York City? [ARTIST'S LIFE]
2. Düwel has lived in three different urban environments at three different times. What similarities and differences might he have seen between these places? [PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT]
3. Düwel's work has been exhibited in the United States and abroad. Where did he study art and where does he teach art now? [ART EXPERIENCE]

**Matthias Düwel** earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Universität der Künste Berlin and was awarded a German Academic Exchange fellowship to New York City where he was made artist-in-residence at New York University. He currently serves as faculty at Pima College in Arizona.

Düwel says *"I grew up in Berlin in the aftermath of WWII. As children, we played in bombed out fields, poked fingers into walls with bullet holes. While my generation may regret the city's destruction, many of us are grateful not to have grown up under the Nazis. Still we inherit that past. That ambivalence informs my work."*

*"When I moved to NYC in 1984, I saw parallels in the hulks of the empty factories lining the Hudson River and East River. They were like abandoned cathedrals, dead altars to the industrial age. People talked about 'post-industrialization' as if our economy no longer relied on the exploitation of people and environment."*

*"After moving to Arizona in 2004, my focus shifted to the excessive development, sprawl and waste created in my local terrain and I became very conscious of similar global phenomena. My subject matter expanded, from malls and housing complexes, to the concept of flux and instability."*

# Now You Try! What Else I Can



Mathias Düwel,  
*Irrwanderung #23*,  
oil on paper

**Brainstorm and list 5 interesting facts about Matthias Düwel's background.**

*\*You may want to consult pg. 9 and/or a media article and/or Internet references about the artist.\**

- a \_\_\_\_\_
- b \_\_\_\_\_
- c \_\_\_\_\_
- d \_\_\_\_\_
- e \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, based on your research, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about these artworks/artist.**

- a \_\_\_\_\_
- b \_\_\_\_\_
- c \_\_\_\_\_

# What Does It Mean?

## Tips for interpreting an Artwork



**Artist's Intention:** Artists decide how they want their artworks to look. Their intentions may be:

- |  |             |           |                   |
|--|-------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Personal or private                                  | Traditional | Practical | Boundary breaking |
| Unconventional                                       | Evolving    | Emotional | Spontaneous       |
| Experimental   | Deliberate  |           |                   |
| Focused on collector, patron, funder or other viewer |             |           | Other             |

**Art Specialists' Understandings:** The considered opinions of art specialists (experts) direct viewers' attention to aspects of artworks that they judge to be worthy of that attention. Art specialists may include:

- |                |                     |                    |               |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Artists        | Art Teachers        | Museum Curators    | Art Critics   |
| Art Historians | Master Craftspeople | Ceremonial Leaders | Guild Members |
| Tribal elders  | Others              |                    |               |

**Cultural Understandings:** A viewer's cultural understanding draws upon a set of ideas, beliefs and standards shared broadly within a culture. These are learned, not by special effort and instruction, but simply through growing up as a member of a culture. Unexamined expectations might include:

- |            |                 |                   |                     |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| High price | Obvious meaning | Difficult to make | Easily recognizable |
| Familiar   | Other           |                   |                     |

**Your Own Viewpoint:** Your responses to artworks are affected by:

- |                    |                         |                      |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| conscious thoughts | unconscious reactions   | personal preferences |
| careful viewing    | thoughtful reflection   | relevant information |
| free association   | previous art experience | and more             |

## What Does It Mean?



Diana Creighton, Naco Fences Old and New, diptych, oil on canvas, 32" x 88"

**Diana Creighton** says, "I grew up in Los Angeles, where telling stories is a major industry. I got a degree in literature from Stanford and then studied painting at Arizona State University while working and raising a family.... I now live in Oracle, Arizona, in the Catalina foothills northeast of Tucson. I spend a lot of time in nature, hiking and observing, and am closer to the border and border culture than I was in Phoenix. That has influenced my painting in unexpected ways and led me in this new direction.

"Lately I've been focusing on highways, traffic and structures. The new paintings come from my riding shotgun on roadways in the west, observing the commerce, traffic and busyness of our interstates, looking at rest stops, going through ICE checkpoints and queuing for border crossings. I am painting people and traffic, cars and trucks and the effect of the border on our lives, not from a political point of view, but from the ordinariness of it.... I try to show the effect of the complicated and massive structures that control crossings, and to reflect the change in the landscape from the multiple layers of added construction."

dianacreightonart.com

**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about "what it means."

1. What do you see in Creighton's artwork that reflects human changes to the landscape over time and "multiple layers of construction"? [ARTIST'S INTENTION]
2. How might local Indigenous peoples of the Southwest interpret this landscape artwork? [CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING]
3. Imagine an art historian working on a book about environmental issues in the year 2122. They come across this artwork while doing research. What interpretations might this professional have about it? [ART SPECIALIST UNDERSTANDING]

## Now You Try! What Does It Mean?



Diana Creighton, *Naco Coral #2*, oil on canvas, 18" x 22"



Look at this work by Diana Creighton. Brainstorm and list 5 ideas about what the artwork is about. \*You may want to consult pg. 12 and/or a media article and/or Internet references about the artist & themes.)

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

d \_\_\_\_\_

e \_\_\_\_\_

Now, based on your interpretation, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork.

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

# How Do They Compare?

## Tips for gathering insights by comparing Artworks



**Style:** Style is a set of distinctive qualities ("family resemblance") that are shared by more than one artwork. Artists develop their own style and incorporate aspects of the styles of artists from their own or other times and cultures.

Artist's style

Style of art movement or period

Cultural style

**Art Influence:** Most artists are influenced by artists who worked before them, though some self-taught artists, called "outsider artists," work in isolation, largely unaware of the work of other artists. Art influences can include:

Technical and aesthetic achievements by other artists

Other artists' ideas, innovations, commitments

Traditional or historical art ideas to follow, extend or break away from

**Theme:** Some broad, cross-cultural themes have been the focus of many artists throughout history and across the globe:

People and nature

Cultural pride

Conquest

Overcoming obstacles

Strength of family

Love

Fantasy

Social order

Harmony

Chaos

Revisiting history

Heroic adventure

Religious devotion

Status

Many more

## How Do They Compare?

Practice gathering insights by comparing two artworks



Shachi Kale, *Desert Moon*,  
4 color linoleum print, 17" x 13"



Edgar Bahau Fernandez, *Mujer de Maiz con flor*,  
mixed media and digital art, 22" x 17"

**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering

1. These artworks were made with different art making processes (media). Kale's artwork is a linoleum-cut print and Fernandez's piece is mixed media digital print (includes elements from original graphite drawing). Besides media, how are these works different in appearance? [STYLE]
2. Both images depict references to nature—like plants. What “big ideas” might both of these artworks represent? How do these works fit into the *Vital Signs* exhibition theme? [THEME]
3. Fernandez's work reflects his Xicano identity, graffiti art and Pre-Columbian imagery. Kale's work reflects the vibrant colors and patterns of India where she grew up and her prior work as a graphic designer and illustrator. How would you describe visual evidence of these influences on each on their artworks? [ART INFLUENCE]

# Now You Try! How Do They Compare?



Heidi Hogden, *Alligator Skin*,  
graphite on paper, 208" x 40"



Danielle Napolitano, *On Break*,  
monoprint, linocut, chine-collé, 11" x 14"

1. What visual similarities can you see between the artworks? [STYLE]
  
2. The artworks both depicts animals but how do the ideas and/or messages differ? [THEME]

**Now, based on your comparisons, write three questions you could ask a friend about these artworks.**

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_



# Token Response 2.0 | SEEKING the Artist's Voice

## with ART-IN-RESIDENCE, David Emitt Adams



David Emitt Adams, *Desert Combine #2*,  
tintype on found objects,  
16" x 19" x 14"



Questions can help you figure out how an artist thinks and works. Choose three tokens to guide your inquiry about this artist. If you are able to talk to the artist, what would you most like to know? Circle your chosen tokens.

**Hint:** Knowing something about the artist and their work can help you ask better questions, for example, an artist's statement, key life experiences of the artist, and quotes about specific works.



# Token Response 2.0 | SEEKING the Artist's Voice

## with ART-IN-RESIDENCE, Edgar Bahau Fernandez



Edgar Bahua Fernandez  
*Red Dreams*  
 oil on canvas, 60" x 48"



Questions can help you figure out how an artist thinks and works. Choose three tokens to guide your inquiry about this artist. If you are able to talk to the artist, what would you most like to know? Circle your chosen tokens.

**Hint:** Knowing something about the artist and their work can help you ask better questions, for example, an artist's statement, key life experiences of the artist, and quotes about specific works.



# Token Response 2.0 | SEEKING the Artist's Voice

## with ART-IN-RESIDENCE, Shachi Kale



Shachi Kale  
*The Burden and The Privilege*  
 watercolor, 30" x 22"



Questions can help you figure out how an artist thinks and works.

Choose three tokens to guide your inquiry about this artist. If you are able to talk to the artist, what would you most like to know? Circle your chosen tokens.

**Hint:** Knowing something about the artist and their work can help you ask better questions, for example, an artist's statement, key life experiences of the artist, and quotes about specific works.



## Artists-In Residence Text Panels

### David Emitt Adams, Phoenix 2022 Gallery at TCA Artist-in-Residence

Adams is a photographer and educator and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Arizona State University. His photographs have been exhibited nationally and internationally including places like Boston, Santa Barbara, Paris, Thailand, Phoenix and Santa Fe.

*Adams says, "For my ongoing series, 'Conversations with History,' I have gathered discarded cans from long deserted Sonoran Desert dump sites. The Sonoran Desert encapsulates Yuma, Arizona, the US/Mexico border city where I was born, and Phoenix which I have called home for the last ten years. Most cans were discarded by trains, now debunk railroads, passing through the desert heading West or dumped by careless individuals.... This series is grounded in environmental issues surrounding the delicate desert ecosystem as well as past and present human involvement with this landscape.*

\*See more of Adams's work and meet him at his onsite studio this summer at the Gallery at TCA's *Vital Signs* exhibition.

davidemittadams.com

#davidemittadams

#ethertongallery

**Edgar 8ahau Fernandez, Phoenix**  
**2022 Gallery at TCA Artist-in-Residence**

Fernandez is a full-time artist that embraces his Xicano identity and a passion for creating work that continues the legacy of his ancestors. He studied art at Phoenix College and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Arizona State University in 2019. His art reflects a variety of influences including graffiti, graphic arts, Pre-Columbian imagery and contemporary western painting traditions. Today, Fernandez is making a name for himself through participation in numerous exhibitions and community mural projects across the Valley.

*Fernandez says, "Art has the power to strengthen community and contribute to the restoration of our environment. I believe art can bring balance in our homes, classrooms, studios, and communities by cultivating responsibilities as stewards of the earth. My goal is to use art to express the indigenous perspective on sustainable environmental practices centered on inclusion, representation, and connection."*

\*See more of Fernandez's work at the Gallery at TCA's satellite exhibition, Temperature Check, at the Tempe Post Office on Mill Ave.

8ahau.com

#8ahau

## **Shachi Kale, Chandler**

### **2022 Gallery at TCA Artist-in-Residence**

Kale is a visual storyteller, graphic designer and illustrator who sees her art as a reflection of her own journeys through life. She works with a variety of art media including watercolors, acrylics, embroidery and digital arts. She was born and raised in Mumbai, India and moved to Arizona with her husband in 2001. She is passionate her family and has illustrated more than twenty children's books. In recent years, Kale also found success in the local art scene and shown her work at places like the Tempe Center for the Arts, Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum and Vision Arts Gallery of Chandler. Kale looks to folk arts from around the globe and her own Indian heritage as references for the vibrant colors, patterns and perspectives she uses to tell a story. She especially likes the colorful narrative traditions of Indian miniature paintings which date back to at least the 9<sup>th</sup> Century.

*Kale says, "My most recent works are about the fragility of elements in nature using paper, thread and mixed media. I have been exploring the interconnectedness of nature and our personal well-being in my art. How mental health is influenced by the environment and the symbiotic existence of humans and the natural world.... I have explored how just as we live in the desert, the desert lives within us too, and the more we understand it and adapt to it the more harmoniously we can co-exist."*

shachikale.com

#shachidreams

## Exhibiting Artists

### **Diana Creighton, Oracle, AZ**

Creighton grew up in Los Angeles, CA. She earned a degree in literature from Stanford University and studied painting at Arizona State University while working and raising a family. Today, she lives in Oracle in the Catalina foothills northeast of Tucson. She spends a lot of time hiking and enjoying nature.

*Creighton says, "Lately I've been focusing on highways, traffic and structures. The new paintings come from my riding shotgun on roadways in the west, observing the commerce, traffic and busyness of our interstates, looking at rest stops, going through ICE checkpoints and queuing for border crossings. I am painting people and traffic, cars and trucks and the effect of the border on our lives, not from a political point of view, but from the ordinariness of it.... I try to show the effect of the complicated and massive structures that control crossings, and to reflect the change in the landscape from the multiple layers of added construction."*

dianacreightonart.com

### **Matthias Düwel, Oracle**

Düwel is originally from Germany and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Universität der Künste Berlin. He was awarded a German Academic Exchange fellowship to New York City where he was made artist-in-residence at New York University. He currently serves as faculty at Pima College in Arizona.

*Düwell says "I grew up in Berlin in the aftermath of WWII. As children, we played in bombed out fields, poked fingers into walls with bullet holes. While my generation may regret the city's destruction, many of us are grateful not to have grown up under the Nazis. Still, we inherit that past. That ambivalence informs my work.*

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*"After moving to Arizona in 2004, my focus shifted to the excessive development, sprawl and waste created in my local terrain and I became very conscious of similar global phenomena. My subject matter expanded, from malls and housing complexes, to the concept of flux and instability."*

matthiasduwel.com

## **Lex Gjurasic, Tucson**

Gjurasic is originally from Seattle but currently calls the Southwest home. Much of her love for making art and utilizing her imagination is influenced by her childhood battles with lung disease.

Gjurasic has now been making and exhibiting art for more than 25 years. Her work has been featured at art institutions like the Japanese American National Museum and Getty Institute in Los Angeles, Meow Wolf Denver and most recently at Vison Gallery in Chandler. Her recent work started taking shape during the pandemic. Gjurasic says, *“my work offered respite from the stress and challenges of life in isolation. As my world suddenly shrank to the size of a 144-square-foot studio, I began imagining and creating new worlds—expansive landscapes in vivid color, full of hope and longing and reverence for the natural world.*

*“The [Flower Mounds] series is an expression of my own exuberance for life and a love letter to the natural world, borne of a coping mechanism.... The circumstances forced me to innovate, too; the work is made from a wide breadth of materials found in my home. I have painted the soft green mountains in the Land of Enchantment, the desolate Sonoran Desert bathed in its warm, soapy hues, and the fireworks show that is a Californian Super Bloom, a veritable explosion of glowing orange—all places I pined for while isolating.”*

lexgjurasic.com

#lexgjurasic

## **Heidi Hogden, Phoenix**

Hogden received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting from Minneapolis College of Art and Design in Minneapolis and a Master of Fine Arts degree in studio art from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in affiliation with Tufts University in Boston. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at Arizona State University's School of Art.

Her research interests include human-induced environmental changes as they relate to location, the examination of the natural world through visual art, and the sampling from historical artworks, techniques, and subjects through a contemporary lens.

Hogden says, *“as a visual artist, I look towards the life and death cycles of the natural world to understand how it has been changed and altered by our existence.... The animals depicted in these works have been extracted from their natural habitats for display, pointing to the trouble with hunting culture within the United States. At the same time, I am mesmerized by the fact that both taxidermists and still life painters are committed to the illusion of life. By using source material from contemporary trophy studios, I discover new ways to reinvigorate the genre of still life painting and honor the life of the nature morte around us.”*

heidihogden.com

#heidihogden



### **Daniella Napolitano, Phoenix**

Napolitano has been drawn to the natural world since childhood. As an artist, she explores the diverse and complex relationships between animals, humans and the environment. She is especially interested in animals of the Southeastern and Southwestern United States. Recently, Napolitano completed her Master of Fine Arts degree and thesis exhibition called *“Have You Seen Me: A Guide to Noticing and Understanding”* at Arizona State University’s Harry Wood Gallery.

Taking a scientific approach, Napolitano’s work is informed by research in areas like ecology, biology and natural history. As a printmaker, she incorporates a visual graphic style that is influenced by imagery in nature books, field guides and textbooks. She describes her work as *“visual narratives that incorporate observation-based information with a whimsical approach to animal behavior.”*

Napolitano says she is also *“inspired by stories about sightings of animals that are so often associated with the city, they have been rendered invisible at best, a nuisance at worst. The stories have been exaggerated, made fantastical or humorous as an attempt to be more memorable and endearing to the viewer. By highlighting ‘ordinary,’ urban animals [she hopes to] remind the viewer that humans share a space with wildlife.”*

daniellanapolitano.com

### **Rebecca Padilla-Pipkin, Phoenix**

Padilla-Pipkin is an interdisciplinary visual artist and educator. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from the University of Oklahoma and is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree at Arizona State University. She describes her life as transient and is influenced by the many places she has loved. Because of her experiences she has chosen to investigate themes of place-making, belonging and impermanence through materials like plants, fibers and paper.

Pipkin says of her work on display, *“I strive to bring myself and the viewer to a deeper connection and understanding of place by responding to the emotional and natural landscapes we inhabit. Using a wide variety of materials such as transitory plants (categorized as invasive), fibers, and paper, I investigate how we can know an environment through the materials and forms found there..... After gathering organic materials for an installation, plants can be used to create a natural dye, which in turn is used to dye fibers or paper for sculptural and textile works. My use of materials is cyclical, imitating the way living things move and evolve in a changing climate and world.... By observing, thoughtfully gathering, and transforming these materials, I manifest the longing to know and cultivate place-scapes of belonging and rootedness for transitory beings, both human and nonhuman.”*

rebeccapipkinfineart.com

## **Kendra Sollars, Tempe**

Sollars is an Arizona native and currently works in video-based public installations. While earning a Bachelor of Arts degree at Ohio State University she also competed as a synchronized swimmer and claimed two National Championships. After graduating she worked as the choreographer for the Arizona Desert Dolphins team and then as an artist/athlete with Cirque du Soleil's "O" in Las Vegas. As a synchronized swimmer, Sollars explored narrative and form through movement and performance. She has adapted that experience into an interdisciplinary art practice.

In 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, she began her latest ongoing work *Dark Days, Bright Skies: Isolation and Quarantine*, documenting the sky every day since the United States hit 100,000 cases of COVID. For Sollars, the work is about loneliness, depression and the loss of connection with others, and the hope of one day returning to some semblance of normal.

*Synthesis* is a large-scale video projection which reimagines the human form as native Arizona plant species as they blossom and grow. Sollars says, "As a former competitive synchronized swimmer with years of experience, I use my own physical form, filmed underwater to choreograph movements reminiscent of a variety of desert plant species. In the same way that a synchronized swimmer's rhythm and timing is critical to the success of the team, the synchrony of ecological events is essential to the fitness of the ecosystem."

kendrasollars.com

## **Hyewon Yoon, Chandler**

Yoon is originally from in Seoul, South Korea where she later earned Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting at the College of Art, Sook-Myung Women's University. She first moved to the United States to study painting at the San Francisco Art Institute where she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree.

Yoon says, "My recent body of work explores and organizes organic structures and landscapes I pass by in everyday life. I unite and manage images derived from varied life forms such as wood, flowers, plants, and so on. I crystalize these images from the environment to form my own world of emotion and awareness. Through these imagined landscapes, I strive to create a peaceful mind for myself and share my vision of the beauty in nature.... My works of art were formerly realized through oil painting, but has transformed into pen drawn works on canvas and panel. The action of drawing fine lines forces me to meditate deeply about my experience and express it with precision. Unlike oil painting, the permanence of ink does not allow me to retreat or correct which is in likeness to actions taken in true life."

hyewonyoon.com

## FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY: MARKS OF MY ENVIRONMENT

**OBJECTIVE:** Students/participants will be able to demonstrate their skills of experimentation in their drawings.

VA.CR.2.HS2a: Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form using various approaches.

### **MATERIALS:**

drawing paper

wide-point and fine-point, colored felt markers

scraps of paper for experimentation

**INTRODUCTION:** Ask students/participations to look closely at the diversity of marks in artworks in the "Vital Signs" exhibition. Pay particular attention to drawings and line work made by artists like Hyewon Yoon, Heidi Hogden, Mattias Duwel, Diana Creighton, Danielle Napolitano and Shachi Kale. All the artists in the exhibition expressed ideas and feelings about connections between people and the environment. Ask students/participants to reflect on how they connect to the environment.

Demonstrate some of the range of types of marks one can make using felt markers providing scraps of paper for experimental mark making.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Make a drawing using a variety of marks inspired by how you connect with your environment.

