

2022 Artists in Residence

April 2022

Mary Burger

Felting and Fiber Art

<http://www.maryburger.com/>

Work during Residency:

I'm a visual artist and writer based in Oakland. In my visual practice I work in a variety of media, including painting, printmaking, and fiber arts. During the Pond Farm residency, I'd like to focus on a wool felting project titled Fundamentals. The project uses abstract geometric and biomorphic patterns to explore relationships to natural forms.

For the Fundamentals project, I work primarily with undyed white wool and add other fibers in natural or dyed colors. I'm interested in simple forms like lines, grids, and crosses, and in subtle natural patterns like the fibrous bark of a redwood or the spore pattern on a fern leaf. I take seriously Marguerite Wildenhain's directive to study the patterns found in nature, and to discover which details engage my response. I'm especially excited to do this work at Pond Farm because the artistic foundations there resonate strongly with my own interests. In particular, the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College are powerful precedents for me. The artistic principles of those communities, such as the merging of art and craft, the importance of hands-on learning, and the use of abstraction to explore materials, all speak to me. I'm particularly inspired by artists Anni Albers and Ruth Asawa for their innovations with fiber materials and techniques.

I'm also very moved at the prospect of working on land that was home to Pomo communities for many centuries. Pomo basket weaving is a pinnacle of fiber artistry, in its mastery of craft, its intricate patterning, and its deep regard for materials. During the residency, I'd like to learn more about Pomo basketry, starting with a visit to the collection at nearby Santa Rosa Junior College.

I'm drawn to the practice of felting for several reasons. I enjoy the tactile immediacy of working the loose fiber with bare hands. The first textiles were created thousands of years ago to be in contact with skin, to provide comfort and protection. That sense of nurturance is a palpable part of making the work. I also appreciate the light ecological impact of the materials. I want to decrease my use of industrially produced materials and their energy-intensive, hazardous manufacturing processes. Natural fibers avoid many of those impacts. Related to this, I'm excited at the chance to work in a region that has a growing number of independent wool producers. Places like Windrush Farm, Bodega Pastures, and others practice small-scale sheep ranching techniques and preserve Sonoma County's legacy of sustainable agriculture. I'd like to visit those producers to learn more about their activities and support them by sourcing materials there.

Pond Farm and the surrounding region offer powerful inspirations for me in developing the Fundamentals project. I would be honored to be a Pond Farm artist in residence, to explore this work and its connections to the region.

Community Engagement:

I'd like to offer a demonstration and artist talk, to introduce visitors to the materials and techniques of felting, and to discuss legacies of the Bauhaus, Black Mountain College, and Pomo that have influenced the Pond Farm community and my own work. If possible, I'd like to invite other area artists and scholars with knowledge of these legacies to take part in the talk. I'd also like to donate a felted piece to the Stewards, in appreciation.

I'll use the demonstration to show visitors the process of wet felting: laying out the loose fiber, saturating it with soapy water, and agitating it to make it cohere into a textile. The process is simple to learn, and fun for those who want hands-on experience. As part of the demonstration, I'll show samples to explain the

process of preparing the wool for felting, from shearing to cleaning, carding, and combing. I'd like to invite a local small-scale wool producer to talk about sustainable ranching and the process of preparing wool. I'll also discuss the concept of a "fibershed" (like a watershed), a concept that considers all of the resources required to produce fiber, and encourages the use of locally-sourced textiles.

In discussing the cultural forerunners of Pond Farm, I'd like to invite area experts with knowledge of the Bauhaus, Black Mountain College, and Pomo history. I'm hoping that one of the Stewards docents might be interested in talking about Marguerite Wildenhain's experiences at the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College. I'd also like to find area artists or scholars who are familiar with the works of Anni Albers and Ruth Asawa, and their achievements in breaking down the divide between 'craft' and 'fine art'. There's an important story to be told, of how artists such as these have raised the profile of practices that were once dismissed as 'women's work'.

I also hope to include representatives from nearby Pomo communities, or someone familiar with their practices, to talk about Pomo basket making. The sourcing and preparation of fibers, the construction techniques, the symbolism of ornamental patterns, the practical and ceremonial uses of baskets, the integration of the functional, the aesthetic, and the spiritual, are all important aspects of Pomo practice. I think visitors would enjoy learning about this practice, and I would appreciate the chance to include this significant cultural heritage in a discussion of fiber arts and the Pond Farm legacy.

June 2022

Sally Baho

Writing

<https://www.sallybaho.com>

Work during Residency:

I am a Syrian immigrant. I was raised in Pacific Grove, California with my summers spent in Damascus until 2011, when the war began. My thoughts, culture, behavior, and customs are at a crossroad of East and West. I have a deep appreciation for history and tradition but also value progress and innovation. My writing reflects how I make sense of the world — it is my internal dialogue, in both fiction and non-fiction — of how I see society and my analysis and commentary about it.

I embrace what I consider to be the best of both worlds, but am constantly questioning social mores, customs, and trying to understand the roots of why we humans do what we do, collectively. With my work, I want to show the beauty of both my cultures and make my Syrian culture accessible to the rest of the world. As we continue to coexist in this melting pot, I believe that it is important to share our heritage and our roots with our neighbors — as well as to learn about theirs — and my work aims to do just that. Whether I am writing about health issues (I contribute to a local health column), food, society, or our beliefs, I find that we have our humanity in common. I seek to bring people together with my writing; human experiences and emotions exist in all cultures and my goal is to help people relate to others who are different from them.

I hope to show the immigrant or "third-culture kid" experience, as the psychologists call it. Immigrants and first-generation Americans make up a large (and rapidly growing) and important part of our population. Our experiences and preferences are important to public policy, but also to our collective American, and more specifically, Californian culture. I hope my work makes the experiences of immigrants more understandable and accessible.

My time at Pond Farm will be used to write and connect with nature, which, in my writing process, are deeply related. There is something about being immersed in and connected to nature that allows me to structure my day intuitively and lends itself to the creative process. The words of Marguerite Wildenhain really stuck with me and captured my thoughts on nature's effects on our creative works, as well as my experience with the effects of nature. She wrote, "If you have the will to learn, and the eyes to see, and the mind to search, someday too, all the facts you have discovered through nature will be visible in your

work, whether you know it or not.”

The environment of Northern California is to me, metaphorically a blank page. Artists and writers alike have been drawn to Northern California for her openness and, in turn, many works of art, from poetry to painting, have been created or inspired there. This openness and taking a moment to observe the world around me will benefit my work in providing a space for stillness and quietness to finish the story.

Community Engagement:

I have several interactive ideas of how I would like to engage the community in my work, safety (per COVID-19 restrictions) pending. If allowed, I would love to have a cooking class or demonstration, where I teach community members to make Syrian dishes using locally sourced ingredients. My master's thesis explored the relationship of foodways and the homing process of Syrian migrants, in other words, I interviewed Syrian immigrants and refugees about how they create or have created home through their food practices. In both the research for my thesis and the interviews themselves, I learned the deeply important role of food and home, from the physical space to the notion of feeling comfortable. I would couple this with a poetry or prose reading of my own work or the works of others, that would fit the theme for the day. If food is restricted, I am happy to simply do a poetry reading or a writing workshop. Throughout my life I have often found myself in the role of translator. First for my parents, who hardly spoke English when we moved here, then to my friends and neighbors for my parents and our culture. As a writer, I find myself translating cultures, thoughts and opinions, into something readable. I hope to use this skill to engage with the local community to show them something new or teach them a bit about my culture, using food and creative writing as the media to do so.

July 2022

Alexandria “Alex” Martinez

Mixed Medium Paintings, Printmaking, Beadwork

<https://alexandriamartinez.squarespace.com/>

Work during Residency:

I am a second-generation, Queer Latinx, Mexican-American, Chicana, mixed-medium visual artist and social justice visual arts educator serving students in the San Francisco Bay Area.

I earned my B.A. in Art from San Francisco State University (SFSU) in 2006, where I specialized in printmaking, painting, and drawing. In 2012, I became an inclusive Special Day Class teacher with dual teaching credentials. Through my teaching experience, I became committed to racial and social justice in education and my art practice. Centering art in all facets of my life, in 2017, I began designing and delivering bilingual anti-racist transformative visual arts education. I currently collaborate with four Bay Area non-profit arts organizations (i.e., Museum of Children's Arts, Richmond Art Center, Leap Arts in Education, and Youth in Arts). In 2017, I began exploring my artwork as a spiritual and sacred practice, drawing from my Mexican heritage, traditional artisans/artesania, devotional paintings (retablos), and altar-making.

Award of a 2019-2020 Public Participation Fellowship with Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) catalyzed a large-scale collaborative portrait series, Legacy of Resilience. Imploring vivid acrylic gradations, beaded and embroidered textures, inciting text, intricately printed patterns, Legacy amplifies the politics of representation and identity. Legacy was co-created with local Queer women of color artists, linoleum block printing by Malaya Tuyay, and embroidery by Eli Reyes, while I contributed concept, design, acrylic painting, and beadwork. Legacy interrogates how marginalized populations are seen and unseen, describing how systemic racism simultaneously misrepresents us and denies us authentic participation. Our series depicts portraits of Transgender Asylum Seekers and Missing and Murdered Indigenous, Transgender, and Two-Spirit people who are missing from data, media, and in life. Seeking to bring positive change, my artwork acknowledges injustice and elevates the joy and resilience of the most marginalized populations.

The Pond Farm Residency offers the generous gift of time and space immersed in a gorgeous natural setting. A Pond Farm AiR will enable me to advance my art practice, incorporate new media, make creative alliances, research, and create new work.

Creative practice/Exploration/Innovation/New Media:

I will spend my days engaging in creative practice, exploring new media for painting, and adding a sculptural component to my artworks. I will investigate the application of color to my surfaces in different ways, including printing, spraying, brush techniques, stenciling, and blocking off areas. I will explore combining various techniques without concern for production. Instead, my emphasis will be on process and innovation. I will explore soft and hard sculpture to bring an altar-like third dimensionality to my 2D mixed-medium paintings. I will further hone my skills in beading, printmaking, continuing my large-scale mixed medium portrait series in acrylic, block print applique, embroidery and beadwork.

Research:

I will spend evenings making nurturing meals and researching initiatives that support better outcomes for marginalized BIPOC, LGBTQI+, and migrant communities. I will source visual imagery, oral accounts, and written documentation of the systematic injustices endured by these othered peoples. I will critically analyze how othered peoples are misrepresented in the media and by society. I will further analyze how this misrepresentation creates systemic denial to access (i.e., educational system, health and wellness, income and homeownership, etc.) I will create artwork that acknowledges these injustices and depicts the resilience and joy of our lives.

Nature Breaks:

I will use the time at Pond Farm to connect with myself through nature. I will explore Pond Farm and Guerneville by meditating, hiking, swimming, kayaking, and drawing in nature. I believe in the healing properties of quiet, stillness, fresh air, and nature.

Community Engagement:

I will reach out to school and art communities in advance to organize and collaborate. As a teacher with over 10 years of experience, I can offer teacher training in Racial Justice Teacher Training, Integrating Art for Educators, and Culturally Responsive Teaching. I am also happy to deliver nature-based art lessons for youth. Additionally, I will reach out to the local art community to participate in Exhibitions, Art Walks, and give Art Talks.

Connecting with the community and giving back is at the center of my work as a social justice art teacher and professional artist. I currently partner with four Bay Area-based Non-Profit Arts Organizations to design and deliver transformative Visual Arts Education. I am grateful for the opportunity to build professional relationships, collaborate with the school community, and deliver education training while a Pond Farm AiR. I am excited to offer nature-based youth workshops and collaborate with the local art community.

Teacher Training: Racial Justice Teacher Training & Culturally Responsive Teaching:

I am in the process of co-creating racial justice training for educators with San Francisco's Leap Arts in Education (LEAP's) Racial Justice Training Institute. Our goal is to improve outcomes for all students through transformative arts education. This training offers education a foundation on Racism in America, Bias, Systems of Oppression, and Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Integrating Art for Educators:

I can offer short workshops for teachers on how to support Arts Integration in their curriculum.

Youth Nature-based Art workshops:

I can offer short art workshops for youth or center-based art activities that youth artists can participate in with minimal supervision.

Artist Talk:

I would love the opportunity to engage in natural conversations or an organized Art Talk about my creative inquiry and practice.

Exhibition & Art Walk:

I plan to engage with the art community in Guerneville through participating in Art Walks and reaching out to local art spaces for exhibition opportunities.

August 2022

Ashwini Bhat

Sculpture/Installation/ Performance/Ceramics

<https://ashwinibhat.com/>

Work during Residency:

I create radical, but somehow familiar forms that suggest a complex interplay between the landscape, the human, and the non-human, provoking questions regarding widespread assumptions about identity and species hierarchy.

While I'm living and working now outside the California Bay Area, I grew up in a small, rural, South Indian town. My first languages were Havyaka and Kannada, but I began to speak English and Tamil in my twenties. In 2015, I moved to the US on an artist visa. As a new immigrant to California, deeply touched by its diverse and fragile natural environments, I found myself and my studio practice drawn—historically, culturally, physiographically—to this region's topographies.

My ongoing research and current body of work, "Assembling California," consists of installation, ceramic sculptures, works on paper, video, and performance. It is a documentation of my personal, artistic field survey of California's ecology in this time of climate change and shifting habitats.

During my residency at Pond Farm, I'd like to continue the ongoing research for my current body of work, "Assembling California," consisting of installation, clay, photography, and video performance. It is a documentation of my personal, artistic field survey of California's ecology in this time of climate change and shifting habitats.

I'd concentrate on the micro-climates surrounding Headlands. Coming from a background in craft-based practices, I enjoy the repetitive activities leading to the exploration of a single idea. I would first identify a few trails in the 5-mile radius around Pond Farm. I'll record the hikes through notes, drawings, photographs, and videos. Clay is one of my primary materials. The malleable, ephemeral, yet potentially permanent quality of clay helps me to record, through imprint, features particular to each locale. On every journey I take, I will collect imprints of various forms and textures.

In India, where I grew up, I was always surrounded by representations of hundreds of gods and goddesses. There, it's common for anyone to confer sacrality on an ordinary object, say a brick or a tree, by tying a thread around it. It then becomes a meditative locus, a place to acknowledge in passing or to make an offering. I'd love to translate that practice into my artistic discipline here and to leave behind subtle secular prayers on these trails, using thread to symbolize a sacred bond with nature.

I imagine this project developing into a large installation of raw clay imprints shown alongside the photograph and notes of the surfaces where the imprint originated. Each imprint would be like a canto, all the cantos coordinated together to form a larger rhythmical semblance of the land. As a corollary to this installation, "Assembling California" would consist of drawings and watercolors, documentation of the sacred thread locales, some reconstructed photographs, and a performance video. The performance

video will be connected to dance as well as to the process of collecting imprints from the land.

Community Engagement:

I often collaborate with poets and writers and non-profit organizations. I'm involved in various art and climate related initiatives in the Bay Area. I also see myself as an advocate for ceramics, for women artists, for immigrants, and for Asian women. Firmly believing that there needs to be some structural changes in our society as well as in the field of ceramics, I decided to work from the inside of some of these organizations. I believe in being the change I want to see. I now serve as a board member for Studio Potter Journal representing Northern California, as an advisory member for Arion Press, SF; and I'm working with the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) to plan the 2022 conference in Sacramento. For the last five years, I've taught at the Sonoma Community Center's ceramics program. I'm inspired by the California Clay movement and its makers, and I'm working on several projects highlighting the history of ceramics in Northern California. Through these projects, I'm finding my place in California's community.

I'm passionate about sharing my skills with the larger community. Most of my research in the last few years has been out on trails. When I'm documenting on the trail, recording a video, drawing quick watercolors, or talking to a banana slug, people pass me by and two out of ten pause to ask what I'm doing. To me, this curiosity is what leads to conversations and new trajectories. In the last four years, I've spent a lot of time talking to strangers, and it's been a learning experience. I'd love to share my research at Pond Farm with the local community and meet people who share a similar interest in their surroundings. During my residency, if the Covid restrictions permit, I'd love to design a workshop to explore and document the microclimate of Pond Farm, with a special focus on clay and other natural materials. I see this as an opportunity to share a collaboration with the larger community.