Introduction

This is a difficult time for artists and curators. They face not only the standard difficulties of cultural producers—the struggle to find a voice, the need to remake the world and push against the burden of their predecessors—but just the ever-present pressures of economic well-being. They are also making work in a time of tremendous precarity for the world at large, threatened by specters of fascism and conflict, and the fact that their future horizon disappears daily as the global temperature rises. The group of undergraduate students involved in this catalogue are representative of a larger student body, all of whom are finding themselves in a process of negotiating their place in the world, both as artists and citizens.

One of the means artists have always used to forge their visions in times of crisis is collaboration. From medieval guilds to modernist movements, artists find strength and expressive capacity through alignment. The collaboration between NYU BFA Program in Studio Art and The Institute of Fine Arts is part of this history. The New York University Curatorial Collaborative began in 2014, initiated by both students and faculty and designed to bring graduate students in art history into contact with senior undergraduate students of the BFA Program. In so doing, they were not thinking in the standard terms of “networking,” but in the art historical vision of community-building.

The collaborative processes will be made public through several two-person exhibitions at 80WSE Gallery and one curated group exhibition organized in galleries of the Barney Building, home to the Studio Art Program. The students chosen were selected by a combination of factors, including their commitment to work, their interest in the project, the diversity they manifest (diversity being a central component of coalition-building), and the contingent alignments between curatorial and artistic visions that make shows like this possible. Like all community-formations, these shows are both organic and artificial, both institutional and experimental. These tensions make the collaboration unique and full of the unexpected.

The works you will see in this catalogue are the result of research, trial and error, learning, feedback, and the enthusiasm of these students to realize their visions. As faculty, we embrace the multiplicity of backgrounds and approaches that these students represent. As the Director of the BFA Program, I am proud that the work showcased in the exhibition is a testament both to the efforts of these young artists, and to the extraordinary faculty that have guided them through their time here.

This catalogue marks a point in the students’ journey as artists. It is not the end of their journey, nor the ultimate expression of their vision for the world. It is a proposition for a conversation with you, the viewer. The catalogue is thus more a pause than a completion, a space to recognize and to honor the interests, ideas and efforts of our students and the curators who have engaged with and expanded their visions. We thank you for joining them in this journey as they confront the difficult times we live in, and help make possible a future full of the values seen herein, including community, creativity, engagement as well as resistance.

Shadi Harouni
BFA Program Director
Department of Art and Art Professions
New York University
It is a pure accident that Jongho and Daniel both work with glass and metal but achieve disparate ends, stripping down disguises and obstacles in contemporary society. Objects are saturated by images and sound that always serve a designated public service. It is appearances that narrate the story, not humans. Guy Debord predicts our modern dilemma by saying, “everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation.” The exhibition Sense and Insensibility, featuring new works by Jongho Lee and Daniel Evanko, takes an initial step to retrieve our autonomy of time and sense, which have been clouded by seemingly or acoustically bewildering reality.

Jongho ceaselessly de-contextualizes found objects through a series of assemblage, alteration and re-installation. Abandoned window frames, wasted construction material, plastic knick-knacks and other frivolities — we are so accustomed to using and discarding them in daily life that we take for granted their predetermined functionality, readiness and harmlessness. His work, 9th and Stuyvesant, is a site-specific installation that prompts us to contemplate our abiding sense of security in urban environments. Jongho installs the metal pole in a way defying its normal presence. By doing so, he is able to re-shape its physical environment into what he calls an “architecture as deus ex machina in art form”, which evokes an eerily shocking effect as we gape at and evade it. His glass-metal sculptures also resurrect picked-up material from the street. After meticulous study of their chemical ingredients and manufacture profile, he alloys them. In the process of melting, deforming and forging, their own chronology as functional items shatter, thus giving birth to an alternative narrative of object history.

Daniel takes his cue from the immaterial sensorium that governs human interactions in our society growing ever distant and split. A musician his entire life, he believes that sonic elements, generated through or enhanced by sculptural objects, contain the decisive power to unify and resonate experience among the viewers. Connectivity is the penetrating theme in his works. A collectively shared experience of the sensorium can be reached only when inside the gallery space, which filters out the ubiquitous noises and hums of the city. Similarly exploiting the unpredictable materiality of glass and metal as Jongho, Daniel documents the incidental cracking as well as planned synthesis in the process of making. Material transformation alludes to the fluctuation of human psychological responses, which have long been waylaid and diluted by excessive stimulators in contemporary life.

The exhibition explores the full potential of spatial features at 80WSE Gallery, creating a sensorium immersion yet simultaneously disconnecting from our common knowledge of time and sense. Exemplified by the works of Jongho Lee and Daniel Evanko, we see a tension between the palpable objects and the formless, pure experience.
Senior Honors Studio
February 7 — March 12, 2018

Gallery One
80 Washington Square East
New York, NY 10003

Senior Honors Studio 2017/18 chronicles a series of five, week-long exhibitions featuring pairs of BFA Studio Art majors from the New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development’s Department of Art & Art Professions, working in close collaboration with a curatorial Masters / PhD candidate from New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts. The exhibitions are conceived under the dual auspices of the student organized NYU Curatorial collaborative and the Senior Honors Studio Program.

Organizers
Tammy Lee Brown - Director, Planning & Communications
Priyanka Dasgupta - Senior Studio Faculty & Program Coordinator
Kathleen Joyce & Haley Pierce - NYU Curatorial Collaborative Coordinator

Nicola Lees - Director, 80WSE Gallery
Ben Hatcher - Exhibitions Coordinator, 80WSE Gallery
Hugh O’Rourke - Gallery Manager, 80WSE Gallery
Olivia Andrews - Exhibition Technician
Sasha Ballard, Byron Kim, Hannah Sage Murphy, David Stapleton, Alston Watson, Kara Kendal - Exhibition Assistants

Jenny Noguchi - Publication Designer
Maral Babai - Copy Editor
Emily Ruth Olsen, Briana Zimmerman - Publication Assistant
Jason Varone - Web & Electronic Media Manager
Benjamin Lozovsky - Photographer

Advisors
Jesse Bransford, Clinical Associate Professor, Dept. Chair, Art & Art Professions, Steinhardt
Shadi Harouni, Visiting Assistant Professor, BFA Director, Art & Art Professions, Steinhardt
Edward Sullivan, Deputy Director, NYU Institute of Fine Arts and College of Arts and Sciences

Artists
Lilli Biltucci, Olivia Chou, Daniel Evanko, Nathan Storey Freeman, Catalina Granados, Monilola Ilupeju, Elexa Jefferson, Jackie Kong, Jongho Lee, Marta Murray

Curators
Samuel Corey Allen, Phoebe Herland, Amelia Russo, Jiajing Sun, Mengyao Wang

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http://www.nyucuratorialcollaborative.org/