



LACEY LEONARD
ANDREW FRANKLIN

THE STATELY MANSION OF RADIOLARIA

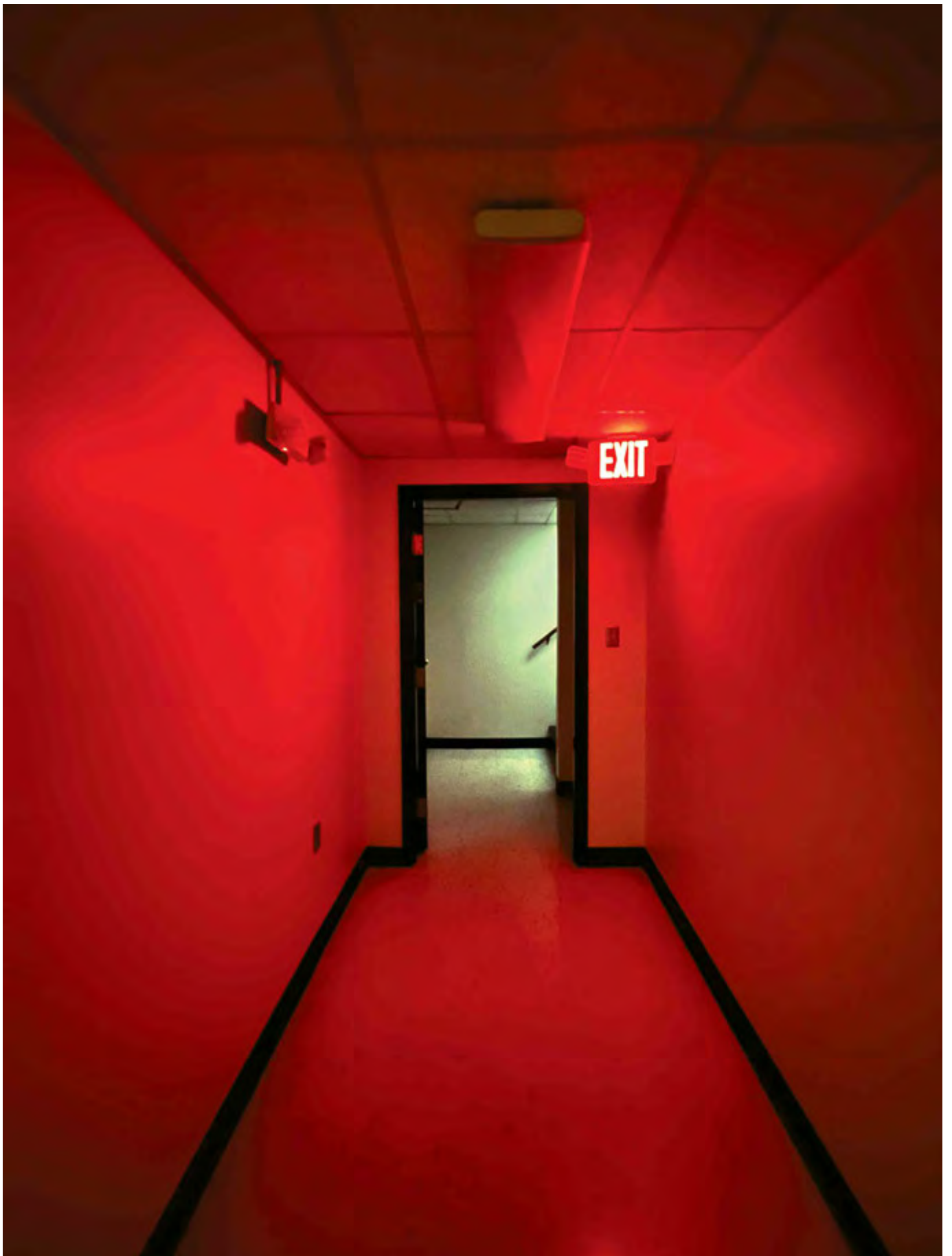
January 5 - 27, 2024

Opening January 5

Closing January 27



Roanoke, Virginia USA



January 14, 2024

During their exhibition, "The Stately Mansion of Radiolaria", Lacey Leonard and Andrew Franklin loaded the typewriter with paper and began typing their thoughts.

LACEY

When you enter the exhibition, there's these large red architectural elements that frame a life-size projection of a hallway leading to an ominous entry lit by a singular EXIT sign.

ANDREW

I captured these moments from a familiar and eerie feeling, the one where you enter a space and the hair on the skin stands up. To capture that feeling, I tried to stand still, but my body's slight movements are visible in the video. We placed the video at life-sized dimensions to make participants feel like they could also occupy this space; creating a feeling like something might happen or someone may be watching. I'm most interested in the feeling before the fear; dread.

LACEY

We felt that entering through the exit hallway would put the viewer in a soft vertigo, priming them for more unsettling moments in the work. The shift is really subtle, like a lot of the work in the show, you really have to be paying close attention.

ANDREW

We paired the entry with a manipulated version of "You're Welcome" from the Beach Boys album, "Smile", 1966. My fascination for that song comes from this album which was born from Brian Wilson's quirky and unorthodox methods. That album has dark and seedy undertones mixed with brilliant and angelic harmonies from The Beach Boys.

LACEY

It's like entering an aetherial carnival of doom.

ANDREW

Yes, and the album was never clearly finished, so it's up for debate whether the "You're Welcome" track was meant for the opening or closing of the album which is a perfect example of liminal sound space. We will never know if it's the entry point or the exit.



Installation view, architectural elements, video projection

LACEY

I edited the song to follow the crescendos and cadences while looping backwards on itself. It builds in volume and intensity and then fades out, the Beach Boys repeating "Welcome, Welcome, Welcome" and then in the backwards loop the darkness of Brian's genius becomes more obvious and disturbing. The video is also looped backwards on itself so there's no clear beginning or end to the installation.

The Lights On In Our Sphere
2022
Polaroid photograph



Posted on the Glass Door
2022
Polaroid photograph



Ghosts Among the Green
2022
Polaroid photograph



ANDREW

In the years leading up to this exhibition, we had captured a lot of photos that inspired this disturbed feeling. We curated our most recent works to the ones that we felt captured an unsettling beauty.

LACEY

These three polaroids were taken by Andrew but mostly all of our work, both collaborative or not, is titled using excerpts from my poetry. The titles contextualize the work, it's all the thoughts lurking in the background.







Never
have I passed so much time with
any one animal and remained
so fascinated by its behavior.

Installation view, collage on glass camouflages a hidden camera

LACEY

The front installation walls divide the space so that you either walk left or right to enter the gallery. On one side you approach a weathered yellow door with a collage in the glass window. We mounted a security camera behind the two-way glass and captured viewers immersed in the experience.

ANDREW

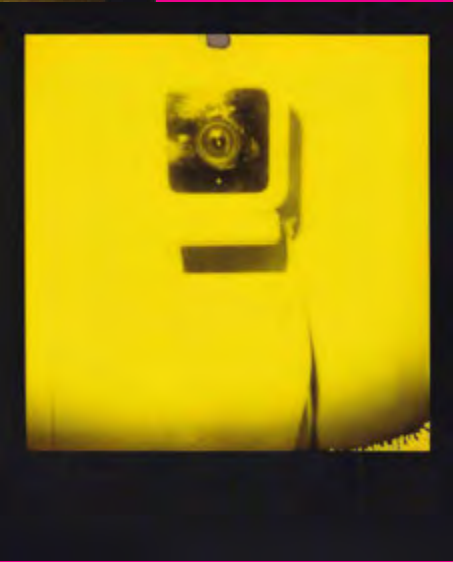
You don't see the live feed until you reach the very back of the gallery where artists and friends gather to eat and drink. So viewers are watching, and being watched, and observing but also being observed.

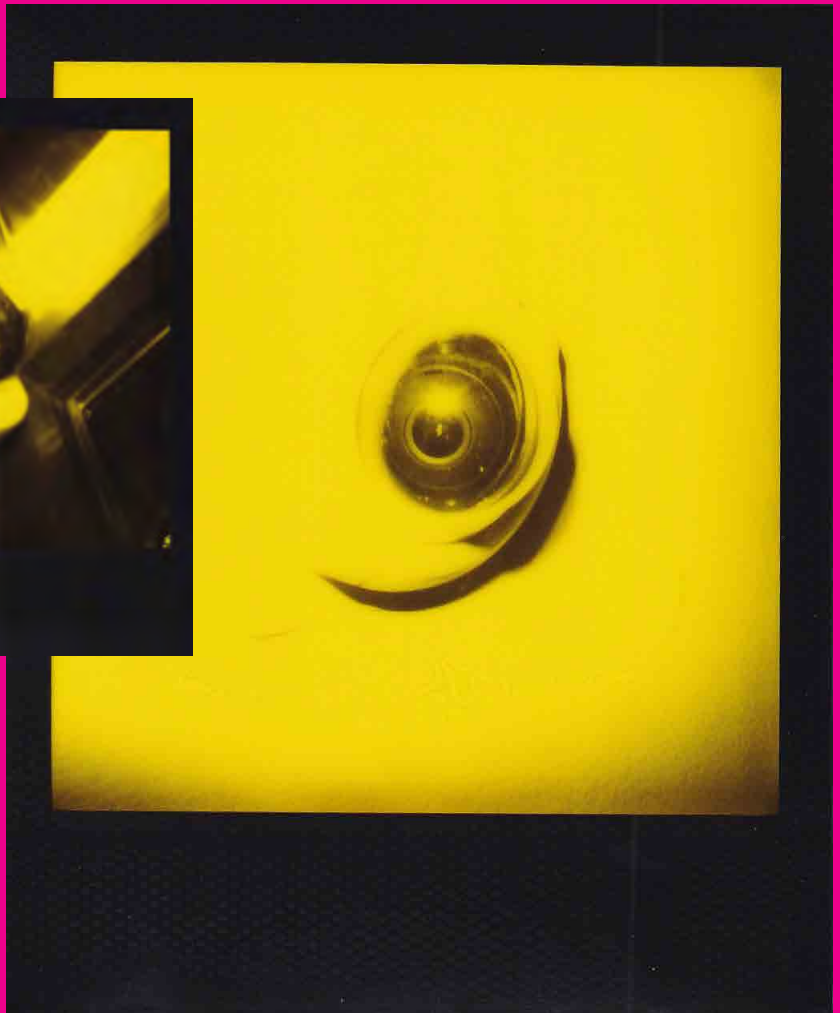
LACEY

I was surprised to see many people didn't mind or even react to the camera in the gallery. Everyone acted pretty normal, as if we've been eased into a constant state of surveillance.



Reveal the Location to an Intent
Observer
2024
Polaroid photographs





ANDREW

The need for that surveillance confirms there's always an invisible force threatening our safety, Our guard must be up, our cameras always rolling. In a way, I think sometimes we feel better knowing that everything is recorded. Evidence. Proof. As if the footage could speak more truth than the event itself. We are building trust with this technology in hopes that it can protect us from ourselves.

LACEY

This exhibition became the visual representation of our conversations about our state of being. Isolation, fear, and violence seem to be the global themes of existence right now. I've always been drawn to find hope in dark times but Andrew encouraged me to embrace the darkness and push more color and movement into my work. My writing has always been dark, so we found ways to weave the words into the whole process.

ANDREW

Even though we embraced darker themes, we wanted to balance those with humor, camp, and a playfulness that reflects our studio practices. Like the long pink glove holding a gun that's filled with spray foam, a photograph of the "Absolute Tanning" salon in a dilapidated building in deep Southwest Virginia, and the whimsy and nostalgia of polaroids and typewriters.

LACEY

There's something truly special about creating with analog technologies like a typewriter. It forces you to stay present with the medium. Nothing else is activated except the device and your own creativity.



The high blue evening
fell sleepily upon men

Who As if
Looked They were

Killers.

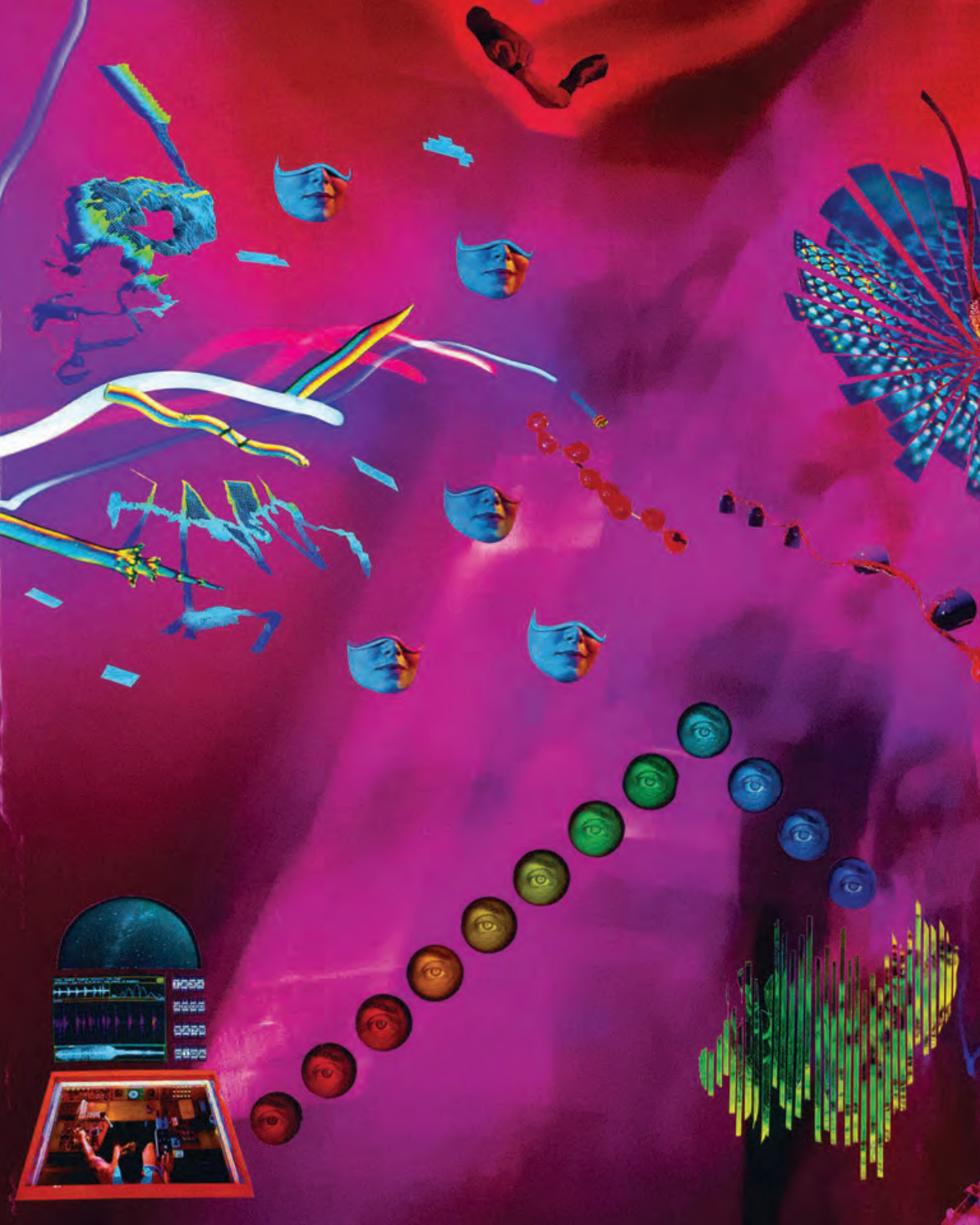
All living things
 thousands of years
 ago,

Turned into water spirits

The sea has
 remained with us.



Killers (top)
Water Spirits (bottom)
2024
mixed media





This Was Genuine Exploring
2022-24
analog collage on photo printed on archival paper



THREE'S A BUNCH
ON THE WINDOW OF HIS HEAD
TAPPING GLASS
TRAPPED
THE WARMTH FOGGED IN
HOT ENOUGH TO BEAD UP
AND STREAK DOWN
COLLECTING MORE STEAM AS IT FALLS
A CREEP
A PEEP
OR A POKE
WANTING FOR ALL MY ATTENTION TO LOOK THROUGH
AND TOUCH MY SPINE
UNKIND.
SO I COMMIT TO THE BLINDS
TIGHTLY TIGHT INTO PLACE
SAFE.
HERE IN THE QUIET.
HERE IN THE QUIET.

THE WARMTH FOGGED IN
HOT ENOUGH TO BEAD UP
AND STREAK DOWN
COLLECTING MORE STEAM AS IT FALLS

A CREEP

A PEEP

OR A POKE

WANTING FOR ALL MY ATTENTION TO LOOK THROUGH
AND TOUCH MY SPINE
UNKIND.

SO I COMMIT TO THE BLINDS

THERE'S A SOUND
ON THE WINDOW OF MY HEART
TAPPING GLASS

TRAPPED

THE WARMTH FOGGED IN
HOT ENOUGH TO BEAD UP

AND STREAK DOWN

COLLECTING MORE STEAM AS IT FALLS

A CREEP

A PEEP

OR A POKE

WANTING FOR ALL MY ATTENTION TO LOOK THROUGH

AND TOUCH MY SPINE

UNKIND.

SO I COMMIT TO THE BLINDS

TUBBING THEM INTO PLACE

SAFE.

HERE IN THE QUIET.

HERE IN THE QUIET.

ANDREW

We are always thinking about similar styles and constantly giving each other feedback, so the collaboration felt very natural and easy for us. We would look at each other's work and think, "I could make that better" and then add on to it until we achieved something we both liked.

LACEY

Andrew had taken these long exposures in the living room that looked like some older paintings he had made, so I asked if I could collage over them. It's nice to start in on a piece that already has direction. It's like getting to start somewhere in the middle, which makes it easier to slide in and access the work.

ANDREW

These light photos were definitely missing something in their composition and had dynamic qualities that created a vibrant stage for your collages.

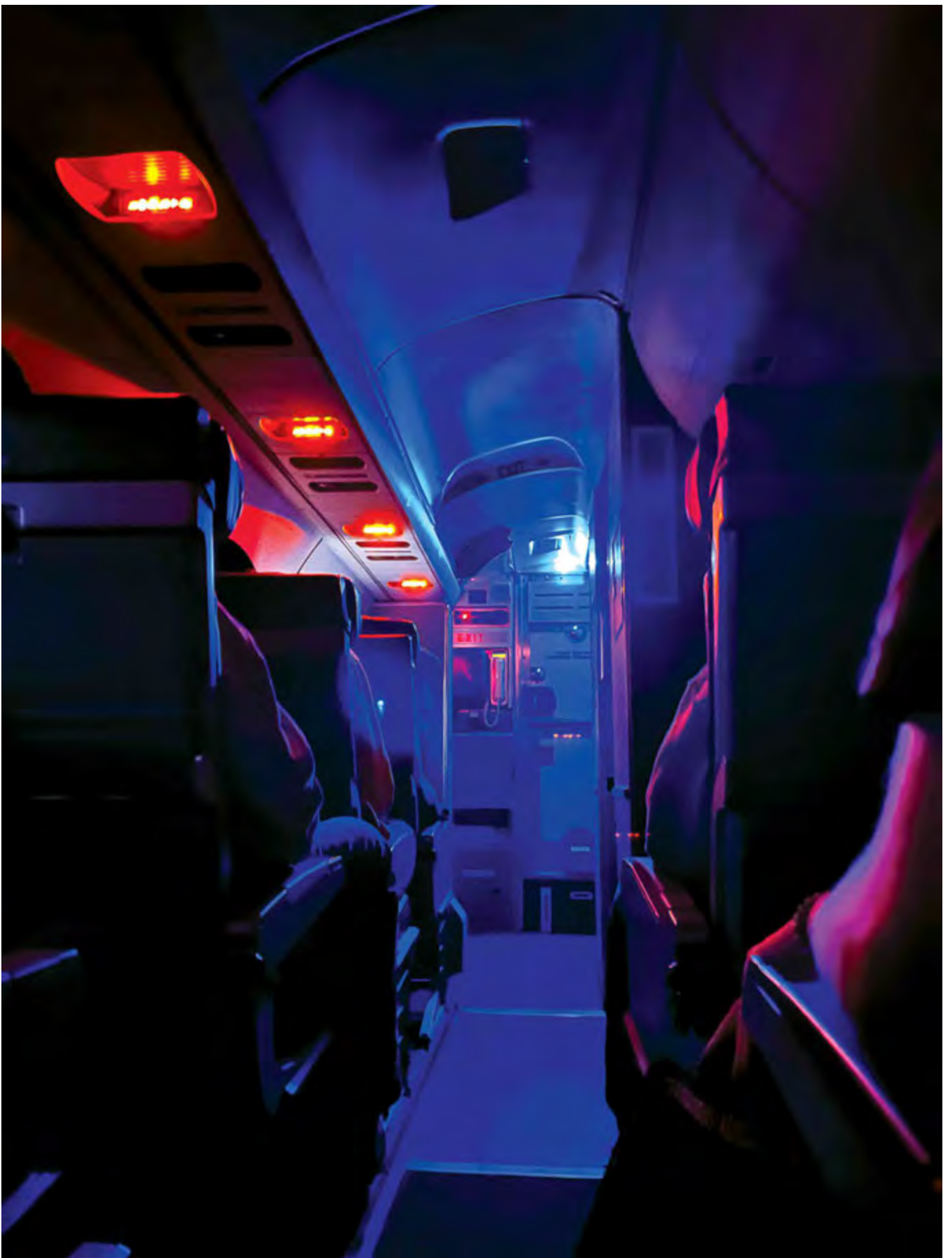
LACEY

There's the juxtaposition of manmade lights and objects blended with organic and natural elements because we felt that these unsettling feelings occurred regardless of environment. We are never very far, if at all from the natural world and its consequences. There's a particular aesthetic to our survival right now.

Your Unrelenting Laser
2024

Analog Collage on photo printed on
archival paper





ANDREW

I feel inspired by liminal spaces because they demand a present awareness. As if, it's only awake because I noticed it. I'm part of that uncomfortable tension between time and space.

LACEY

Do you think the tension is derived from the environment being inactive or activated by an invisible force or the objects in the space itself create tension?

ANDREW

It's that you can't tell if the space has been activated or is about to be activated. That's the uneasiness that causes an inescapable dread.

LACEY

I think there's a quality that gets left behind. Like the ghost of action that makes these subtle spaces feel so intense. It's a feeling like something did happen here, but I don't know what it was, so it could be anything. Anything could happen here, and that can be really alarming in a quiet way.

ANDREW

The liminal space also doesn't have to be static, the difference between many of the pieces is that they represent this potential force, both in motion and in stillness.



LACEY

I really feel like this exhibit was the experimental catalyst for our next collaboration.

ANDREW

A lot of these feel like sketches for the films we are writing. Putting these images together is helping us create our own visual language.



LACEY

I'm incredibly grateful for the space and time to be able to create this with you. Making art with your best friend has to be one of the greatest gifts of all. Thank you for saying "yes" to my ideas, big or small.

ANDREW



I am very lucky to be able to share the dream with you. To live and work alongside a partner who shares a similar vision is truly special. I've always admired your ability to use language to decode our experience. Thank you for finding the words when I cannot.

facing page: *Blunder Ahead in Pursuit of Happiness; First Bikini Appears on the Same Beaches; Spending Another Night There*
2022
Polaroid photographs



Passage Place
2022
photo printed on archival matte paper

Among the Single-Celled Animals I and II
2024
mixed media



Radiolaria: Radiolaria (ray-dee-uh-lair-ee-uh) are marine microorganisms with intricate skeletons made of silica, making them the only animals with a substantial glass component.



Radiolaria are Water Dwellers
2024
video installation, mixed media



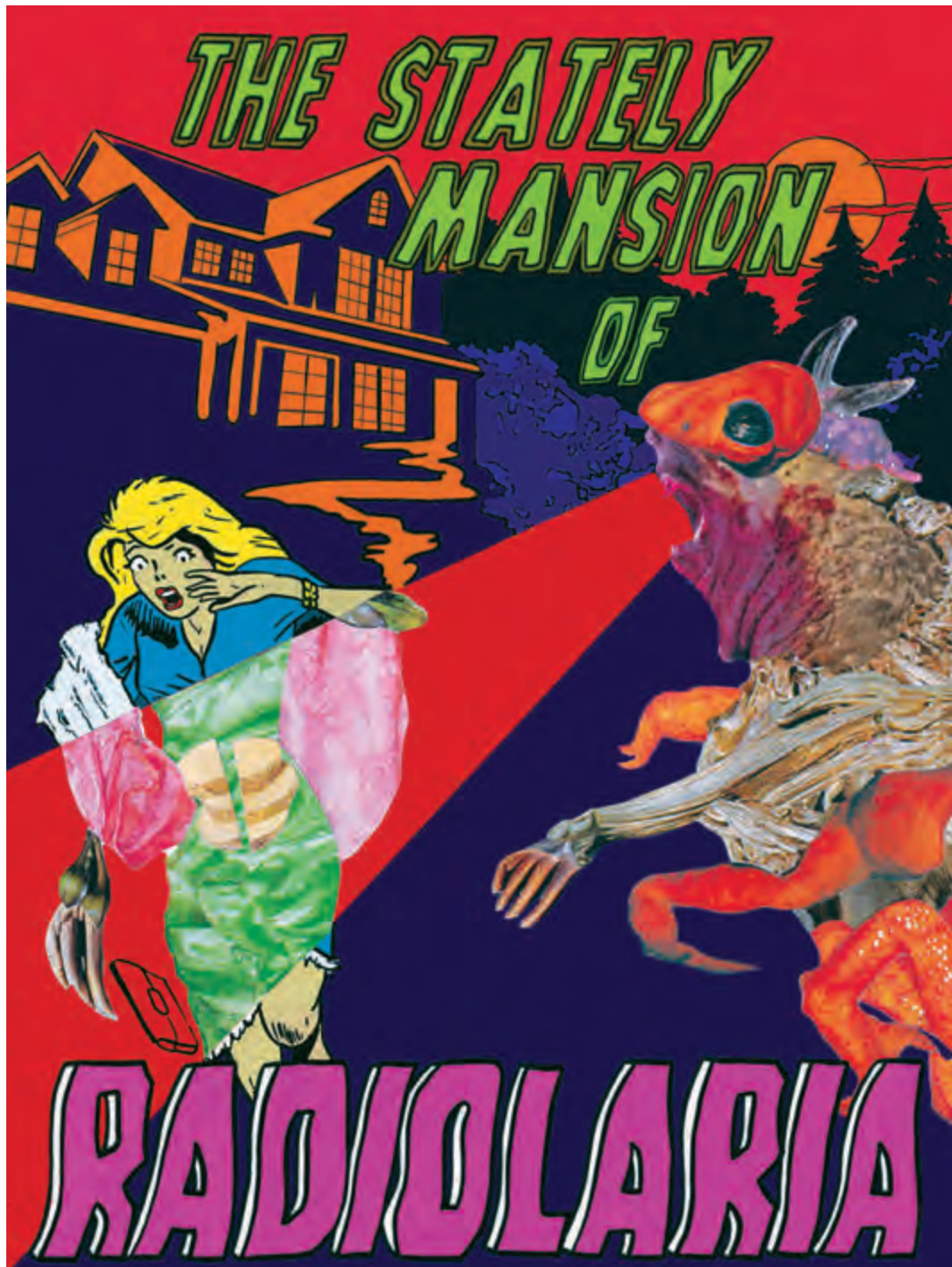
The City made the Victim Forget
2022
photo print on archival matte paper



Cradle Me in the Softest Blue
2022
photo print on archival matte paper







Poster designed for the 2024 exhibition
by Lacey Leonard and Andrew Franklin

A heartfelt thank you to Ed Hettig and Rachel Markwood for their unwavering support of this exhibition, providing both a home for the artwork and a steadfast commitment to championing emerging artists. Dave Franklin, your generosity in lending us the architectural elements for installation and assemblage has been invaluable. Joseph Emery, your efforts in promoting the exhibit and tenacious enthusiasm for our work. Talia Logan, thank you for your dedicated oversight and assistance with framing. Bob Huot and Gregg Weinschreider, your continuous support of Alexander/Heath Contemporary is the cornerstone of our artistic community in Roanoke, Virginia. To our Friends and Family, your generous encouragement allows us to create freely, and we are grateful for your unwavering presence in the midst of life's peculiarities.

100 copies of this catalog printed for the occasion of the exhibition
Lacey Leonard and Andrew Franklin
The Stately Mansion of Radiolaria
January 5 - 27, 2024

Catalog Design: Lacey Leonard and Andrew Franklin
Printed by Mixam Inc, USA

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