



The Moby-Dick **PROJECT**

A collaborative art exhibition with
the Bedford Hills College Program

BHCP ARTISTS

ERICA BELGRAVE
ANDREA BENSON
ASHLEY BERGER
TIANA BROWNE
MARESA CHAPMAN
STACY DEBEER
CHERYL DYCE
SARAH FERGUSON
MARIAH HYDE
STEPHANIE JONES
CONNIE LEUNG
BETH LYONS
CAREN MONAHAN
JENNIFER MONTANO
ERICA OLIVENCIA
SASHA SUPRUNCHIK
MONICA SZLEKOVICS
TINA WAGONER
TALISHA WILLIAMS
KEANNA WOMACK

INVITED ARTISTS

FRED BENENSON
WILLIAM CHAMBERS
BARBARA FRIEDMAN
ELEN LIN
DIANE SAMUELS
DUSTON SPEAR
BENTON SPRUANCE
CAROL VENEZIA

OCTOBER 30 - DECEMBER 6, 2017

The *Moby-Dick* PROJECT

A collaborative art exhibition with
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Curated by Hallie Cohen and Duston Spear

CURATORS' STATEMENT

This year, Marymount Manhattan College (MMC) celebrates twenty years of granting degrees through the Bedford Hills College Program (BHCP). Since 1997, women incarcerated at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility have been able to pursue the Associate of Arts degree in Social Sciences and the Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. The program officially became a satellite campus of MMC in 2004.

In celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the BHCP, a unique exhibition of artworks based on *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, by Herman Melville, has been created by the incarcerated women artists of the BHCP after participating in a course called "Illustrating the Novel," taught by professor and artist Duston Spear. These artworks are shown alongside pieces by invited artists whose work shares an affinity with the great American novel. Themes of obsession, cultural identity, communication across space, time, and species, and the embrace of the sea will be the subjects of interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

AILEEN M. BAUMGARTNER, DIRECTOR

Bedford Hills College Program, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

The main goal of the Bedford Hills College Program is to provide the women incarcerated at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility with an academically strong and very rich college education. We know that within the confines of the facility, there is limited opportunity for the women to explore their own creativity, and we strive to offer them as wide a range as possible in the creative arts. We occasionally offer courses in creative writing and acting, but every semester since 2004 we have offered a studio art class, and these classes have been simply invaluable. Through them, countless students have discovered their artistic and creative abilities. Studio art classes are particularly important for our new students. Most of them have never been in college before and are deeply unsure of their abilities. Their confidence grows as they learn that there are various ways they may express themselves, and through the art exhibits we have held inside the prison, they come to understand that their work has value, and is valued. This is the first time BHCP artwork is being displayed in an exhibition in the Hewitt Gallery of Art at MMC.

A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE TO THE WORLD

BY DEBORAH FRIZZELL, PH.D

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art History, William Paterson University of New Jersey

Melville's *Moby-Dick* has served as a threshold to the imagination for many generations of readers and storytellers worldwide. The distinctive voice of Ishmael, the outsider, and his shipmates Queequeg, Daggoo and Fedallah plunge us into a quest for meaning, riding the Pequod on the wild force of nature, Moby Dick. The "hooded phantom" is the obsession of Ahab, "the scheming, unappeasedly steadfast hunter of the white whale." The characters grapple with everyday survival and the big questions of existence, while dealing with loss, trauma, obsession and redemption. The story and its deep symbolism, its variety of characters and their conflicting desires set in motion an overflow of images in readers' minds. It has inspired illustrators and filmmakers to visually interpret not only action scenes but also the hallucinatory dreams and fantasies of Ahab and his crew sailing on the fathomless infinity of the sea.

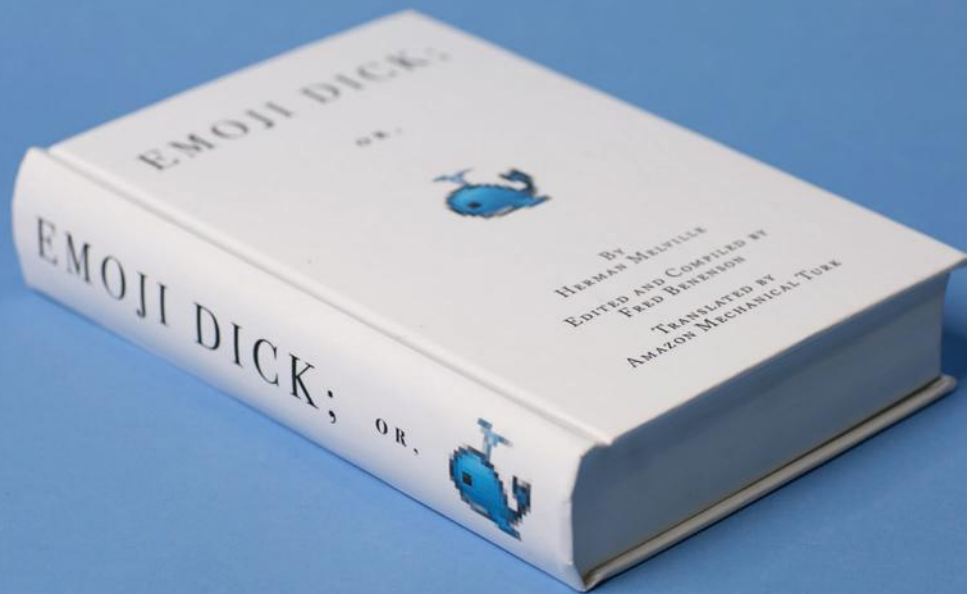
"What is your white whale?" Studio Art Professor Duston Spear asked her students this question in the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility College Program at the beginning of their art course, "Illustrating the Novel." Spear had been awarded an Artist Residency at the New Bedford Whaling Museum by the Melville Society Cultural Project and during her research she realized that *Moby-Dick* would be a perfect vehicle to stimulate students' narrative interpretations and lead to personal expression in visual form. After discussing the novel's themes, viewing the 1956 film by John Huston, and looking at examples of historical illustrations of *Moby-Dick*, students made collaborative life-sized drawings of Queequeg; depicted New England winter landscape scenes; copied JMW Turner's watercolors of whale hunts; and made portraits of people to represent various characters. For their final project, they made sketches as pictorial answers to the original question posed: "What is your white whale?"

The students' collaborative *Moby-Dick* Project artwork presented at the Hewitt Gallery of Art is poignantly personal while resonating with universal themes and symbols. In addition, four members of the MMC Bedford Hills College Program - Stacy DeBeer, Connie Leung, Monica Szlekovics, and Tina Wagoner, responded to their own readings of *Moby-Dick* in collage, drawing and painting. Accompanying these projects are works based on Melville's novel by invited artists: Spear, Fred Benenson, William Chambers, Barbara Friedman, Eleen Lin, Diane Samuels, Benton Spruance, and Carol Venezia. The individual voices amplify each other in a chamber ensemble interpreting Melville's text. Together the art works form a tapestry of visual images engaging in a kind of pictorial dialogue mirroring our face-to-face connectedness. We reimagine the destruction of the Pequod and envision Ishmael telling his tale.

"Hark ye yet again—the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks... How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me."

- Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (Chapter 36)

FRED BENENSON



ENGLISH: Call me Ishmael.

EMOJI: 📞👤🚢🐳👉

WILLIAM CHAMBERS





LISTEN TO THE WHALES

Canvas wall panel, freestanding whale listening device, floor cushions, and sandbag/stanchions • 7'H x 6'W x 2'D

BARBARA FRIEDMAN



PINK COUPLE IN OPEN WATERS

Oil on linen • 48" x 60" • 2010



OPEN WATERS

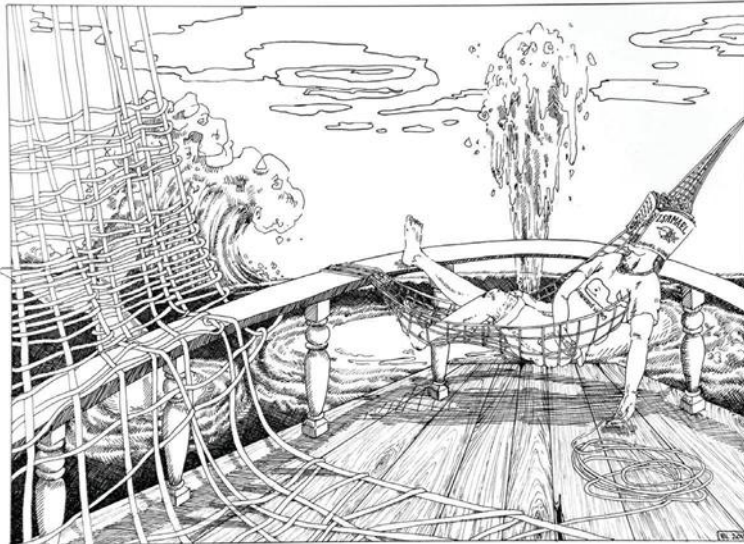
Oil on linen • 48" x 60" • 2009

ELEEN LIN



CABIN TABLE

Ink on paper • 12" x 9" • 2016



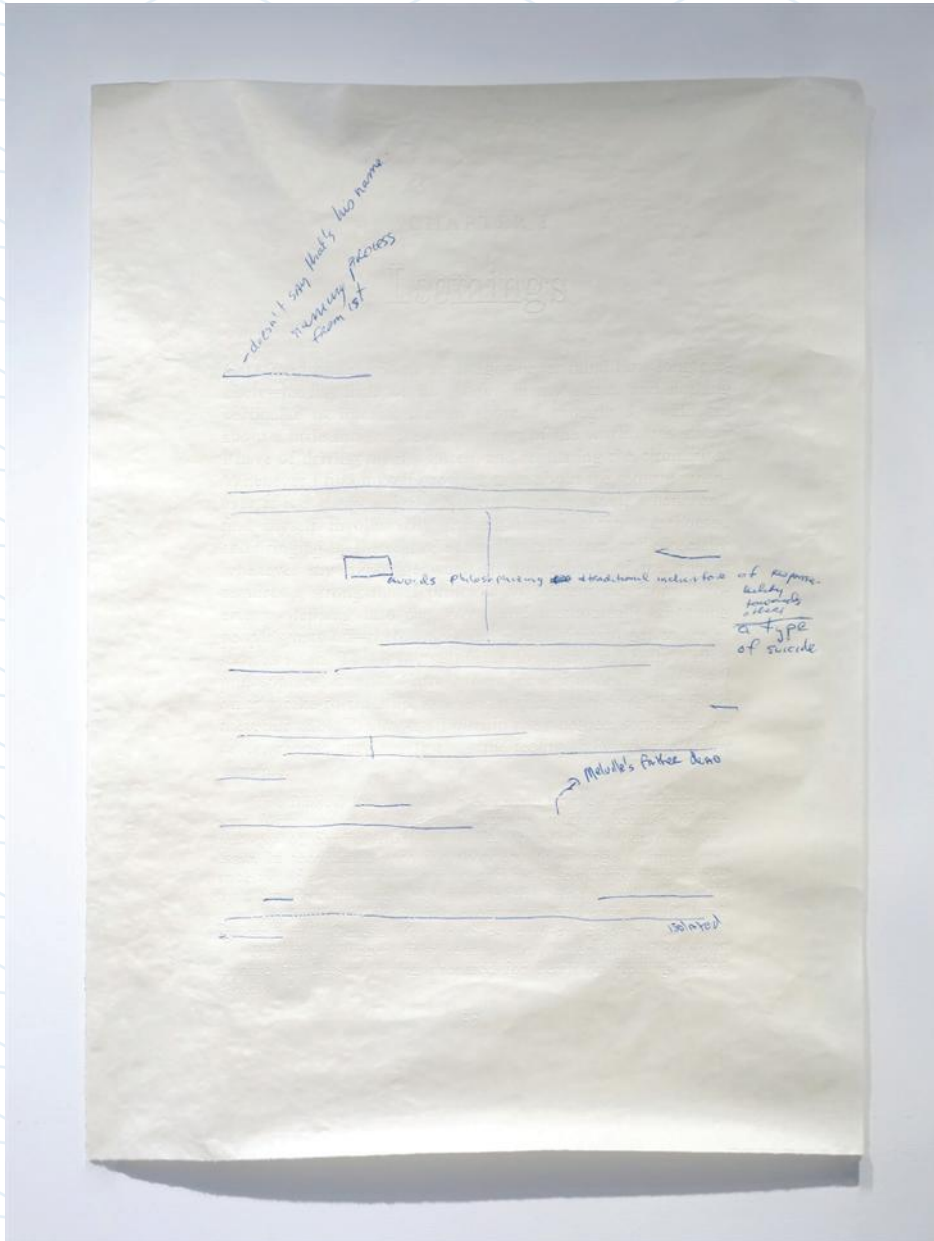
LOOM OF TIME

Ink on paper • 12" x 9" • 2015



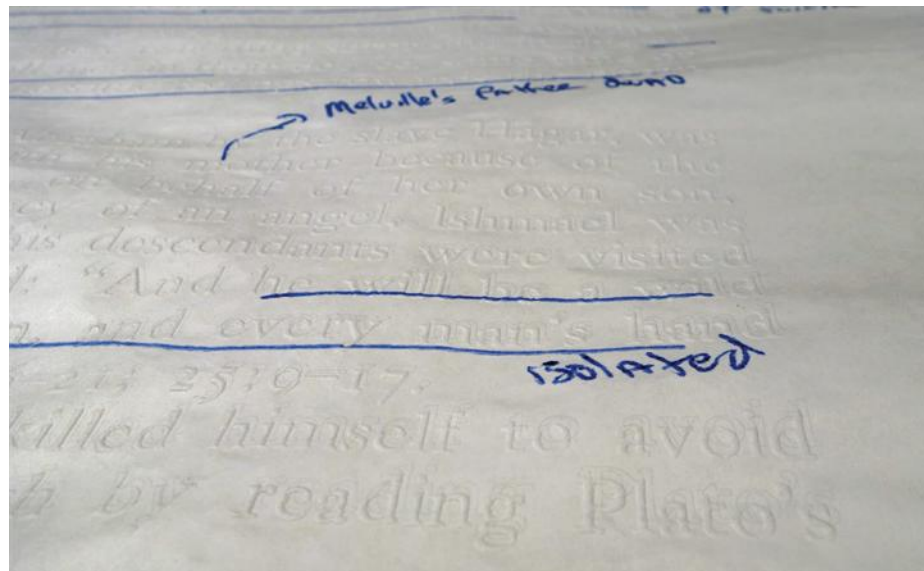
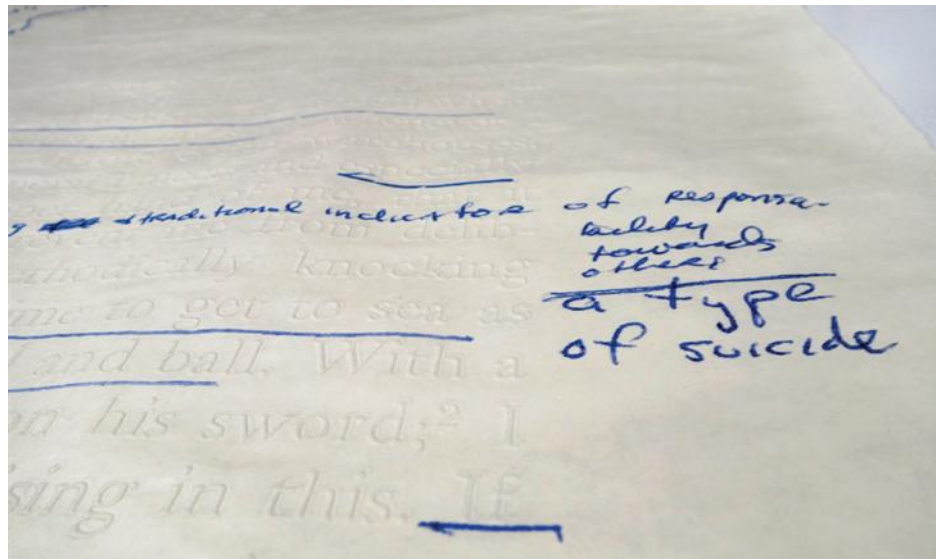
CABIN TABLE

Oil, acrylic, ink, and graphite on canvas • 60" x 72" • 2017



MOBY-DICK, ANNOTATED FIRST PAGE

Digital image printed on Haruku paper. Edition of two. • 45" x 32.5" • 2016



MOBY-DICK, ANNOTATED FIRST PAGE (details)

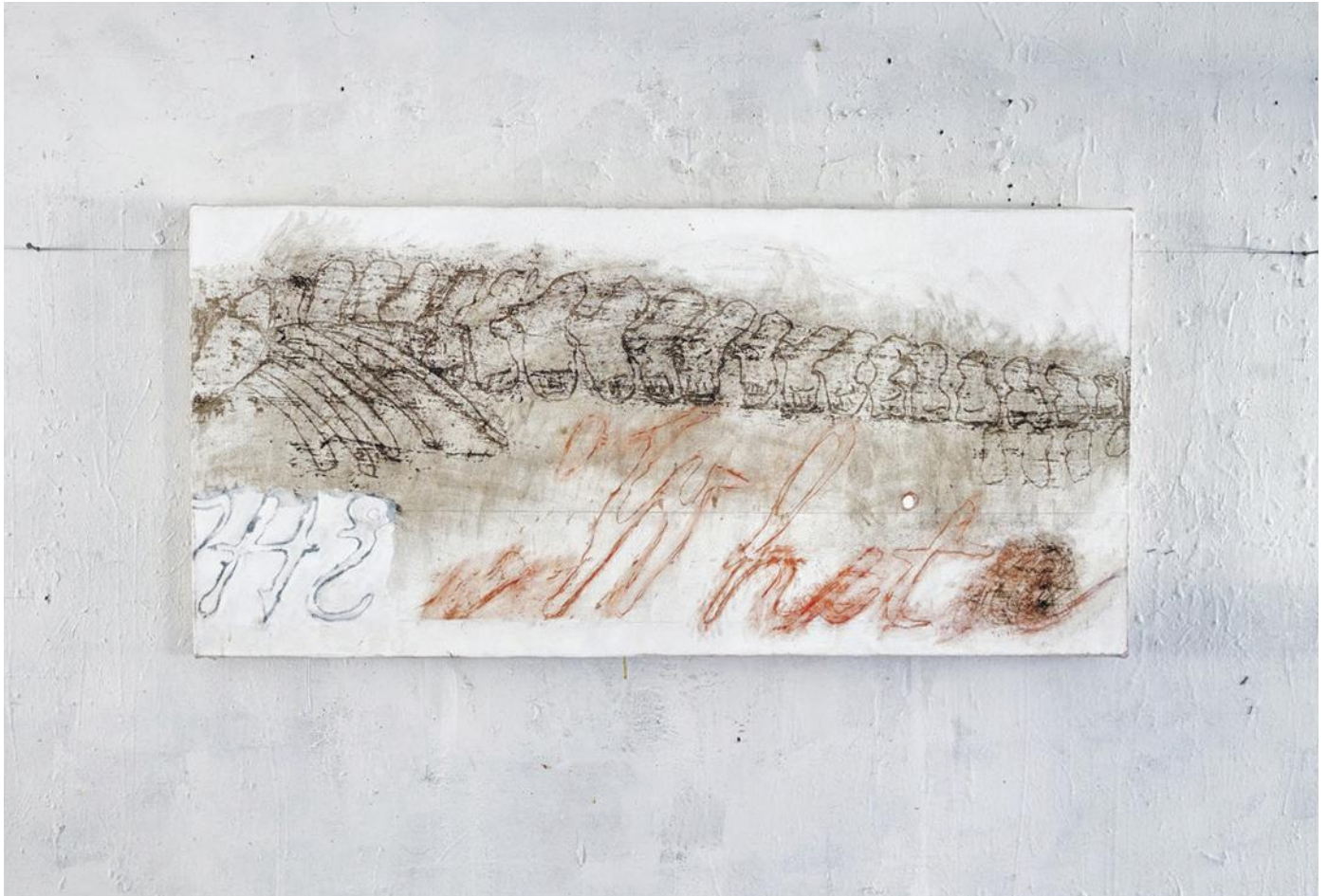
Printer: Samuel Poulos. Courtesy of the artist and Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NY. The scanned hand-annotations of a devoted Melville reader printed on Haruku paper and then blind embossed (with the full type of page 23, the first page of the *Moby-Dick* edition).

DUSTON SPEAR



GEORGE AND WILLIE MUSE AND THEIR FREAK SHOW OWNER

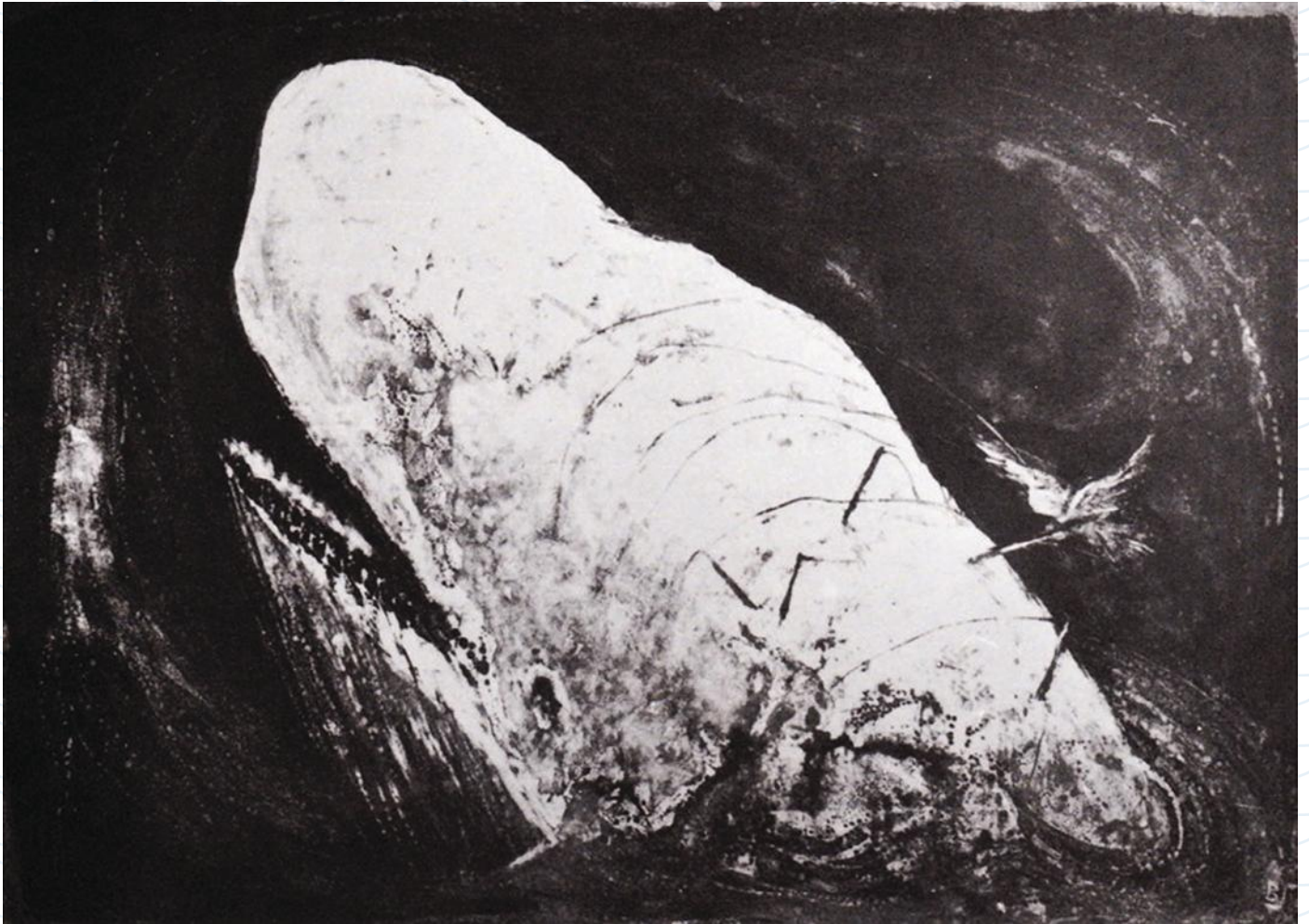
Newsprint, wire, and bubble wrap • 16" H x 21" W x 9" D • 2016



PIECES OF THE WHALE: IT WAS THE WHITENESS

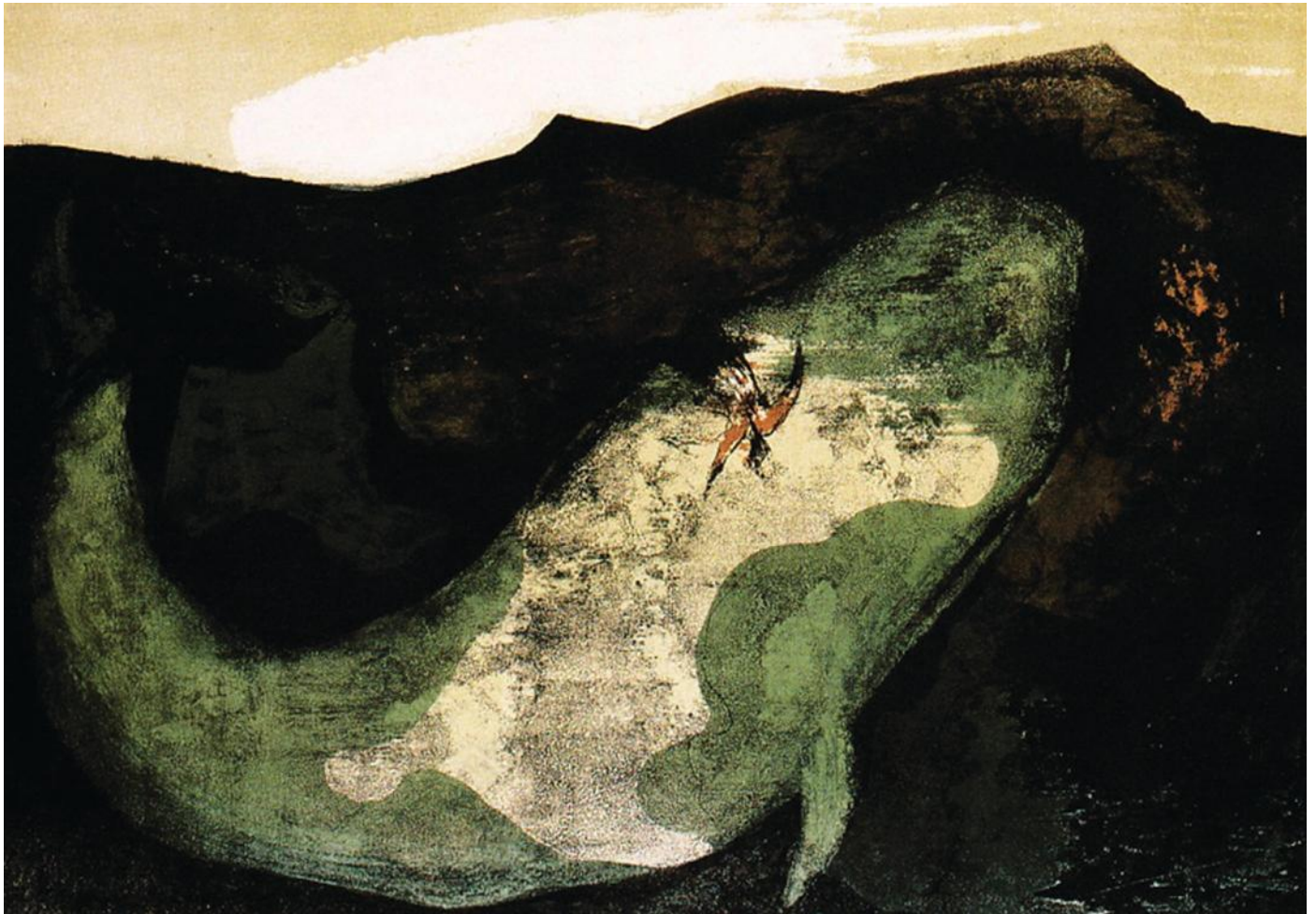
Oil on canvas • 22" x 44" • 2016

BENTON SPRUANCE



THE WHITENESS OF THE WHALE

Lithograph in grey and blue-green • 16" x 22" • 1965-66



THE DEATH OF THE PEQUOD

5-color lithograph • 27.5" x 38" • 1966

CAROL VENEZIA



HUDSON SUNSET

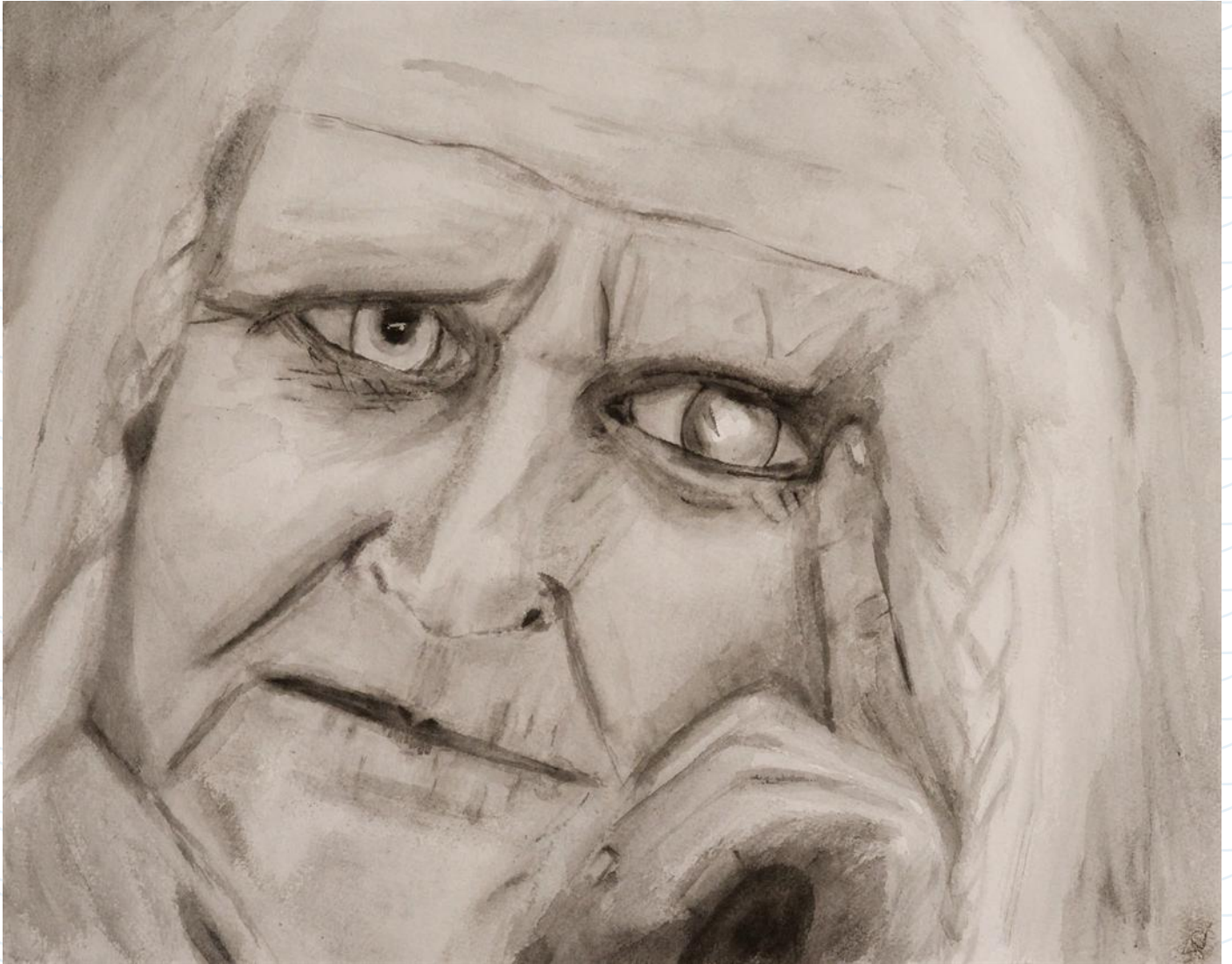
Pigment on acrylic panel • 12" x 16" x 2" • 2015



SARDINIA FLOW

Pigment on acrylic panel • 12" x 16" x 2" • 2016

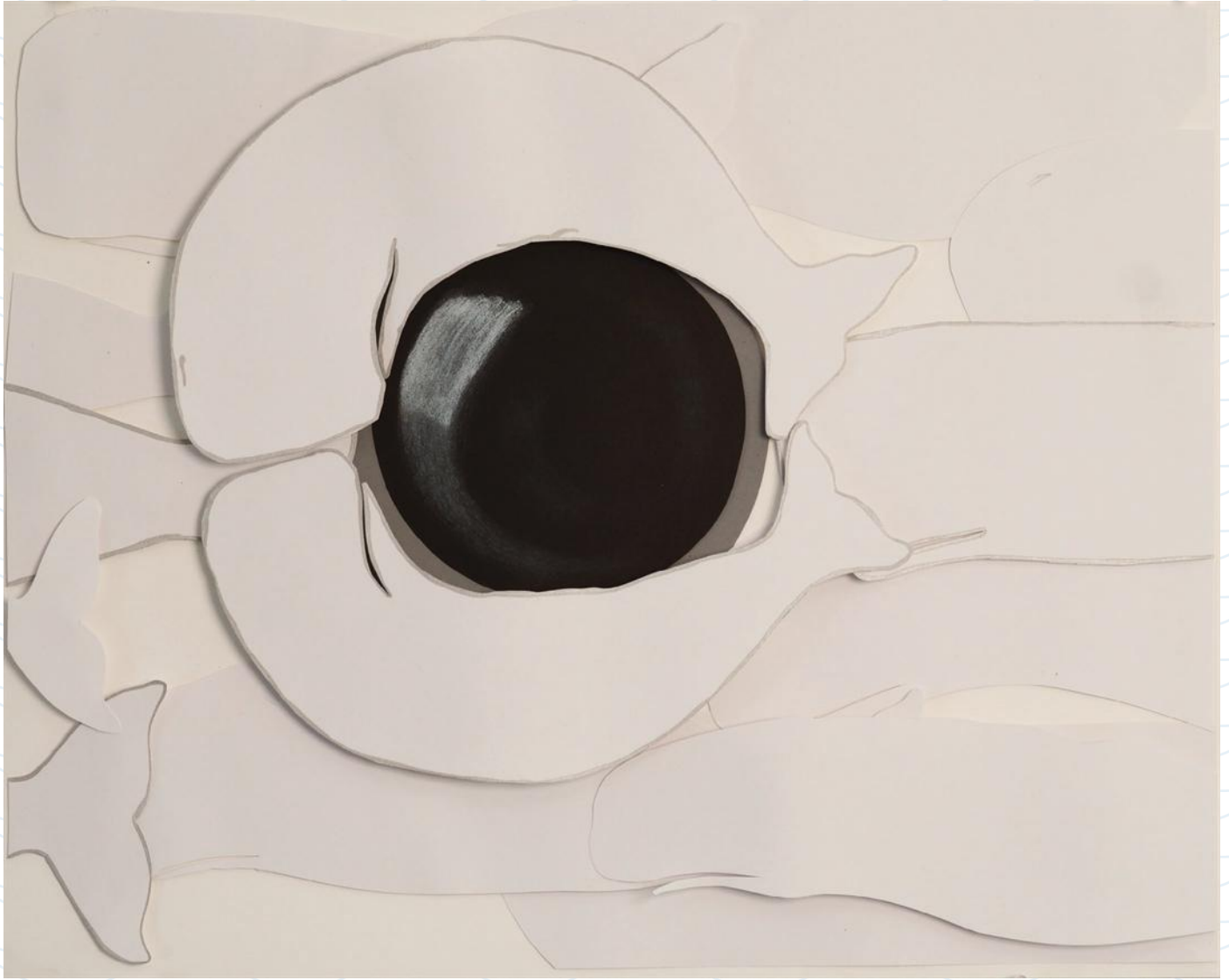
STACY DeBEER



OLD WOMAN AND THE SEA

Watercolor • 21" x 25.5" • 2017

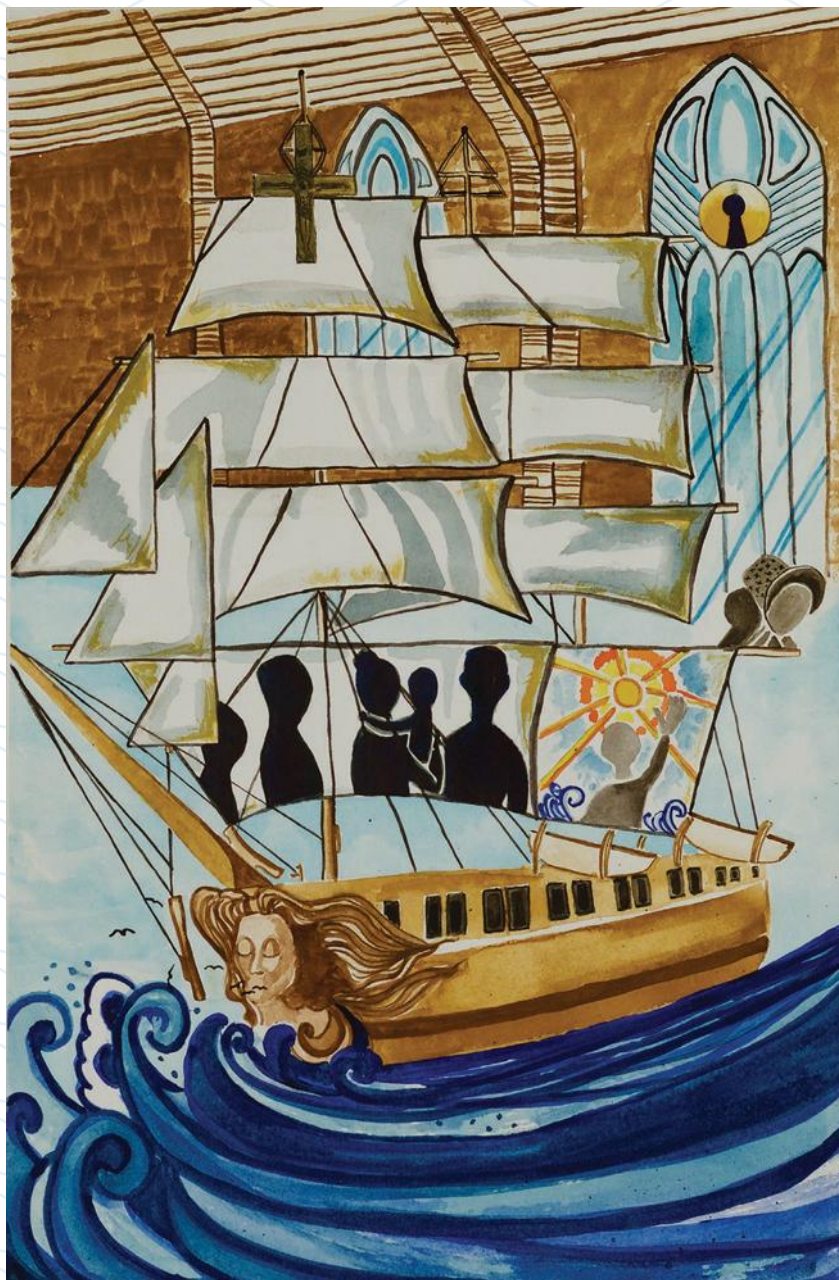
CONNIE LEUNG



IN THE EYE OF THE WHALE

Collage • 19" x 23" • 2017

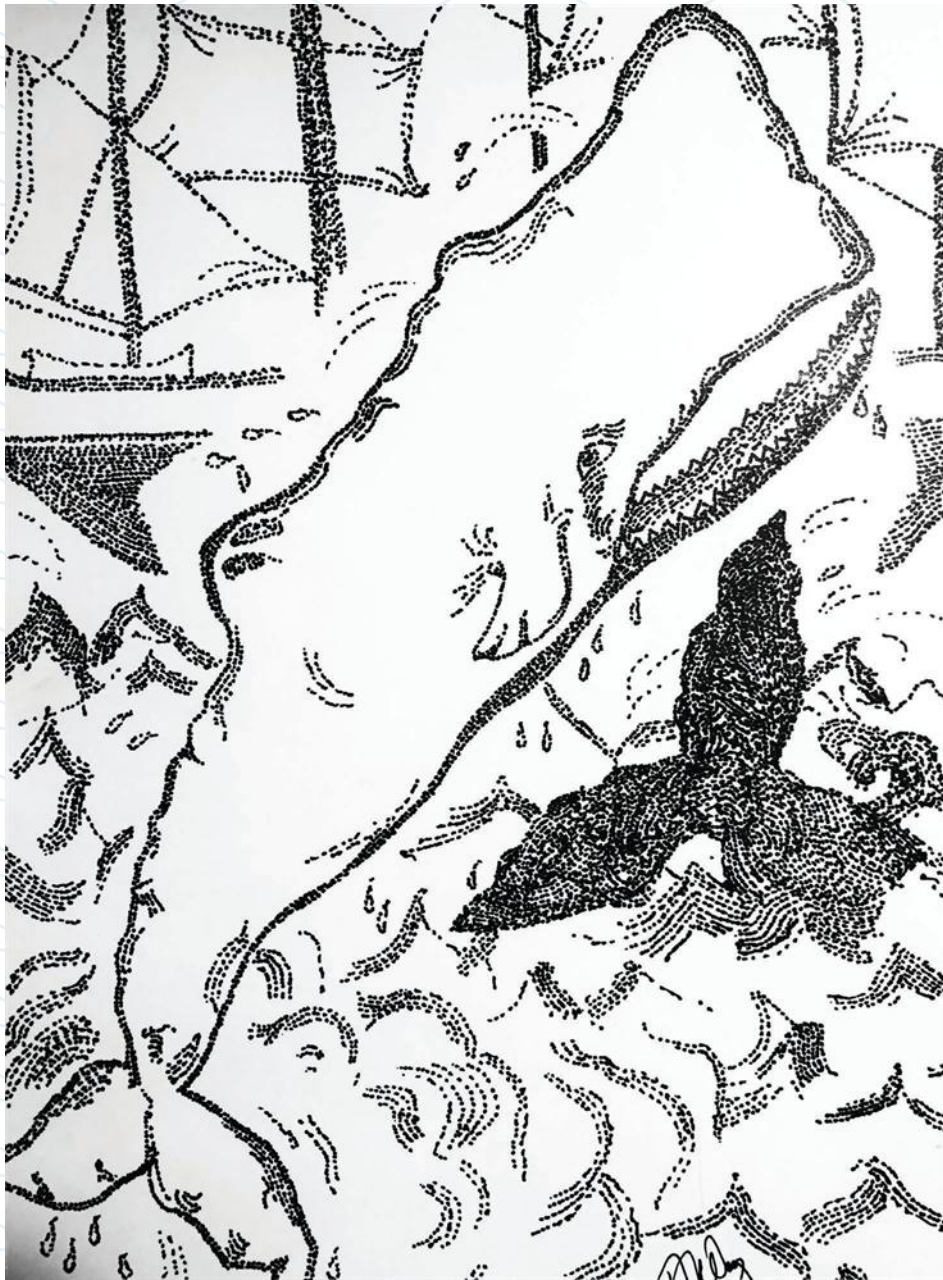
MONICA SZLEKOVICS



PHANTOM SHIP

Watercolor • 23" x 17.5" • 2017

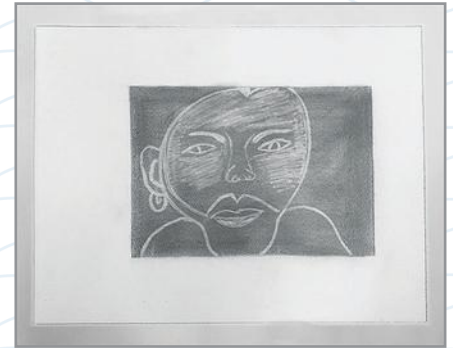
TINA WAGONER



THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE VERY WHITE WHALE

Pen on paper • 9" x 12" • 2017

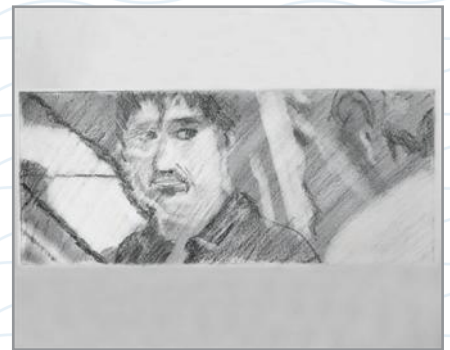
PORTRAITS OF WHALING MEN



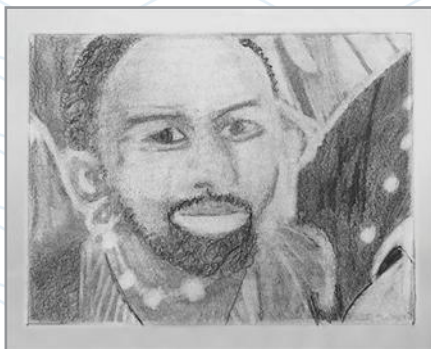
Talisha Williams



Keana Womack



Jennifer Montano



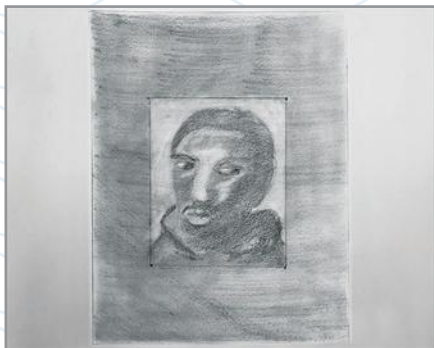
Caren Mankan



Beth Lyons



Ashley Berger



Sasha Suprunchik



Sarah Ferguson



Mariah Hyde



Erica Olivencia



Erica Belgrave



Tiana Browne



Andrea Benson

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT



SEVEN SEAS

Acrylic on canvas • 80" x 75.5" • 2017

Each student worked on one half of a Gauguin painting - matching colors to the original. The pairs were then re-united. The class also made patches for the border based on Tahitian art. This piece represents the travels the whalers in *Moby-Dick* took through the South Seas and the exotic way of life they experienced.

Photograph by Jon-Marc Seimon

NOTE FROM GALLERY DIRECTOR

The Hewitt Gallery of Art, located in the main esplanade and adjacent Black and White galleries, is a laboratory for and an extension of the pedagogy of the Art and Art History Department. In addition, it is an alternative exhibition space for contemporary art of emerging, mid-career, and established artists displaying a wide variety of media and styles. The Gallery provides opportunities for art majors and minors to gain first-hand experience in exhibiting their capstone and junior work, for students to curate and organize shows in conjunction with the Gallery Director and for faculty and alumni to present current work to the community.

Hallie Cohen | *Professor of Art, Director of the Hewitt Gallery of Art*

SPECIAL THANKS

MARYMOUNT MANHATTAN COLLEGE (MMC)

Kerry Walk, President

Sharon M. Meagher, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty

Kristen Anderson

Kathleen LeBesco

Carly Lynch

Kayla McCaffrey

David Mold

Peter Naccarato

Laura Patnaude

Stephanie Policastro

Jessica St. Marie

Matthew Whitenack

MMC Facilities/Maintenance Staff

MMC Security Staff

THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION (DOCCS)

Anthony Annucci, Acting Commissioner

J. McKoy, Deputy Commissioner of Program Services

Linda Hollmen, Assistant Commissioner of Education

Emily Bessette, Director of Education

Joseph Joseph, Superintendent, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

Eric Miller, Deputy Superintendent of Program, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

Michael McKenna, Education Supervisor, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

BEDFORD HILLS COLLEGE PROGRAM (BHCP)

Aileen Baumgartner, Director

Rachel Bernard, Assistant Director

Duston Spear, Studio Art Instructor

The Students of the Bedford Hills College Program



Marymount
Manhattan
College

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