

LIMINALITIES

August 12 – December 9, 2024
Collections Study Space
Curated by Jesse Asher Alsdorf, BA '22

University Art Museum
University at Albany
State University of New York

Introduction

LIMINALITIES explores transitional and liminal spaces — spaces that we usually pass through rather than remain in. The photographs, prints, and paintings in this exhibition, drawn from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections, physically depict or metaphorically evoke such spaces, holding us in transitional realms but with seemingly no beginning and no end.

Unsettling yet familiar, many of the works depict transitional points of entry, such as windows or doorways. They invite viewers to imagine themselves entering each work and exploring its alternate reality from a first-person perspective or by identifying with the people depicted in them. Other pieces present aestheticized abstractions of their subject matter, luring us into transcendent worlds. The works in the exhibition ask us to reflect on issues such as the inevitability of death, human vulnerability, nostalgia, or the peace we find in transitional periods through the meditative process of viewing art. Above all, a sense of loneliness circulates among the works.

Our feelings of calm and discomfort are evoked by the tonality, atmosphere, and inherent photographic qualities of the works, all of which are explored in nuanced ways, even in the lithographs and paintings in the exhibition. Photography lends itself well as a medium for illustrating liminal spaces. It captures and transfers our visual perception and reality to a form that can be physically altered through printing techniques that manipulate texture and color, leaving us suspended in an emotional space between the real and the imagined.

LIMINALITIES Artists

Elizabeth Blum MFA '97 (b. 1958, London, England: Lives and works in Kittery, ME and Maidenhead, England)

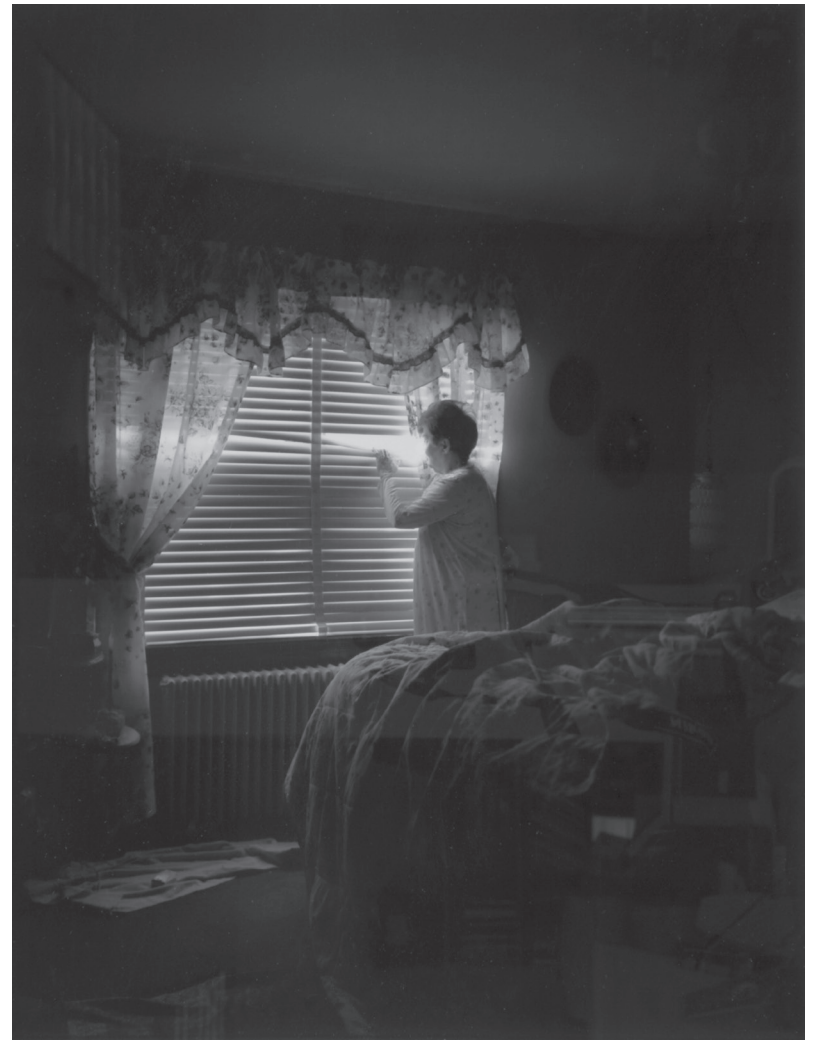
Encompassing photography, digital composites, and digital media, Blum's work emphasizes the parallels between the realities of nature and technology. In the photo collage *Against the Mighty Mite* (1997), Blum elongates the figure, extending and entwining the legs with a vacuum cleaner hose. The real depth of the living space becomes superficial through the surface textures created by plastering the photographs on plexiglass. Like the figure, the space challenges the viewer's perception with an uncanny physicality that manifests an alternate reality.

Andrew Brischler (b. 1987, Long Island, NY: Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY)

Brischler's paintings and drawings use abstraction, image, and text to develop a new language for reflecting on the narratives of his personal life. Unapologetically bold in its pop art nature, color, and form, *Fake Fuck With No Fangs* (2013) interrupts the exhibition's sequencing to simulate a glitching effect with vertical stripes, reminiscent of a television screen. Within the stripes, the smoothly painted colors become columns of vast space conveying emptiness and ambiguity.

Colleen Cox MA '00, MFA '08 (b. 1974, Niskayuna, NY: Lives and works in Rensselaer, NY)

Cox's photographs offer a sense of intimacy and comfort amid loneliness. Her images often highlight a subject enveloped in shadows, with some sort of light that leaks through and permeates the darkness. *Waiting (Persephone)* (2008), whose title refers to the Greek goddess of spring abducted to the underworld and only allowed to return briefly each year, is about yearning and solace. The subject peers through window blinds, and what lies beyond is unknown. The image's physical scale allows the viewer to feel as if they share the space with the subject, reciprocating sympathy and consolation.



Colleen Cox, *Waiting (Persephone)*, 2008

Kathleen Dagostino

After Miró The Farm (1984) references Joan Miró's *The Farm* (1921-22), a nostalgic depiction of the Spanish painter's family farm rendered in the geometric forms of Cubist abstraction. In Dagostino's interpretation — suggestive of Miró's later surrealist techniques and style — wispy striations of neon colors and the abstraction of space create a softened landscape with glowing orbs, evoking a dreamlike landscape. The childlike shapes generate a sense of familiarity and provide a safe space for meditateness.

Kathleen Fair MFA '83

Fair's drawings and lithographs are atmospheric and mystifying. With her refined graphite and printmaking techniques, she builds bold, dark layers to generate moody scenes of abandoned spaces. The lithograph *The Approach* (n.d.) depicts an enclosed space of what appears to be an empty pool. However, the space is not completely identifiable through the shadows and textures, which encapsulates a haunted feeling.

Ray Felix MFA '10 (b. 1968, Philadelphia, PA; Lives and works in Philadelphia, PA and in the Capital Region of New York)

Through his photography, Felix explores the deeply personal connections we share with physical spaces. Often visually cold and empty, his photographs often convey a sense of abandonment and solace. *Viewing Room 1* (2014) portrays the quintessential liminal space: an empty room stripped of any identity. The incandescent lighting illuminates the textural nature of the bare room's flooring, walls, and ceiling. The warm lighting and patterned wallpaper generate a feeling of comfort, and yet the emptiness of the space is unnerving as if the room itself could feel vulnerable. An open door on the right invites the viewer to venture into what may be an infinite loop of similar rooms.

Vlastislav Hofman (b. 1884, Jicin, Czechia; d. 1964, Prague, Czechia)

Hofman was a well-known architect, a prominent figure in the Czech avant-garde movement, and a self-taught artist influenced by Cubism who designed an extensive number of sets for theater productions. *Hamlet* (1926) details a stage design for William Shakespeare's best-known tragedy. Themes of life and death are reflected in the drawing's haunting spaces and the set's towering scale. As a stage design, it represents what is to be a simultaneously real and fictional space that invites us to contemplate our existence in its cold and brutal confines.

Thomas Kite MA '78 (Lives and works in La Conner, WA)

Kite's take on a self-portrait offers a highly textural surface with the rich black tones. The printed X-ray of his skull is an existential reminder of our core and being, acting as a memento mori. Within and around the skull shapes, textures and tones give way to weightless voids. The work is a reminder of the mortality that weighs on the mind but also offers meditative spaces that suggest the thought of death need not be so daunting.

Neal Slavin (b. 1941, Brooklyn, NY; Lives and works in New York, NY)

Slavin is a director and photographer known for his humanizing group portraits. *Cemetery Workers and Greens Attendants Union - Local 365 S.E.I.U. - A.F.L.-C.I.O. - Ridgewood, N.Y.* (1979) presents the idea of the inevitability of death in a matter-of-fact, even celebratory way, featuring an open grave with cemetery workers crowded around the frame in a welcoming manner. An abundance of flowers and the rich tones of Ektacolor further lighten the mood. The work in some ways invites the viewer to acknowledge and embrace our final resting places instead of fearing them.

Robert von Sternberg (b. 1939, Glendale, CA; Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

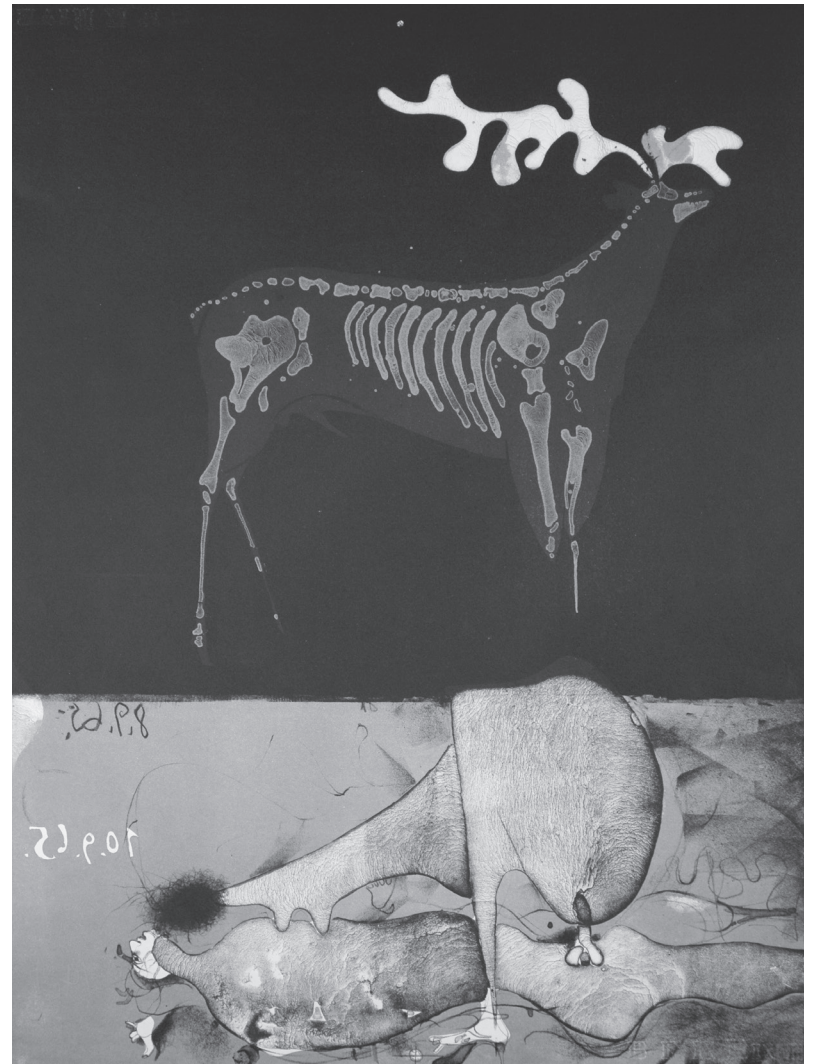
Von Sternberg's photographs reflect a subliminal approach to capturing odd and vacant spaces. His portfolio reflects what he captures via travel or commute. *Morning View Drive Window, Malibu* (2011) depicts a moody and illusive scene of a window in an unidentifiable space. The window panes are lit in bright white against an ambient red hue. The entire frame is curtained with a mesh-like texture, distorting and mystifying the environment. The lack of any figures or other context is unsettling.

Sandra Wimer MFA '90 (b. 1951, San Antonio, TX; Lives and works in Norman, OK)

Wimer's works explore the sky as a universal subject matter while also reflecting on childhood memories. She often experiments with old printing techniques, as in *Out of the Blue VI* (1999), which uses a photosensitive formula involving gum and ammonium dichromate on a lithography stone. An image of a cloudy sky and errant tree branches is interrupted at its center by the crosshairs of a camera lens and is obscured with handwritten text that creates a moiré pattern. This combination of visual forms creates a feeling of being surveilled in an innocent landscape.

Paul Wunderlich (b. 1927, Eberswalde, Germany; d. 2010, Saint-Pierre-de-Vassols, France)

Wunderlich was a German sculptor and painter who became established as an artist in the Magic Realism circle. His work often incorporated forms that were either sexual or fantastical. This composition features a skeletal deer looming over an amorphous figure. The deer's bones glow in teal against a stark black void. It seems to live deep in the woods or an unconscious psychological space. In either case, it inhabits a place that humans have yet to explore and suggests we have an incomplete knowledge of what lives among or within us.



Paul Wunderlich, *Untitled*, 1965

LIMINALITIES Exhibition Checklist



Elizabeth Blum

Against the Mighty Mite, 1997

Photographic print collage mounted on plexiglass
28 x 20 inches

Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, purchase of University at Albany, State University of New York

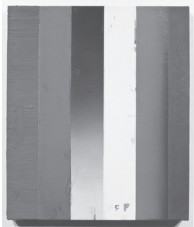


Kathleen Dagostino

After Miró The Farm, 1984

Etching on paper
16 ¼ x 19 ½ inches

Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of Robert Cartmell



Andrew Brischler

Fake Fuck With No Fangs, 2013

Oil, colored pencil and pencil on linen
20 x 17 inches

Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of David Hoberman



Kathleen Fair

The Approach, n.d.

Lithograph on paper, edition 2 of 8
22 x 17 inches

Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, gift of the artist



Colleen Cox

Waiting (Persephone), 2008

Chromira print on paper
24 x 19 inches

Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, purchase of University at Albany, State University of New York

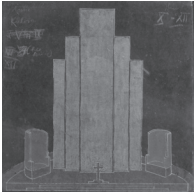


Ray Felix

Viewing Room 1, 2014

Archival pigment print
24 x 24 inches

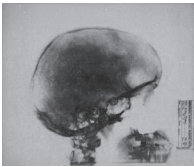
Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of the State of New York, purchase of University at Albany Alumni Association Dr. Arthur N. Collins '48 Purchase Award



Vlastislav Hofman

Hamlet, 1926
Crayon on paper
9 x 9 ½ inches

Collection of University Art Museum,
University at Albany, State University
of New York on behalf of The
University at Albany Foundation,
gift of Jarka and Grayce Burian



Thomas Kite

Untitled, n.d.
Photo etching on paper
10 x 12 inches

Collection of University Art Museum,
University at Albany, State University of
New York on behalf of The University at
Albany Foundation, gift of Robert Cartmell



Neal Slavin

*Cemetery Workers and Greens
Attendants Union - Local 365 S.E.I.U.
- A.F.L.-C.I.O. - Ridgewood, N.Y. from
Groups in America*, 1979
Contact print on Kodak Ektacolor 74
RC-N paper
10 x 10 inches

Collection of University Art Museum,
University at Albany, State University of
New York on behalf of The University at
Albany Foundation, gift of Stephen and
Linda Singer



Robert von Sternberg

Morning View Drive Window, Malibu, 2011
Archival inkjet print
11 x 16 ½ inches

Collection of University Art Museum,
University at Albany, State University of
New York on behalf of The University at
Albany Foundation, gift of the artist



Sandra Wimer

Out of the Blue VI, 1999
Digital lithograph on paper
8 ½ x 11 inches

Collection of University Art Museum,
University at Albany, State University of
New York on behalf of The University at
Albany Foundation, purchase of University
at Albany, State University of New York



Paul Wunderlich

Untitled, 1965
Lithograph on paper, edition 5 of 100
25 x 19 inches

Collection of University Art Museum,
University at Albany, State University
of New York on behalf of The University
at Albany Foundation, purchase of Art
Council

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1400 Washington Avenue

Albany, New York 12222

518-442-4035

www.albany.edu/museum

In 2018, with support provided by the Henry Luce Foundation American Art Program, the University Art Museum (UAM) opened the Collections Study Space, a multi-purpose space designed to safely house over 3,000 objects reflecting over 50 years of modern and contemporary art, and simultaneously make them accessible to students, faculty, other researchers and scholars, and the community. The works in the University at Albany Fine Art Collections can also be viewed in the online database at: universityartmuseum.org.

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