

Even when absent, glass serves as inspiration for my work by relating qualities of glass to the human body." Cantu's bulging stomach, plush fatty landscaping, their fleshy folds create an inversion of geological practice, finding nonlinear shifts from within one's body much like the extraction of an earthen core. In both photographic works Prod and Pull (2019), Cantu prints contortions of their body onto cotton and affixes the cloth-printed photographs to the wall with flesh tape. The cast glass sculptures titled Trimmings (2020), form a ripened still life with the feeling of an abandoned campfire on the gallery floor, only a few pieces of skin-like tissue left behind.

Efrat Lipkin graduated from an MFA at Yale School of Art, Sculpture Department in 2020. The dichotomy of geology and the human body is put into dialogue with Lipkin's peak and punctured sprawling installation of brass bells, rubber pulls, and glass vessels all creating pings and stinging visual sensations. Lipkin has generated a corporeality of the inner body, a vascular system of geological and humanist histories, while battling the Cartesian phenomenology of being. "The site I inhabit and the site I imagine set up conditions for political forces brought about by a refusal to standardize and be standardized, to reconfigure reality constraints. To make and live within these spaces is to articulate in their own grammar." Lipkin suggests our presence and absence is the object of life whose details are stored in the crevices of both organic and manmade spaces.

### Breathing:

Madeline Rile Smith graduated from an MFA in Glass at Rochester Institute of Technology in 2020. Informed by living with chronic pain Rile Smith works in glass to help explore degrees of physical ability and compromise within the human body. Physical pain has resulted in moments of intense isolation for Rile Smith, leaving them with needs to connect with others through breathing exercises. Glass as a performative vehicle enables these meaningful interactions between people while creating forms of documentation and pathways of breath; recorded sounds of this shared breath that persist within the vessels Rile Smith forges through glass. Through objects and performance, Rile Smith steps away from their limitations and finds pleasure, intimacy, and the discomfort that accompanies the interpersonal experiences of closeness. "I am curious where the line is drawn between help and hindrance, between intimacy and unease. My instruments of connection and compromise invite people to engage in acts of intimacy and potential discomfort." For Rile Smith these glass objects ask the question: how close is too close and what are the boundaries? In this exhibition, Instrument for Connection and Compromise and Duel Duet (2019) draw a parallel between the physicality of glass and the human body, comparing material affordance to corporeal affordance. "I utilize the material metaphors inherent to glass--invisibility, luminosity, resilience, and fragility-- to consider the dualities of pain and joy; fluidity and rigidity; and isolation and connection."

# UrbanGlass

## *Flesh of My Flesh*

Curated by Baseera Khan

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*"Finitude is the most capacious and enabling of the attributes we share with others, because unlike the particular way in which each of us looks, thinks, walks, and speaks, that connects us to a few other beings, it connects us to every other being. -...and acknowledging these limits allows us to experience the expansiveness for which we yearn, because it gives us a powerful sense of our emplacement within a larger Whole. Unfortunately, though, finitude is the most narcissistically injurious of all the qualities we share with others, and therefore the one we are most likely to see in them and deny in ourselves."*  
- Kaja Silverman

Flesh of my Flesh is a five-person, juried group exhibition whose title is borrowed from a decade-long project by Kaja Silverman, a book of essays, published in 2009. I look to the artists in this exhibition to reveal how the femme-identifying body takes on analogies of finitude, the state of having limits or end, by using concepts and the materiality of glass to create a series of objects that visualize the spacebetween exile and kinship. The themes of each essay in Silverman's writings range from the space between two people, the psychology behind love and desire, and relational constructs that give one their sense of self. As an artist who is working in the capacity of curator for Flesh of my Flesh, I see the material of glass as a factor in these conditions of not just love and desire, but of joy and safety. Overtime societal mythologies and storytelling have examined glass and its inherent properties as a raw material to interpret legacies of individuality, one's finitude. The ability to see our own reflection can directly influence senses of care towards the Other. Using glass as a conceptual lens to complicate dominant psychological narratives, artists in Flesh of my Flesh dive deep into personal subject positions to expose the vulnerabilities of movement, modification, and breathing.

Glass occurs in nature due to miraculous formations of heat and pressure modifying silica sand, a key component and renewable resource. Lightning creates fulgurites often found on beaches all over the world, volcanoes produce obsidian rocks, and established historical activities have left behind tektites in locations such as Egypt and Libya where comets and meteorites once landed, leaving silica fields as evidence. Man-made glass is developed with the combination of raw materials such as soda, lime, and silica heated at specific temperatures in order to produce a basic glass compound. Each region's chemical compositions differ slightly from one another, resulting in geographically unique glass. Glass has conflictual geo-political histories due its human ingenuity and rarefaction, which partially manifested into timelines of immense monetary value and exchange. I get into the weeds of what glass is, and how it has been used for mobility of one's place in society, to exemplify its use in

folklore, literature, and mythologies creating identity of one's sense of self, the psychological understanding of why we exist, to make sense of our finitude.

Artists such as Leon Patillo and DMX wrote and performed songs entitled "Flesh of my Flesh" around the same time as Silverman's research and writings. To unpack this cultural phenomenon, I went back to the biblical scripture that pronounced, "flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone.". I then took a closer look at why the artists chose to exemplify social issues of movement, modification, or breathing through a glass object instead of photography or cinema, the more typical formats studied by Kaja Silverman, as their creative means for social investigation.

The intersectional lens on the femme-identifying body, and more specifically a Black, Indigenous, Queer, or Brown person, in my interpretation, has not only been influenced by ideations of western psychology but also anchored in theological narratives. In Genesis 23 (Bible), Eve was created from the rib of Adam and in the Koran, Eve and Adam were both created for one another out of heat and dirt (silica sands). In the Koran, Eve is said to be like the curve of a rib cage, you cannot straighten her or she will break, meaning handle Eve with special "care." The material history of glass, and its function as a raw source of visual reflection itself, makes for an interesting lens on the femme-identifying body.

### **Movement:**

Anna Lehner graduated from an MA-MFA in glass at the University of Wisconsin Madison in 2019. Lehner uses concepts derived from geological research to build an artmaking platform that explores planetary histories and human timescales. Using live data, written word, soundscapes, and glass itself, Lehner combines drawing and sculpture with archival practices to arrive at contemporary geological visualities. "I am interested in exploring the facets of fracture within tectonic plates and how they correlate to human chronology. The physical memory of past seismic events are embedded within the material makeup of our continents and these records give us a glimpse into the past." Glass has a variety of qualities that encompass fragility, instability and reflection for Lehner. Time and the solar system's disregard for human presence provides sheer awe of infinitude and scale that shapes placement of the self within Lehner's ongoing practice. In the Accumulated Time triptych (2018), Lehner made a record of seismic activity from volcanic rock, charcoal, and ink on paper using a mechanism that releases a drop of ink every time an earthquake is detected through the United States Geological Survey (USGS) notification service marking time and movement. Shifting Foundation is a work made entirely from glass during a Fulbright fellowship in 2020. Inspired by a section of sediment core taken from the Hikurangi Subduction Margin in New Zealand, this specific piece was inspired by a core taken from the Campbell Canyon, showing the seafloor effects from the complex 2016, Mw 7.8 Kaikōura

Earthquake. Lehner also takes this research into personal practices of movement and play as a member of an occupational therapy group in Wisconsin that works with the disabilities of Parkinson's disease; applying the craft of glass as a form of physical therapy for different groups of people with alternative abilities, using craft as care.

Jessi Li graduated from an MFA in Visual Arts at Hunter College in 2019. Lines of control and corners are a focus for Li as they connect lived experiences to the concepts of travel. Working in site specific installation for UrbanGlass, Li is interested in corridors of in-between spaces such as airports, train stations, and funerary passageways. A maze is sutured to the gallery wall, trapping anyone who chooses to walk inside the structure to take a closer look at the glass objects affixed to the baggage claim carousel inspired table top. Li investigates ideas of errantry: looking for something, but not knowing what it is until one fully experiences the unknown. In art historically, we see archetypes of male identifying figures roaming from place to place, having no real agenda other than self actualization. In Li's work we are able to see a femme person play out similar patterns of searching for stability and one's identity through travel and objecthood. By forging utilitarian forms out of glass, Pass Away contains three sculptural elements: a conveyor belt, weapons and bags.

While in China Li spent time understanding death through a foreign cultural lens, a system of funerary rituals that allow a passing person to leave earth much like one goes on a road trip, taking only their essentials with them on the journey. The sculptural weapons incorporate altered, manufactured TSA approved objects and life casts. Traveling alone as a woman heightens defensive and resourceful awareness, and these weapons protect from both physical and emotional threats. Li uses these small scaled vessels and site specific installations as a metaphor for an all inclusive version of storytelling, an alternative to the hero/action arch found in the literature of Ursula K. Le Guin. Her book, The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction, describes the bag as the original object, which Li follows intently. "My sculptures hold multitudes, simultaneously referencing protuberances of limbs or concavities of mouths, as well as useful tools."

### **Modification:**

Kayla Cantu graduated from an MFA in Glass at the Rochester Institute of Technology, School of Art and Design in 2020. Cantu claims their body as unruly, a site, one that holds tectonic shifts and that questions the unrest in one's perception of landscape and time. Against the backdrop of normalization and documentation, Cantu takes their own body as an archival discovery of a new geologic understanding of existence and finds glass as a material that can resemble these representations. Why must we resolve the discomfort of one's derivations from the norm, from the self, the psychological, the physical,? Who put forth dominant narratives of female embodiment? "I am a fat, female, half-Mexican, bisexual artist who utilizes glass, video, photography and mixed media.