

# Nostalgia & OUTRAGE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

Mary Fortuna and Adrian Hatfield



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CURATED BY DICK GOODY

On Cover:

**ADRIAN HATFIELD**

*The Midnight Sun*, 2019

oil and acrylic on canvas

30 x 24 inches

# Nostalgia & OUTRAGE

“Nostalgia and outrage” is a state of mind. On the one hand, we long to bask in the memories of a gilded childhood. On the other, we see ourselves on a threshold, walking toward an unknowable, often alarming future. But, really, in all of this, how far do we ever stray from the path of our childhood? As Aristotle said: “Give me the child until he is seven and I will show you the foundation of the man.”

The title of this exhibition came after Mary Fortuna and Adrian Hatfield began discussing their past and current lives and approaches to making work. Pairing them ignited the mutual spark of their measured assessment of the world and their attitude towards greed, apathy, and absurdity in the face of the changing conditions in which they find themselves.

**MARY FORTUNA**, a longtime servant of the visual arts in Detroit, working as a curator and exhibition coordinator at the Paint Creek Center for the Arts, now lives and works in Traverse City. This has lent her the impetus to refocus on her own artistic practice. Throughout, she has always expressed her verbal distaste at the way the shortsightedness of big business has placed metaphysics and nature in peril as it impacts the natural world. Paradoxically, her work is more of a poetic celebration of nature and metaphysics than an outright florid attack on any particular improprieties of the industrial complex. One could say that her intellectual sense of injustice is moderated by her intuitive approach to making chiefly three-dimensional objects, which possess an affectionate folkloric, if sometimes ominous, edge. Deploying a diversity of compelling engagement strategies, her output encompasses an array of practices: small and large, soft and hard sculptures, tactile ephemera, masks, puppets, paintings, and collages. Her work never functions without impulse. When she was little, watching Captain Kangaroo on TV, glued to a segment on how to make a ukulele out of a large plastic dish soap bottle, her reactive response was to rush to the kitchen sink, drain a full bottle of dish soap, and create her very own instrument. Her work is a combination of an insistent feedback loop drawn from the world in which she finds herself, but it is simultaneously a balm to get her through to the next challenge. The result is deeply emotional work, which pulls adroitly on unsuspecting heartstrings.

**ADRIAN HATFIELD**, partially tempered by his role as a painting professor at Wayne State University, is no less equally galled and appalled. His work offers a stark contrast to Fortuna’s metaphysical leanings. In his paintings, slapstick characters

interlace with a subliminal atmospheric middle ground, operating against a cyclorama of unexpectedly vivid candy-pastel coloring. If Fortuna’s work invites a spectrum of sensations ranging from the whimsical to the sinister, Hatfield’s oeuvre is instantly provocative, withering, and ironic. As a child, encountering suffocated, expired deflated fish on a Florida dock, their workings instantly transfixed him. Revulsion was never a possibility; his clinical eye was and is determined to analyze and engender significance. Rather than being allusive, his calibrated, sequentially arranged images offer no respite. In his work, the Titanic will sink and the monster prevails because the catastrophe is the whole raison d’être, unfolding on an unavoidably candid grand scale.

Hatfield and Fortuna are confrontational and contrapuntal; their melodies are singular, yet in this exhibition they wind around one another and interlace only to break free towards their particular unique discourses. If the nostalgic, foreign countries of our childhoods have been tempered by overarching concerns about the future of the world and its ecosystems, they say we must act. Hence “Nostalgia & Outrage,” comedic, arch, and ironic, lends the viewer the gift of complicity; one can only experience these artworks in the context of one’s own melancholic longing and indignation.

Above all, immersion in these artists’ oeuvres moves us to sense the possibility of a veiled optimism in the face of the challenging array of life-changing social and environmental circumstances which surround us. They impart the knowledge that we are not alone in our universal outrage and nostalgia, that we could make the sacrifices that we need to foster a better, healing world. So often these contexts appear insurmountable, but here in Fortuna’s fetishistic flourishes and Hatfield’s hallucinatory harbingers, hope, humor, and despair are overlaid with their immersive, astute metaphysical buoyancy. ●

**DICK GOODY | NOVEMBER 2023**

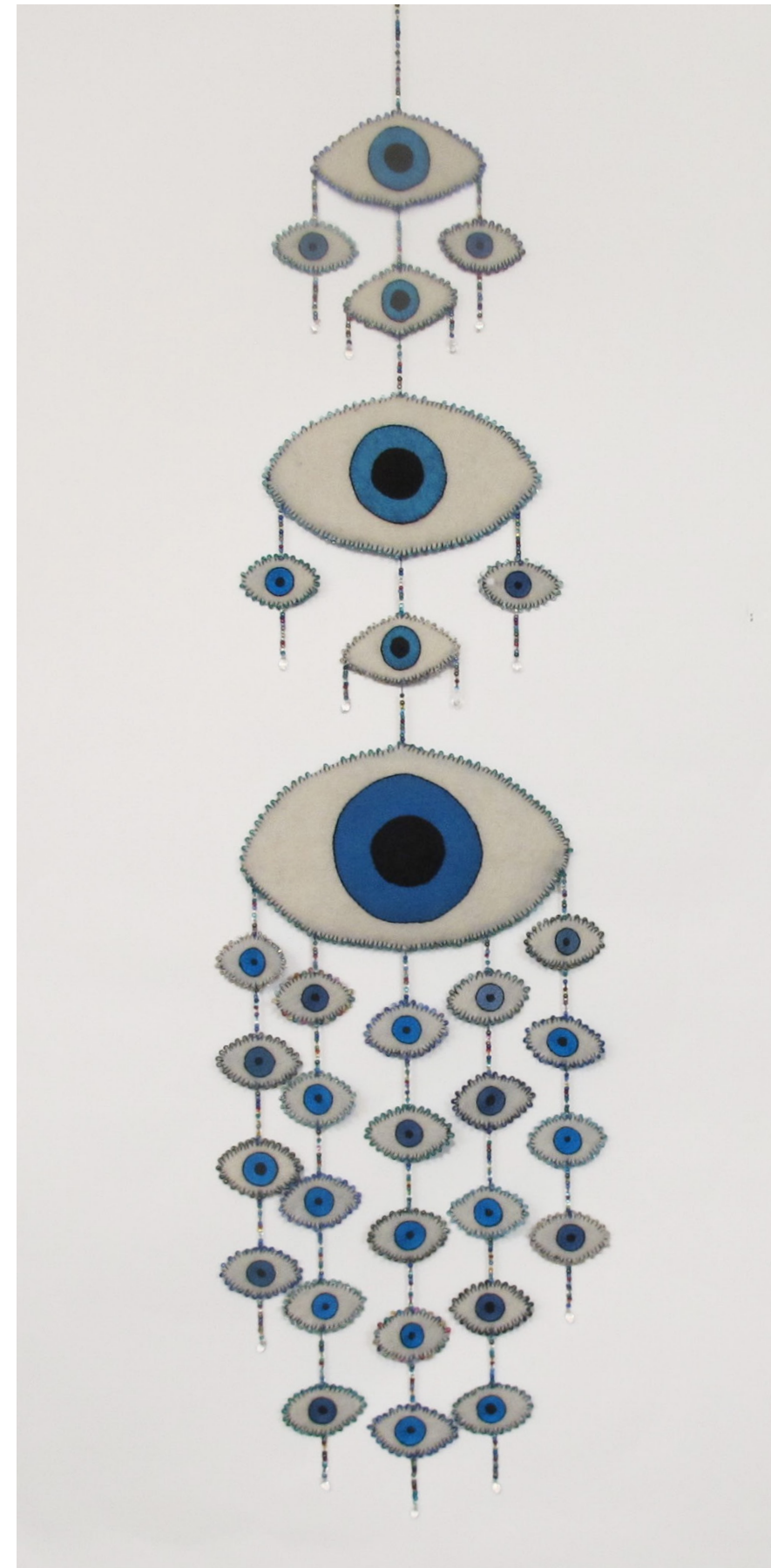
# MARY FORTUNA

*A Murder of Crows*, 2023  
wool felt, beads, branch  
35 x 39 x 7 inches





*Afronaut, after a painting by Peter Williams. In Loving memory*, 2021, soft sculpture, 12 inches high, private collection



*Amulet*, 2021, applique, embroidery, wool felt, beads, 46 x 12 inches



**Button Skull Mask**, 2021  
wool felt, buttons, embroidery  
11 x 8 inches



**Rabbit Mask**, 2021  
wool felt, embroidery  
18 x 10 x 5  
Collection of Dalia Reyes



**Deer Mask**, 2021  
papier mâché, twigs, acrylic  
12 x 8 x 5 inches  
Collection of Don Tuski



**Bear Mask**, 2021  
papier mâché and acrylic  
10 x 8 x 5 inches  
Collection of Dalia Reyes



*Snake Mask*, 2021, linen, buttons, beads, embroidery  
45 x 12 inches, Collection of Took Gallagher



*Lesser Demon*, 2023, soft sculpture — velvet, silk, beads  
20 x 7 x 3 inches



*Button Snake*, 2022, velvet, beads, buttons  
52 x 7 x 7 inches



*Cluster*, 2023, soft sculpture — velvet, beads  
25 x 6 x 3 inches



*Crow Hood Mask*, 2021, velvet, beads, embroidery, 13 x 9 x 11 inches



*Crows in the Orchard*, 2019, relief print, 24 x 18 inches



*Dark Garden*, 2021, embroidery on linen, 20 x 18 inches, Collection of Jon and Elizabeth Brent



*Emblem – Lotus*, 2016, velvet, silk applique, embroidery, 22 x 17 inches, Collection of Patrick and Paulette Brent



*Dream Snake*, 2023, linen applique on vintage quilt, beads, buttons, embroidery, 65 x 40 inches



*El Corazon*, 2023, velvet, silk applique on linen, beads, embroidery, 24 x 24 inches



**Ex Voto 1**, 2018, embroidery on six vintage handkerchiefs, 46 x 40 inches



**Ex Voto 3**, 2018, embroidery on six vintage handkerchiefs, 46 x 40 inches



**Ex Voto 2**, 2018, embroidery on six vintage handkerchiefs, 46 x 40 inches



**Ex Voto 4**, 2018, embroidery on six vintage handkerchiefs, 46 x 40 inches



*Ex Voto 5*, 2018, embroidery on six vintage handkerchiefs, 46 x 40 inches



*Ex Voto 6*, 2018, embroidery on six vintage handkerchiefs, 46 x 40 inches



*Let It Be*, 2018, embroidery on vintage textile, 15 x 11 inches, Collection of Ann Ameling



*Great Horned Owl Mask*, 2021, wool felt, embroidery, 12 x 10 inches



*Protection Flag*, 2023, linen, cotton applique, embroidery, 56 x 56 inches



*Spirit Voices*, 2017, applique, embroidery, beads on linen, 26 x 20 inches, Collection of Took Gallagher



*Swarm*, 2022, wool felt, beads, waxed fiber, bamboo, 48 x 12 x 12 inches, Collection of Bret Boulter



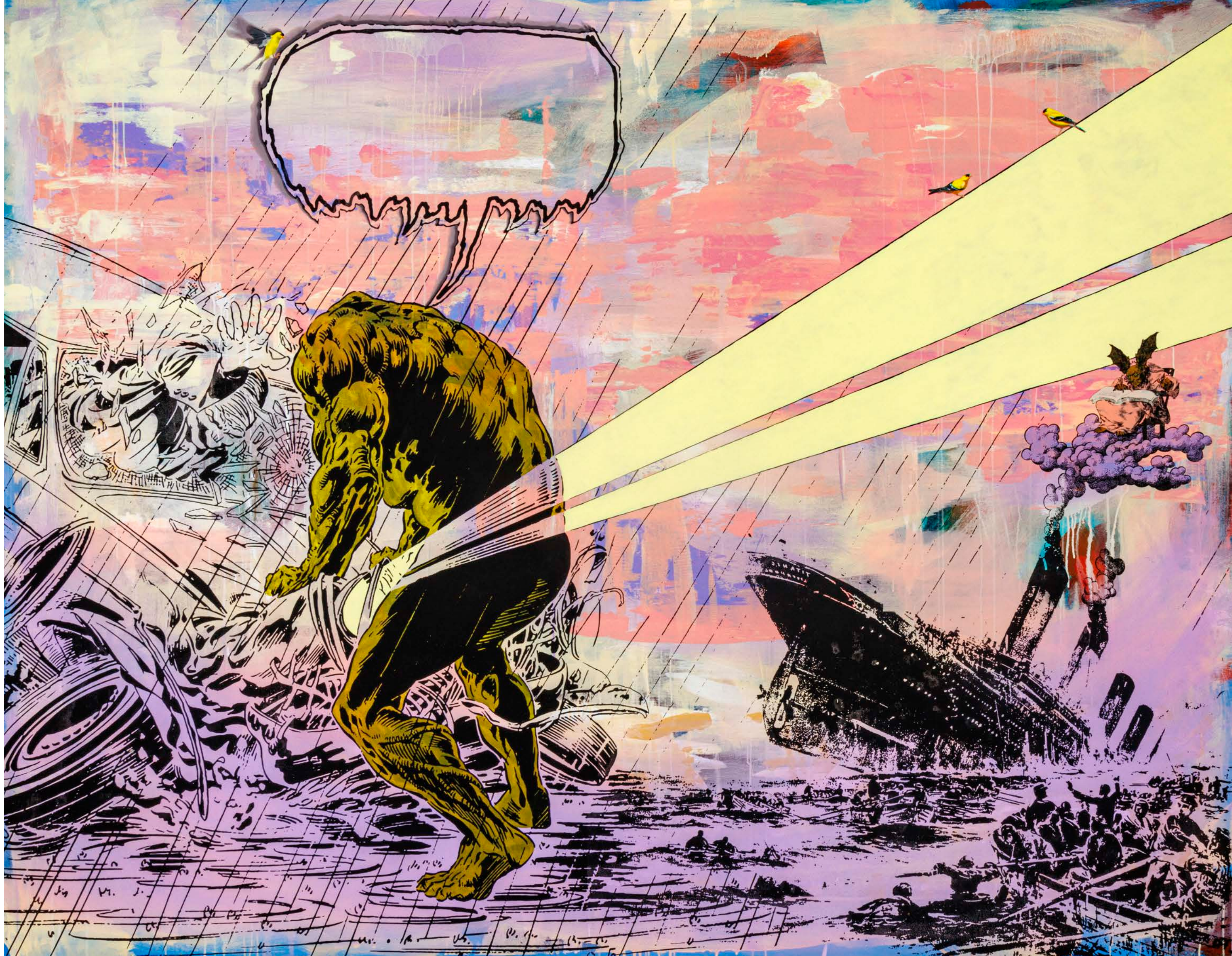
*Upsnake Downsnake*, 2021, applique, embroidery on vintage quilt fragments 16 x 7 inches, Collection of Took Gallagher



*The Void Mask*, 2021, linen, embroidery, beads, 13 x 11 x 11 inches

# ADRIAN HATFIELD

*Plotting happiness and flinging  
empty bottles, 2023*  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
84 x 108 inches





*The Shining City on the Hill*, 2023, oil and acrylic on canvas, 16 x 12 inches



*To arrive where we started*, 2023, oil and acrylic on linen, 22 x 16 inches



*Survivor's Guilt*, 2023, oil and acrylic on linen, 16 x 22 inches



*The Somnambulist*, 2023, oil and acrylic on linen, 16 x 22 inches



*Untitled*, 2021, oil and acrylic on canvas, 24 x 36 inches



*Teamwork makes the dream work*, 2022, oil and acrylic on linen, 60 x 84 inches



*Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72 inches



*If this isn't nice, what is?* 2018, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches



*Manifest Destiny: there ain't no party like a Donner Party*, 2020, oil and acrylic on canvas, 22 x 24 inches



*There will come soft rains*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches



*Probe 7, over and out*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



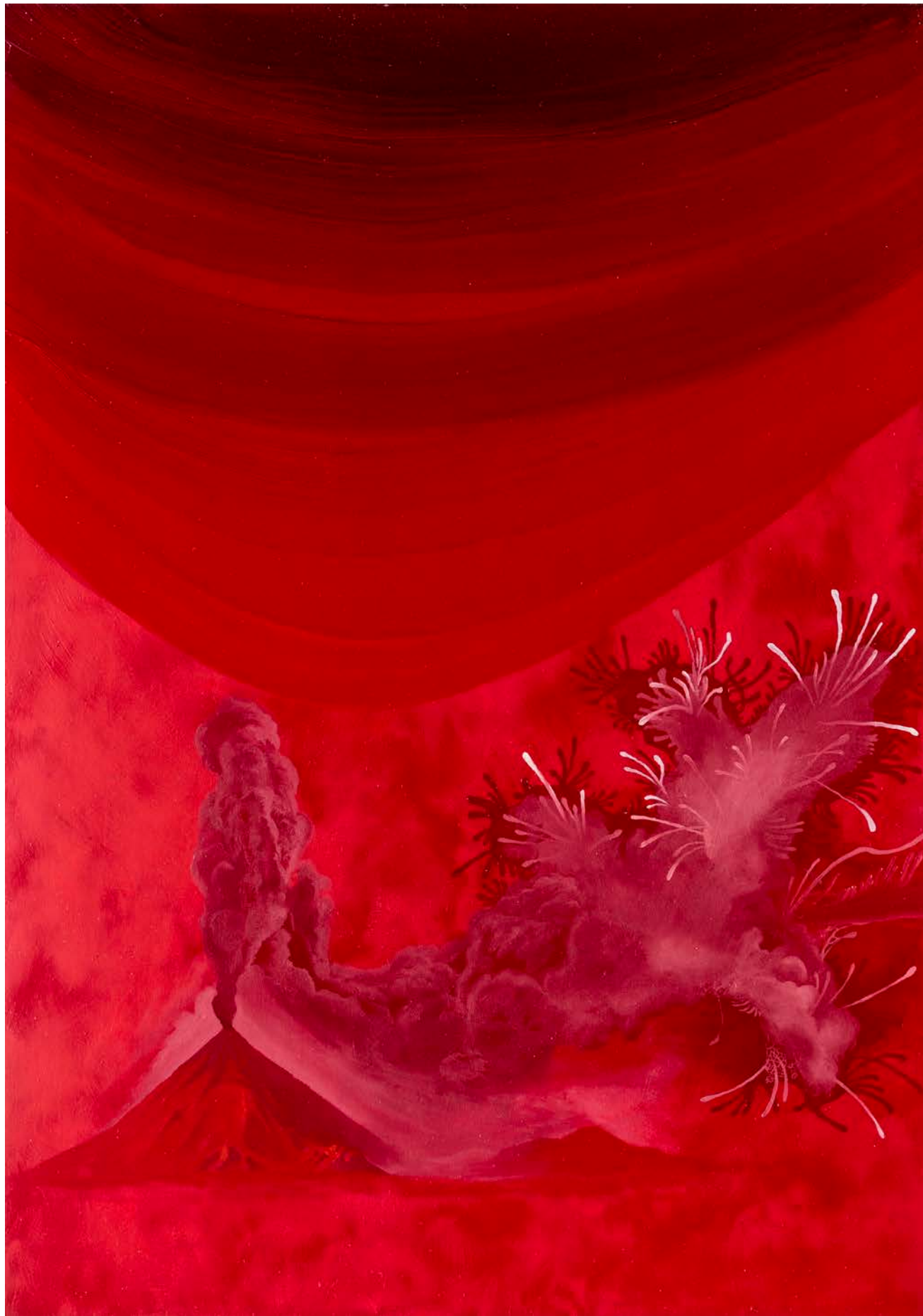
*The Shape of Things to Come*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches



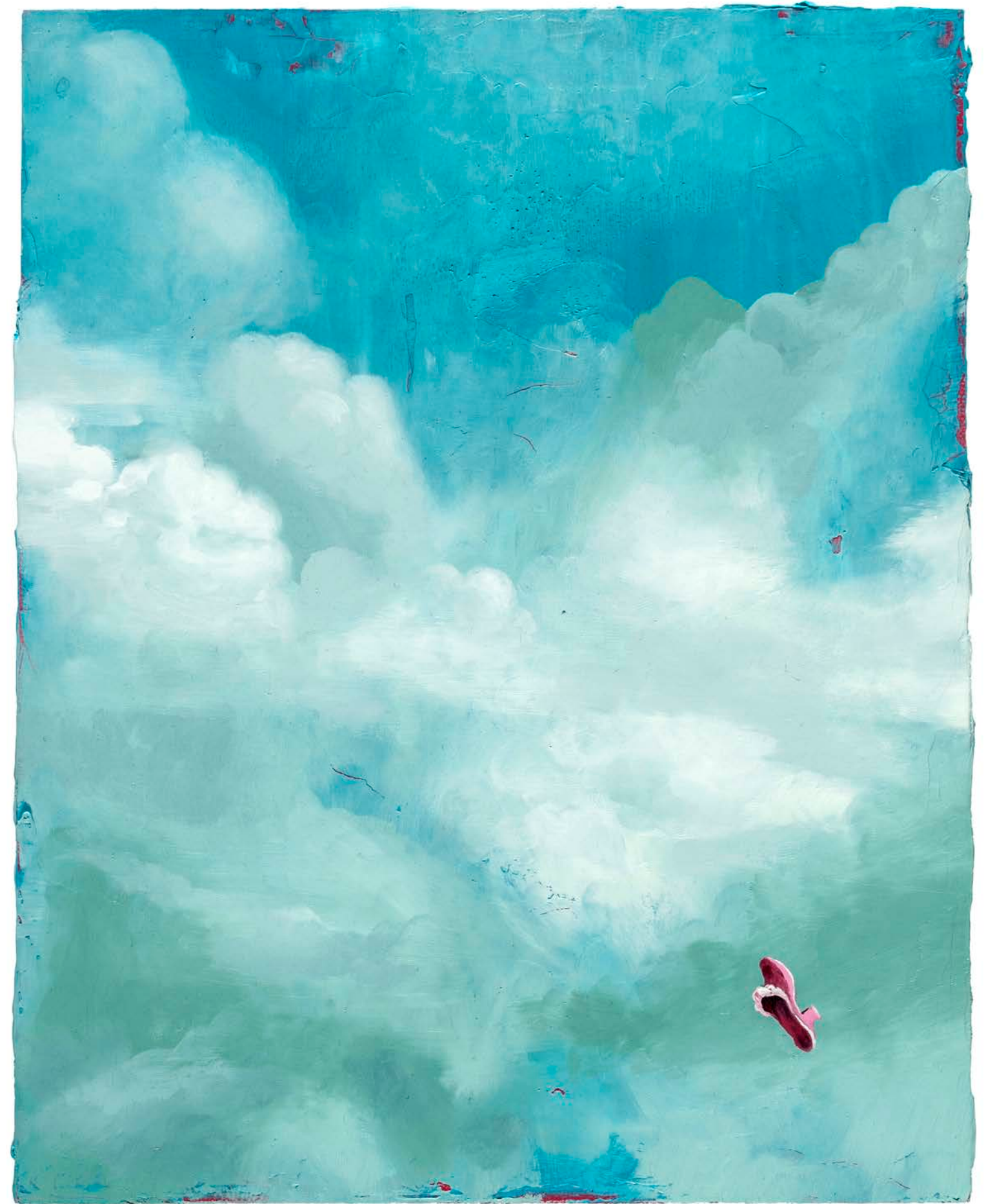
*After the Nightmare*, 2017, oil on panel, 14 x 11 inches



*Neither Grief Nor Malice*, 2017, oil on panel, 14 x 11 inches



*Svante's Dune*, 2016, oil on panel, 18 x 12 inches



*My Mother Lives in Hackensack*, 2016, oil on panel, 10 x 8 inches, private collection



*Sublime Detritus*, 2010, oil on panel, 60 x 42 inches, private collection



*Star of Bethlehem*, 2015, collage, 12 x 10 inches, private collection



*Methods of Contemplation and Deduction*, 2011, mixed media, dimensions variable



*King of the Impossible*, 2011, mixed media, 80 x 48 x 36 inches



**Adaptive Radiation**, 2015, collage, 28 x 20 inches



*The Morning After*, 2015, collage, 28 x 20 inches

# Nostalgia & OUTRAGE

## Mary Fortuna and Adrian Hatfield

Interview by Dick Goody

Dick Goody: What did you think you were going to do for a living when you were ten years old?

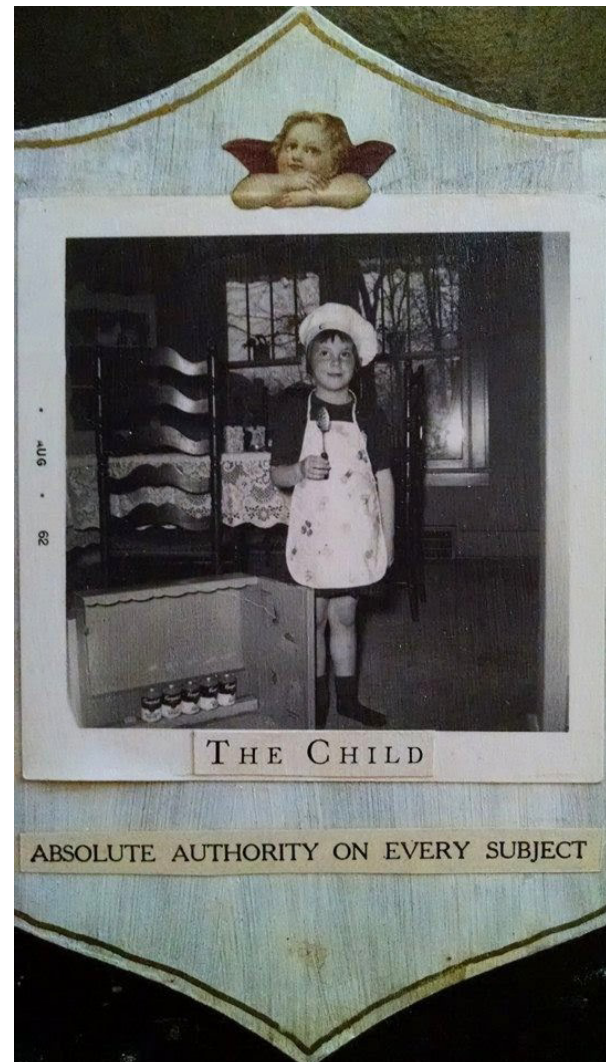
**Mary Fortuna:** I was going to be either a Catholic nun, or a cook, or a nurse.

Goody: What do these have in common?

**Fortuna:** Some element of nurturing. Some element of a kind of generosity. I was lucky enough to have known a couple of good Catholic nuns.

Goody: And you were a true believer?

**Fortuna:** I wasn't a true believer, but I was raised a good Catholic girl. We understood this as a kind of authority, but they could also be very nurturing people.



Mary Fortuna, *Aspiring Cook*, photograph, c. 1964

Goody: So, you knew these nuns?

**Fortuna:** I went to a Catholic school. You know, we had one who was actually like **"The Flying Nun."** I don't know if you remember that from TV. She was this cute little spritely woman, and she was always very enthusiastic, sweet, and she'd read to us all kinds of good stuff.

"The Flying Nun" was an American sitcom starring Sally Field as Sister Bertrille, a nun who could fly when the wind caught her winglike, nun's headgear. In doing so, she assisted in resolving any number of conundrums. This ABC TV series ran 82 episodes from 1967 to 1970.

Goody: And how about you, Adrian?

**Adrian Hatfield:** I was going to be a vertebrate paleontologist or a marine biologist.

**Fortuna:** That's pretty specific. That's so perfect.

**Hatfield:** My parents, both being scientists, got me really interested in the natural world. Like a lot of kids, I was obsessed with dinosaurs. We spent a lot of time fossil hunting and doing science stuff. The ocean provided a sense of wonder that seemed to encapsulate the mystery and sense of wonder that my parents instilled in me. We camped for a couple weeks every summer. We went all over the state.

Goody: There are commonalities with both of you, aspects that overlap, for instance, you're both interested in natural history. You're both at times irreverent, and you're both a bit fetishistic with your motifs. What other concerns do you think you share?

**Fortuna:** We both have a sense of humor and we're both anxious or pissed off about the state of the world. We share cultural and environmental concerns. We can both be easily tipped into the rage side of things.

**Hatfield:** It's true.

**Fortuna:** A lot of art historical references show up. We're sort of pinging all over the place.

**Hatfield:** I think we both use storytelling or narrative as a hook. We both use archetypal characters in our work.

**Fortuna:** We do. Talking about what we'd be when we were little, I will say I was always into making stuff. I didn't say, "I'm going to be an artist when I grow up". I just kind of was an artist, but it wasn't what I thought about as what one aspires to do.

Goody: Did you think you'd be an artist, Adrian?

**Hatfield:** I was drawing a lot. Growing up in Toledo, Ohio, the ocean and ocean creatures were kind of like these mythical things that I'd never seen in real life. But my grandfather had a house, on the water in St. Petersburg, Florida. I used to go down there and hang out with his next-door neighbor who was always fishing on the dock. She had no respect for life, but if she caught something that she thought I would find interesting, she would put it out in the sun to dry until I got there. I would come out to the dock sometimes and there would be a dried-up octopus or a stingray. She kind of considered stingrays evil because they stung people, so there would be this stingray upside down on the dock with a brick on top of it. She collected weird stuff to show me. There were all these creatures that had been kind of mythical, waiting for me on the dock.



Adrian Hatfield, *Fishing St. Petersburg, FL*, photograph, c.1977

Goody: Kind of pathological.

**Fortuna:** Borderline insane!

Goody: When you were growing up, were you somewhat antisocial because you were so engaged in the private activity of making work?

**Fortuna:** I very much was. I was the first to want to be off by myself, doing my things.

Goody: Were people or your parents concerned that you were too self-absorbed?

**Fortuna:** No. I mean, they were concerned that I was a crybaby and a brat.

**Hatfield:** I wasn't anti-social. I liked to draw and I liked doing solitary things, but generally, I was also a social kid.

Goody: You both have a lot of archive elements in your work. Can you talk about in what physical realm these exist? For example, are they objects in a box, data in a computer file, or are they transcendent things in your mind's eye?

**Fortuna:** All of the above. I definitely fetishize objects, so it's archival stuff. I could be a serious hoarder if I'm not careful. I like to have fabrics and textiles and shells and beads and buttons and whatever, around me. My brain is just like that too. I have a rotating, rambling collection of crazy images in my head always, which I can access whenever I need it, both in the imaginary and in the physical realm. The detritus of the world kind of becomes material for me.

Goody: And you, Adrian?

**Hatfield:** I have a very organized encyclopedia of images that I collect on my computer. I have a lot of images relating to pop culture, illustration, and art history. They're collage elements. It's not just about breaking down the hierarchy of images, it's also about trying to use different kinds of images like a Rosetta Stone to translate art historical elements that people might not at first understand.

Goody: In some ways, an archive is a reliquary. These objects become somewhat sanctified. I think it's a generational thing because people brought up in the digital realm have maybe less connection to physical objects.

**Hatfield:** I agree. For instance, I might use part of a Frederic Edwin Church painting. An art historian or somebody who studied art history would know that there was a conversation in those paintings about the natural world versus human activity. Someone else might understand that the **"Swamp Thing"** is also about that interaction between humans and the natural world.

Goody: How did you first encounter the Swamp Thing?

In what incarnation was it? Did you have an emotional connection with it/him?

**Hatfield:** I was introduced to the "Swamp Thing" around age 5 through comic books that were down at the barber shop where my dad took me to get my hair cut. They had this pile of old comics that had each been read hundreds of times by countless kids. The "Swamp Thing" had these great horror-noir illustrations done by a guy named Bernie Wrightson. The story was about a scientist working in a secret lab in the Louisiana bayou who was trying to create a super-fertilizer formula to solve the world's hunger problem. Things went



Cover of *Swamp Thing #9* (March-April 1974), art by Bernie Wrightson, DC Comics.

sideways, and he was doused in his formula and set on fire. He jumped into the swamp to put the fire out, and the formula reacted with the organic matter in the swamp to turn him into the Swamp Thing. As a kid, it had everything: monsters, science, mystery and fantastic art. He was a tragic figure who had lost his humanity, but was working to protect the swamp/environment, usually through vanquishing other monsters. I definitely felt a connection with him. He was much cooler to me as a kid than your standard super-heroes.

Goody: What's your definition of community in the context of art making?

**Fortuna:** I was so involved for so many years. Since I moved to the woods seven years ago, I haven't even thought about it. I turned into a little old lady who sits around and makes flowers, bugs, and snakes.

**Hatfield:** I'm in the opposite space right now, where I'm very hungry for that interaction. I love that we're doing this show together. As a teacher, I feel like I have such a responsibility to all the painting and drawing majors. I spend so much time talking with artists who are at that stage of getting started and figuring out who's serious about it. I feel very energized by all those interactions.

**Fortuna:** I was completely immersed. I did my time going to openings and gallery talks, and that kind of stuff, but then suddenly, I could not wait to get out of town.

**LYNN AVADENKA**  
b. Pontiac, Michigan, 1955

Avadenka is the Director of Signal Return, "a Detroit nonprofit dedicated to preserving and teaching traditional letterpress printing, and building a community center for art, craft, design and collaboration." Absorbed by the book format and the arcane epistemology of text, her artwork ruminates upon the aesthetic and metaphysical possibilities of image, the manuscript, text, and printing. Avadenka was in the OU Art Gallery exhibition *The Art of the Artist's Book* in 2010.

Goody: Let's look at this as a lifelong question. Who from your community has had a lot of impact on your work?

**Fortuna:** Lynn Avadenka.

She continues to have an impact. She is sort of a typographer/printmaker. She now runs Signal Return. I was asked to participate in a project called "On Press: Prints for Non-Profits." They paired artists, whether they had a

printmaking background or not, with community organizations. They paid a decent stipend to make a print. The sale of it would support nonprofit organizations. I made a crow in an orchard. The impact of this project continues to resonate with me. In my case, it supported the Detroit Food Academy. They train kids in schools to have careers in the food industry. The Detroit Institute of Arts bought the whole collection of prints which means I have a print in the museum collection. Lynn was always nurturing and very supportive very early on. Like, when we were forming a co-op down on Grand River

in the early 1990s, she was one of the people attending meetings with us, giving us a bit of guidance. Vince Carducci has also always been very supportive. **Gilda Snowden** was a massive presence. I'm going get all choked up. Gilda was hugely supportive to me and every young artist in town. Whoever met her, got something from Gilda. She was an extremely generous spirit. Dennis Narocki was very supportive – Michelle Perron – Valerie Parks.

Goody: Tell me about your work *Afronaut After a Painting by Peter Williams* in Loving Memory, 2021.

**Fortuna:** The *Afronaut* piece was made as a gift for Peter Williams, and as an homage of sorts. For the last few years before he died, Peter seemed to be in a period of furious production with his paintings. They got more and more beautiful and challenging and just plain weird, more and more powerful. He started sharing progress photos of his *Afronaut*. I fell in love with the character and asked his permission to make a doll from the image. He agreed, and I managed to send it to him within the last couple of months before he died. He

said he loved it. It's one of my favorite things I've made in recent years.



Mary Fortuna, *Crows in the Orchard*, 2019, relief print, 24 x 18 inches

**GILDA SNOWDEN**  
b. Detroit, Michigan, 1954 – d. Detroit, 2014

A Detroit artistic icon, teacher, mentor, mother, and wife, Snowden created color-soaked, painterly abstractions infused with passion for her community and the city that she loved. Snowden had a solo exhibition at the OU Art Gallery in 2013.

**PETER WILLIAMS**  
b. Nyack, New York, 1952 – d. Wilmington, Delaware 2021

Williams was a painting professor at the University of Delaware. In exhibitions in New York and Los Angeles, his painting captured the humor and horror of the personal experience of living as a black man in 21st century America. Williams had a solo exhibition at the OU Art Gallery in 2000.



Mary Fortuna, *Afronaut After a Painting by Peter Williams in Loving Memory*, 2021, soft sculpture, 12 inches high, private collection

Goody (to Hatfield): Have any Detroit-centric people impacted your work?

**Hatfield:** I think about the real journey-people: I consider Mary to be one of them. **Clinton Snider** falls under the same category. There are lots of new artists I've become aware of like, **Rashaun Rucker** and a young painter named Bakpak Durden.

**RASHAUN RUCKER**  
b. 1978, Winston-Salem, NC

Rucker is a current Gilbert Fellow pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at Cranbrook Academy of Art. A skilled draughtsman, Rucker uses figurative drawing, printmaking, and photography to morph images into polemical forms, drawing us towards the struggle against inequality and racism.

**CLINTON SNIDER**  
b. 1969

Snider is a Detroit-based painter and multimedia artist whose work explores the transformation and detritus of landscape, particularly as it pertains to capturing to the ups and downs of a city like Detroit. Snider was in the OU Art Gallery exhibition *Who Were They Then* in 2018.

Goody: In what ways have they had an impact?

**Hatfield:** They remind me why I love art and why I chose to be an artist. The artists that really stop me in my tracks tend to be people who pair a strong commitment to, and love for their craft with a sincere passion for their subject matter. They also commonly take an unusual approach to their work. My first response to initially encountering the work is often being struck by how it doesn't neatly fit into a category. When I first saw Rashaun's drawings of human/pigeon hybrids, they struck me as absurd, but they were created with such love. Both the care and the absurdity kept me interested and I ended up spending almost an hour in the gallery, going back to each piece and reading his artist statement.

Goody: When I asked you individually if you wanted to do a show together, Adrian replied, "I'd love that. I just saw her in a group show at The Scarab Club and she was my favorite artist" And Mary said, "Adrian is one of my favorite Detroit artists." This mutual admiration is very affirming. What is it about each other's work that fosters these feelings?

**Fortuna:** Adrian's paintings always have some focal point, or something going on, that draws me in. I could stand there for an hour and just keep looking and looking and looking. I get completely absorbed and everything else shuts down and it's just me with this painting. I remember I called your paintings cosmic, apocalyptic dinosaur paintings.

Goody: They are certainly labyrinthian.

**Fortuna:** Yes, and there's always this formal rigor with a larger view of art history that keeps them grounded and not just flying off into the realm of pop. They're substantive.

Goody: Adrian; you collect Mary's work. What draws you to her pieces?

**Hatfield:** I love the element of fairy tales and fables in the work. Old world style stories, not the contemporary versions, sanitized by Disney because they think kids are more fragile than they are. There is vulnerability and threat in her creations.

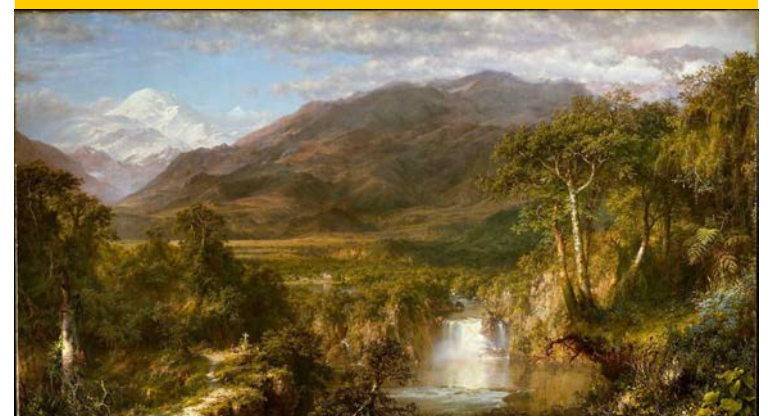
Goody: Go back as far as you like, any place on the planet Earth, what's your favorite exhibition you've seen and why?

**Hatfield:** The first time I saw **Frederic Church's**, *Heart of the Andes* at the Met, I just started weeping. I had admired his paintings in books. I studied them. And so conceptually, I was interested in them, but seeing that painting, it was 10 feet wide! Looking at it up close – a six inch by six inch section, I'm like, "Man, if I did that, just in terms of accomplishment – like mastery of the medium – I could die.

**FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH**

b. 1826, Hartford, CT – d. 1900, New York, NY

A member of the Hudson River School, whose members favored vistas of the steadily vanishing American wilderness, Church was one of the principal landscape painters of the 19th century. His exquisitely rendered panoramas, known for their embodiment of the sublime, captured the grandeur of nature largely unencumbered by human activity, in spellbinding dramatic light, most notably at sunset.



Frederic Edwin Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, oil on canvas, 66 x 119 inches

Goody: What was it about the subject matter that made you weep?

**Hatfield:** That's hard to pin down. Part of it was just the artistic accomplishment. I always tell overly cautious students "Just go for it. There is no perfect painting", but in my head the rest of that sentence is except the *Heart of the Andes*. It's a perfect bullseye both technically and conceptually. That's the easy part to explain. The other, and perhaps more powerful part is just how humans respond to beautiful, transcendent art. It's like weeping at an exceptional opera aria, even when you can't understand the words.

Goody: It's so weird that Church was working at roughly the same time as the Impressionists. It's such a calculated way of painting compared to what they were doing. It's like America being progressive and conservative at the same time...

**Fortuna:** I stumbled onto a show of **Christian Boltanski** once at MCA in Chicago. I'd never heard anything about him. It devastated me, unglued everything in me. And I think it was on the same trip, I saw **Annette Messenger**, his wife, who had an exhibition at the Art Institute. So, I was kind of getting socked in the head by the two of them. I've never gotten over either of them.

**ANNETTE MESSENGER**  
b. Berck, France, 1943

Messenger's work operates in the realm of upending male privilege. Ritualizing the process in sculpture and installations, her practice embraces a variety of unexpected techniques and materials in the refinement of her quest for a woman's authentic identity and standing.

Messenger and Christian Boltanski were life partners until his death in 2021.

Goody: What was it about them that drew you in?

**Fortuna:** First of all, it was darkened galleries of little ghostly metal cutouts, hung on wires over flickering candles... puddles of melted candle wax on the floor, shooting shadows onto the walls.

Goody: Very visceral.

**Fortuna:** Oh God. It was... I'm feeling it right now. Right in the core. And, Annette too. Like, she had this way of just being sloppy, weird, and precise at the same time, like making collections of, of bodily organs all strung together with weird stuff hanging off them. And I don't know, the two of them are sort of aggressively weird and spooky. Boltanski especially. I also saw **Martin Puryear's** work at the MCA. I walked in and was like, "Where did I just land? What planet am I on?" He remains one of the most important artists in the world to me.

**Hatfield:** Having mentioned Frederick Church, I also love **Julie Mehretu** for exactly the same reason. It's their sublimity by capturing such immense subject matter. They refuse to accept the limitations of painting and they're pushing it as far as possible. So, theoretically, it's impossible to actually capture the sublime in a painting. Even if they fail, they create these beautiful things in the process.

**JULIE MEHRETU**  
b. 1970, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mehretu's panoramic paintings capture aspects global sociopolitical and urban life drawn from a variety of visual data: plans, climate diagrams, arena schemas, and bunting. Her graphic-oriented representations use complex schematics, involving intersecting linear perspective, latitudinal arcs, and ellipses lending them their dynamic whirlwind effect.

**CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI**  
b. Paris, France, 1944 – d. Paris, France, 2021

Boltanski, who was a photographer, painter, sculptor, and film maker, said of his oeuvre: "My work is about the fact of dying, but it's not about the Holocaust itself." A contemplation of suffering, his work utilized materiality and scale to give life to the lost, repurposing the intimacy of once worn items, photos, and other corporeal signifiers.

Goody: How does your biography play a role in your work? I mean some people consciously use their biography to conjure whatever it is they're doing. Some people might have a sort of a parallel thing and it isn't so conscious.

**Fortuna:** I don't know if I'm deliberately drawing on biography, but I feel like I can't escape who I am and who I've been since I was a little kid. The year that they invented **pantyhose**, I sat there with my doll and I spent three weeks doing whatever I needed to do to make a fair pair of pantyhose for my doll. Do you have any idea how hard that was? If I could achieve that by the end of the summer, that was all the summer I needed. To make a pair of goddamn pantyhose for a doll this big (indicates 4 inches). They looked like crap, but they held together and they were on her and they

didn't fall off. And it's like, "I did that". Once I saw **Captain Kangaroo** make a little ukulele or something out of an empty dish detergent bottle. And I went and dumped out

my mom's dish detergent in the sink and rinsed out the bottle. There I was hammering nails into a plastic bottle to make this ukulele. Like, "What are you doing?" If anybody had seen me, they would've had to stop me.

Goody: It's important for people to hear that because when you're young, you think that you have to change because the world is not as you want it to be. It's so beautiful to hear that you can continue to find joy without having to conform.

**Fortuna:** My parents were smart enough not to stop me.

Pantyhose (a portmanteau of panties and hose) was first introduced to the marketplace in 1959 as "Panti-Legs." Pantyhose became a trademark name in 1974, made of manmade fiber such as spandex (polyether-polyurea copolymer).

Captain Kangaroo was a weekday American morning children's comedy TV show starring Bob Keeshan, running 1955 to 1984.

Goody: What about you, Adrian?

**Hatfield:** I'm not in my work like that. I'm kind of obsessed with objectivity. I am very fact based. I think one thing that drives my work is a level of disbelief and outrage that we as a society have not made very clear common-sense choices over the last decades to put ourselves in a better place. There was this philosophy that I was brought up with but the fact is the world doesn't operate based on it. There's some level of outrage that I feel is devastating.

Goody: Would you say that there's a resurgence in themes of natural history or nature in contemporary art because of this outrage?

**Fortuna:** I see it.

**Hatfield:** Definitely.

**Fortuna:** At least in the contemporary art that I pay attention to, I ignore things that annoy me.

Goody: Nature has always been part of art history, but it sort of disappeared during Modernism. It has returned in response to what is happening on the planet. It's gone from nostalgia to outrage.

**Fortuna:** Nostalgia and outrage might be the basis of my whole world philosophy.

Goody: I'm sensing an exhibition title here.

**Hatfield:** Yeah. That's good.

**Fortuna:** We're grasping at straws... Like, "You better enjoy nature because it may not be here much longer..."

**Hatfield:** My sense is that environmental concerns are driving the discourse. It's interesting because I feel like I've been doing work on this subject for more than 20 years. I mean, it's evolved, but now I see a lot more. I used to feel like I was kind of alone.

Goody: In what way does what you do to earn a living influence your work?

**Fortuna:** I've always felt like I'm going to do this, whatever I have to do in the meantime. I was fortunate enough to have a job as exhibitions coordinator at Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester for a while where I was sort of in the art world and exposed to it all the time. I'm sort of grateful to have a job now where I can put some creativity into it. I'm a baker. I wouldn't call myself a pastry chef. That's a little beyond my ability, but I am a baker, and there is creativity in that. I think one thing that's appealing about it: it allows my mind to be free to wander around and, you know, go where it wants to go. That's like the most essential part of my work is my brain just being on sort of overdrive, you know, looking at images.

Goody: So, in fact, it's quite a positive thing. I mean, it's woven into the fabric of your life.

**Hatfield:** After teaching, I look forward to the summer, although the summer break isn't a break. It is when I can finally get back into the studio.

Goody: What do you think are the chief doctrines of a painter working in the third decade of the 20th century? Is anything prescribed or is it a free for all? What do you tell your students?

**Hatfield:** I think it's a free for all. What I tell my students is to take responsibility for their choices. When I start teaching Painting I, it is a skill building class. It's very traditional: representational painting from observation. Then in Painting II, I continue those lessons to a much lesser degree with the clear message that there are a lot of ways to paint. If you paint like Rembrandt, it's one thing; if you make a Pollock drip, it means something entirely different. I tell them to think about why they're making the choices they're making and how that affects the meaning of their work.

Goody: Mary, as a multidisciplinary artist, what gets you started? Is it an idea or a particular material?

**Fortuna:** It's both. I will say that my favorite state of mind, and this happens more often than I think about consciously, I'll wake up in the morning and I will have an idea concrete and fully formed in my head. I will have this image of something I can make, and I'll start making it in my head. I will understand it almost as I'm apprehending it. If I can get started on that right away. I leave myself very open and unbound by rules. I have the great luck to not be a trained fiber artist. I've taught myself by figuring things out. I had a dream 30 years ago of a snake-form in a particular way. I've tried to get at it a couple of times and I've never quite gotten there, but I'm going to have to try some version of that for this show.

Goody: I wonder what would happen if you had ten people working for you?

**Fortuna:** It would drive me insane. If I have to train one more new baker at work how to scoop cookies and place them on a goddamn tray!

Goody: Yeah. HR can be a drag. Adrian, how do you handle being in a constant state of outrage?

**Hatfield:** I'm not the crazy guy on the corner screaming, "The End is Nigh!", but the outrage is there. I remember specifically in 1978 when I read about burning fossil fuels causing climate change for the first time. I asked my dad about it and he went on to explain like, "Oh, yeah, you know, that is what's happening. It could definitely lead to mass extinction", but this is where the optimism comes in, he said, "but the world's governments are aware of this and everyone's working to develop solutions." There was a real point of disbelief in the late nineties, where I'm like, "We're really not going to

address this the way we were saying”. Reading about all these predictions, I never thought they would happen. Then, seeing them actually unfold in real time is unbelievably surreal and outrageous. I never thought I would live to see these wildfires and the sea level rise.

Goody: So how do you deal with it specifically?

**Hatfield:** By using cartoony and satirical elements, I can address these catastrophes. They’re like an oven mitt that lets me touch this alarming subject matter. It’s more important to me that the imagery be seductive to draw the viewer directly to what’s at stake.

Goody: Mary, your work is a visual manifestation, but at the same time it exudes magical properties. How is the visual form informed by its metaphysical qualities?

**Fortuna:** Physical objects have always carried magical properties since the dawn of humanity. As often as we were picking up weapons, we were picking up ritual objects; sometimes they were the same thing. One of the oldest things we’ve done was to put our hands on something and evoke the magic of the universe. It takes me back to being a kid. Sitting and reading my mom’s copy of Pinocchio with these fantastic illustrations. Images are hugely powerful for me. As is handling objects. Things get weighted with a sort of magic or folklore or whatever that is. I’m an intuitive crow. I’m constantly amassing and gathering, whether it’s mental images or pictures from the internet. It’s almost turmoil until I can sit down and turn them into physical things.

Goody: I sense there’s no separation there.

**Fortuna:** I can’t take them apart.

**Hatfield:** That’s interesting. I was reading recently about the difference between an amulet, a charm, and a talisman. It’s like an amulet is for good luck. A charm is to bring a particular positive quality and a talisman evokes protection. It’s funny, like, that’s such an art historical way to talk about it because when you make your things, it’s not like, “Well, this one’s going to be an amulet!” It’s much more visceral. Your process imbues it with the magic.

**Fortuna:** It’s totally instinctive. I’m not a careful enough researcher to separate myself from what I’m looking at, but if I’m going to grapple with something serious, I’m going to read and absorb and understand as much as I can about it. I think it’s all sort of wound up in a ball for me. And, you know, I recognize that I’m a weird aging white lady in the North, but it’s not like I’m holding rituals.

Goody: When Adrian was talking about his protective oven gloves, it shows that artists probably use these tropes to insulate themselves. For example, Adrian, the backgrounds in your work evoke a pleasant candy soft niceness, which

is in contrast to the work’s stark messaging. Is this to lure the viewer?

**Hatfield:** Definitely.

Goody: There’s a certain glee in that.

**Hatfield:** It mirrors the way I deal with the subject matter. I can’t walk around being in despair all the time. It’s definitely a hook for the viewer, a way to lure someone in. People innately respond to the graphic imagery and the pastel colors. It’s an antidote to misery.

Goody: When you collage the work of artists like Goya, Aubrey Beardsley, and cartoon characters like **Alfred E. Newman**, in your paintings, you are channeling atrocities, decadence and idiotic invulnerability. This kind of appropriation creates an immediate shortcut to your polemic agenda. What is the process of you becoming comfy and snug with these iconic visual devices, which could become overbearing?

Alfred E. Newman is the iconic, fictitious surrogate representative character of MAD magazine. Debuting in the magazine in 1954, his original image first appeared in advert for the play *The New Boy* which made its Broadway debut in 1894.



*The New Boy*, newspaper illustration, 1894

**Hatfield:** They’re definitely overbearing but they’re elements of humanity or the people that I am satirizing. I’m satirizing the stupidity of the human collective.

Goody: Using these elements, which channel existential angst, what are you actually satirizing?

**Hatfield:** The human condition, by which I mean our inability to take on the serious challenges that face us. I like to build these colleges before I burn them to a screen. It’s a process of addition and subtraction.

Goody: Oh, so they’re silkscreened?

**Hatfield:** Yes: screened onto the canvas. I am putting things in and pulling things back. I try to avoid specifics.

Goody: Is it a logical or emotional process?

**Hatfield:** It is definitely intuitive and emotional initially, then I step back and think about the images I have forced together, and how they are interacting. I make some edits, and then come back later and take another intuitive run at it.

Goody: Mary, you use certain iconic images. For example, hands, lotus flowers, Mount Fuji, and other Eastern signs. You also use crucifixes, snakes and moons. Are these loaded forms, religious or secular?

And what kind of effect happens when you mingle them together?

**Fortuna:** I don’t use them in a religious way. I respond to them graphically first as compositional elements or just motifs to play with.

I think of **Jane Hammond** and I think of the way she uses images: she’ll take images like a loaded gun and use them as just another piece on the monopoly board. I love that she deals

with things and strips them of their importance. I don’t necessarily do that, but I understand what she’s doing there. I feel like the universe is so vast that if you keep stepping back and stepping back and stepping back, it’s all the same goddamn river.

Goody: We’re talking about cultural icons. You’re both using them. We tell students not to do pictures of graveyards, kittens, clowns, sunsets, or boats in a harbor. So how do you appropriate something that might be considered to be banal or cliché? It’s a problem for every artist, especially in a culture that’s so mired in visual density.

**Fortuna:** I make it visually interesting for myself. It’s about directness. It’s got to be fun to make. If it’s too torturous, I’m just going set it aside and never get beyond it. I want to get rid of hierarchies and distinctions. For me everything has to be universal.

**Hatfield:** Images are like corpses I’m reanimating to do my bidding.

**Fortuna:** Dude!

**Hatfield:** I’m not going use something that’s still alive. I’m not going to go and get a comic book that was published this month, I’m going to pull something from 50 years ago.

Goody: *Nostalgia* and Outrage.

**Hatfield:** That’s one of the reasons that I wouldn’t use a political cartoon. I wouldn’t use, a Donald Trump: it would be too immediate, but if you have someone like Goya... it’s solidified. So, for example, if I can take that image and reanimate it, it transforms into something else.

**Fortuna:** Like the snake, for instance, is something that appears with varied meanings and varied complexities. There is not a culture in the world that has not made it a critically important image, whether it’s the source of life, a pathway to eternity, or whether it’s, like, “huge danger” and “stay away from this”. It is massively important in every culture that has ever made images or objects. For this reason, it feels like it can belong to me. I do it in my own way and use my own language to address it. These animals have become universal symbols which make us reactive.

**Hatfield:** These animals or symbols appear in all cultures. Universally, we react to them – animals reacting to animals. Like, nobody sees a snake coming toward him and is like “boring.” You have to respond.

**Fortuna:** Exactly! The same with spiders.

**Hatfield:** No one sees a scorpion and says “meh”. It looks like a five-year-old designed it for the Pentagon.

Goody: What’s next for you both?

**Fortuna:** I haven’t thought a lot about what’s next for me, beyond what I want to do for this show. I have so many ideas I want to play with. This has given me the push I needed to make some larger pieces, fewer little details in favor of some larger, maybe looser gestures. I may find myself in trouble down the road with a bunch of larger scale fabric pieces, but I’ll deal with that problem when it happens. I want to keep exploring the sort of totemic images I keep going back to. I can’t seem to shake the snakes and crows and bees and hearts and all that stuff that looks and feels to me like archetypal symbols.

**Hatfield:** I’m thinking about dousing myself in super-fertilizer, setting myself ablaze and throwing myself into the swamp. The environment needs a champion. ●

Artists’ Bios

MARY FORTUNA, b. 1956, Royal Oak, MI, has been showing her artwork nationally and internationally (paintings, masks, sculpture: dolls, animals, and other fantastic creatures) since 1996. She received her BFA from Wayne State University in 1992. Her oeuvre explores the natural world, fauna, mythology, folklore, and the metaphysical realm as conceived by people everywhere, as well as the infinite variety of life forms that make up the natural and supernatural worlds.

“I work in any medium that catches my interest, two or three dimensional, to make whatever I can conjure up. I’m more interested in the objects themselves than in any single, specific narrative.”

For over twenty years, she was immersively involved in the Detroit art scene, serving in such non-profit organizations as the Contemporary Arts Council of Detroit, Art Detroit Now, Detroit Artist’s Market Exhibition Advisory Committee, and the Detroit Institute of Arts/Friends of Modern Art Forum for Contemporary Art. In 2011, she was a juror for the Kresge Art in Detroit Fellowships. From 2000 to 2014, she worked at Paint Creek Center for the Arts, in Rochester, MI, first as an education coordinator, and from 2004 onwards as exhibition coordinator. In 2018, she was invited by the Signal Return Press in Detroit to make a print for On Press: *Prints for Non-Profits*, where her work raised money for the Detroit Food Academy.

Fortuna has conducted hands-on workshops and classes for children and adults at the Detroit Institute of Arts Education Department, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Hatch Art, The Scarab Club, Popp’s Packing (all in Detroit), Anton Art Center, Mt. Clemens, and Flatlanders Sculpture Center, Blissfield in Michigan. In 2016, she moved to Traverse City, where she continues making her prolific oeuvre of soft-sculptures, textiles, paintings, and ephemera.

ADRIAN HATFIELD, b. 1969, Toledo, OH, is a multi-media artist whose oeuvre explores nature, conservation, environmental discourse, and pop culture. From an academic perspective, he examines modes of visual communication developed within religion, science, and 19th century Romantic landscape painting, in particular as they pertain to capturing the sublime. He views science through the lens of mythology in order to celebrate the unknown, drawing upon scientific illustration and diorama, as well as religious shrines and altars.

“I try to convey both the dread and the splendor, along with the absurdity of human inaction, in work that samples and recombines elements from art history, illustration, and pop culture.”

Hatfield has shown his work nationally and internationally in a variety of projects such as: “Altered States” at Jack the Pelican Presents in Brooklyn, NY; “Recent Work” at ARC Gallery in Chicago, IL; “King of the Impossible” at the South Bend Museum of Art; “Suitable Illusions” at the Northern Arizona University Art Museum, and at the NES and SIM artist residencies in Iceland.

Hatfield has a Bachelor of Education in Art Education/Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting/Drawing from The Ohio State University. He earned his Master of Fine Arts in Painting/Drawing from Ohio University in 2003. In 2005, he joined the painting faculty at Wayne State University, where he is currently an associate professor and head of painting.

Nostalgia & OUTRAGE

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On Back Cover:  
MARY FORTUNA  
*Swarm*, 2022,  
wool felt, beads, waxed fiber, bamboo  
48 x 12 x 12 inches  
Collection of Bret Boulter



Mary Fortuna and Adrian Hatfield  
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

# *Nostalgia &* **OUTRAGE**

NOSTALGIA & OUTRAGE: MARY FORTUNA AND ADRIAN HATFIELD

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