

**MFA**



Timing is everything. On March 16th the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Waterloo issued an email that read “URGENT ACTION REQUIRED: work from home guidance.” And just like that the 2020 MFA cohort moved from working with a “business as usual” mentality to quickly vacating their studios, having no idea when they might return to a space that had become a second home. Concern mounted as COVID-19 spread and it became clear that UWAG would also see its gallery doors close.

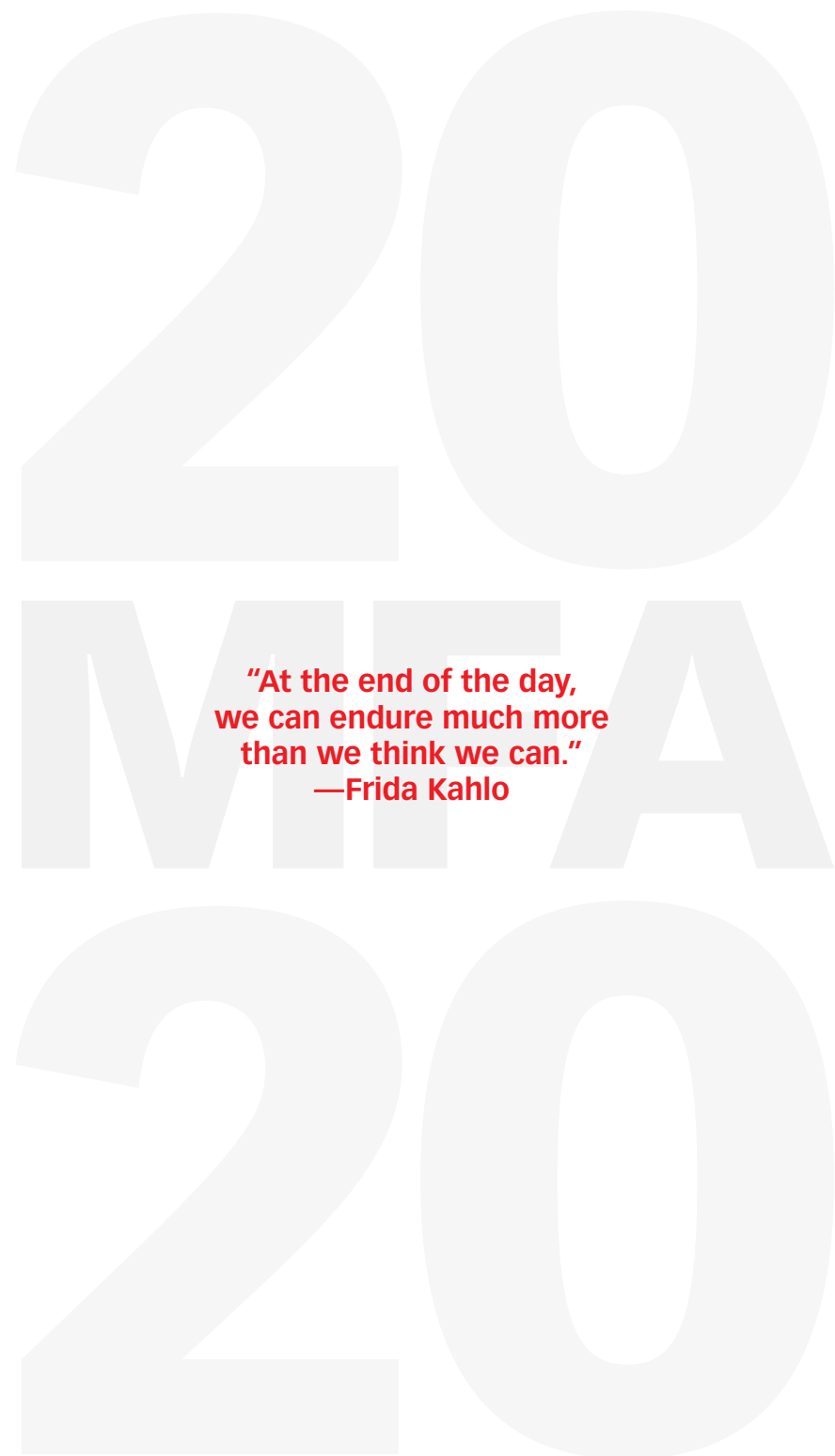
And then it became clear that the thesis exhibitions would be indefinitely postponed.

The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the fact that life is both beautiful and terrifying. Everything old is new again—except for the fact that the words and times that resonate now are ‘Spanish Flu, 1918-1920’ and ‘Black Death, 1331-1352’. Yet art finds its way through and becomes something that people look to and cling to. As true today as in the past. For artists our practice is a way to respond to the barometer of the time, providing us with an outlet or a reprieve, and even a reason to get up in the morning. For viewers the art offers a chance to make sense of it all.

We are proud of the 2020 class. Proud of their work and of their adaptability. Proud of their determination to see their degrees through in a time of crisis. It takes courage to carry on in a time of uncertainty and this courage will serve them well.

With extraordinary enthusiasm we raise our virtual glasses in celebration of Becca Wijshijer, Tyler Matheson, Brubey (Wanzhi) Hu and Kayla Witt. Bravo!

**Tara Cooper, Associate Chair, Graduate Studies**



## **MFA Thesis One**

April 16–May 2, 2020

### **Becca Wijshijer**

shrimpychip YouTube

*shrimpychip YouTube* is a series of YouTube videos that explore the ways in which digital intimacy and capitalism intersect. The performances, designed for YouTube, strategically exploit emotional responses to the body, home, and notions of privacy in order to highlight the counterintuitive relationships embodied in digital capitalism. Editing and aesthetics of social platforms are employed to stress the strangeness of these new economic, cultural, social and private relationships. In documenting myself using AI and search tools, the work functions as a digital archive of actions and perceptions, thereby providing a firsthand account of the body and thoughts as they are mediated by technology. By tirelessly following trends to the point of ridiculousness, *shrimpychip* empathizes with the Internet culture while at the same time amplifying its more concerning aspects.

Becca Wijshijer is a research-based artist working within digital media. Wijshijer is an MFA candidate at the University of Waterloo, and received a BFA from OCAD University. They have exhibited at La Centrale galerie Powerhouse in Montreal; Supermarket 2019 in Stockholm, Sweden; and are alumni of The Roundtable Residency in Toronto. They were awarded the Shantz International Research Scholarship through the University of Waterloo, and worked with !Mediengruppe Bitnik in Berlin, Germany during the summer of 2019.





untitled (for Felix), 2019, mixed media

## **MFA Thesis One**

April 16–May 2, 2020

### **Tyler Matheson**

**Any other name would smell as sweet**

*Any other name would smell as sweet* is an exploration of personal and shared experiences of feeling queer. This body of work serves as an aesthetic and material investigation of the performativity of othered bodies, identities, and visibility. The process of becoming and adapting to surroundings is conceptually and experientially present in my work. When creating installations, I employ mirrors and queer-coded reflective materials. By choosing materials that have the visual capability to shift and transform their appearance depending on the viewer's body and position in relation to the work, I create a spatial dynamism where each individual's experience is uniquely their own—where the viewer and the work are reliant on each other. In this codependent performance, the gallery becomes a site where viewers can be projected into queer liminal space—a bridge between worlds.

Tyler Matheson is an MFA candidate at the University of Waterloo and received a Bachelor of Fine Art from York University. He has exhibited in Montreal and Toronto. He was awarded a Shantz International Research Scholarship through the University of Waterloo, and worked with German artists Fabian Treiber and Dave Bopp in the summer of 2019. He was a recipient of the 2019 Superframe Framing Fund.

[www.tylermathesonartist.com](http://www.tylermathesonartist.com)

## MFA Thesis Two

May 7–23, 2020

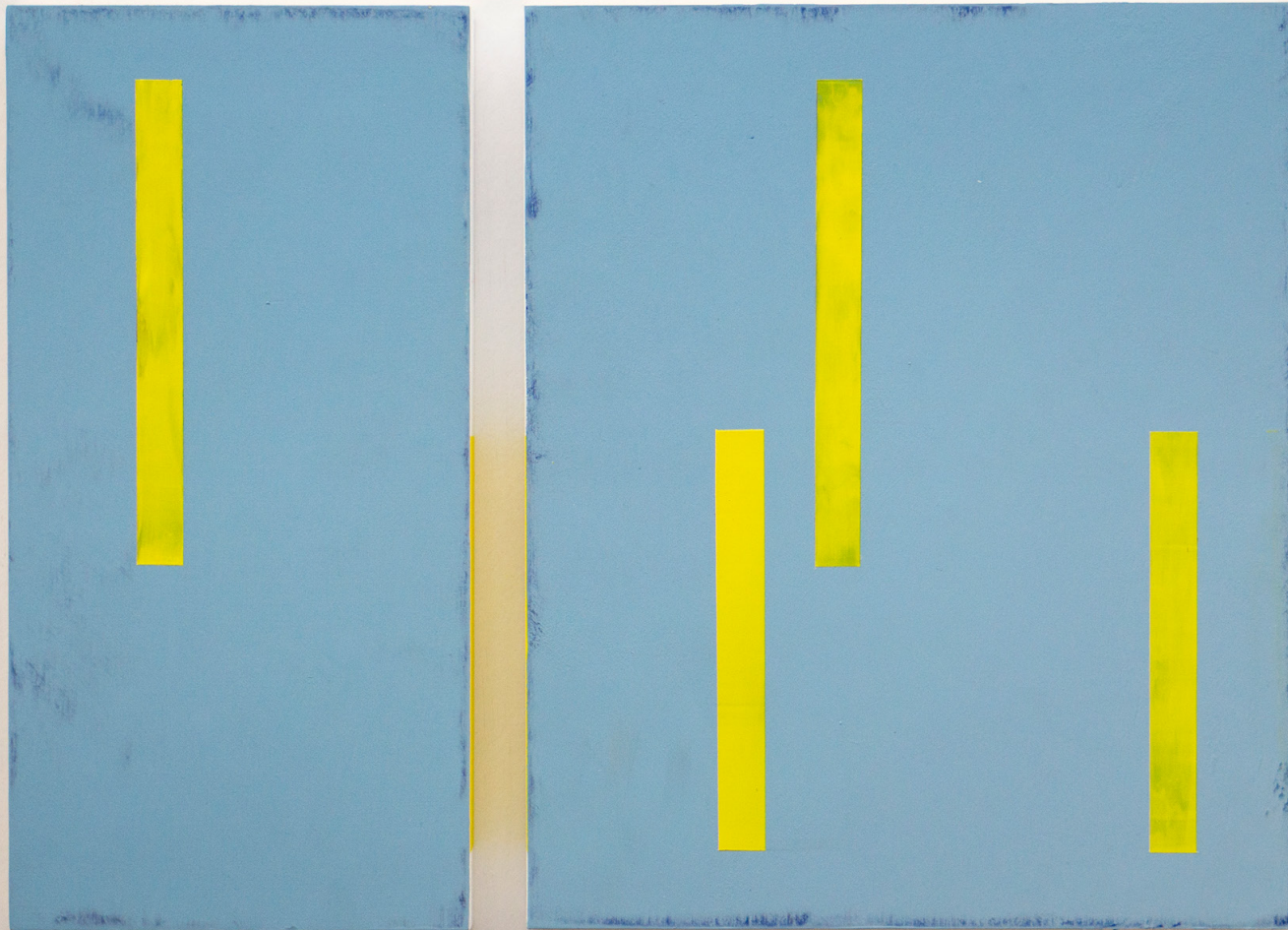
### Kayla Witt

Condemned to a Perpetual Jacuzzi...  
With Millions of Your Best Friends

*Condemned to a Perpetual Jacuzzi... With Millions of Your Best Friends* is a multi-media body of work that investigates the personal, the socio-political, and the cultural notions of home. The mind's vision of home is most often held as an idealized place—the location where meanings and attachments are personal and symbolically intense. Forms of utopian thinking are embedded as the very cornerstone of what the home represents, especially in contemporary media iterations. My work grapples with the lived experience and materiality of the home by redrafting the imagery presented in Interior Design and Architectural magazines. Through collage, painting, performance and video, I subvert the structured and predictable media's language of desire. At first glance, my work appears "homey", as the magazine source material is evident, but as details register and accumulate, it becomes apparent that there is a tension between comfort and discomfort in the images. There is disruption and unpredictability in these inaccessible, aspirational spaces. You wouldn't actually want to live there even though it feels like you might.

Kayla Witt is a MFA candidate at the University of Waterloo, and received a Bachelor of Fine Art from OCAD University. She has exhibited at The Gladstone Hotel, Struts Gallery and Faucet New Media Centre, Critical Distance Centre for Curators, The White House Studio Project, YYZ Artist's Outlet, Bunker 2, among others. She was awarded the Shantz International Research Scholarship through the University of Waterloo, and worked with Tony Berlant in Los Angeles in summer of 2019. She is also the recipient of the 2020 Sylvia Knight Award in Fine Arts.





3 or 4 or 5?, 2019, acrylic on wood panels, 30.5 x 15.25 cm and 30.5 x 25.5 cm

## **MFA Thesis Two**

May 7–23, 2020

### **Brubey Hu**

#### **I Have No Home But Me**

*I Have No Home But Me* explores themes of home and duality through personal narratives embedded in my paintings and artists' books. A duality that exists within a body, does not necessarily exist as a pair of oppositions. The pair can also be complementary to each other, or live at the same time as coexistence. Employing geometric shapes painted over two panels using masking tape, this visual duality is constructed within diptychs that juxtapose opacity and reflection. The paintings are my attempt to discuss the notions of consensus and reconciliation. The used tapes are collected to serve as the memory of how the paintings are made. In addition, a book of poetry collects my writings expanding the themes of memory, identity, and translation. The combination of paintings and books investigates the evaporation of information and emotion, through the process of translation that I frequently experience as a bilingual woman living in-between places.

Brubey (Wanzhi) Hu is an MFA candidate at the University of Waterloo, and received a Bachelor of Fine Art from Maryland Institute College of Art. She has exhibited at Art Mûr in Montreal, Canada; Hui Yuan in Hefei, China; and Florida International University in Miami, US. In 2018, Brubey participated in BAiR Emerging Visual and Digital Arts Residency at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. She was awarded a Shantz International Research Scholarship through the University of Waterloo, and worked with Agnes Barley in New York City in the summer of 2019.

[www.brubey-hu.com](http://www.brubey-hu.com)

**MFA 2020**  
**Becca Wijshijer**  
**Tyler Matheson**  
**Kayla Witt**  
**Brubey Hu**

**Presented by**  
**University of Waterloo Fine Arts**  
**and University of Waterloo Art Gallery**

**April 16–May 23, 2020**

**University of Waterloo Fine Arts**  
**University of Waterloo Art Gallery**  
East Campus Hall  
263 Phillip Street, Waterloo, ON

Currently closed due to COVID-19 until further notice

Web: [uwaterloo.ca/fine-arts](https://uwaterloo.ca/fine-arts) | [uwag.uwaterloo.ca](https://uwag.uwaterloo.ca)

Facebook: [uwag.waterloo](https://www.facebook.com/uwag.waterloo) Instagram: [waterloomfa](https://www.instagram.com/waterloomfa) | [uwartgallery](https://www.instagram.com/uwartgallery)



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