



PATTERN — CHAOS & COHERENCE

PATTERN — CHAOS & COHERENCE

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ABSTRACT

There is power in rhythmic images. This series of artworks is meant to discover the presence of patterns in a project that could be seen as introspective and exploratory. Sewing patterns, patterned fabrics and papers, charcoals, and soft pastels blend in collaged layers to illuminate the topography of my figurative art. In a state of chaotic possibilities, I surround myself with visual chatter as I sift through piles of fabric, paper, and appliqués. Life is messy and we are a tapestry of our fragmentary impressions, influences, and interests. We are a collage. I create collaged surfaces that reflect with this inner reality. The figure and the patterned environment are interlaced and symbiotically connected. As I draw into, around and over these patterns in an intellectual, physical, and emotional process, I investigate pattern and decoration as a vehicle for fine art. Dressmaker patterns speak to the idea of cutting, folding, and trimming a woman's body to an idealized size of implied conformity. Other floral and geometric patterns explore a wild and boundless beauty that resonate with the interior landscape and emotional tone of the subject. These varied patterns interweave onto the surface of my drawings and cause the edges of the past and present to soften and blur. Like my figures, I begin to dissolve into the experience.

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To the many artists whose creative worlds I have shared over the past two years, particularly my two mentors, Alla Bartoshchuk and Soey Milk. Your artistic wisdom and generosity of time and spirit have deeply enriched my experience and expanded my vision, skill, and artistic practice. To my amazingly talented fellow graduates, I could not have done this without you. Thank you as well to Peter Zokosky whose sound presence and thoughtful insight has shaped my journey. You all have been essential to my growth during my MFA candidacy.

DEDICATION

To my beautiful, wild, and loving family. Your support has meant everything to me.

EPIGRAPH***Options***

*I prefer many things not mentioned here to many others unmentioned,
I prefer zeros randomly scattered
to zeros lined up in rows.
I prefer a time of flies to a time of stars.
I prefer to touch wood.
I prefer not to ask how much longer and when.
I prefer consideration of the option that there are many ways of being.*

- Wislawa Szymborska

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PATTERN — CHAOS & COHERENCE

DESCRIPTION

Literally, warp and weft are the two components used in weaving that turn thread or yarn into fabric. The warp yarn is held in place lengthwise on the frame or loom, while the weft yarn is drawn over and under the warp. Figuratively, the term warp is used to suggest the essential foundation on which any structure is built.

—warp+weft

It should not work. This alphabet soup, crazy quilt, gallimaufry, hodgepodge, pastiche, and patchwork disorder of collage should not work. To collage is to weave unlike elements together formally and conceptually. Max Ernst describes this as “The noble conquest of the irrational.” Life is messy and we are a tapestry of our fragmentary impressions, influences, and interests. We are a collage. I create collaged surfaces that interlace with this inner reality. Responding to surfaces intuitively, I cover panels with charcoal, paint, soft pastel, textiles, and resin to mirror my innermost world. In a state of chaotic possibilities, I surround myself with visual chatter. I sift through piles of patterned fabrics, decorative papers, and appliqués. The process of creating is as important as the final image. As a figurative artist I layer, lift, and build the mediums until they resonate the emotional tone of the figure. My drawings deconstruct and reimagine archetypes of the feminine. Each time I gather materials for a new drawing, I defy the voice that questions the shambolic challenge before me. It should not work, but I find my way through the confusion. I choose to embrace the chaos and find coherence in the clutter.

I have a vivid memory of being transfixed by pattern. As a child I was surrounded by wild, dominant, and garish tessellations. My mother’s house was filled with vibrant floral

configurations that were fractals on the walls. I remember sitting and looking at the patterns in my room and seeing the underlying structural grid of repetition within the floral chaos. I



Fig. 1. Jill Maytorena, *Alexis*, 2022, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 24 in.

would stare at the flowers—the green, the gold, and the pink—until I could imagine them seamlessly looping, crawling, and flowing onto the ceiling, onto my bed and onto my body until I was engulfed by them. As

I grew older, I rejected these types of patterns as gaudy and busy. It is only

in the last few years that I have embraced the vivid experience of pattern again. Examining my current fixation with patterns today, I can see the influence of my imaginative experience in my collage panels like *Alexis* (Fig. 1). I realize how much this memory is woven into my creative revelations. The inspiration for my work stems from a personal introspective place that is filled with twisted strands of impressions, memories, thoughts, and experiences. I entwine this inner collage onto my drawings. Like I envisioned the patterns consuming me as a child, I no longer reject the ornate and the gilded. I interlace repetition and figures until the layers consume each other.

My inspirations are also spun on the warp of poetry, literature, other visual artists and movements like the Pattern and Decoration movement. The Pattern and Decoration movement (P&D), which was founded in New York in the 1970's, clashed with minimalism in a rallying cry of unabashed adornment. "More is more!" (Katz 284) they thundered in reaction to a way of speaking about art that reflected virulent masculinity and sexism. P&D



Fig. 2. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment*, 2022, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

saw the opulent, delightful, and ornamental as every bit as authentic, complex, and sophisticated as the ideals of minimalist modernism. The movement also asked why women's creative work and the mediums available to them—

tapestry and textile, ceramics and pottery, and other crafts—have been seen as less valuable (Katz 283).

I think of my work as unfinished inventories of ethereal junctures: figures captured in unguarded moments of thought or ephemeral moments between inhaling and exhaling. I pull imagery from the fabric of this psychic landscape. As a fine artist, I boldly work with elements of craft. I embellish my surfaces with floral appliqués, gold and silver threads and glittery crushed glass. In *Adornment* (Fig. 2) I challenge myself to push the boundaries of excess. Decoration, ornamentation, and defiance are the threads that I interwork on my surfaces, and I refuse to see my materials with any hierarchy in value. The pastels, the patterned fabrics, papers, and appliqués build my images with equal voice until I make sense of this turmoil with intuition



Fig. 3. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 2*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.

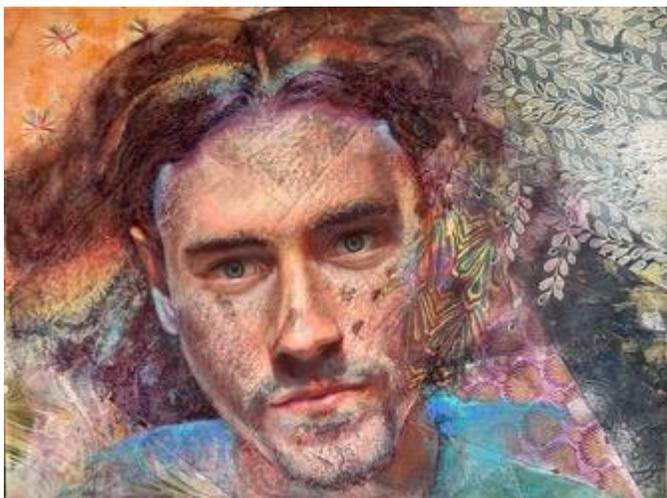


Fig. 4. Jill Maytorena, *Rainbows & Resolve*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

and design principles. I began my use of appliqués in a hesitant and self-conscious way, as if I was unsure if I was allowed to explore embellishment. It was not until I gave myself permission to break through the boundaries of fine art and craft to incorporate mass-produced elements of women's handiwork to create wild, interlacing surfaces. Some of my works such as *Floral 2* (Fig. 3) are solely built with machine-made appliqués and patterned fabric. The embroidered elements become the subject themselves. I curate and meld the elements together until their relationships become integrated. I build surfaces that shimmer and dissolve into one another. As I discover connections and blend elements, the separate strands become a harmonious tapestry of mixed media.

An underlying strand of meaning in my work is spun around the concept of beauty. Who has the authority to claim what is beautiful and what is not? Salma Hayek wrote an enlightening statement about this idea. "People often say that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder,' and I say that the most liberating thing about beauty is



Fig. 5. Jill Maytorena, *The Fairest of Them All*, 2022, Pastel and Fabric on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.

realizing that you are the beholder. This empowers us to find beauty in places where others have not dared to look, including inside ourselves.” I find beauty in unusual and sometimes dissimilar materials. I find beauty in different feminine images. There is beauty that I discover in men as in my work *Rainbows & Resolve* (Fig. 4), and beauty that I discover in an older visage such as *The Fairest of Them All* (Fig. 5). I want to draw men with wild patterns and decoration like *Rainbows & Resolve*, and I want to draw young, beautiful women and celebrate their image. I reject the idea that to be a feminist I am limited in the way that I can portray beauty. I must leave room in my drawings for the freedom to explore. I came close to rejecting what I considered feminism in my work until I read a quote by the feminist activist, Gloria Steinem. She stated, “A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men” (Figetakis). Perhaps there is room in this vessel called feminism for freedom and exploration. I defy the idea that beauty is only found in a golden ratio. In *Presence & Pattern* (Fig. 6), I play with stereotypes as I combine a youthful appearance with flowers and embellishment. I celebrate and discover beauty. I do not censure it.

Mary Smull, an artist who makes abstract needlepoint states,

I don't think about plot. I think about character.

What makes a great character so engaging?

That tension between the part of the character you can understand and the part you can't understand, reconciling that into one

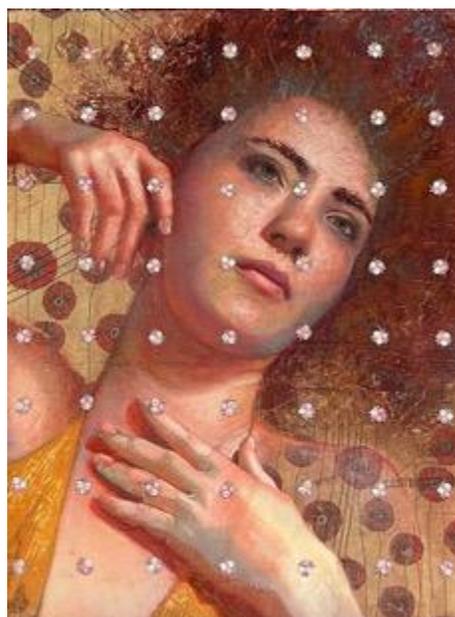


Fig. 6. Jill Maytorena, *Presence & Pattern*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.

being. The best images do that, too. There's enough complication in the image that it takes a while for the mind to reconcile the parts. There's more than one answer to the question. (Crimmins)

There is not an explicit narrative in my work. Like Smull, I do not think about the plot. I think a lot about the character of my work and the questions that it could raise.

The figure is usually a vital part of my drawings. And while it may be the focal point, it is sometimes no more important than the other elements. It is another facet in the collage. The figure becomes another voice in the clashing, strident, and visual muddle until its relationship is resolved with the other elements. The figure and the patterns have a symbiotic relationship. For the sake of the character of my work, the figure needs the pattern to be present. The pattern creates the environment. It creates harmony and disruption. The pattern does not



Fig. 7. Jill Maytorena, *Work in Progress*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

always need the figure to be present, but when the figure is introduced to the pattern, the figure creates its own kind of chaos. The pattern comes to life as it becomes both the foreground and the background. The figure interacts with the pattern in a way that feels transgressive. The human form gives the pattern surface to break. Each figure provides the image with tension and harmony. In my drawing *Work in Progress* (Fig. 7), the boundaries of texture are pushed as I seek to discover my limits of surface adornment. I study the dialogue between the foreground and the background, and the figure and the patterned environment.

Between the dissipation and discovery, the foreground and background dissolve into a



Fig. 8. Jill Maytorena, *Jardin*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 24 in.

symbiotic relationship and become one.

Through figuration, vivid pastels and pattern, my drawings also recapture and reorder societal ideas regarding women through my female gaze and experience.

The femininity that we know of today was constructed upon singular archetypes that

gave women restricted ways of being. I believe that women are not a singular anything.

Women are beings of depth and complexity. I am weaving drawings where women are elaborate and unapologetic subjects and providers of authentic experience and empathy. In the palimpsest—a surface having diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface (Merriam-Webster)—of my drawings, fractured floral patterns disintegrate into ruptured and unruly disobedience. The figure negotiates this unbridled space. The lush richness of a vibrant inner beauty has an unorthodox, uncultivated, and unharnessed quality to it. In *Jardin* (Fig. 8), I explore the way the foreground and background melt away into each other. The exterior environment becomes a reverberation of an interior garden, and the boundary lines soften and dissolve. There is a



Fig. 9. Jill Maytorena, *Reflection*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

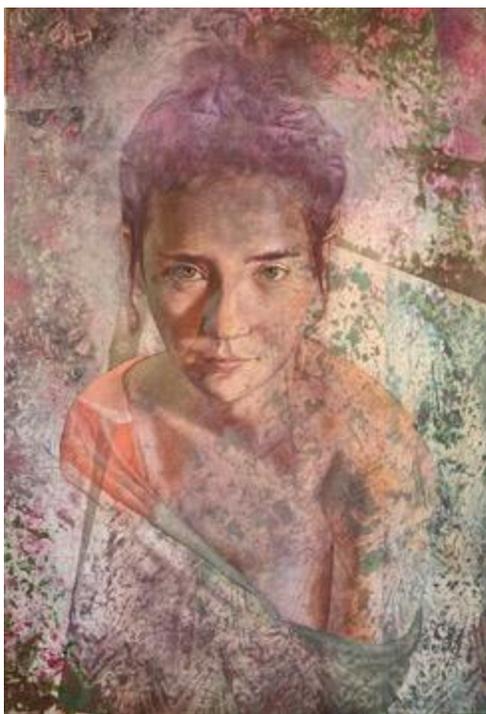


Fig. 10. Jill Maytorena, *The Gaze*, 2020, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

physicality to this process of sanding, layering, lifting, and building the mediums until they the textures unite the figure and the background. These patterns breath through the figure and together they create a new beautiful reality.

When I interweave elements, I amplify an idea. While I do not always know how to respond to a new intension, I do know it takes intuition, skill, and focus to learn and understand the new mystery before me. In the drawing *Reflection* (Fig. 9), I weave a dazzling dialogue between the woman’s interior self and her external environment as the figure

contemplates the viewer. I form a space where the figure and the environment begin to disintegrate into each other. The result is an effective dimensional figure and a flat plane that plays with space and form.

In my drawings, patterns bellow in chorus as competing repetitions build

into a cacophony of visual pleasure. Patterns sigh as they quietly dissolve. “More is more” resonates with my drawings. By layering, lifting, and exploring the surface I am in harmony with the P&D movement. The topography of *The Gaze* (Fig. 10) is built by combining and

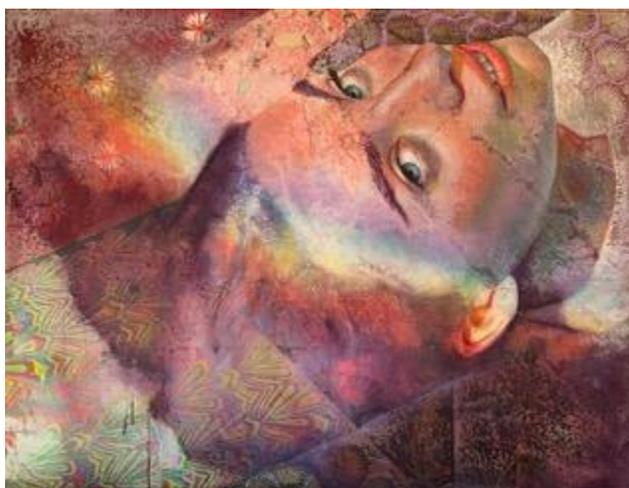


Fig. 11. Jill Maytorena, *The Room Was Then Illuminated*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 48 in. x 36 in.

distressing flowered patterns so that the surface shimmers with depth and interest. In *The*

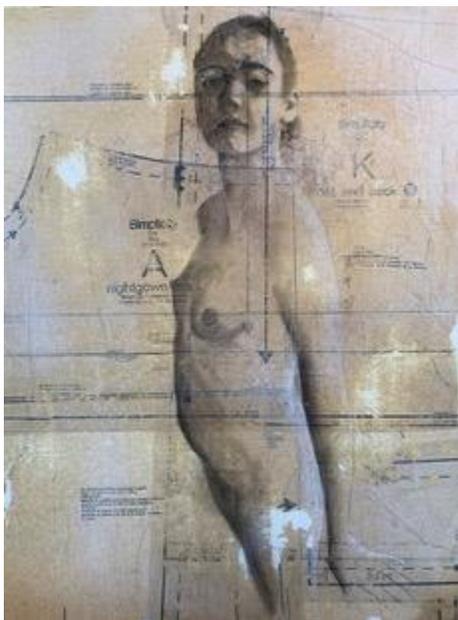


Fig. 12. Jill Maytorena, *I Defy the Measurement*, 2020, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.

Room Was Then Illuminated (Fig. 11), the drawing is no longer solely about the pattern and decoration, but about the dynamic exchange between the figure and the ground. The conversation changes when I add the figure to the pictorial plane. There are no limitations placed on her feminine self, and she is fully realized in her environment.

As a way of challenging the stereotype of perfection, I investigate a belief in the lie that says that other women and myself do not measure up to expectations. Like my fears and my scars, these are the

parts of me, both the physical and emotional, that I want to hide. This branch of my work began with a box of vintage dressmaker patterns. While I sifted through the box of tissue paper instructions about cutting, folding, and measuring, I saw my daughter's image on the patterns. I see these patterns as a representation of archetypes of beauty. My daughter has surgical scars from childhood cancer that weave over her body in thickened, ropey lines. Standing in defiance and challenging the idea that only unmarred skin can be beautiful, I could see her, fully formed, on the fabric pattern. *I Defy the*

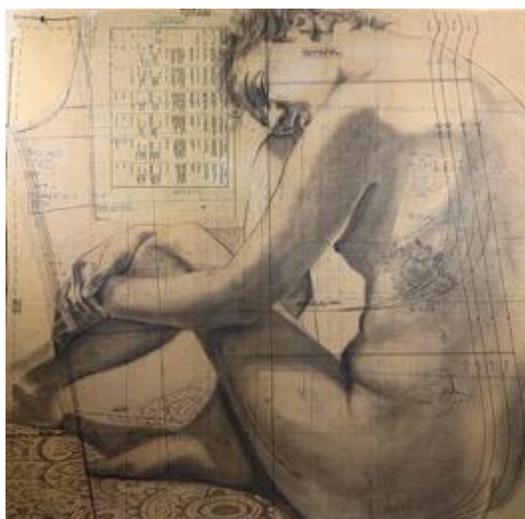


Fig. 13. Jill Maytorena, *The Seam Line*, 2021, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 36 in.

Measurement (Fig. 12) crystalized in my mind's eye and became the beginning of my series



Fig. 14. Jill Maytorena, *The Cutting Line*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

about the body and the fabric patterns. Unremitting patterns speak to the implied conformity of the body. In *The Seam Line* (Fig. 13), I question and explore the obedience to societal norms. These patterns reinforce the laws of stability, order, and compliance. The cutting, folding, measuring, and trimming of fabric implied by dressmaker patterns is a metaphor for the way the figure can be viewed as flawed or in need of alteration.

Filaments of these stories about feminine

archetypes continue to find their way into my drawings.

Feminism challenges me to

see my reflection and the reflection of others with a set of glasses which correct the distortion I see in the mirror.

Feminism is the belief in equality for women. It also asks that I explore equality in beauty. Dressmaker patterns provide the surface of my panels like *The Cutting Line* (Fig. 14). Young women, women with round figures, older women like *The Interfacing* (Fig. 15) and the very slim are explored on these patterns. The swooping and precise cutting lines intersect the figure and question how beauty is measured.

While I lack the words to fully describe my intuitive nature, I find that drawing conveys these mysteries for me.



Fig. 15. Jill Maytorena, *The Interfacing*, 2020, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 12 in. x 24 in.

The act of creation allows me to weave the deeper, private tapestries of myself. This internal process becomes external work. The palimpsest nature of my work spins together snapshots of memories and present impressions. These layers flood into the surface of my drawings and cause the edges of the past and present to soften and blur. Like my figures, I begin to dissolve into the experience.

RESEARCH

I question the negative connotations of fabric, of ribbon, of lace. I turn these symbols of our imprisonment around.

— *Miriam Schapiro*

The first vibrant thread of inspiration for my work came from a museum show that I did not want to see. In 2019, I was in Los Angeles for the day and decided to explore the Museum of Contemporary Art. When I found the main exhibition called *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985*, dismay swiftly overtook any excitement I had for my visit. All I could think of were the negative connotations. Pattern? A whole show about pattern? Decoration in art seemed even less interesting. I entered the show and prepared to be underwhelmed. I did not know that the exhibition would radically change my vision as an artist. The austere white walls exploded in a wild riot of color, pattern, and texture. Undisciplined objects of craft spilled off some of the surfaces. Others held patterns in grids that stabilized the unruly visual cacophony. I was stunned at the glorious recklessness of it all.

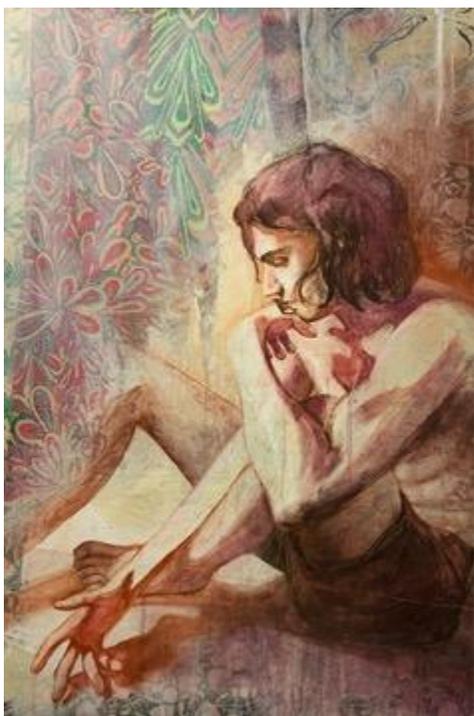


Fig. 16. Jill Maytorena, *Instance and Rhythm*, 2019, Pastel, Acrylic Paint and Found Papers on panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

The P&D movement of the 1970s and 1980s in the U.S. delighted in and ennobled the kind of handicrafts that are familiar around the world, such as quilting, crocheting, and embroidery. The patterns in these works derive from everyday forms such as global art traditions. I created *Instance and Rhythm* (Fig. 16) immediately after I saw *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985*. Although I did not understand at the time how important the P&D movement would become to my work, I can now see the visual and conceptual threads that I was weaving my ideas around in this pastel of my son, Kim

MacConnel's *Dahi Wadi* (Fig. 17) was the first image at the show that caused me to stand still and absorb. His irreverent use of painted bed sheets prompted me to use the vertical panels of pattern in *Instance and Rhythm*.

The P&D movement gave me permission to explore surfaces as a flat two-dimensional space. Unlike *Dahi Wadi*, I was interested in the figure in the flat space. As I continued to study the strands of P&D influence in *Instance and Rhythm*, I was reminded of an



Fig. 17. Kim MacConnel, *Dahi Wadi*, 1978, Acrylic on sewn cotton bed sheets, 100 in. x 110 in. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

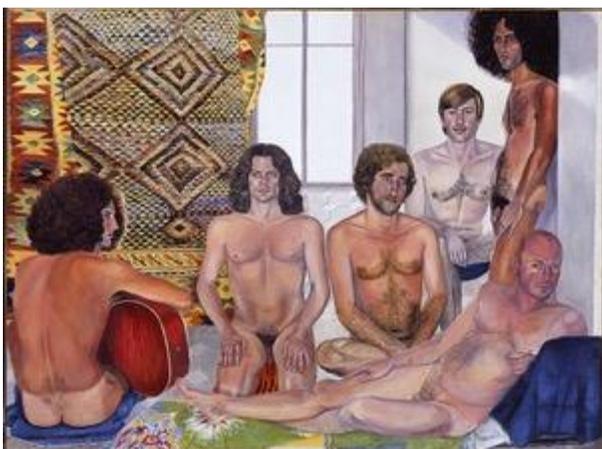


Fig. 18. Sylvia Sleight, *The Turkish Bath*, 1973, Oil on canvas, 76 in. x 102 in. Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago

image that I had not consciously paid much attention to in the exhibition when I first saw it. Sylvia Sleight's *The Turkish Bath* (Fig. 18) is not an image that I am drawn to, but I can see some similarities in our use of the figure in a patterned environment. Sleight's slightly stylized figure on the left of *The Turkish Bath* overlaps a woven tapestry. Instead, I

have created a figure and patterned ground that meld into each other into a less defined space. P&D challenges the art world to examine the binary hierarchy of fine art and craft, and I continue to intertwine that theme into my own work in a slightly different way.

This interlacing of fine art and craft was found when I entered a large room that held Cynthia Carlson's installation *Tough Shift for MIT, room 1* (Fig. 19). The walls seemed to be covered with hand-painted floral wallpaper. On a closer look, the installation was a combination of elements. Glued to the wall, a pattern of artificial polyester and plastic flowers gave way to hand painted flowers. The painted flowers became simple line drawings which dissolved into empty space. Fascinated that the mass-produced, artificial flowers held

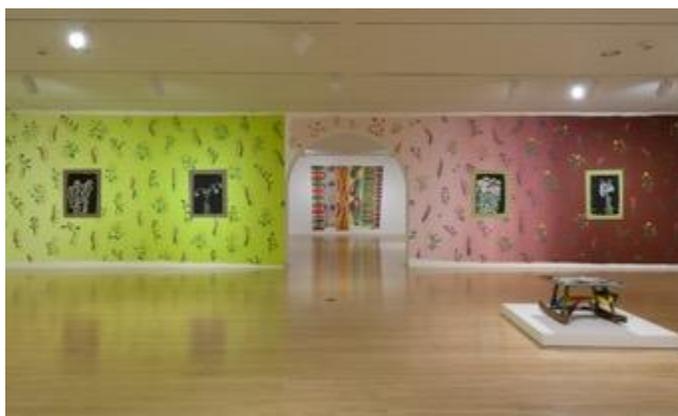


Fig. 19. Cynthia Carlson, *Tough Shift for MIT, room 1*, 1981, Mixed Media, 10' x 48', Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles



Fig. 20. Miriam Schapiro, *Heartland*, 1985, Acrylic and fabric on canvas, 85 in. x 94 in, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

titled *Heartland* (Fig. 20). Femmage was the term that Schapiro used to combine feminism and collage. Linda Nochlin describes the use of collage in the context of femmage as “a technique that calls the much-vaunted purity of High Art into question by its very nature, bringing the most banal elements from the real world into the fictive realm of representation” (Gouma-Peterson 7-10). *Heartland* is a love letter to women’s handiwork which has been seen as trite, such as sewing and quilting. Femmage explored the excess and exuberance of P&D, but it also

no more artifice than the painted ones, I was inspired and intrigued by Carlson’s unfettered use of the decorative.

One of the most influential artists that I encountered at the MOCA show was Miriam Schapiro and her works that she called “Femme.” The first work of hers that I experienced was the eight-foot-high appliquéd heart



Fig. 21. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 7*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.

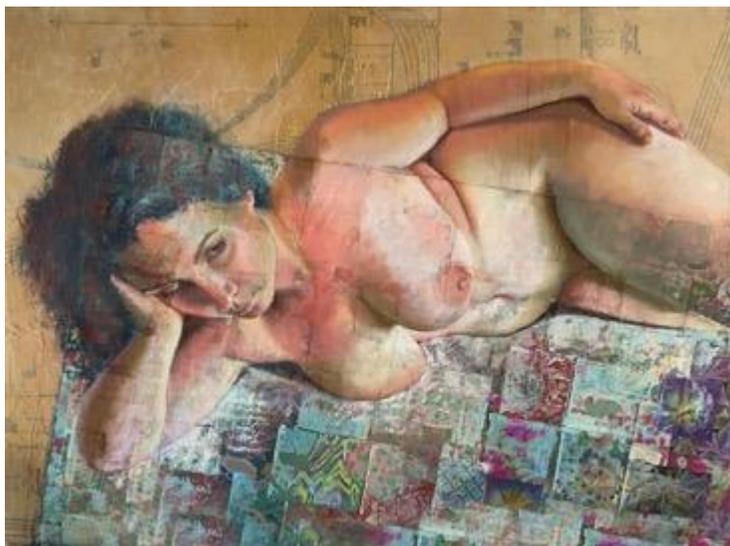


Fig. 22. Jill Maytorena, *The Pose*, 2021, Pastel, Oil Paint and Found Papers on panel, 36 in. x 24 in.

entwined itself with the ancient tradition of craft work done at home by women. Schapiro transported the product of craft into the realm of fine art (Broude 320). She celebrated craft as a way of acknowledging the history of women's work. Schapiro heavily ornamented her surfaces with fabric, paper, paint, and appliqués, and in my work *Floral 7* (Fig. 21) I share this approach with her. I collage fabric, appliqués, paint, and insects to create the image. Mindful of the tradition of craft, I intentionally offer my work as fine art. Aware of the implications of mere decoration, I embrace the decorative. I challenge the negative connotations of embellishment. In a contradiction to the sanitized and rigid gallery walls, I fearlessly explore excess.

While I investigated repeating patterns with abandon, I also began to study dressmaker patterns and the conversation that I see these patterns have with body dysmorphia and with beauty. In *The Cutting Line* (Fig. 14), I discovered, from a feminist perspective, how the figure is impacted conceptually and intersected physically by the dressmaker patterns. In *The Pose* (Fig. 22) I extended my dialogue with femmage by including multiple patterns which speak to the measured value of the female nude. The realization that my drawings have a deep connection with femmage inspires me to weave more relationships with Schapiro's work.

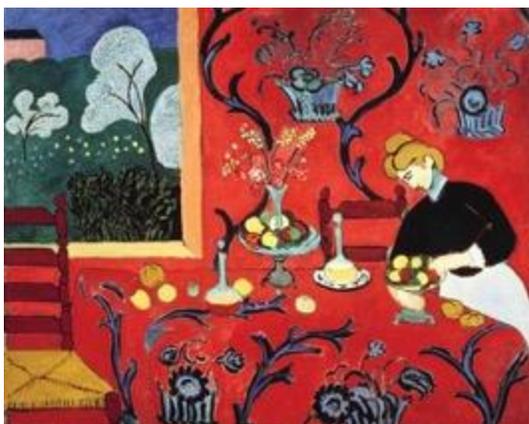
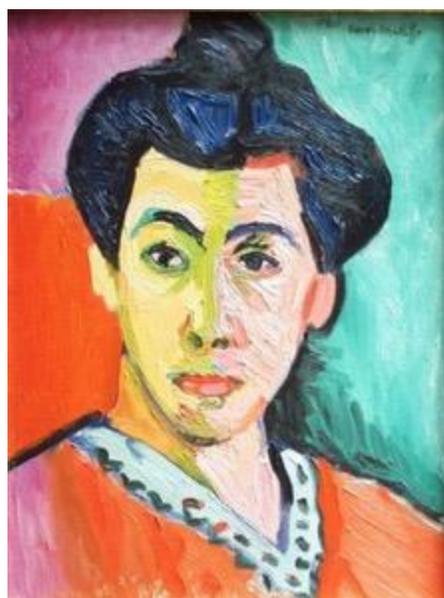


Fig. 23. Henri Matisse, *The Dessert: Harmony in Red (The Red Room)*, c. 1908, Oil on canvas, 70.9 in. × 86.6 in., Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

Henri Matisse was known for his bright colors and flat two-dimensional shapes. Like him, I explore flat patterned spaces in the pictorial frame. I did not think of Matisse as an influence until I looked at his work through my experience with P&D. Matisse was an artist who weaved on the warp of Art Nouveau and the decorative arts that came before him (Broude 319). In *The*

Dessert: Harmony in Red (The Red Room) (Fig. 23), Matisse allows pattern to drift across the table and wall to collapse space. While I may seek to flatten space with pattern, I do not flatten my figurative images in the way that he does. Matisse was audacious in his choices of color, and I find myself inspired to experiment with my own choices. I see some similarities in his portrait, *Portrait of Madame Matisse, The Green Line* (Fig. 24), and in my own

portrait, *The Gaze*, (Fig. 10). In the *Portrait of Madame Matisse, the Green Line*, Matisse has compressed the space and used color in a manner consistent with the



Comparison between Fig. 24. Henri Matisse, *Portrait of Madame Matisse, The Green Line*, 1905, Oil on canvas, 16 in. x 12 in, The National Gallery of Denmark and Fig. 10, Jill Maytorena, *The Gaze*, 2020.

Fauves. In my portrait, the background has been flattened and I have begun to play with color in the portrait that is not representational. Unlike Matisse, my figures remain dimensional and not stylized. It is important for me to create a representational figure to both contrast with the atmospheric and ethereal environment, and to begin to dissolve into the environment in a visual conversation.

While I weave my work in an intuitive and emotional way, it has been insightful to recognize the warp that provides the underlying structural threads. With an affinity for pattern and a reverence for craft, I pull my visual and conceptual fibers over and around the P&D movement and from artists such as MacConnel and Carlson. The warp that is Schapiro's femmage allows me to collage and explore my own voice in the feminist tradition. Further back, I can see the filaments of patterned lineage in the works of Matisse. I am the weaver of my own work, but I will always be in conversation with my threads of influence.

I fabricate my drawings with other strands of inspiration. Creative revelations are drawn from poetry that aligns anarchy with possibility and artistry. The words of Virginia Woolf, Wislawa Szymborska and Alfred Lord Tennyson echo the chaos of possibility with resounding truth and beauty. My work flows from this wellspring of verbal density with a visual density of its own.

I found a quote from Woolf while I was researching the P&D movement. Woolf clearly illuminates a process that I have no words to describe. Each time I read this passage it is a revelation.

I attain a different kind of beauty, achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords;
showing all the traces of the mind's passage through the world; achieve in the end,

some kind of whole made of shivering fragments; to me this seems the natural process; the flight of the mind... (Woolf cited by Michod 284)

Woolf explores the contradictory nature of the creative self. I also seek a “whole made from shivering fragments” by innately choosing contrasting patterns and imagery. My “shivering fragments” are created from gathering materials in what feels like a haphazard and nonrational experience. In *Birds of a Feather, Work in Progress* (Fig. 25) I meld materials together as I glue, paint, sand, and layer the images until they become an unexpected environment for an



Fig. 25. Jill Maytorena, *Birds of a Feather, Work in Progress*, 2022, Pastel, Fabric, Paint, and Appliqués on ACM Panel, 28 in. x 32 in.

unexpected figure. Woolf writes of “a symmetry of infinite discords,” and this describes my process of finding the visual balance of a whole that is greater than its parts. The “Natural process; the flight of the mind,” challenges me to look at the way that I criticize my collections of jumbled thoughts. To me, Woolf is suggesting that I do not need to tidy and constrain my flighty notions. The way my visual ideas jump from insight to non-sequester reflects the rhythm of my own natural process.

Wisława Szymborska speaks to how she embraces chaos and trusts an internal compass in her poem, “Options.”

I prefer many things not mentioned here to many others unmentioned,

I prefer zeros randomly scattered

to zeros lined up in rows.

I prefer a time of flies to a time of stars.

I prefer to touch wood.

I prefer not to ask how much longer and when.

I prefer consideration of the option that there are many ways of being.

(Szyborska cited by Bassnet 41)

Szyborska's poetry is like a lucid treasure. I was investigating feminism in art when I came across this excerpt from her poem. I was — and still am — struck, as if hit by a bracing wave, by the resounding precision of her words. For me, this poem is about confirming the wisdom of travelling the path less taken. The idea that an unexpected uncontrollable mess can point the way to clarity is described by Szyborska as, "I prefer a time of flies to a time of stars." Instead of the reassurance of fixed points in the sky, flies represent an uncontainable wildness, a reality without black and white fixed absolutes. In considering Szyborska's last line "the option that there are many ways of being," my own work is given the freedom to develop on its own accord. I have the choice to contradict myself, and I have the choice to change my mind.

In 1833, Alfred Lord Tennyson composed a magical poem called "The Lady of Shalott." I first read the poem when I was nine. I was attending a girl's boarding school in England, and I was charged with memorizing the first four stanzas of the poem. As I memorized the words, the poem became my own. Tennyson's words are still written in my memory. It was as if the poem had been privately written for me about an immersive world that only I knew. My understanding of the poem has changed over the years, but it remains

To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,

The Lady of Shalott. (Tennyson cited by Gardner 637).

The siren's call to cocoon myself in the familiar is represented by her weaving the loomed tapestry by day and night. Would I choose to weave shadowy images without care for eternity? Or would I, like her, risk everything for a vision of reality? If I become complacent in my work—if I only create what I already know and what is safe—then I am weaving my own veiled images. To risk everything is to look outside my own creative tower and visually respond to the mysterious, the beautiful and the chaotic inspirations that I see.

These poets' words give voice to the poetry of my soul, and they continue to inspire my work and resonate with my contradictory and intuitive nature. The art created by P&D and artists such as MacConnel, Carlson, Schapiro, and Matisse inform my work both visually and conceptually. Like weaving a tapestry, my art is laced across these strands of influence. I seek to fearlessly embrace the chaos of the unknown and excess by pushing my boundaries and trusting my intuitive process. In the chaos, I can run the risk of confusion and indecision. Puzzling through these obstacles brings unexpected riches to my work. Preferring to see that there are many possibilities for my art gives me the freedom to choose multiple directions and discover new ways of seeing and creating.

METHODOLOGY

It is an artist's job is to make order out of chaos. You collect details, look for a pattern, and organize. You make sense out of senseless facts. You puzzle together bits of everything. You shuffle and reorganize. Collage. Montage. Assemble.

—*Palahniuk*

I find beauty in unusual and sometimes contrasting materials. I am looking for harmony between disparate decorative elements. Investigating a way to describe an interior emotional landscape, I build surfaces that shimmer and dissolve into one another. Stripped from any temporal/spatial connotation, the characters in my work evoke a sense of transcendental presence that speaks to viewers on a subconscious level. The portrayal of the figures is achieved by meticulous drawing techniques. Deconstruction (and reconstruction) of the surroundings is achieved by a juxtaposition of different media. My creative process is deliberately chaotic in the beginning. I puzzle and weave the elements from this chaos to achieve a sense of harmony. As I challenge myself to use embellished materials, I ask myself, "How far is too far?" Can I create a beautiful ephemeral moment with multiple patterns and decoration? Will the collage unify as it is woven into an image of fine art, or will the individual elements fall into kitsch?

I begin my process by finding my figurative image first. Discovering a pose that is graceful, poetic and a little otherworldly, I capture my subject's unselfconscious gaze. As I notice a shift in her posture, she leans forward with an attitude of confidence, and her eyes challenge me in subtle defiant regard. Each slight movement of the body changes the narrative. She straightens her spine and shifts a little to the right. Her open hands raise in a graceful gesture (see Fig. 30). The reverberating resonance in my mind tells me that this is

the vehicle. Her head turns, and she looks out into the distance with a cool gaze, and I know that I have found the image for *Adornment* (Fig. 34).

For this drawing, I decided on a 48 x 36-inch aluminum composite material to provide a solid surface. Larger surfaces allow the mark making to come expressively from my arm and shoulder rather than a smaller surface where the marks come from the wrist. Preparing the decorative surface as the foundation of the drawing begins with placing assorted silk-screened papers on the ground. I pick these papers because the texture will reveal itself through the figure and blur the line between foreground and background once I begin drawing. This is the beginning of the intuitive part of my process, and I play with papers in a design method of discovery as I look at mismatched patterns. I search for contrast, color, and harmony that I can unite into a whole. I move the papers on the ground by layering, turning, adding, and subtracting individual sheets. In Fig. 26, I consider each design composition until I find the one that innately works in Fig. 27.



Fig. 26. Jill Maytorena, *Process Images 1, Adornment*, 2021, Found Paper on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

Once I have found my design, I begin to adhere the papers to the panel with a matte gel medium. The medium seals the paper and gives the surface a slight tooth. At this point the papers are too crisply collaged as they just lay next to each other like unfamiliar visitors. Since I seek to create a unified whole, I begin to disrupt the crisp quality of



Fig. 27. Jill Maytorena, *Process Image 2, Adornment*, 2021, Found Paper on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in. 2021.

the entire surface with gesso primer, sandpaper, and acrylic paint. I create areas with diluted gesso to make hazy clouds that drift over and veil the patterns. I sand edges to soften areas where the papers meet. Paint is used sparingly to guild areas with golden abstracted marks. When the surface works as one environment, I can begin to draw the figure.

In Fig. 28, *Adornment, Work in Progress 1*, marks are the first drawn images to appear on the panel. Mark-making is the framework and the breath of each piece. Sculpting



and crafting shapes, my marks weave, soften edges and boldly sit on the surface. Blending and layering the hues in feathery strokes, I can softly describe the form. Dragging the shades with a weighted hand causes bold marks that bring structure and contrast, mood, and

Fig. 28. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment, Work in Progress 1*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

tone. Marks define shape and marks lose edges. Marks will build a rhythm, pattern, and describe texture and bring variety. While cast and form shadows express the light, high key values cause the form to take shape. Mark-making shapes the power and energy of my ideas.

As I find the gestures of her form, I mark lightly with pastel pencils. In Fig. 28, I begin to quickly find the shapes and features on the patterned panel. I realize that the image and I are strangers at this point. We have not yet developed a rapport. Mapping the surface allows me to get to know her. Starting with the placement of the eyes I map paths to other areas of her figure. Each time I explore the new terrain of her face and hands, I check my

map to see if I agree with my decisions. Marking my paths as I go, I am impatient at this point. I want to rush into this process and unleash creative energy. Rushing means that I will need to come back and repair areas that are unresolved. With the figure drawn I can commence to explore hue and form.

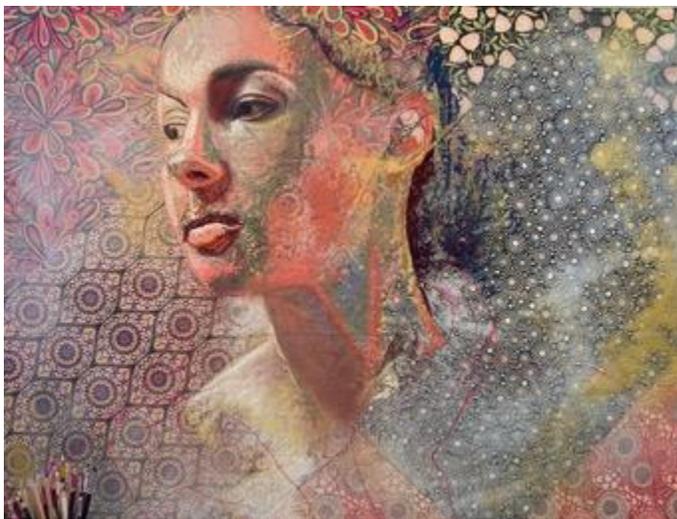


Fig. 29. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment, Work in Progress 2*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

Color always begins with the pastel box. It is a long, rectangular hinged container that opens like an oversized book. With a sense of anticipation, I lift the clasps and look inside. From the deepest of violets and palest blues to the creamiest yellow ochres and the richest of reds, rows, and rows of vibrant soft pastels

shimmer in the case. I have an infatuation with soft pastels. I love the way they feel. I love the way they blend into each other one moment and sit on top of each other in the next. I love the way my hands get dirty and that I get to work with hundreds of individual colors. From the dizzying array of pastels, I choose my palette. I want to use everything, but I know to use self-control. I have learned the power of restrained color choices. The process of discovering which colors work is a pleasurable and sometimes frustrating puzzle.

I lightly drag the deep red in the shadowed areas of the face and hands. Using water and a long-handled brush, I create a wash with the powdered pastel. I move my brush in gestural scrubbing motions to further indicate form. In Fig. 29. loose, wet washes glide over the contours of her face. This wash will dry and allow me to work into and lift the surface as

I begin to refine the image. I continue to construct form with warm and cool colors. After building brilliant strokes on her face, I tone the skin with an olive green to neutralize some of the saturation. My lines follow the contours of the face, winding over the cheeks and the chin. I emphasize the structure of the nose by crisscrossing over the bridge and illuminating the tip. I capture reflected light in the shadows under her chin. Catching the light at the bottom of the iris, the green eyes start to fill the face with life. Describing the brown hair with unexpected violets, cobalt, and turquoise, I make shapes and texture without rendering the exact strands. The hair is loosely impressionistic. I move the colors in skipping and curving marks. If I blend the pastel, it gives me solid areas of color. When I drag the pastel over the patterned surface the texture reveals itself in breathtaking ways as it appears through the form of her cheek. Her left shoulder is unrendered as a simple contour line, and it melts into the background. The decorative papers breathe through her body in places allowing the pattern to become part of the foreground.

Part of my idea was to push the boundaries of the decorative elements and at this



Fig. 30. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment, Work in Progress 3*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

point I have only explored the patterned paper. I decide to experiment with flowered appliqués. My concern is that they will not unify with the rest of the image, and they will just look like they are stuck on the surface. I begin to place the appliqués onto the image, trying to find the boundary of excess. I am

surprised and encouraged by the results. I am finding a harmony in the disparate materials and the unexpected three-dimensional aspect of the appliqués. I continue to refine the figure and add more embellishments in Fig. 30.

At this point, I reflect on where I started, what my idea was, and where I ended up. This process of thought can reveal unexpected results. I absorb how I responded intuitively to



Fig. 31. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment, Work in Progress 4*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

the materials, the process, and the concept. The way I challenge myself usually leads to surprising discoveries. I did not create a plan and then follow that plan in an exacting step by step process—or at least my process did not seem that way. My plans are fluid ideas which become guidelines that I can push

and pull through my methods. I challenged myself to use many different elements and press how far I could go with the materials. Looking at the image, what felt like a huge leap now looks like a smaller logical and slightly polite step forward. I needed to push beyond my hesitancy and be bold. In Fig. 31, I add multiple layers of embellishments, ribbon, and thread. The visual cacophony should not work. I heard my artistically narrow-minded voice questioning my choice to embrace the chaos. “Why make it so difficult? Why not simplify and make something like you have done before?” I remembered Ernst’s words as he described the process of collage as “The noble conquest of the irrational.” I decided to

commit myself to the ridiculous disorder, and I moved the elements around until I found the coherent weaving in the collage.

In my exploration of unifying the appliquéés with portrait, I decide to pour resin to



Fig. 32. Jill Maytorena, *Detail of Adornment 1*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

encase the embellishments and the figure. It quickly becomes apparent that the resin is not working in the way that I anticipated. In Fig. 32, the resin darkens everything it touches. I am left with a dark shiny puddle of encrusted appliquéés. I am devastated and my mind reels with the possibility that I just ruined my drawing. It takes me

several days to stop looking at the experiment as a failure. As I really look at the darkened puddle, I begin to see the possibilities and the opportunities. I am emboldened with the idea that I have nothing to lose, and I let go of my cautiousness. I ask myself exciting questions. What would happen if I sanded the embellishments? What if I used pastels and oil paint to enhance the darkened areas? I respond intuitively to the mess in front of me. As I sand, I add more



Fig. 33. Jill Maytorena, *Detail of Adornment 2*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

appliqués, and use a blow torch to melt and distress the threads of the embellishments. I draw



Fig. 34. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment*, 2022, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 48 in. x 36 in.

and paint over the areas of resin, add more aluminum metalized polyethylene terephthalate—commonly known as glitter—and in Fig. 33 the results are surprisingly satisfying. I choose to balance the image by adding more resin to the left side of the image and I repeat the process of pushing and pulling the surface. The final image of *Adornment* (Fig. 34) tells a story of my process as the elements meld together in an unexpected way.

Emboldened by my experience with *Adornment*, I look for other ways to unexpectedly respond to the appliqués. I want to invite the viewer to look closely and make discoveries. I decide to use real dried insects to contrast with the flowers. This contrast adds a little poison to the



Fig. 35. Jill Maytorena, *Detail of Floral 7*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.

and paint over the areas of resin, add more aluminum metalized polyethylene terephthalate—commonly known as glitter—and in Fig. 33 the results are surprisingly satisfying. I choose to balance the

pretty. The insect is vibrant but is camouflaged by the embellishments. It is only on a closer



Fig. 36. Jill Maytorena, *Detail 1 of There is a Castle She is Building Inside Herself*, 2022, Fabric and Thread on Stretched Over Wooden Bars, 26 in. x 24 in.

read that the insect is revealed (Fig. 35).

Building on my experimental momentum, I continue to look at the way that I am weaving decorative elements onto the surface of my work. Since the appliqués are made from threads, I decide to introduce my own threaded stitches. In the *Detail 1* of *There is a Castle She is Building Inside of Herself* (Fig. 36); I machine sew

multiple fabrics together. I take the sewn fabric and stretch it over wooden stretcher bars until

I have created a taut surface. This surface allows me to hand sew patches of fabrics over and

under each other until I have created a

stitched fabric collage. This collage

becomes the environment for the portrait

in *Detail 2 of There is a Castle She is*

Building Inside of Herself (Fig. 37). I

embroider into and around the portrait as

my stitched marks echo the rhythm of

the appliqués. In the finished image of

There is a Castle She is Building Inside

Herself (Fig. 38), the decorative



Fig. 37. Jill Maytorena, *Detail 2 of There is a Castle She is Building Inside Herself*, 2022, Pastel, Fabric and Thread Stretched Over Wooden Bars, 26 in. x 24 in.

elements and the portrait meld together. The embellishments and the figure become both subject and environment.



Fig. 38. Jill Maytorena, *There is a Castle She is Building Inside Herself*, 2022, Pastel, Fabric, Appliqués and Thread Stretched Over Wooden Bars, 26 in. x 24 in.

The appliques have a kitsch quality on their own, but through my practice I find they bring an unexpected dimension to the collage. I will use them again. In future drawings, I will continue to boldly explore excess and see if I can find my limits. I ask myself to discover “How far is too far?” Maybe there is no such thing as too far, but I will continue to live with

the question. In my application of the materials, I discover how to take a unique set of different two-dimensional and three-dimensional imagery and weave an integrated whole. This whole also raises the idea of craft to the level of fine art. I find lucid beauty in the messy process of collage and the use of unusual materials.

CONCLUSION

The MFA program has provided a rigorous and creative space which has helped me recognize the deep connection that I feel to this work and how the work connects to the contemporary art world. When I first began to put these words to paper, I feared that I was not communicating the urgency and the magic that these images hold for me. This work is very personal to me. I also want to leave room for it to speak to others. There is a connection

to patterns that we all share. Through the development of my writing and the development of my collage process, I have stitched together a language that interweaves the symbiotic evolution between the two. Moving forward I will explore these threads of pattern and collage as they organically build into future work. I hope to discover and rediscover work that speaks to the tradition of craft and fine art, and I will create works that describe and study this connection. I no longer question if this connection should work, and I confidently find my way through the confusion. I choose to welcome the chaos and find coherence in the tapestry of disorder.

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APPENDIX

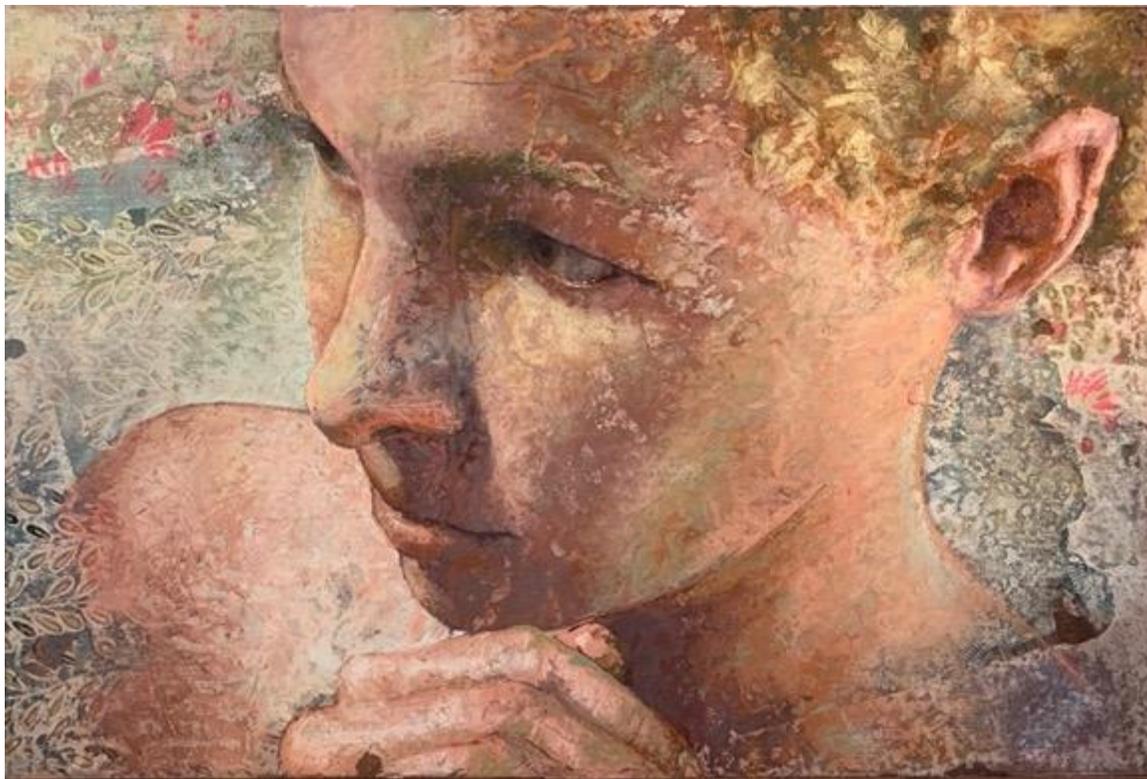


Plate 1. Jill Maytorena, *Jardin*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 24 in.

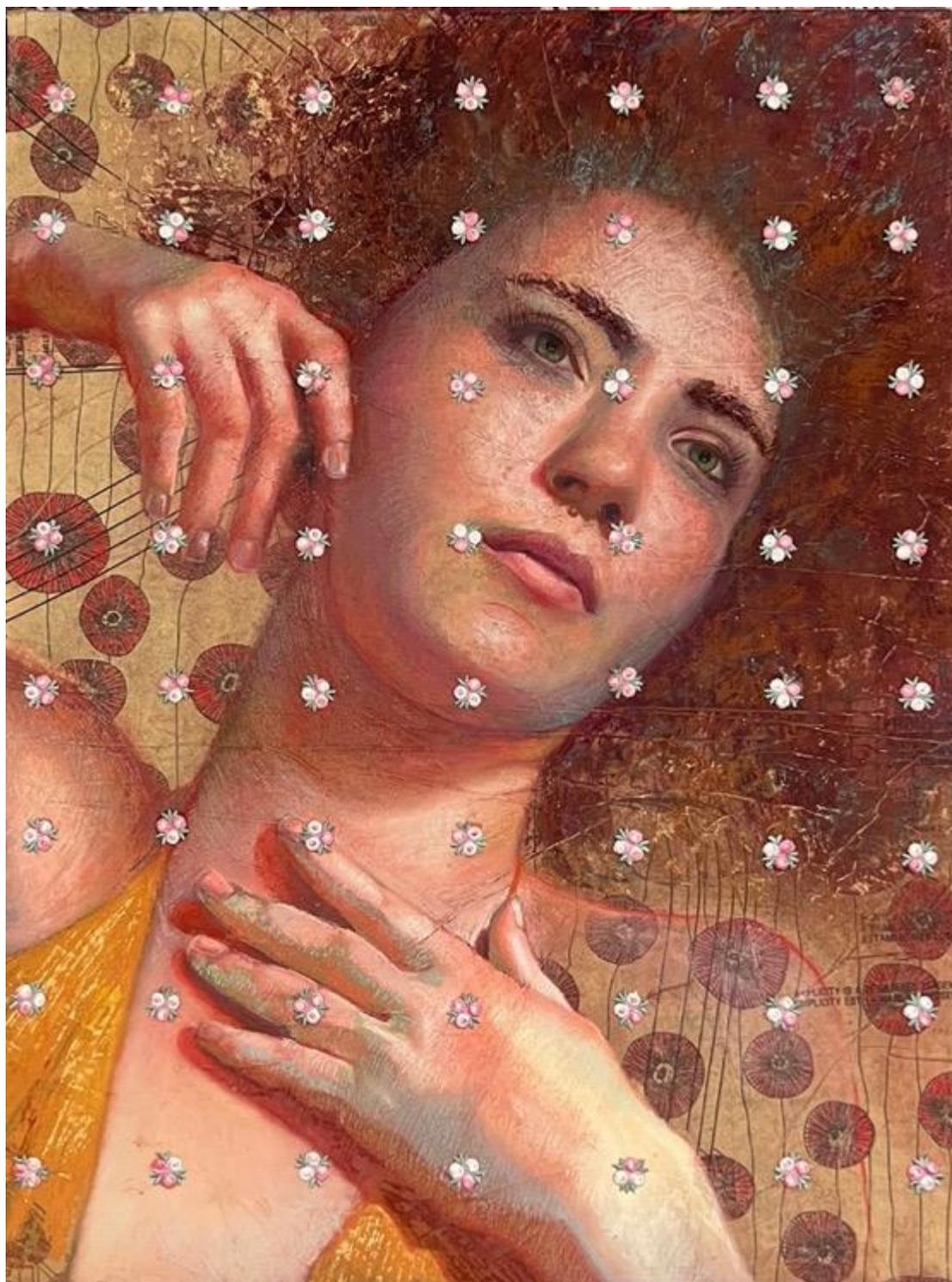


Plate 2. Jill Maytorena, *Presence & Pattern*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.



Plate 3. Jill Maytorena, *Birds of a Feather*, 2022, Pastel, Fabric, Paint, and Appliqués on ACM Panel, 28 in. x 32 in.



Plate 4. Jill Maytorena, *Adornment*, 2022, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 48 in. x 36 in.

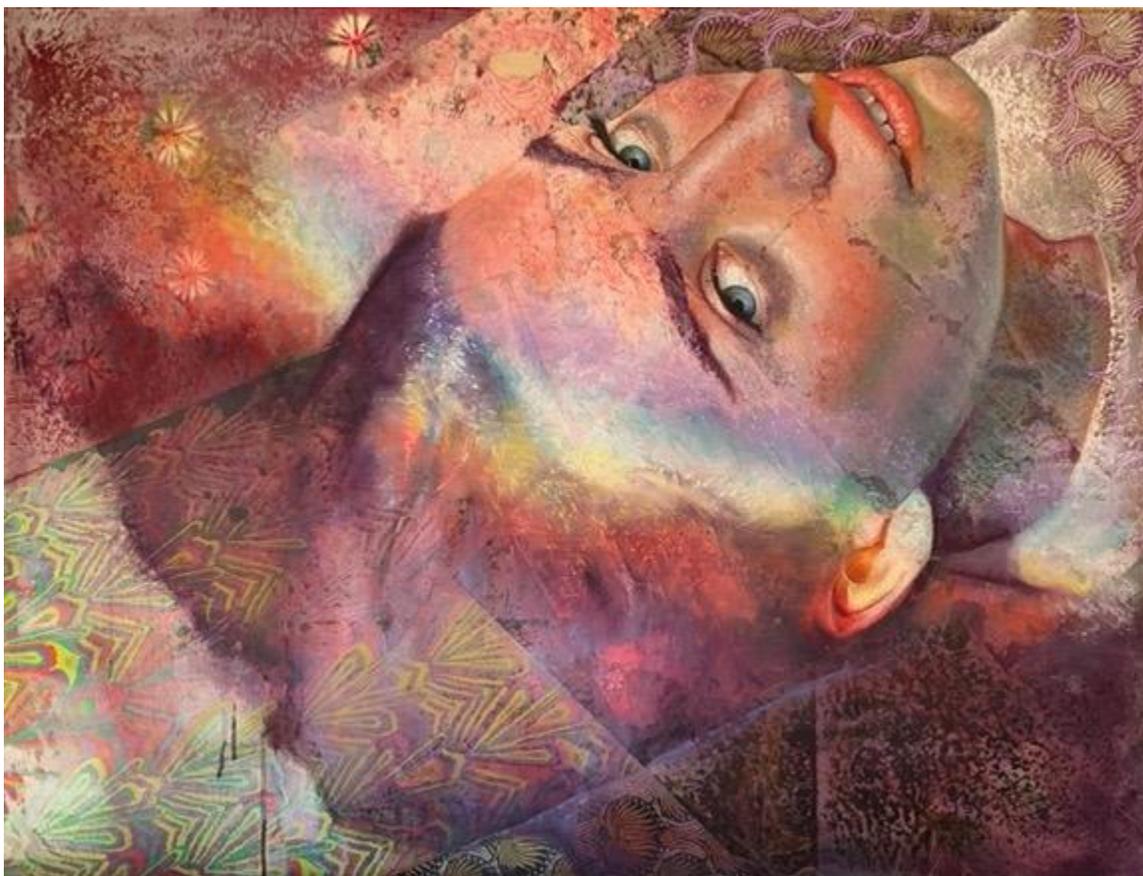


Plate 5. Jill Maytorena, *The Room Was Then Illuminated*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 48 in. x 36 in.

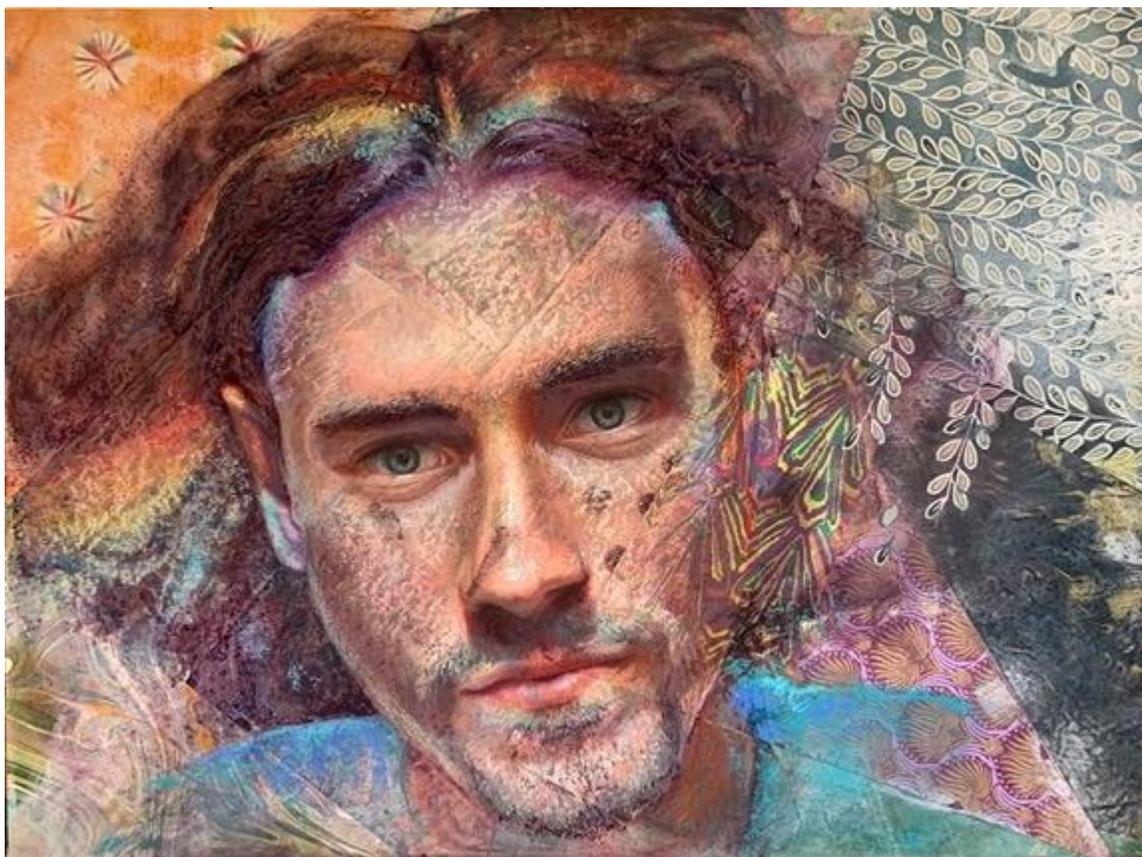


Plate 6. Jill Maytorena, *Rainbows & Resolve*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.



Plate 7. Jill Maytorena, *Alexis*, 2022, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 24 in.



Plate 8. Jill Maytorena, *There is a Castle She is Building Inside Herself*, 2022, Pastel, Fabric, Appliqués and Thread on ACM Panel, 26 in. x 24 in.



Plate 9. Jill Maytorena, *In the Middle*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.



Plate 10. Jill Maytorena, *The Fairest of Them All*, 2022, Pastel and Fabric on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.

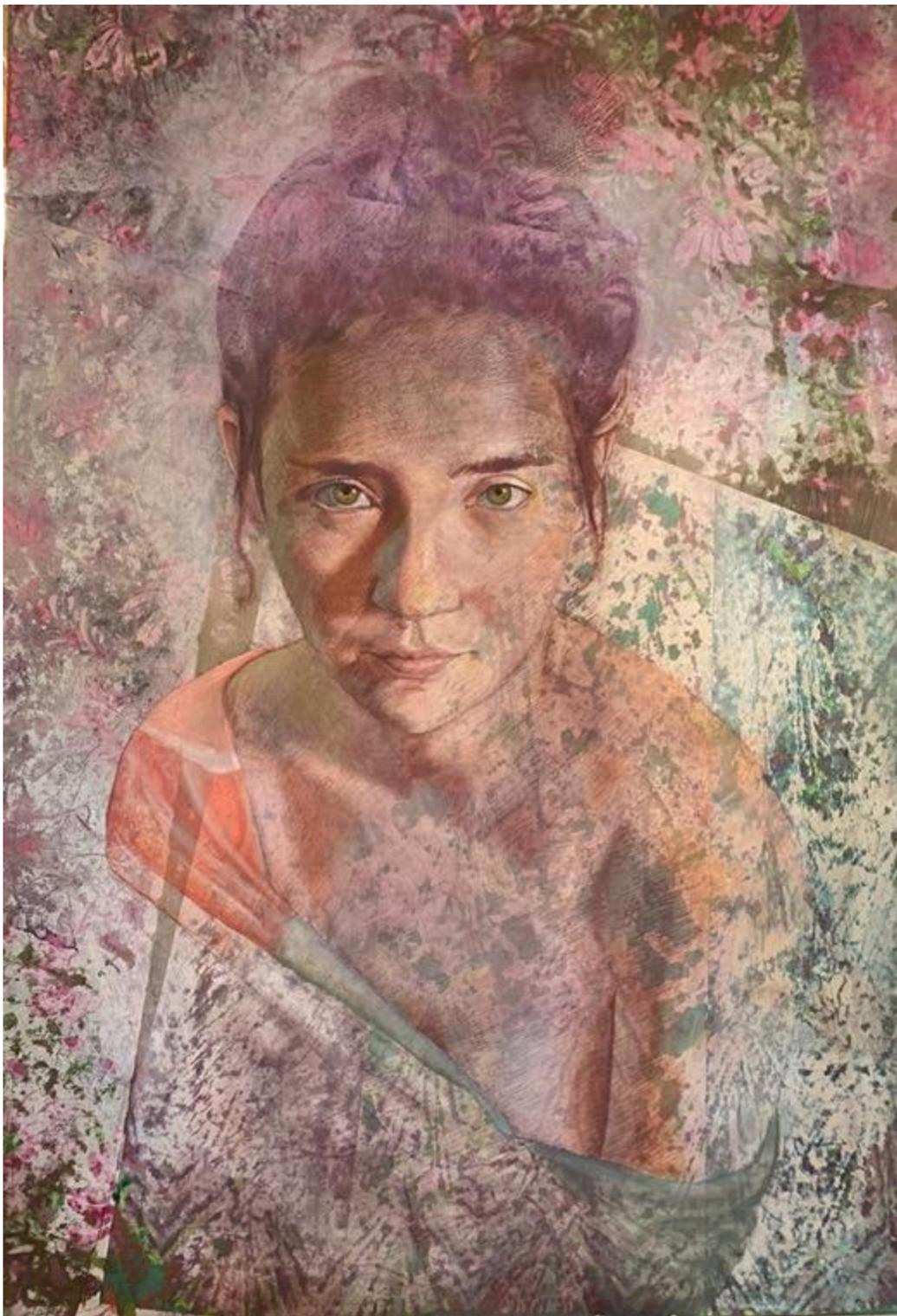


Plate 11. Jill Maytorena, *The Gaze*, 2020, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

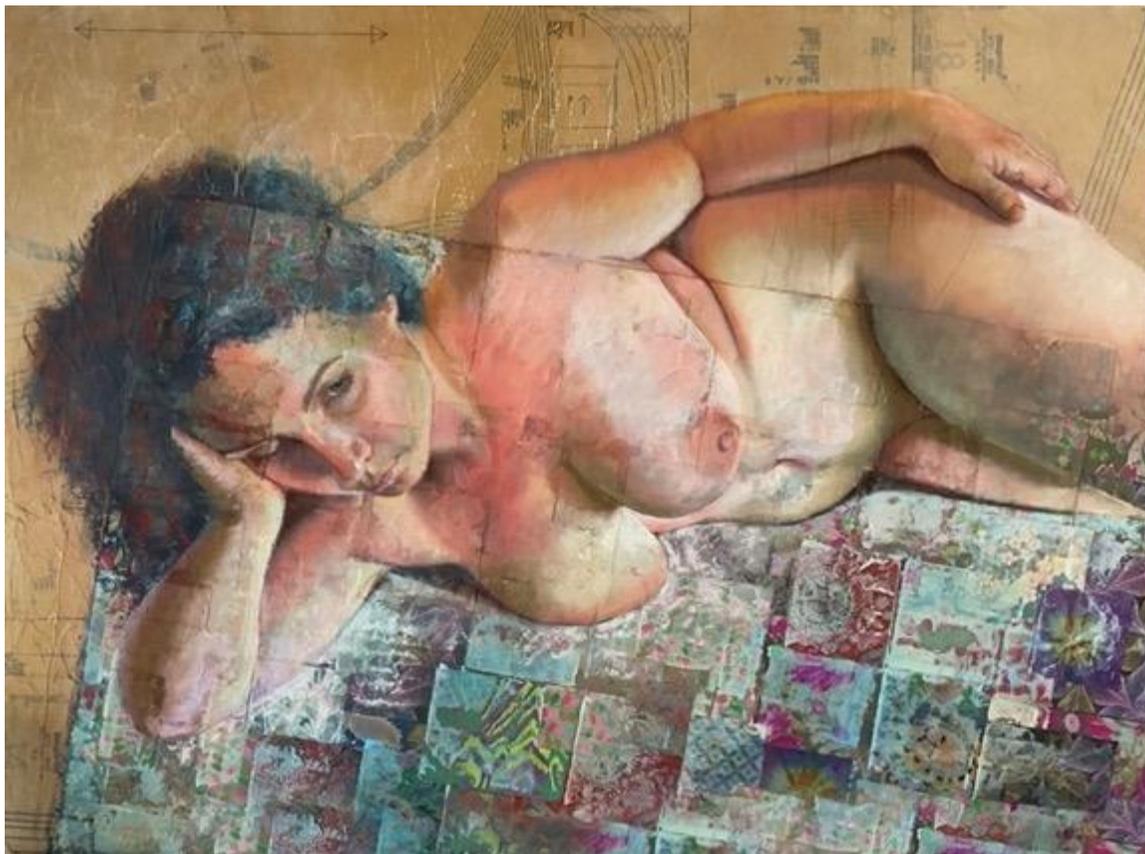


Plate 12. Jill Maytorena, *The Pose*, 2021, Pastel, Oil Paint and Found Papers on Panel, 36 in. x 24 in.

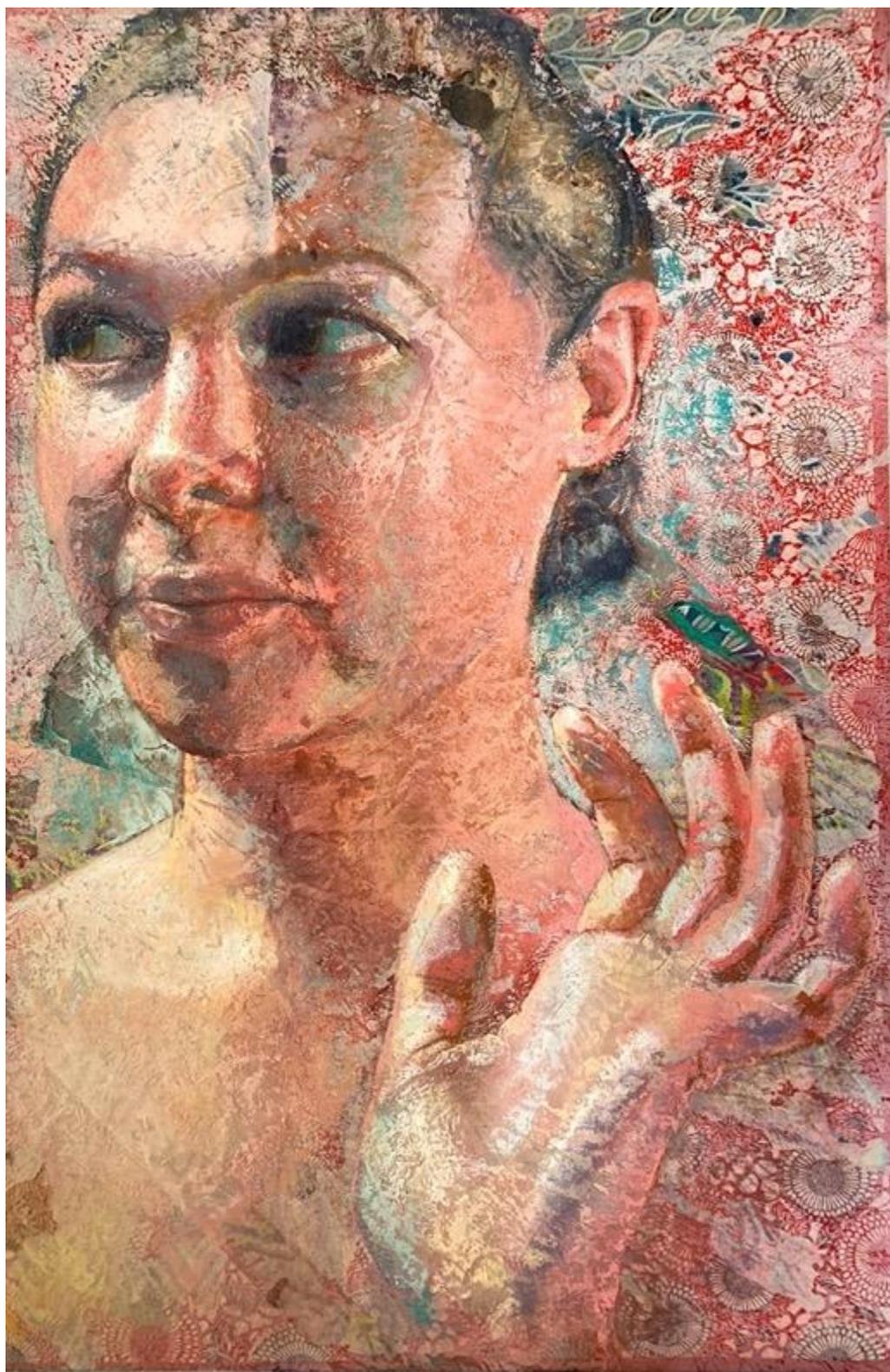


Plate 13. Jill Maytorena, *Alight*, 2021, Pastel and Found Papers on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.



Plate 14. Jill Maytorena, *From the Inside*, 2021, Pastel and Found Fabric on Panel, 36 in. x 24 in.

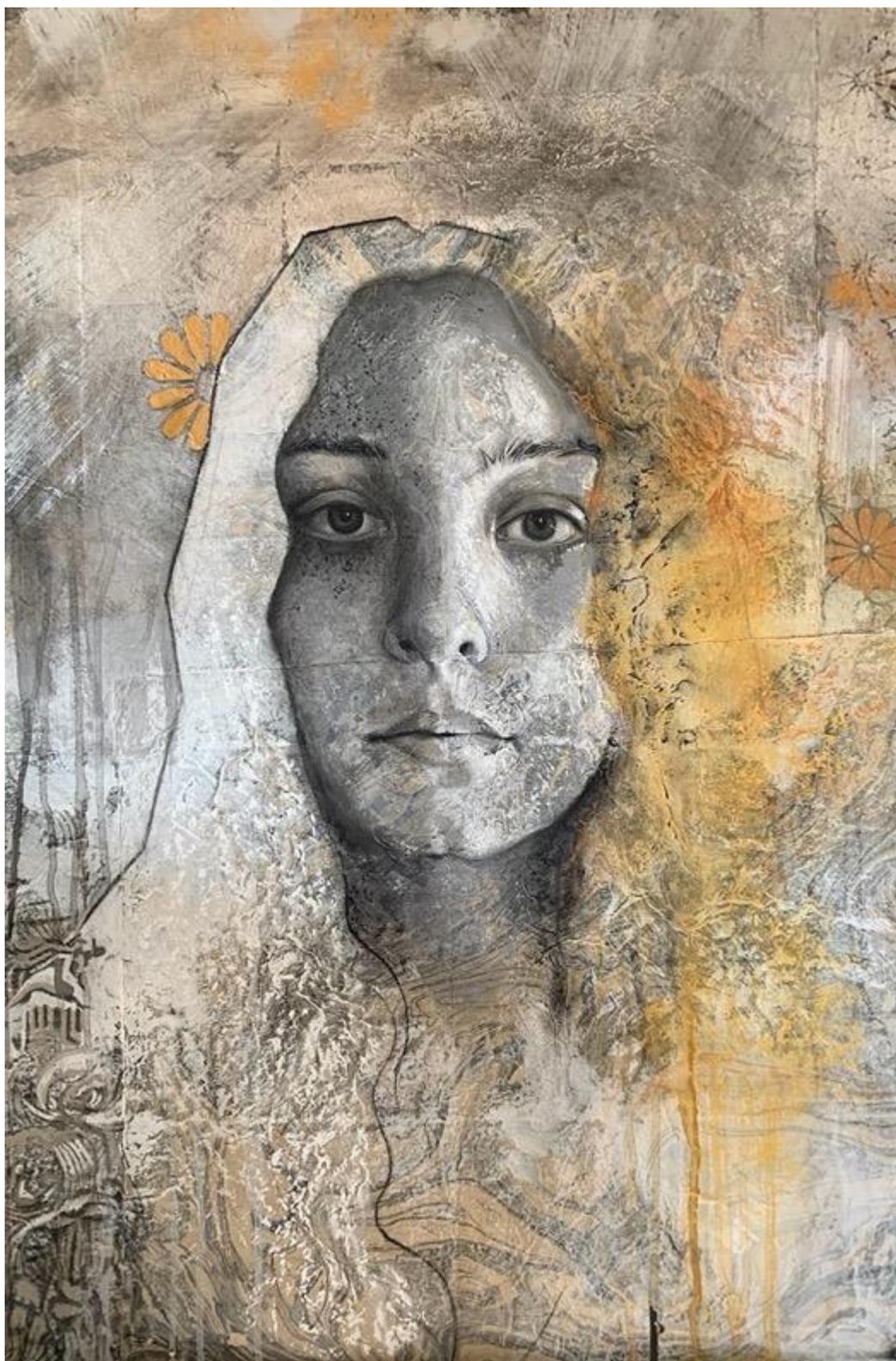


Plate 15. Jill Maytorena, *Reflection*, 2021, Pastel and Found Papers on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

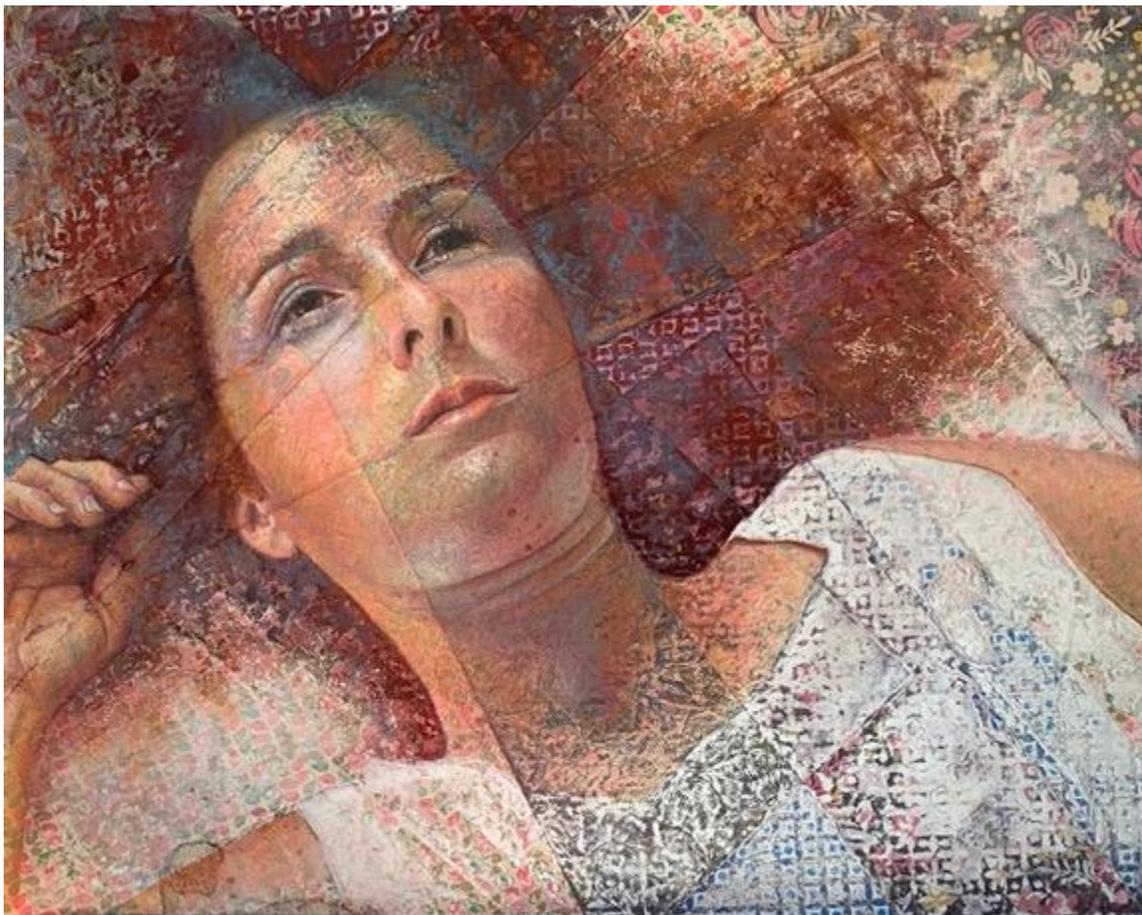


Plate 16. Jill Maytorena, *Dissolve*, 2021, Pastel and Found Papers on Panel, 30 in. x 24 in.

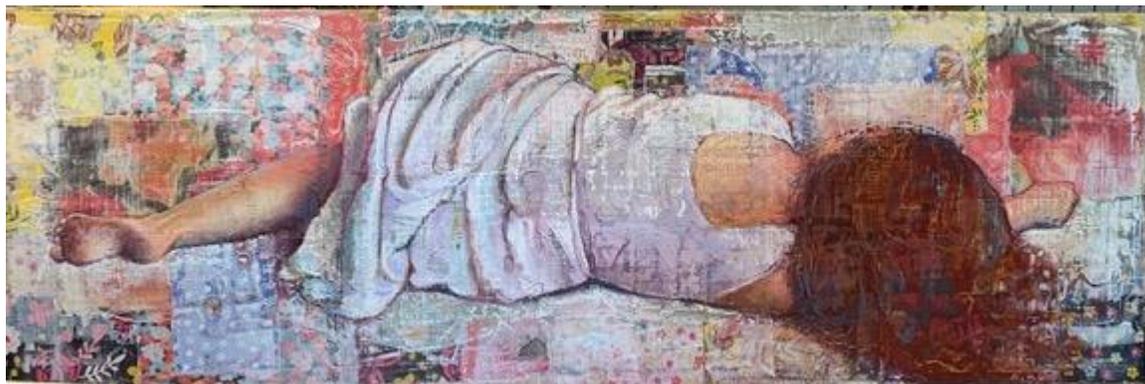


Plate 17. Jill Maytorena, *Patchwork*, 2021, Pastel, Found Papers and Fabric on Panel, 36 in. x 12 in.



Plate 18. Jill Maytorena, *Work in Progress*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 48 in.

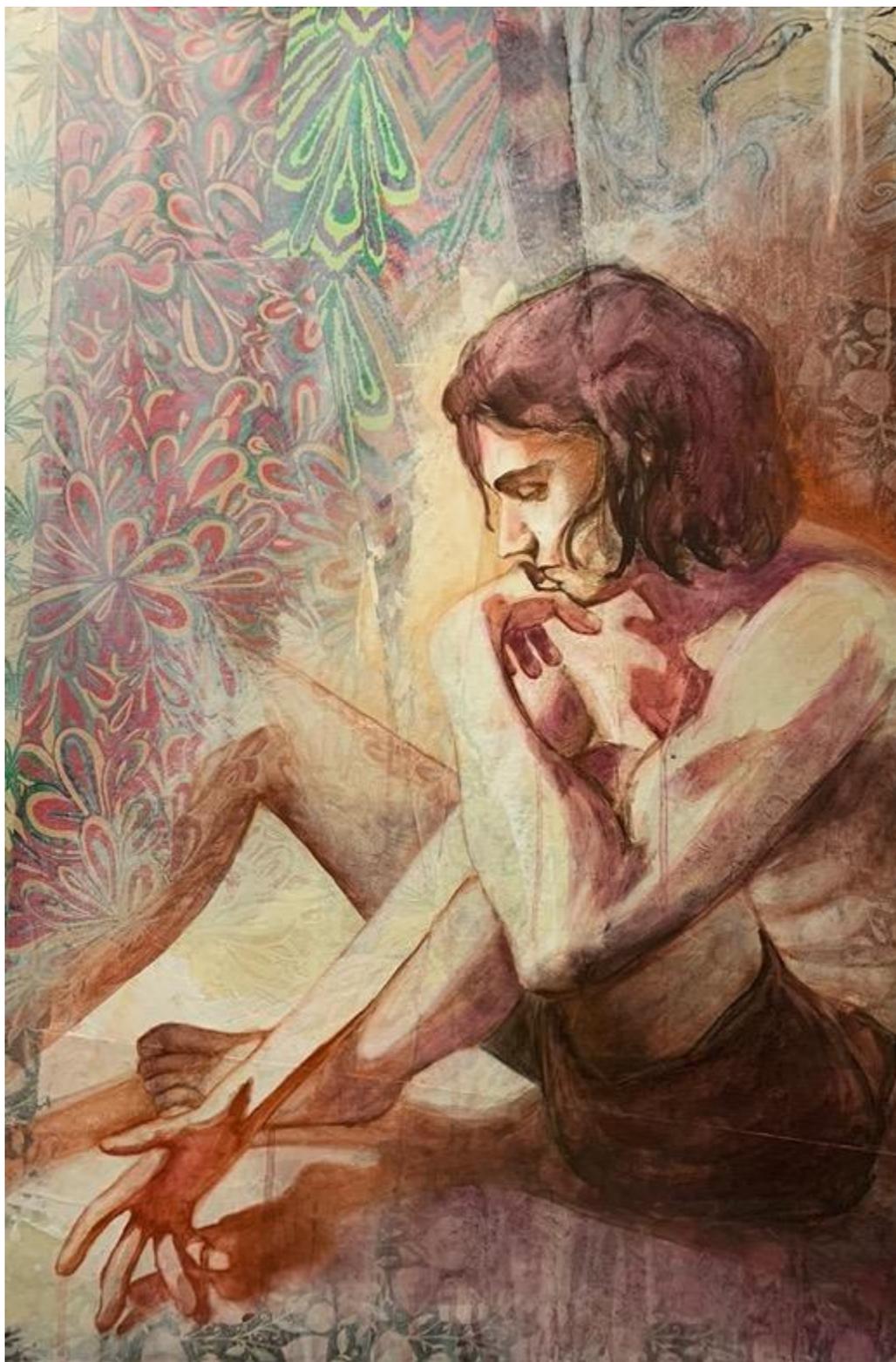


Plate 19. Jill Maytorena, *Instance and Rhythm*, 2019, Pastel, Acrylic Paint, and Found Papers on panel, 24 in. x 36 in.



Plate 20. Jill Maytorena, *Surplusage*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 30 in. x 24 in.



Plate 21. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 1*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 22. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 2*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 23. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 3*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 24. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 4*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 25. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 5*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 26. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 6*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 27. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 7*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 28. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 8*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.



Plate 29. Jill Maytorena, *Floral 9*, 2022, Fabric, Appliqués, Acrylic Paint, and Insects on ACM Panel, 12 in. x 12 in.

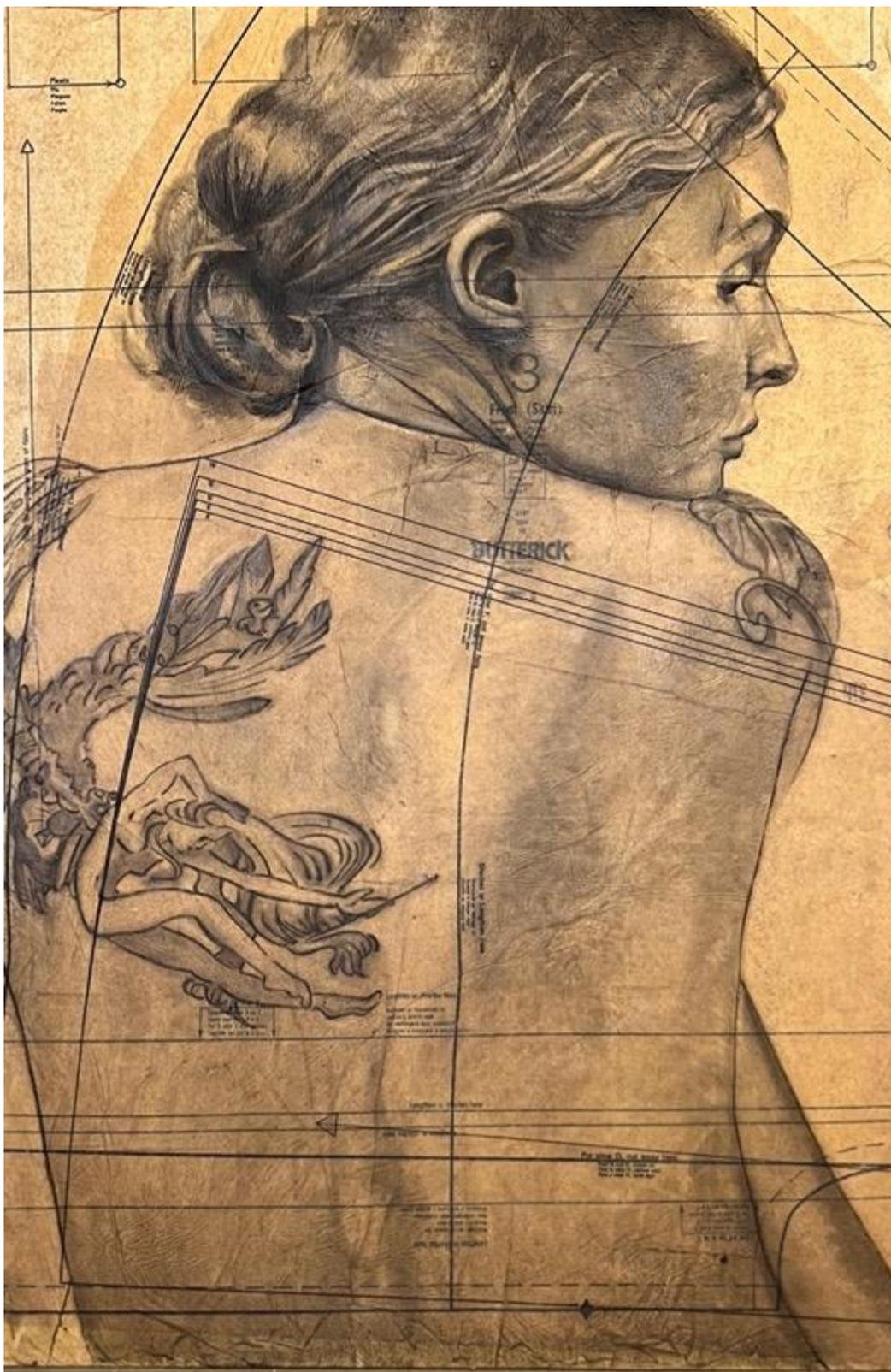


Plate 30. Jill Maytorena, *Butterick*, 2022, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.



Plate 31. Jill Maytorena, *The Cutting Line*, 2021, Pastel and Mixed Media on Panel, 24 in. x 36 in.

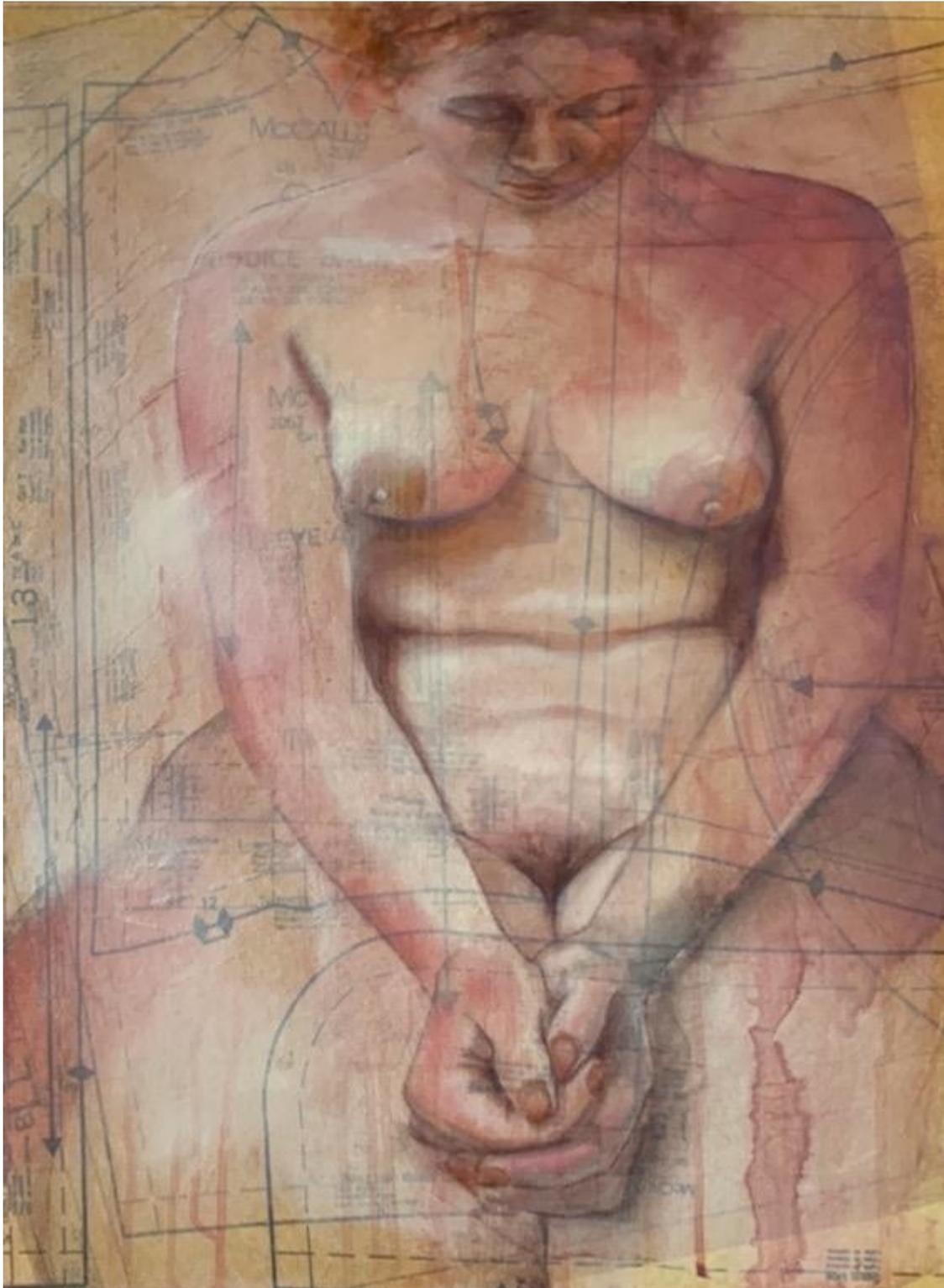


Plate 32. Jill Maytorena, *The Measurement*, 2020, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.



Plate 33. Jill Maytorena, *The Seam Line*, 2021, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 36 in. x 36 in.

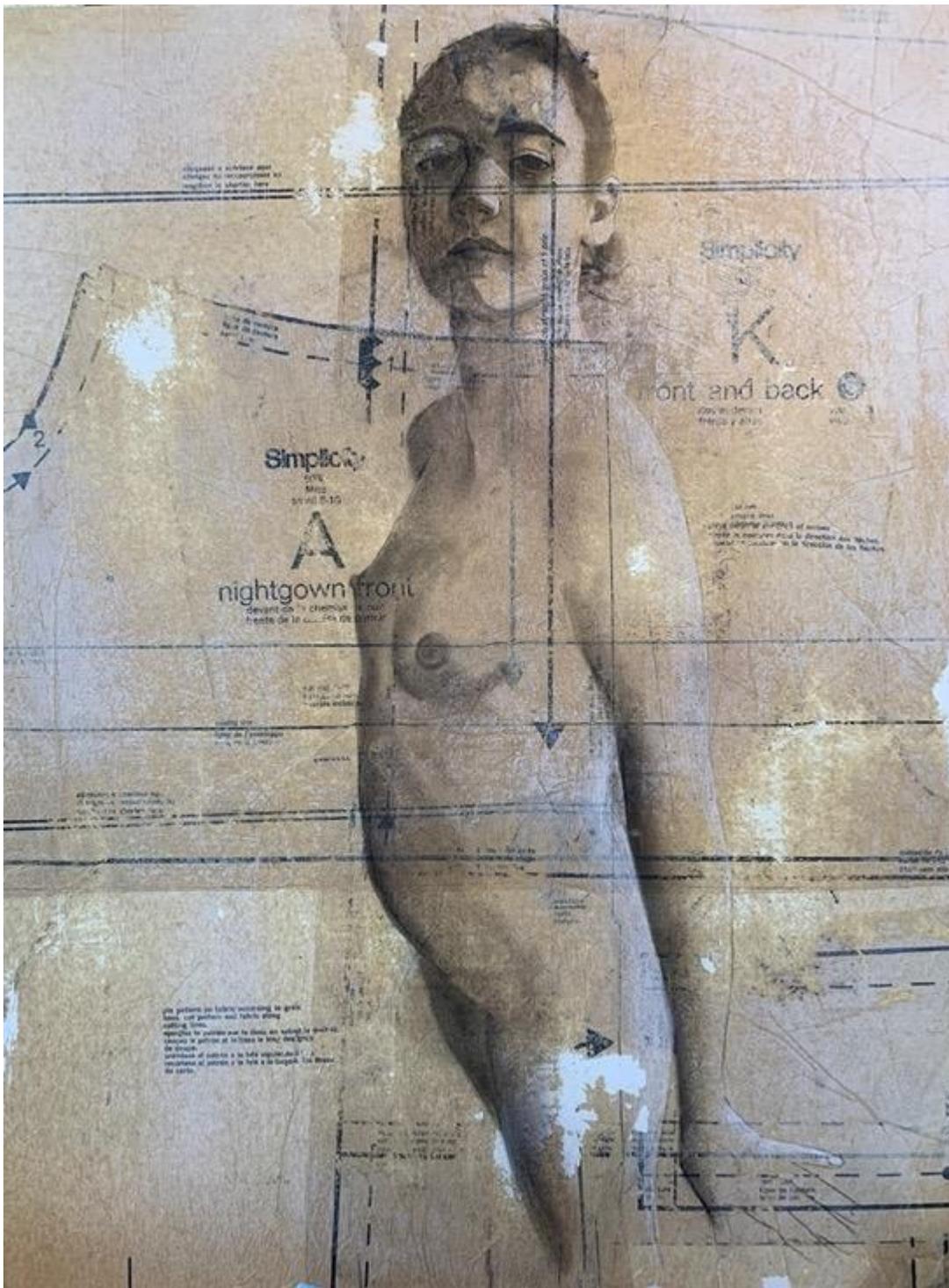


Plate 34. Jill Maytorena, *I Defy the Measurement*, 2020, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 18 in. x 24 in.

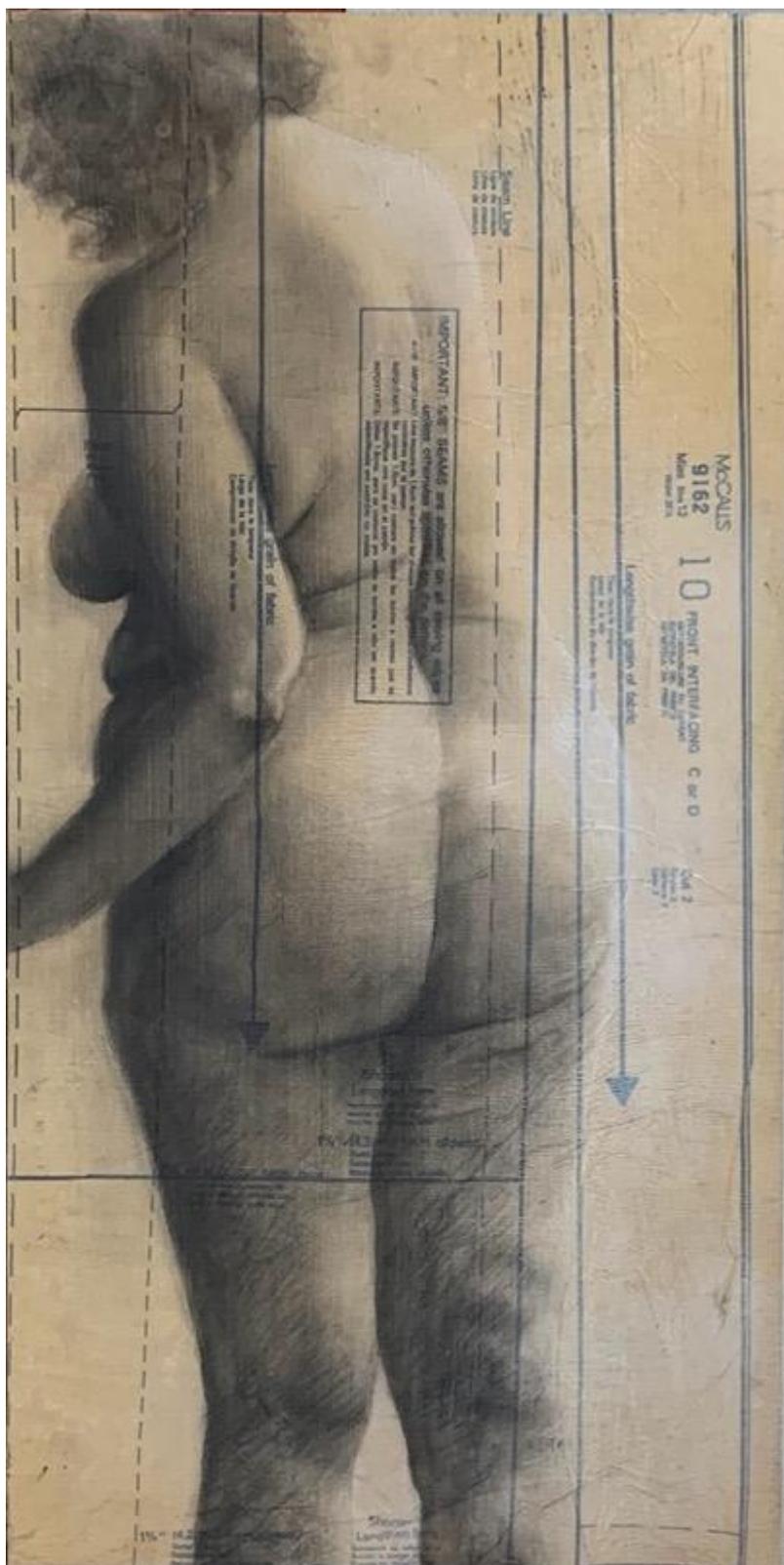


Plate 35. Jill Maytorena, *Interfacing*, 2021, Charcoal and Mixed Media on Panel, 12 in. x 24 in.

ARTIST'S NOTE

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