



## Portals

June 15 – August 18, 2023

Opening reception: Thursday, June 15, 6–8pm

Larkin Dugan / Jacob Feige / Sarah Gamble / Molly Metz / Cobi Moules / Julia Policastro / Isaac Scott

*Portals* presents Philadelphia-area artists whose work offers insight into memory, dimensions of time and place, neglected histories, and realms of joy, fantasy, and foreboding. Some of the works feature literal portals—entryways, windows, and openings—that draw the viewer in. Others suggest the notion of portal more metaphorically, as if we have crossed a threshold and are immersed in a different reality, enveloped by the unfamiliar.

While visiting Portugal on an artist residency in 2022, Isaac Scott was struck by that country's complicity in the slave trade, and even deeper in history, its Moorish rule by Black Muslims during the Middle Ages. His *Mouros* series consists of ceramic heads that celebrate fictional people of African descent that dwell within the walls of ancient Portuguese architecture—part building, part human. One of the heads on view features an actual opening into a dark interior space, beckoning the viewer to contemplate Portugal's racist past while celebrating the African influence on European history.

Cobi Moules reimagines the sublime landscape tradition of 19th century Hudson River School painting as queer spaces of desire, shrouded or framed by silicone embedded with glitter and hair. The oozing layers of silicone create portal-like openings into carefully rendered mise-en-scènes that feature jockstraps hanging from trees, draped across rocks, or nestled in logs. The fleshy silicone alludes to how the queer body challenges the Hudson River School's narratives of manifest destiny, notions of masculinity, and racial supremacy.

Jacob Feige incorporates figurative imagery from film and Soviet modern art that form the ground of his paintings. He then applies a layer of cast acrylic paint in the shape of a cubist portrait complete with multiple openings that reveal elements of the painting underneath. The works explore Feige's family's experiences during and after World Wars I and II. The cast portraits obscure the underpainting, highlighting the difficulty that the artist faces in unraveling the past in the context of annihilating war, scarce documentation, and no family photographs.

While Feige grapples with family histories clouded by the fog of war and elapsed time, Larkin Dugan's memories are more recent, and we can assume, less traumatic. Dugan's cardboard, bas-relief, painted constructions are based on childhood and present-day recollections of domestic spaces and routine life: a

childhood bedroom shared with his twin brother, a beer-pong scene, details of the family kitchen. All of his constructions are framed by a painted cardboard border that resonates with the featured work, drawing the viewer into the artist's personal vision.

Julia Policastro combines travel experiences to places like Siena and Mexico City with a love of Italian Renaissance art and architecture to form the basis of her paintings in sculpted artist frames. Some frames are of the simple "picture frame" variety, while others are elaborate constructions forming columns and archways. Like Dugan, the attention to both frame and image suggests the notion of portal by inviting us to inhabit the work. While referencing the reality of particular places and artworks, her practice is predicated on transforming the known world into the fantastical.

Sarah Gamble and Molly Metz explore a post-portal experience as if the viewer has already entered another dimension or an alternate universe. Gamble's paintings here feature crystals floating in space, prismatic light beams, and her ongoing interest in elaborate, all-over patterning employing dotwork and fleur-de-lis-like motifs. Gamble unites the spiritual and cosmic possibilities of abstraction and representation in the creation of paintings that examine the connective energy between different realities. If Gamble looks skyward toward the heavens for cosmic inspiration, then Metz is more attuned to looking downward at the microcosms of the terrestrial, the aquatic, and the microscopic. Strands of DNA, single-cell animals, and sea creatures seem to be suspended in a primordial soup of paint and collage. Tiny texts are often embedded within odd-shaped forms (cells, squiggles, gestures) with words occasionally so small that at first glance we might mistake them for thready bits of organic material. Many of the artist's works have a painting on the reverse of the support.

Isaac Scott (b. 1990, lives and works in Philadelphia) received his MFA from Tyler School of Art in 2021. He has shown at Magic Gardens, Philadelphia; Design Miami Podium, FL; and the 2019 National Conference for Education in the Ceramic Arts, Minneapolis, MN. Scott's photographs of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in Philadelphia were featured in the June 22, 2020 issue of *The New Yorker*. The photographs were also shown in a two person exhibition (with Ada Trillo) at the Da Vinci Art Alliance in 2022. In August of 2020, Scott completed his first mural with collaborators Gerald A. Brown and Roberto Lugo.

Coubi Moules (b. 1980, lives and works in Philadelphia), received an MFA from the School of Museum of Fine Arts and Tufts University in 2010. He has had solo exhibitions at venues including Carroll and Sons Gallery, Boston, MA; Samek Museum, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA; the Leslie Lohman Museum, New York, NY; Lyons Wier, New York, NY; and West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WV. He has been featured in group exhibitions at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN; the Jepson Center for the Arts, Savannah, GA; , Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Ogunquit Museum of American Art, ME; and Smack Mellon Brooklyn, NY, among others. His work is in the collections of the Crystal Bridges Museum; Leslie Lohman Museum; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Winter Park, FL, and 21c Museum Hotel, Nashville, TN. He has been an artist-in-residence at Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha, NE; Ucross Foundation, Clearmont, WY; and Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT, among others.

Jacob Feige (b. 1979, lives and works in Collingswood, NJ) received an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2005. His work has had solo exhibitions at Rule Gallery, Marfa, TX and Denver, CO; David Richard Gallery, New York, NY; Lombard Freid Projects, New York, NY; and Movement, Worcester, UK. He has been included in group exhibitions at venues such as Wasserman Projects, Detroit, MI; Chambers Fine Art, Beijing, China; Watergate Gallery, Seoul, South Korea; the John H Baker Gallery, West Chester University, PA; and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, NY; among other venues. In 2018 he was artist-in-residence at the Princeton Cyprus Expedition, Polis Chrysochous, Cyprus. He was awarded a New Jersey Council on the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship in 2022. Feige is currently Associate Professor of Art at Stockton University, New Jersey.

Larkin Dugan (b. 1992, lives and works in Philadelphia) received a BFA from Tyler School of Art in 2014. He has shown at Philadelphia venues including Tattooed Mom, Circle of Hope, and Moore College of Art. He was included in the *Tiny Biennale*, Temple University, Rome.

Julia Policastro (b. 1992, lives and works in Philadelphia) received a BFA from Tyler School of Art in 2015. She has shown at venues including the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Automat Collective, Kamihira, and Commonweal, all in Philadelphia, and Mama Projects, New York, NY.

Sarah Gamble (b. 1974, lives and works in Philadelphia) received her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2001. She has had solo exhibitions at Philadelphia venues including Fleisher/Ollman, Moore College of Art, Bambi Gallery, Pageant, and Fleisher Art Memorial. Other solo shows have taken place at Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA; Lump Gallery Project Space, Raleigh, NC; and Jack the Pelican Presents,

Brooklyn, NY. Gamble has been included in group exhibitions at venues such as Edward Thorp Gallery, New York, NY; RedLine Art Center, Denver, CO; Roswell Museum and Art Center, Roswell, NM; Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha, NE; and Marlin and Regina Miller Gallery, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA. Gamble was awarded a Pew Fellowship in the Arts in 2009, and completed a yearlong residency at the Roswell Artist-in-Residence Program, New Mexico in 2014. In 2023 she was a MacDowell resident in Peterborough, NH.

Molly Metz (b. 1992, lives and works in Philadelphia) received her MFA from Tyler School of Art in 2016. She has had solo exhibitions at Day Space and Fleisher/Ollman (both in Philadelphia) and Friends Indeed, San Francisco. Metz has been featured in group exhibitions at Fjord, Pilot Projects, Woodmere Art Museum, and Space 1026 (all in Philadelphia); YUI Gallery, New York, NY; and Adams and Ollman, Portland, OR.