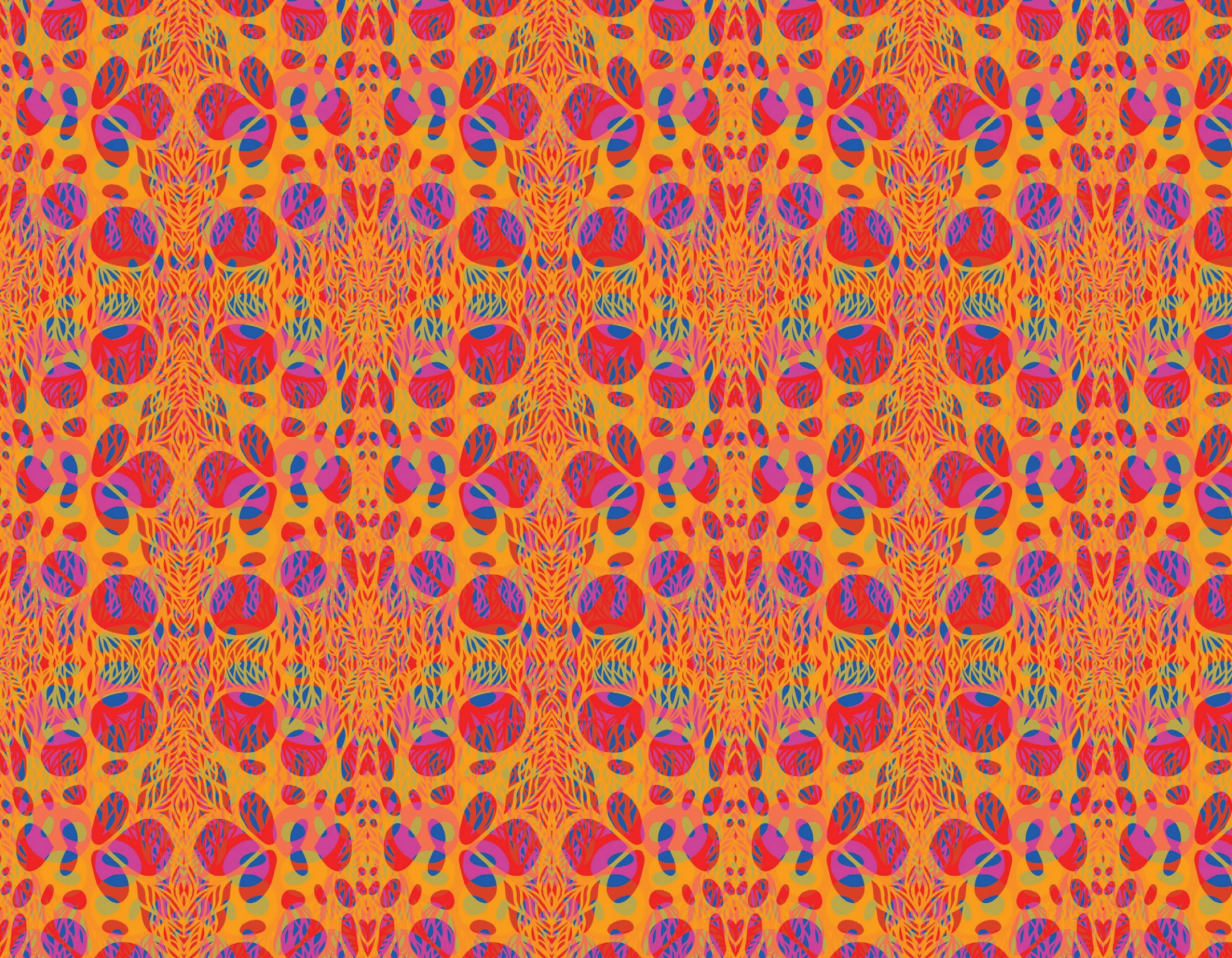
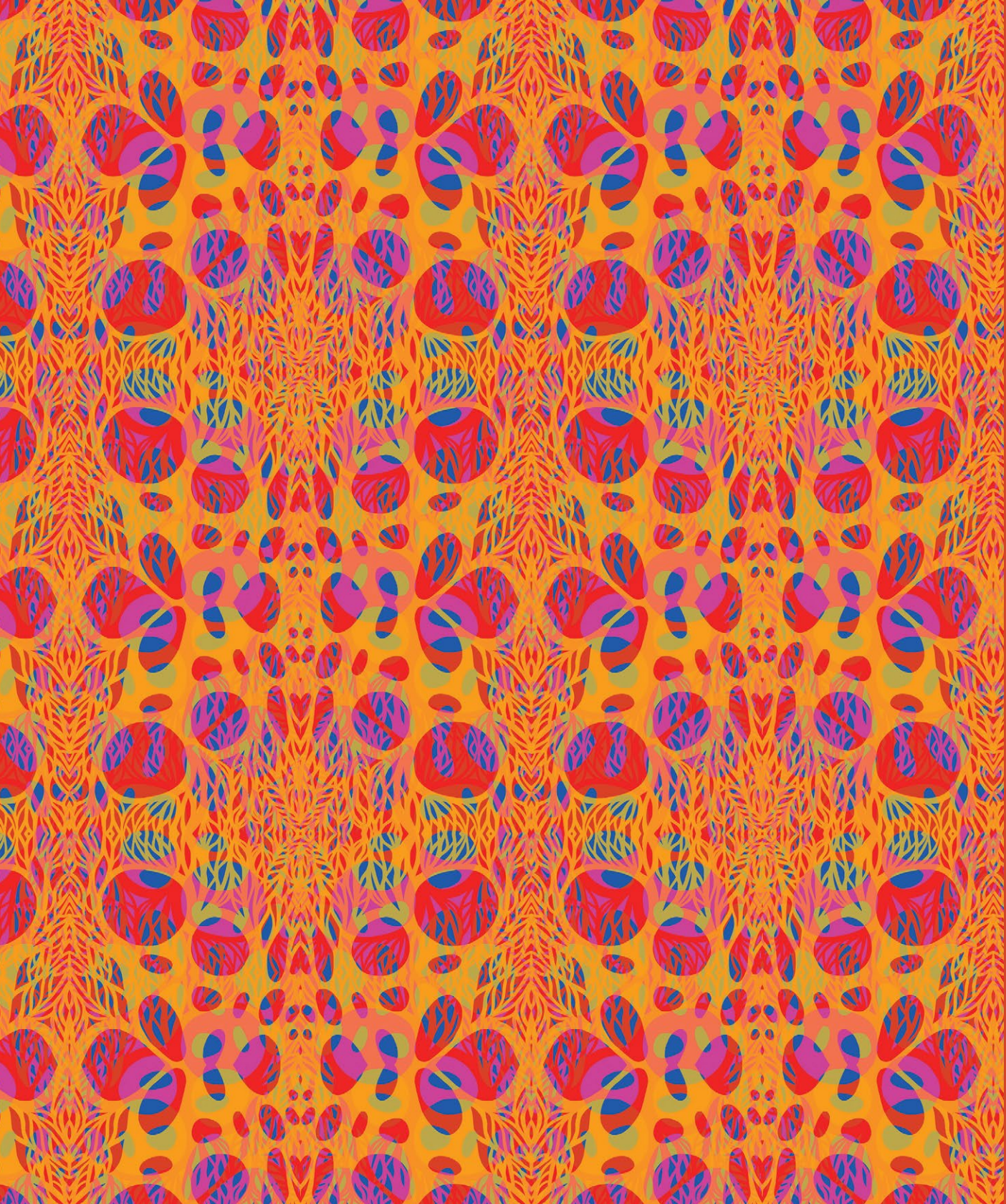




Terra Incognita

Heather Ujiie





Heather Ujiie Terra Incognita

Presented by
Rowan University Art Gallery
September 4 – November 17, 2018

Essay by Dr. Kelly Kirby
Department Chair, Liberal Arts
Moore College of Art and Design

About the Exhibition

Terra Incognita is comprised of new site-specific work by Heather Ujii created for Rowan University Art Gallery that presents her practice of blending the disciplines of textile design, fashion design and fine art with a unique application of non-traditional materials. Pushing the boundaries of what defines fashion and sculpture, Heather dug deep into her influences and content to develop her concepts. Inspired by imagery from Hieronymus Bosch's painting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, historic printed cloth, and by illuminated manuscript paintings from the Moghul Empire, *Terra Incognita* was conceived. Heather designed and fabricated the installation anchored by three Deities: *The Goddess*, *The Hybrid Warrior*, and *The Demon*. They are part fashion, part animal hybrids that conjure the power and complexity of the female voice. Her textile murals envelop the installation, evoking fantastic narratives around the femme fatale and the earthly mystique within this ethereal, mythological world.

- *Mary Salvante*

Gallery and Exhibitions Program Director
Rowan University Art Gallery



TERRA INCOGNITA



Terra Incognita

The Garden of Earthly Delights, painted by Hieronymus Bosch (1490–1510) serves as Heather Ujiié’s point of departure for *Terra Incognita*, a monumental exhibition, displaying configurations of multiple mediums and other worldly surprises.

Through diverse characteristics of *making*, such as painting, stitching, embroidery, large format digital inkjet printing, and multidimensional sculpture, Ujiié creates a transcendental experience, implicit in the metaphor of the garden paradise. Walking into the gallery space, evokes a myriad of potentially confusing emotions and reactions, which resonate within the dualities of life and death, beauty and ugliness, and the sacred and the profane, beckoning humans to ponder on their fragile relationship between biology and evolving culture.

There is a sense of oneness, though, in this seductive environment between three contiguous themes: the human concept of the

Anthropocene, the complex duality between unconditional love and destruction, and the incitement of myriad qualities of aesthetic beauty and enchantment.

We are living in the era known as the Anthropocene (*anthro* meaning human and *cene* meaning geological epic) where human activities on earth have greatly influenced climatic and environmental changes. This period began around 10,000 years ago, after the earth’s last glacial period when *Homo sapiens* in different areas of the world figured out how to domesticate plants and animals. The change from subsisting on foraging and nomadic lifestyles to living sedentary lives created fertile ground for significant increases in human populations, resulting in major shifts in human organization including the institution of politics, organized/bureaucratized religion, gender inequality, and war. Ujiié encapsulates the fragile beauty and tragedy of the human condition in *Symbiosis*, *Matrix*, and *The Demon*.



Symbiosis

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, embellished with grommets, and paracord, 86 x 280 inches, 2018.



Hieronymus Bosch, The Garden of Earthly Delights

Grisaille, oil on oak panel, 81 inches x 152 inches, 1490 - 1500, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Symbiosis sources images from Persian manuscript paintings and *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, to portray a fantastically surreal landscape of flora and fauna. Vibrantly colored birds, horses, and wild boars gaze at themselves in moments of mirrored self-reflection. Humans in solitude wallow in deep thought. An embracing couple by an apple, reminiscent of Adam and Eve in Bosch's work, hold on to one another in sacred spaces of unconditional love, eroticism, and fear. The warrior poses valiantly on his domesticated horse. Dangling bright pink cords symbolize inextricable interconnections between all living things while grommets represent interruptions and disconnections, eliciting deep thought concerning eco-consciousness in the contemporary biospheric landscape. This piece begs for contemplation on our shared connections and confusions between spirituality and reality.

Similarly, *Matrix* beckons critical inquiry into self-reflection and interrogation of relationships between biology, culture, life itself, and spirituality in all living things. The lavishly embellished single mirrored repetitive portrait connected by birds of prey symbolizes beauty and power, but also self-destruction. The cords hanging to the ground serve as umbilical cords or arteries that carry beauty and pain. This work is meant for us to take a serious look at ourselves in our search for love and truth, not only within our own individual life spans, but also in thinking about the past and generations of all living things.

Symbiosis (Right, detail)

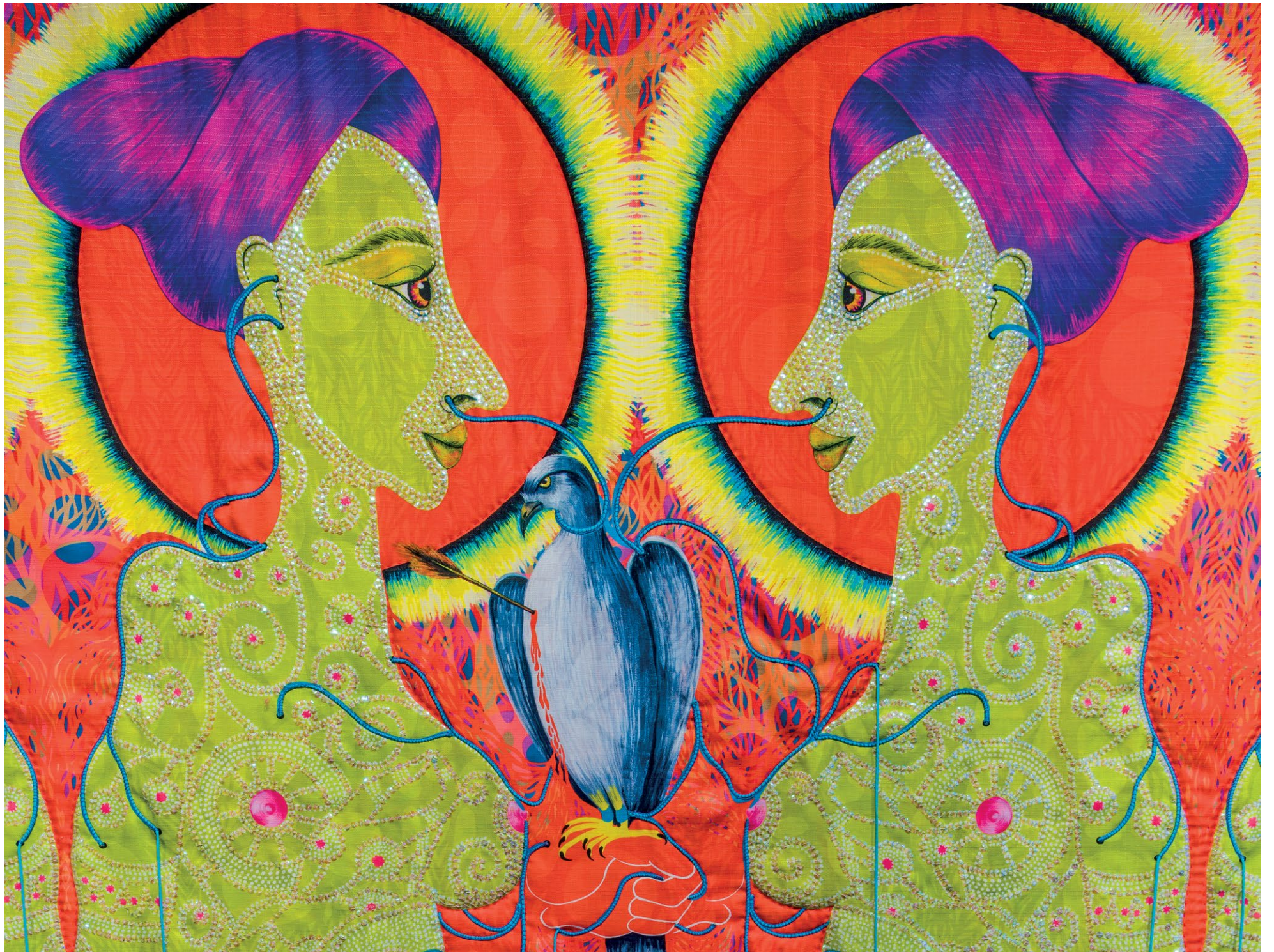
Matrix

(Installation view page 10, detail page 11)

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, quilted and embellished with sequins, paracord, and faux fur, 70 x 213 inches, 2018.







The larger than life *Demon* stands alone. Stunning, she embodies power none other than both good and evil. This mystical creature, encapsulated in all black – on her skin as well as from head to toe and more – dons a mask that looks like an animal muzzle. Attempts for domestication have been made yet she continues to devour and defeat them. There is extreme vulnerability in both dualities of deity and demon, as Ujiie demonstrates in her quest to understand, interpret, and challenge the human made concept of duality.

Duality, the second overarching theme in the exhibition, is about the give and take required for life to exist and persist. It is a balancing act between culture and biology that demands reciprocity to avoid mass extinction. Sociologist Marcel Mauss' (1925) theory of gift exchange proposed there is no such thing as a free gift in what he called "archaic" societies; societies who were – at the time – yet to subscribe to individual contract, meaning Capitalistic practices of exchange through money. Gifts (defined as material items, wealth, property, ceremonies, festivities, time, etc.) are, according to Mauss, exchanged by groups, not individuals, in order to maintain group survival and sustenance.





The Demon

Polyester lace, aquatic tubing, hoop wire, boning, zip ties, polyhedral sequin mesh, constructed corset, air conditioning vinyl tubing, wire, 96 x 240 inches, 2018.



Medusa

(Installation view right, detail left)

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, 58 x 280 inches, 2018.

Ujii's concept of duality begs, and serves as evidence, for the applicability of Mauss' theory to the contemporary human condition. Concepts such as life/death, beautiful/ugly, masculine/feminine, power/fear do not exist solely in opposition to one another in binary form. Ujii's *Medusa* and *The Goddess* both symbolize our desperate need to rediscover the fragile balance in giving and taking that is absolutely imperative for life to continue on earth.

Medusa takes us to this place. Touted as an over-sexualized, enraged female in history she has the power to seduce and to kill. She is beautiful and scary at the same time. She is also boldly sexual and

motherly. She is surrounded by life, including brightly colored trees with flowers at full bloom and an abstracted embryo – the very basic component of life itself. This embryo challenges the duality between male and female to represent security, love, sexuality, birth, and rebirth, along with the spiritual, emotional, and physical empowerment embedded in the female psyche. She is here to reproduce. She is also here to be loved for all she is – powerful yet vulnerable, motherly but sexy, intellectual though not intimidating. Without her, we will all die.







Like fresh water rivers that ebb and flow providing the essential liquid of water to sustain all life, the soft, fuzzy *Goddess* with ethereal wings stands both pure and overwhelmingly unfathomable to understand. Inspired by the futurism and outer worldly symbolism displayed in Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, the figure is both an emblem of immaculateness and possible vision of doom, if humans do not respect and embrace the powerful and necessary gift she provides on a daily basis – to many, but not all humans and living things in the world. This work shows us that beauty can be misconstrued as ugly if the gift of water, the gift of life, is not received with love and respect. If she keeps giving without being reciprocated (meaning acknowledged for the vital prestation she provides), she and all other life shall cease to exist on this earth. The aesthetics of the duality of life and death in this piece are mesmerizing, taking us to a place where we begin to understand that Ujiiie is using duality to create works that are at once beautiful and also discernible. They make us feel happiness, love, sadness, and terror, but they also implore our brains and hearts to think beyond the idea of dualities and binaries created by humans through the aesthetic journey featured in this installation.

The Goddess

Central Fertility Figure

(Installation view page 16, detail pages 17-18)

PVC pipe, wire, acrylic yarn, Styrofoam swim noodles, tape, paracord, thread, acrylic tubing, hoop wire, boning, zip ties, Lucite disc, galvanized stainless steel basin, 96 x 80 inches, 2018.

The Hybrid Warrior

(Installation view right, detail pages 20-21)

Vinyl screening, felt, glue, zip ties, aquatic tubing, Styrofoam tubing, paracord, architectural foam, hot-glue, duct tape, cement tile, wire mesh baskets, rope, vinyl tubing, organic birch tree branches, 96 x 240 inches, 2018.









Ujiié's conception, interpretation, and execution of aesthetics in this exhibition brings us on a journey that elicits contemplation and questions on pondering *how she* developed so many diverse ideas and multidimensional materials. Her work reflects anthropologist Alfred Gell's (1994) theory proposed in *The Enchantment of Technology and the Technology of Enchantment*, which is a play on words and applicable to creators who make things as well as the audience or clients who admire their work. First, the technology of enchantment is referred to an artist's ability to create work that appeals to any human who lays eyes on it. Ujiié has a unique skill to bring together assemblages of unexpected materials and mediums, essentially catapulting viewers into spaces of enchantment and wonder. The enchantment of technology, on the other hand, is a concept resting on the idea that viewers become bedazzled when they experience and view forms of art that trigger them to think outside of what they think they know. It becomes a space where viewers are stunned with the creative talent they see and how their world-view is challenged by the experience.

Interestingly, many of the sculptural works question notions of experimental fashion, referring to the body as a vessel, the body as an adorned object, and the manipulation of bodily materials which symbolize armor, seduction, and innocence. *The Hybrid Warrior* is visually captivating. Her presence in a forest of brightly wrapped trees is bold, bright, beautiful, and warrior like. She wears an enormous animal-like mask, and a linear cloak saturated with multi-colored felt circle florets and zip ties. She is aggressive and seductive, appearing to symbolize a lioness or dragon, yet her very existence evokes ongoing curiosity and fascination.

The "Earth Mother" is celebrated in many of the images in the window coverings. Like all the hanging *digitally printed tapestries* in the

exhibition, these images are first hand painted with gouache, scanned at a high resolution, and manipulated digitally. Women, hybrid creatures, and dancing figures present the female form in acts of celebration, hanging as giant colorful window panels, which block our view of the outside world, and impose self-reflection on the fecundity of the environment we find ourselves in.

As outlined, the three intersecting themes – Anthropocene, dualities and aesthetics – permeate through each work presented in *Terra Incognita*. Ujiié fuses *avante garde/couture* fashion with fine arts by taking objects out of context, repurposing them, and beautifying them with her mastery of skills as a designer and fine artist. Her riveting work leaves us with burning questions. What are humans doing to the planet earth? What are we doing to each other? What does it mean to be healthy and sustainable on this planet? How can raising questions about duality help us to deconstruct ideas about binaries and hegemonic paradigms? Ujiié's art comes from the heart, which seduces our senses, as a plea for universal love.

- Dr. Kelly Kirby

About the Author

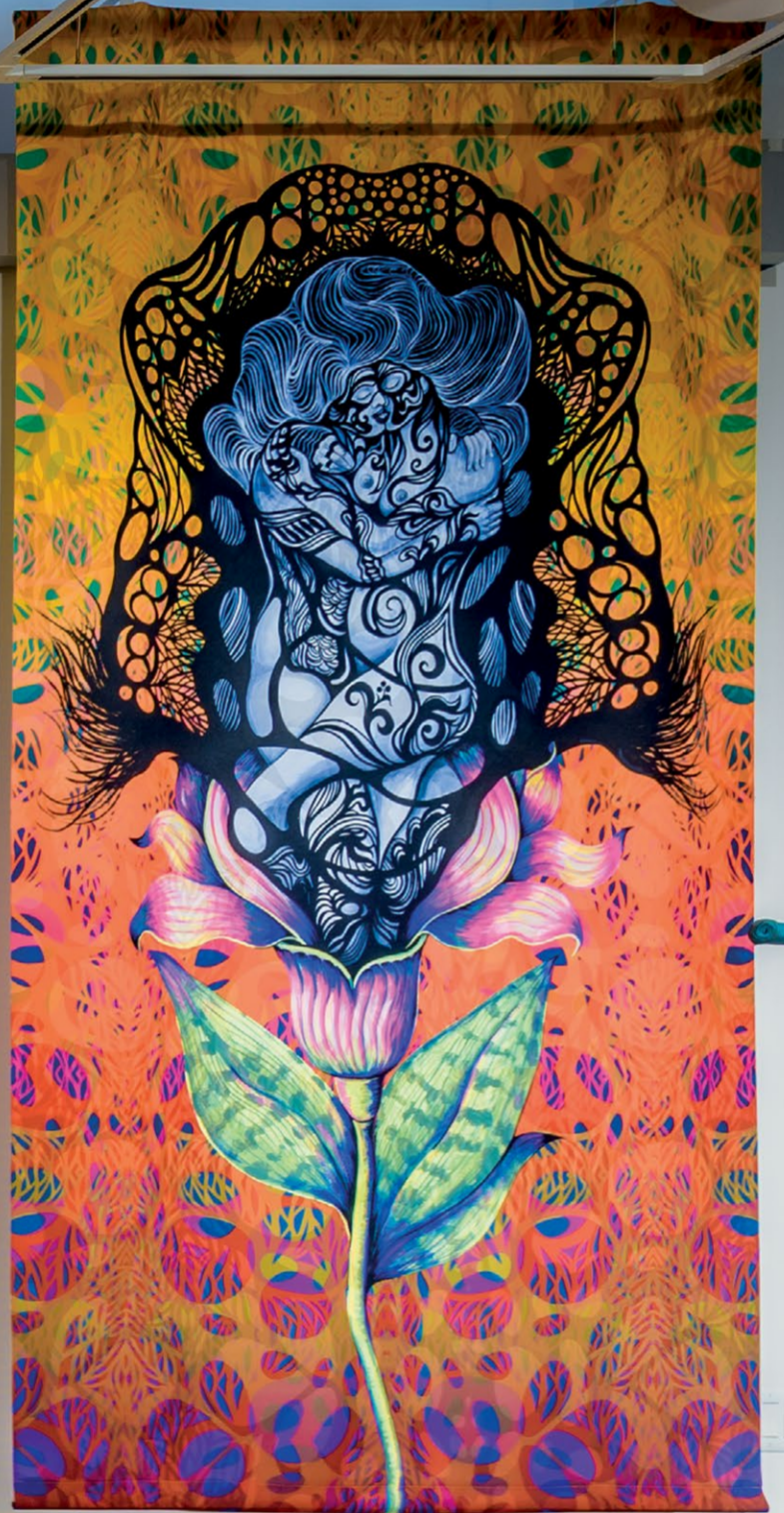
Dr. Kelly Kirby is Department Chair of Liberal Arts and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia, Pa.. She completed her PhD for the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan in August of 2014. Her research incorporates and represents her educational experience in socio-cultural anthropology and museum studies. The dissertation, *Clothing, Kinship, and Representation: Transnational Wardrobes in Michigan's African Diaspora Communities*, examines social interconnections between aesthetics, morality, and representations of kinship through an analysis of the production and consumption of cloth and dress in African Diaspora communities in Michigan. Kelly's background includes engagement with anthropology and museum theory as well as extensive ethnographic fieldwork and experience working with museum collections at the Charles Wright Museum of African American History, and co-curating an exhibit at the Seaport Independence Museum in Philadelphia. She is currently directing and producing a short ethnographic documentary about difficult realities shared by parents and children of mixed heritage.

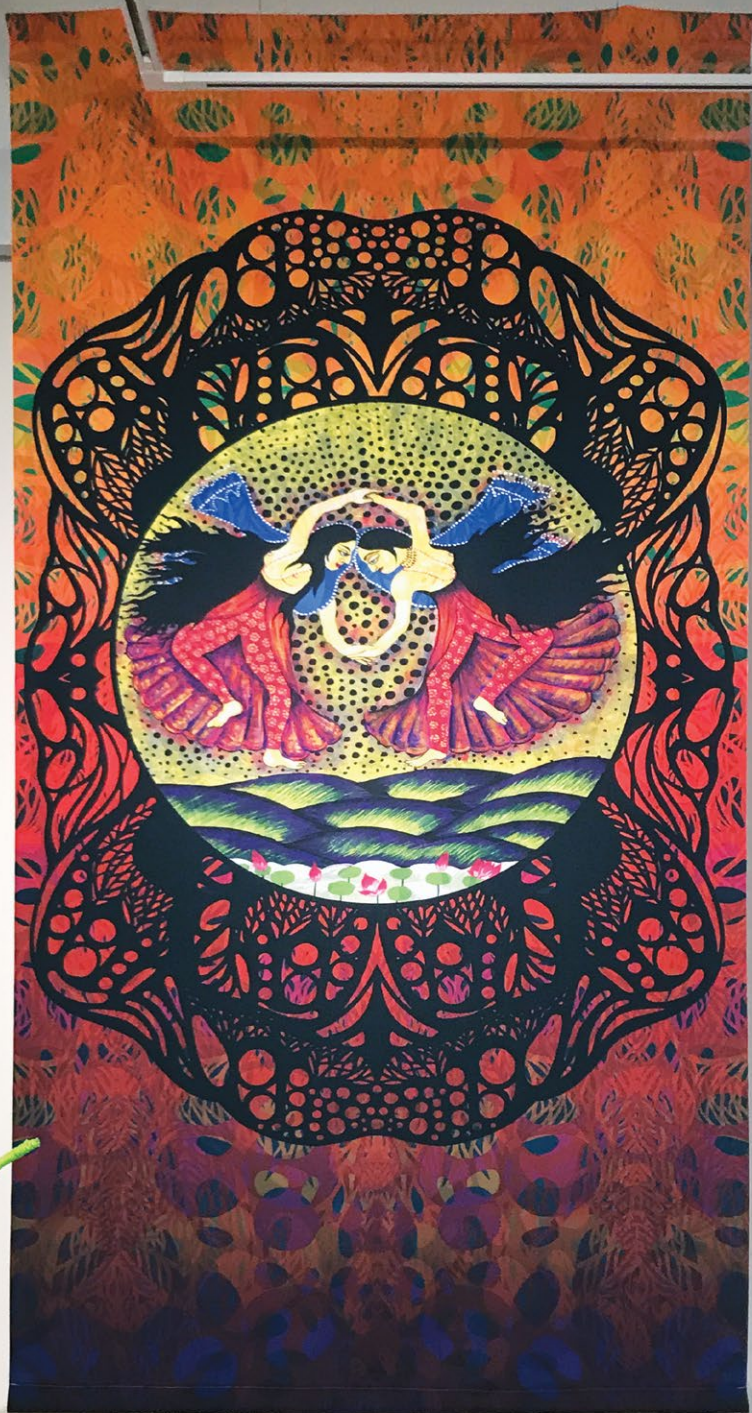
Kelly Kirby
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Moore College of Art and Design
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Hybrid Warrior
(Installation view)









About the Artist

A Bucks County, PA resident, **Heather Ujiie** grew up in NYC's Greenwich Village, part of a family of artist educators, and believes her creativity comes from a lively bohemian childhood. Her installations have been exhibited at the State Museum of Pennsylvania, Delaware Art Museum, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Racine Art Museum, Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, Philadelphia International Airport, and the prestigious Wind Challenge Award Exhibition at the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial Museum. As a designer, she has more than 15 years of experience creating printed textiles for the high-end home furnishing and apparel markets. Her commercial designs have been used in such projects as decorating The White House private residence for President and Mrs. George W. Bush.

Ujiie holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Visual Art from the State University of New York/New Paltz; an Art-Education K-12 degree from Brooklyn College; and an Associate's Degree in Textile Surface Design from The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. She is on the faculty of Moore College of Art & Design and has design experience for dance, theatre, and textiles.

heatherujiie.com

Earth Mother Series

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, 116 x 56 inches each, 2018.

Window panels 1-5, left to right

1. **Earth Mother** (Page 24)
2. **Microcosm** (Page 24)
3. **Hybrid Mermaid** (Page 25)
4. **Embrace** (Page 25)
5. **Dancers** (Left)

Acknowledgments

CURATION:

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Gallery and Exhibitions Program Director
Rowan University Art Gallery

PHOTOGRAPHY:

Hitoshi Ujiie
hitoshiujiie.com

CATALOG DESIGN:

Jillian Schley
Assistant Director, Exhibitions and Programming
Rowan University Art Gallery

Heather Ujiie is a fearless, risk-taking, interdisciplinary artist and it was a pleasure working with her on this project that was over a year in the making. The journey from start to finish was inventive and inspiring, but also introduced structural design and technical challenges. Large, site specific projects like this one are not created in a vacuum and thankfully we were able to collaborate with many creative makers and thinkers to realize it. We would like to extend a special thanks and recognition of those individuals particularly Jim Greenwell, sculpture tech with the Department of Art, for his ingenious fountain system design and elegant tree stands. We also want to thank Rowan students Leann Carlson, Rylee Jacobs, and Summer Culkin, and Moore College of Art and Design students Shannon De Acetes, Jasmine Castañeda- Nava, Azha McIntosh, Jacki Kensey, and Sophia De Mers for their assistance with finishing many of the fashion sections and organic forms. Also, special thanks to Kelly Kirby for her insightful and authentic essay and to Jillian Schley for her beautiful and thoughtful catalog design.

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THE COBY FOUNDATION, LTD.



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New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner
agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Image Checklist

Tree of Life Wallpaper (Front and back covers)

Digitally printed with aqueous pigment on self-adhesive wallpaper, repeat sizes vary according to site-specific specifications, 2018. Featured with The Hybrid Warrior installation.

Optical Textile Print Wallpaper (Inside covers)

Digitally printed with aqueous pigment on self-adhesive wallpaper, repeat sizes vary according to site-specific specifications, 2018. Featured with Matrix installation.

Symbiosis (Page 7, detail page 9)

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, embellished with grommets, and paracord, 86 x 280 inches, 2018.

We live in a complex world, where the evolution of all species depends not only on nurturing and procreation, but violence and hierarchical aggression. The epoch of the Anthropocene is upon us, as humans are now dominating a global culture that has lost sight of the reverence of nature, geology and ecosystems. This piece sources images from Persian manuscript paintings and Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* to represent a surrealistic landscape of flora and fauna. Symbiosis is composed of many disparate parts to reveal a fantastic mirrored landscape, which is meant to reflect our subconscious obsessions and desires.

The hanging hot pink cords imply the interconnection between all things, and the grommets act as a kind of conduit, or hole that implies our tragic demise. This work can be viewed as a dramatic plea for awareness of our shared symbiosis in both the sacred and the profane.

Hieronymus Bosch, The Garden of Earthly Delights (Page 8)

*Grisaille, oil on oak panel, 81 inches x 152 inches, 1490 - 1500.
Museo del Prado, Madrid.*

Matrix (Page 10, detail page 11)

Featuring *Optical Textile Print Wallpaper* (Inside covers)

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, quilted and embellished with sequins, paracord, and faux fur, 70 x 213 inches, 2018.

All living creatures share some form of living network, in their biology, structure and spirituality. The human body has veins, arteries and blood vessels that carry the stream of life. This piece is meant to force the viewer to look at our own global multi-cultural reflection as a symbol of power and beauty, yet also belies self-destruction. *Matrix* functions as a kind of opulent altarpiece, which depicts a repetition of a singular mirrored portrait, including lush embellishments and birds of prey. It represents the ambiguity around power, spirituality, nature, and self-destruction. The hanging cords, which are stitched into the work, cascade down to the ground, and function as displaced umbilical cords, or arteries.

The Demon (Page 12, detail page 13)

Polyester lace, aquatic tubing, hoop wire, boning, zip ties, polyhedral sequin mesh, constructed corset, air conditioning vinyl tubing, wire, 96 x 240 inches, 2018.

This larger than life, all black female-form represents a highly seductive enchantress, or a kind of "succubus" that has the power to seduce and conquer. This hybrid creature, wears a long mask that is characteristic of an animal muzzle, from a horse to a rodent. She was inspired by the exoskeleton of sea horses, and is meant to appear like a majestic deity, as well as demon.

Medusa (Page 15, detail page 14)

Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, 58 x 280 inches, 2018.

Medusa was inspired by characteristics in comic book and anime culture, as well as, from historical artifacts. It is meant to depict polarized images of female sexuality. Since Ancient Greece, the snake-haired seductress has been a sexualized symbol of women's rage. She has been a metaphor of the femme fatale, representing the duality of death, embodied in a beautiful seductive woman. Conversely, the piece also conveys a moment of love and security, encapsulated in an abstracted embryo, depicting a sanctuary for male and female entities. The piece is meant to represent the dualities within male and female, and the power within the female psyche.

The Goddess, Central Fertility Figure (Page 16, detail pages 17-18)

PVC pipe, wire, acrylic yarn, Styrofoam swim noodles, tape, paracord, thread, acrylic tubing, hoop wire, boning, zip ties, Lucite disc, galvanized stainless steel basin, 96 x 80 inches, 2018.

Fountains historically resonate many positive symbols: purity, faith, source of life, and human sustenance. This piece developed inspiration from Hieronymus Bosch's, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, in which many of the architectural elements are both futuristic and phantasmagorical. The figure standing in the pool is meant to look futuristic and pure, a white totem bearing the gift of water. The sound and physicality of running water reverberates throughout the exhibit, so that a subliminal sound of nature is within the architectural space. She is covered in white yarn rings, and wears an all-white corded headpiece composed of multiple fractal cones. Many of the cones are threaded with clear tubing, which sprout out of the apertures, and cascade water down into the giant pool of water. The elements earth, air, fire and water are manifested in many of the two and three dimensional works in this exhibition, and are critical in creating an environmental landscape, whether it be one of affirmation or devastation.

The Hybrid Warrior (Page 19, detail pages 20-21)

Featuring *Tree of Life Wallpaper* (Front and back covers)

Vinyl screening, felt, glue, zip ties, aquatic tubing, Styrofoam tubing, paracord, architectural foam, hot-glue, duct tape, cement tile, wire mesh baskets, rope, vinyl tubing, organic birch tree branches, 96 x 240 inches, 2018.

The materiality of this work, which is linear, armor-like and colorful, is meant to celebrate the feminist tribal warrior spirit that can be both aggressive and seductive. This hybrid creature symbolizes a lioness or a dragon, and can also be seen as a visceral tree of life. She is constructed of multiple flower-like florets, wears a giant facial mask, and stands in an assembled garden landscape of fantastic brightly wrapped trees, and aquatic-like flora.

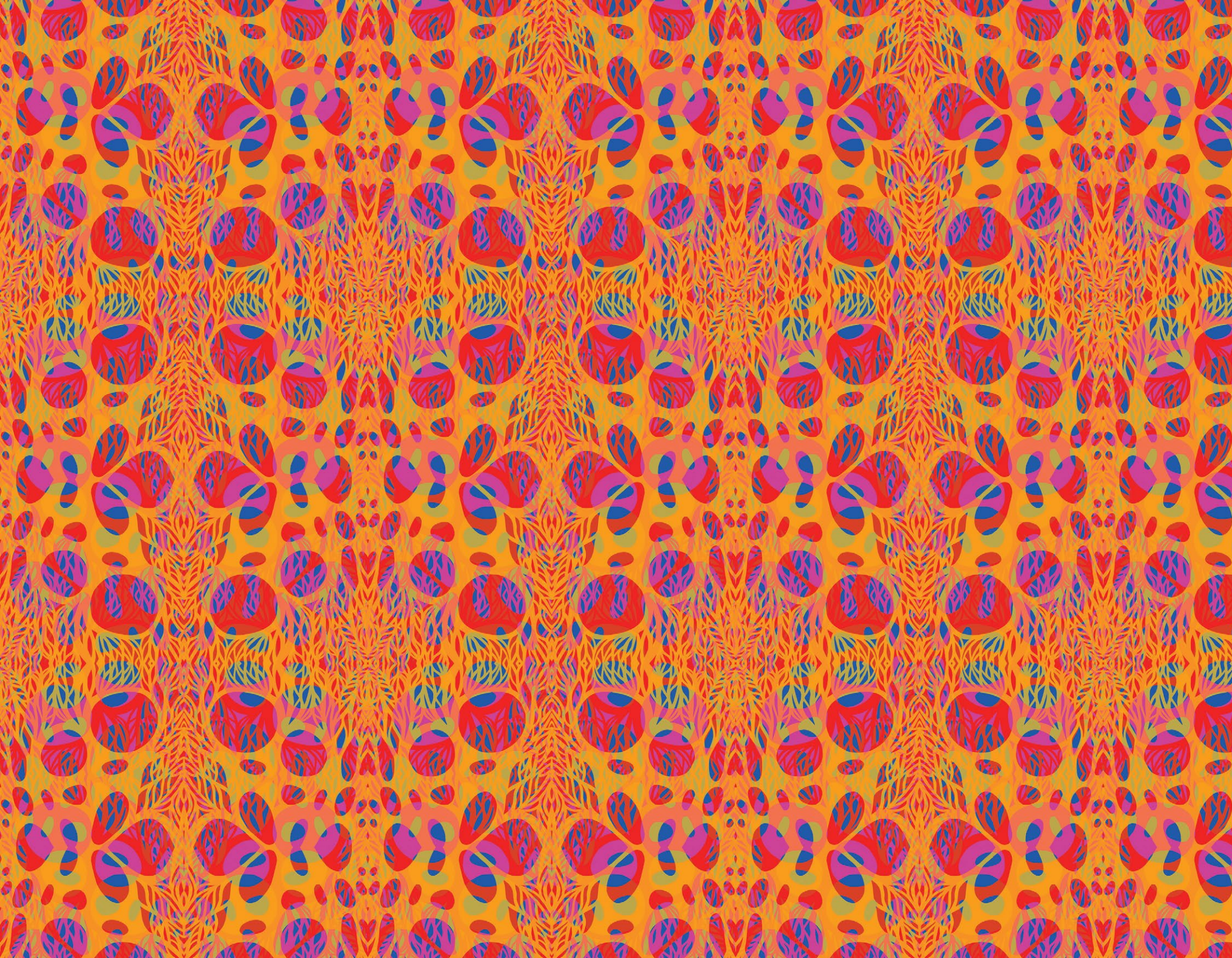
Earth Mother Series

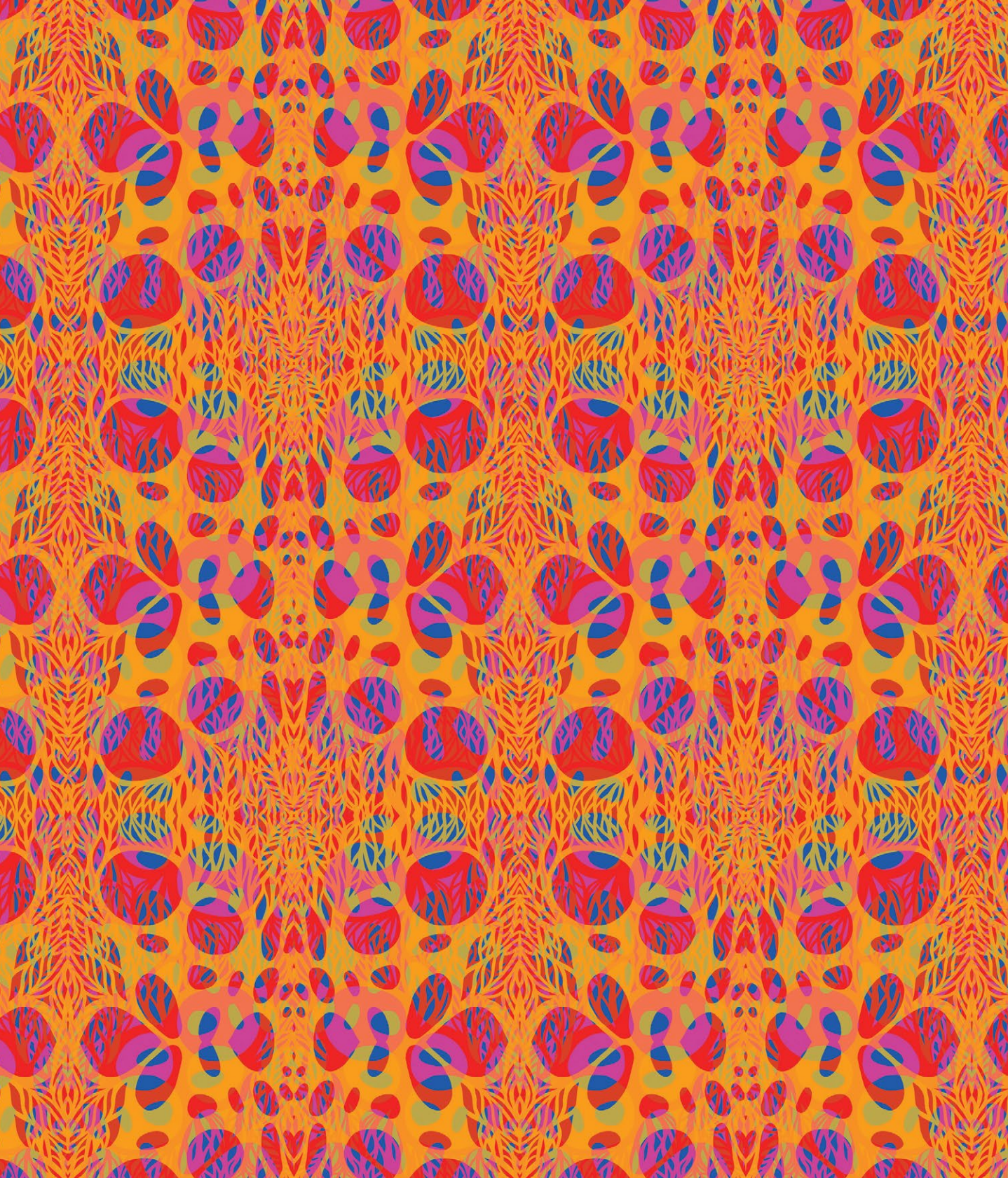
(Pages 19, 24-26) *Digitally printed on canvas polyester, with disperse dye heat transfer, 116 x 56 inches each, 2018.*

Window panels 1-5, left to right (Installation view on page 19)

1. **Earth Mother** (Page 24)
2. **Microcosm** (Page 24)
3. **Hybrid Mermaid** (Page 25)
4. **Embrace** (Page 25)
5. **Dancers** (Page 26)

All of the images in the window coverings are celebratory of the "Earth Mother". Many of the images depict the female form in some kind of embrace, which celebrates life. Hybrid creatures, birds, dancing figures, and female nudes, all create an ambiance of eroticism, cycles of life, and love.





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