

# Celebrating Visual Arts at Clark (Part II)

November 15 – February 13  
Schiltkamp Gallery, Clark University



# Featured Artists

Frank Armstrong

Valerie Claff

Ezra Cove

Jessie Darrell Jarbadan

Antonio Fonseca, Vazquez

Jan Johnson

Eric Nichols

Scott Niemi

Rox Samer

# Curator's Statement

Throughout the 2021/22 academic year (in three consecutive exhibitions), the Schiltkamp Gallery / Traina Center for the Arts will showcase the work of the many innovative visual arts faculty at Clark, while also introducing and welcoming those faculty joining us from the Becker School of Design and Technology – now part of Clark University. We celebrate the creative intertwining of teaching, research, and artistic practice at Clark University!

Professor Elli Crocker, Gallery Director

Sky Deitch '22, Dimitri Koufis '22 Anna Svensen ' 22, Gallery Interns

# Frank Armstrong

## FRANK ARMSTRONG

(Studio Art / Photography, Emeritus / Research Scholar)

### STATEMENT

I spent the early part of my career mostly interested in the natural landscape as represented by the black and white images. With the turn of the century, I begin to explore color and my interest shifted to the doings of man upon the landscape. My subjects, whether black and white or color, have always been the more common rather than the exotic, meaning they are not hidden, but rarely noticed by the passerby. I like to slow down and move away from the major thoroughfares by traveling on the back roads across the country. Since 2003 I have worked only in digital, giving up almost 40 years of film photography.



*Ralls, Texas. 2019. Photograph*

# Frank Armstrong



*West Border Area, Big Bend National Park, Texas. 1990. Photograph.*

## **FRANK ARMSTRONG**

(Studio Art / Photography, Emeritus / Research Scholar)

### BIO

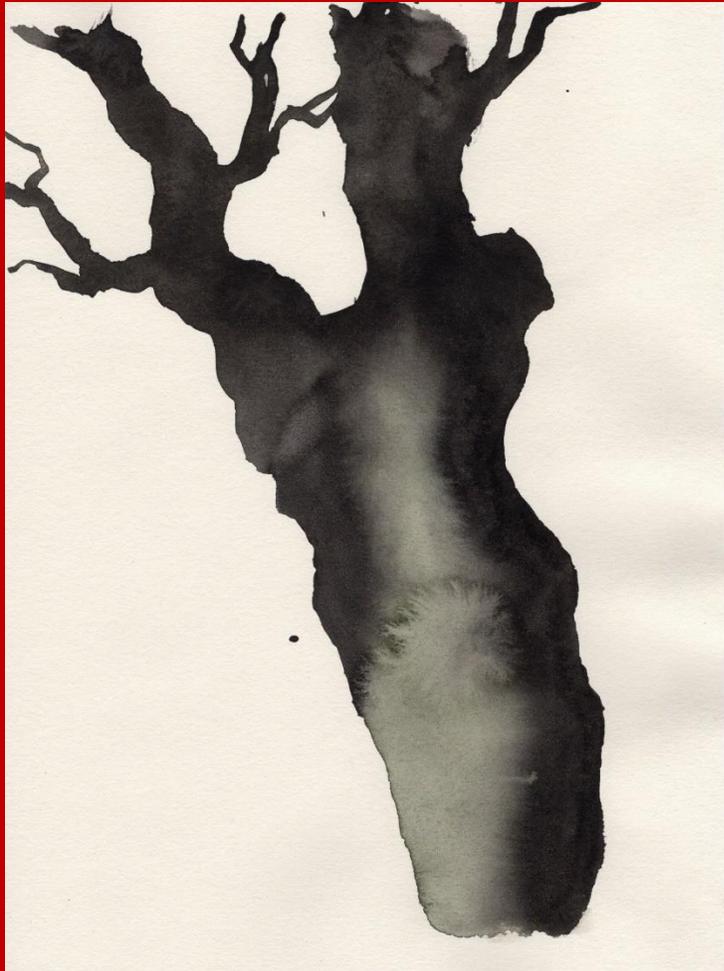
1935 – present, born in Henderson, Texas. US Navy Radioman for four years in the late 50's. Attended Kilgore College then transferred to UT Austin where I earned a Bachelor of Journalism (BJ). Worked for UT Austin for 13 years, first as photography supervisor for Texas Student Publications and later as photographer for UT's News and Information Service. Also, taught photo-journalism in the UT's School of Communications for three-and-a-half years. Received the Dobie-Paisano Grant in 1979. Moved to the east coast in 1983 when my wife's career took us to the Philadelphia area and in 1992, to Worcester. Did free-lance photography and taught a number of photography workshops in the west in all the years between Austin and Worcester. Taught photography in V&PA from 1999 through spring of 2021. Currently a Research Scholar in the Visual & Performing Arts department.

# Valerie Claff



*Light in the Forest. 2015. Watercolor on paper.*

# Valerie Claff



*Winter Trees. 2019. Watercolor on paper.*

## VALERIE CLAFF

(Adjunct Professor / Studio Art Program)

### STATEMENT

Growing up in a house full of Chinese and Japanese artwork, I was fascinated by the mist, infinite spaces, and minimal detail evoking the spirit of place in brush paintings. My work is strongly influenced by this aesthetic. Forests, hills and open spaces are inspiration for my landscapes, painted from memory, in a non-traditional watercolor style. Utilizing a wet-on-wet technique, I manipulate the bleeding pigment to suggest fog, mist, reflections, light and atmosphere. Trees are important features in my work - forests with mysterious light and mists, stands of trees lining the edges of ponds, and solitary trees in open spaces, their linear branches creating contrasts to distant ridges and skies. My paintings seek to convey my relationship to the wild as a place of sanctuary and mystery and to capture the essence of natural places in different light situations and seasons. The rural foothills of the Berkshires, the hemlock forest surrounding my home, small details of natural objects, and the patterns of the natural world are the main inspirations for my work.

Living close to the land, I notice the exquisite forms and repeating patterns found in plant structures, tree rings, insects, and stones. As I walk in the forest, I notice the texture of bark, and the spiral of a snail shell. I see the branching flow patterns of rivers and wonder at the spiral spinning of galaxies. The *Spiral Drawings* were made as meditations to begin my days working in the studio. The process of making them felt like marking time, drawing one continual line from the center out to the edges, suggesting tree rings, ripples in water, patterns on bark, cycles and the infinite.

The *Winter Tree Drawings* began as a warm-up drawing practice and developed into a body of work exploring bare-branched winter trees, their individual characteristics, personalities and the linear gestures of branching systems.

# Valerie Claff

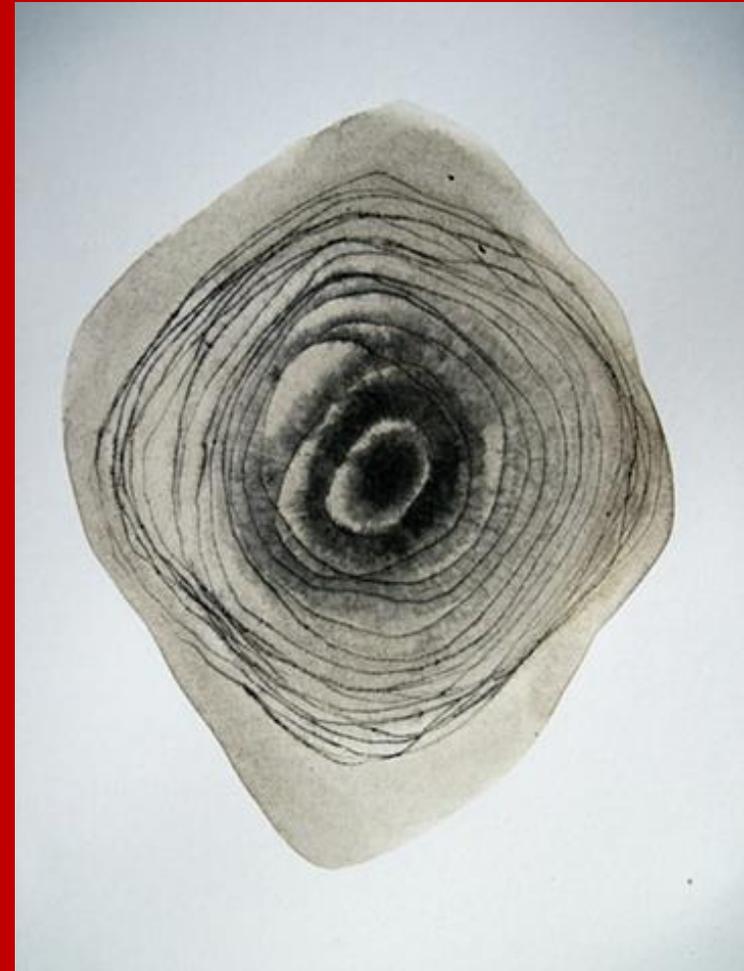
## VALERIE CLAFF

(Adjunct Professor / Studio Art Program)

### BIO

Valerie Claff received an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in Painting/Printmaking and a BA from Colby College in Art with a concentration in Sociology/Anthropology. She is an adjunct professor of studio art at Clark University, where she has taught design, drawing and mixed media since 1995. Her work has been exhibited widely and is included in numerous private and corporate collections.

In 2003 Valerie moved to a hemlock forest in the rural town of Chesterfield in Western Massachusetts to be closer to the natural world and her artistic inspiration. In 2012, she received a grant from the Forest Viability Program to build her studio, *RavenWood Forest, Studio of Mythic & Environmental Arts*, where she teaches classes and workshops, and offers art and spiritual retreats.



*Spiral Drawings. 2013-2015. Ink on paper.*

# Ezra Cove



*Hot Air. 2020. Digital Video.*

## **EZRA COVE**

(Becker School of Design and Technology)

### STATEMENT

3D computer animation allows me to tie together interests in both two- and three-dimensional mediums. While video is ultimately a shallow medium, the use of 3D software allows me to consider objects in the round, simulating sculpted and constructed forms. In *Hot Air*, I have used these tools to add motion to a depiction of a bronze relief. This motion allows for spatial transitions; the picture plane is manipulated over time; it becomes a malleable thing. Relief elements are displaced relative to the plane, their depth transitioning from convex to concave, and back again.

# Ezra Cove

## **EZRA COVE**

(Becker School of Design and Technology)

### BIO

Ezra Cove is a video game artist who creates 3D art assets including characters, environments, and props. He has contributed to various games, both large and small. He also creates experimental time-based work using techniques borrowed from commercial game art production. Prior to coming to Clark, Cove taught 3D digital art at Becker College, Emerson College, MassArt, and Mount Ida College.

# Jessie Darrell Jarbadan



*Costumes. 2006-2012. Mixed fabric.*

## **JESSIE DARRELL JARBADAN**

(Professor of Practice / Theater Program)

### ARTIST STATEMENT

As a professional costume designer, I work within the parameters of the show's aesthetic and budget and must create a cohesive garment story within these constraints. The skills and techniques portrayed here are used throughout my profession. However, these pieces are untethered from any show in particular; rather they represent the types of making that I enjoy as an artist.

My personal artistic practice is grounded in natural fibers, small-batch dyeing, and pre-1960s fabrics, textures, and construction. Some items were designed with an event in mind and others were created as a conversation with the textile or construction technique itself. I use myself as a fit model and a combination of flat patterning and draping on a form to create each piece. Nearly all fabrics were thrifted/repurposed, except the robe/kimono, which was hand dyed, quilted, and then assembled into its final form. These items can also be viewed as a meditation on the changing values attributed to garment making and the uniqueness of handmade clothing.

# Jessie Darrell Jarbadan



Costumes. 2006-2012. Mixed fabric.

## JESSIE DARRELL JARBADAN

(Professor of Practice / Theater Program)

### BIO

Jessie is a Rhode Island-based professional costume, hair, and make-up designer and garment, prosthetic, theatre F/X maker with two decades of experience working in live theatre with a specialization in the creation of new works. Past credits include: *These Seven Sicknesses* (Brown/Trinity MFA), *Miss You Like Hell* (Wilbury Group), *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (Opera North), *Night of the Iguana* (Gamm Theatre) and 10 seasons of the Brown New Play Festival. Jessie is a recurring guest designer for Brown University, Rhode Island College, and the Gamm Theatre, and is the resident designer for the Clark Theatre Program. She holds a Masters in Costume Design and History from Rhode Island College with a focus on the Atlantic world from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to present day and a Bachelors in Music Performance from the Hartt School of Music.

# Antonio Fonseca, Vazquez

## ANTONIO FONSECA VAZQUEZ

(Professor of Practice / Studio Art Program)

### STATEMENT

The “Sin” series is an ongoing project that dates back to 2000 and has become a staple of my work since then. With twelve completed panels and twelve more in process to finalize the series. The piece *Corazon Enjaulado* (“Caged Heart”) is one important addition to this series. The sinner’s heart caged, trapped, subdued by one self, and replaced by a black orchid plant symbolizing that although the new roots are strong the germinating flowers are dark to remind us of the sins that were once entrenched in our body. The “Sin” series has with time been recreated and deconstructed, each time becoming more complex. Using iconographic imagery alluding to the Seven Deadly Sins, I create work that has the spectator question his/her socio-political and religious views as he/she comes to the realization on how today’s society has accepted, and at times venerated and normalized, Sin. This series has been the platform for mixed media practices. Each and every one of the pieces in this series is created with charcoal, soft pastel, saffron, inks watercolor, among other materials on large format paper.



*Corazon Enjaulado (Caged Heart). 2021. Mixed media on paper.*

# Antonio Fonseca, Vazquez

## ANTONIO FONSECA VAZQUEZ

(Professor of Practice / Studio Art Program)

### BIO

Antonio Fonseca, born in Caguas Puerto Rico, earned an MFA in printmaking from Cornell University, Ithaca New York, and is a Professor of Practice at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Fonseca's body of work includes printmaking and drawing, painting, photography and lately some work in animation, filmmaking and video editing. His creative process and research focuses on issues of identity, religion and politics as they relate to his Puerto Rican identity in a form of existentialistic desertion. His work has been exhibited internationally, Shanghai China, France, Australia and South America. His work is in numerous private and public collections: Including the Reyes Veray collection, the Soto family collection, Museum of Caguas, Museum of the Ana G. Méndez University, Museum of the University of Puerto Rico and the institute of Puerto Rican Art. Antonio Fonseca's home and studio practice are located in Southbridge, Massachusetts.

# Jan Johnson

*The Blue-Green Stream*

Wang Wei

*Translated by Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell*

Every time I have started for the Yellow Flower River,  
I have gone down the Blue-Green Stream,  
Following the hills, making ten thousand turnings,  
We go along rapidly, but advance scarcely one hundred *li*.  
We are in the midst of a noise of water,  
Of the confused and mingled sounds of water broken by stones,  
And in the deep darkness of pine trees.  
Rocked, rocked,  
Moving on and on,  
We float past water-chestnuts  
Into a still clearness reflecting reeds and rushes.  
My heart is clean and white as silk; it has already achieved Peace;  
It is smooth as the placid river.  
I love to stay here, curled up on the rocks,  
Dropping my fish-line forever.

## JAN JOHNSON

(Professor of Practice / Studio Art Program)

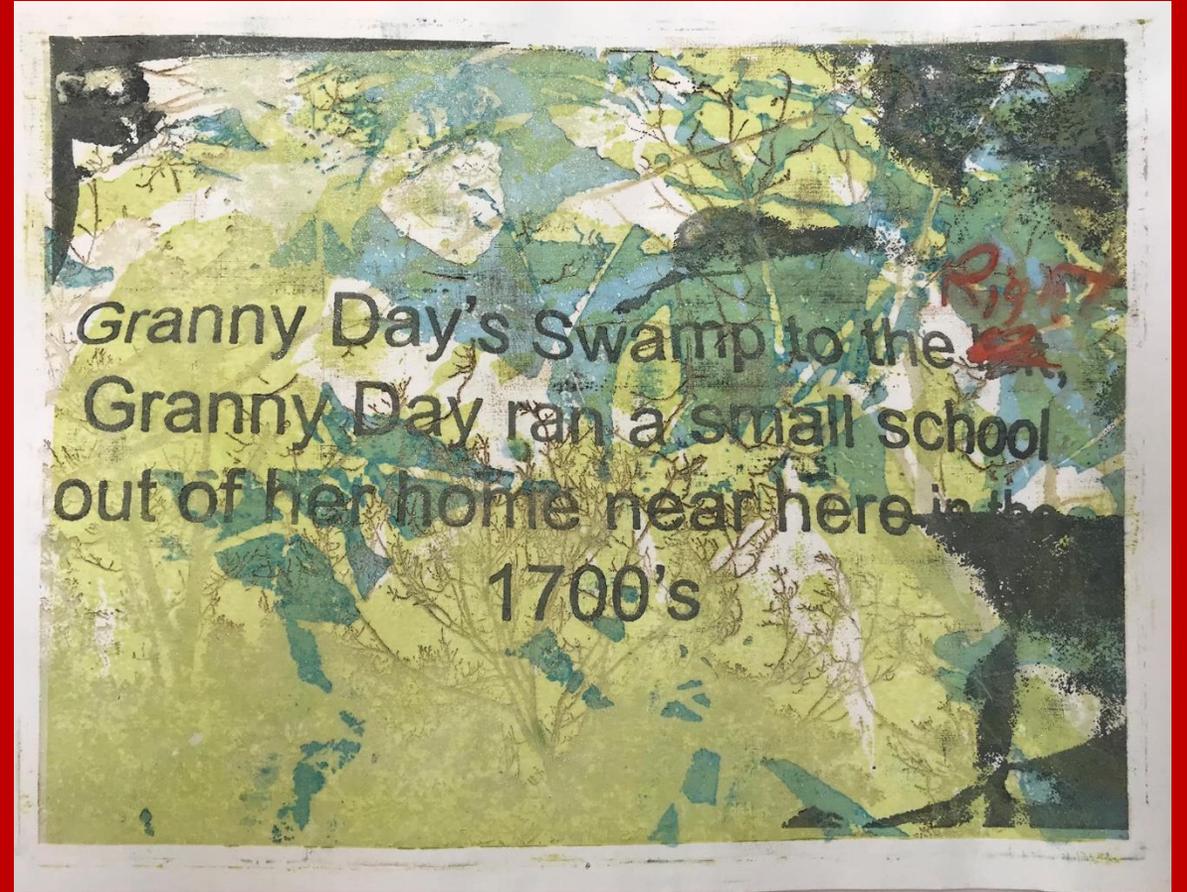
### *A WALK IN THE WOODS*

These six prints are a response to walks taken as artistic practice in an ongoing collaborative dialogue between sound and video artist Walter Wright and Jan Johnson. They take walks, separately and together, and make work that grows out of that practice and space through which they traverse and encounter. In their latest iteration, Wright took a walk in the woods of “Dogtown” near Gloucester, MA, during the green and pandemic, upheaval and lockdown that was summer 2020. He recorded in video the earth and sky as he walked. This footage was processed by him, turning the local color of foliage and branches into a color-stripped digitized drawing animation. From this, screen grabs were taken, laser etched onto Shina woodblocks and given to Johnson. From the digital versions of his walk, she mixed a palette using watercolor, mica, graphite, and nori paste to create inks inspired by nature and desire. These images were printed in the Japanese Style, using multiple blocks to create a palimpsest of overlaid images as they appear in video, memories, and daydreams. Research of artists, writers, poets, performers, scientists, and other thinkers plays a role in their collaborative exchange. A poem by Chinese poet, Wang Wei, surfaced through reading the Poem-A-Day selection from The Academy of American Poets. From his poem, Johnson gathered lines for titles like walking and picking up stones in the flow.

# Jan Johnson



*Into a still drawn clearness, Reflecting the under. 2021. Woodblock on torinoko paper.*



*The swamp is the school. 2021. Woodblock on torinoko paper.*

# Jan Johnson

## JAN JOHNSON

(Professor of Practice / Studio Art Program)

### BIO

Born in North Carolina, Jan Johnson is an interdisciplinary artist, who lives and works in Lowell, MA. Her artistic practice includes drawing, printmaking, embroidery, and painting, and moves from two-dimensions into installation, film, video, performance, creative writing, and artists' books. Her works often include narrative, experience, cultural heritage, feminist critique and place through materiality that weaves layers and edges abstraction.

In 2003, Johnson received her MFA in Painting from Rhode Island School of Design, a Post-Baccalaureate in Drawing and Painting from Brandeis University in 2001, and a BA in Art from Wake Forest University in 1990. Prior to receiving her MFA from Rhode Island School of Design, she was awarded a painting fellowship residency at the Palazzo Cenci in Rome during the summer of 2002. In 2010, she was a Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellow in Drawing. Johnson was a Fulbright Scholar in Art at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design at the University of Dundee, Scotland during the academic year 2015-16. In the fall of 2017, she was awarded an Artists Resource Trust Fund for Individuals from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. In 2020, she and Walter Wright received a Lowell Cultural Council grant to exhibit their collaborative work. In 2021, she was shortlisted for the Blanche E. Colman Award in drawing and printmaking.

Johnson has exhibited in group, two-person and solo exhibitions in the US, Greece, Italy, and the UK. She is Professor of Practice at Clark University where she teaches drawing, printmaking, and book arts, and is Program Coordinator and Lead of the Global Summer Experience at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design at the University of Dundee in Scotland.

# Eric Nichols

## ERIC NICHOLS

(Adjunct faculty / Studio Art Program)

### STATEMENT: *All of My Grandfather's Tools*

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic my uncle began to clean through his basement as did so many other people stuck in isolation. Among the boxes of old clothes and Christmas decorations, he found 5 wooden crates stacked neatly in a corner. The crates contained the contents of my grandfather's work bench, which had mostly been left untouched since his passing in 2000 and Fall 2011 when my grandmother passed away. In the winter of 2011, the contents of my grandparents' house were divvied up among friends and family each wanting to hold onto the heirlooms which served as a thread of connection to those who have passed and as useful goods in our daily lives. The contents of the work bench - mostly old hand tools and the typical odds and ends found in any workbench or junk drawer (screws, nails, hinges, bits of wire, light bulbs, etc.) - were hastily gathered into the crates and stored in their new home until the day when they were left in my driveway accompanied by a text that read, "I left some boxes with your grandfather's tools in your driveway. Feel free to dump them if you don't want them."

*All of My Grandfather's Tools* is a look at the intersection of historical and personal attachment that humans imbue onto everyday objects. It is a look at the transformation of the junk drawer into the sacred objects left by our forbearers. Photography as a medium elevates and instills a sense of prominence to any objects captured within its view, recodifying the image as something new, but a representation of what was. Presented as a photographic archive of the banal objects passed on from one generation to the next. This project uses the language of both the photograph and the archive to elevate the everyday to the sacred.



*Pliers #2. 2021. Photograph.*

# Eric Nichols



*Pocket Knife. 2021. Photograph.*

## **ERIC NICHOLS**

(Adjunct faculty / Studio Art Program)

### **BIO**

Eric Nichols is an artist, cinematographer and photographer based in Worcester Massachusetts. He holds his MFA in Studio Arts from Maine College of Art and is an Assistant Professor at Worcester State University. He is currently pursuing a career as a fine art photographer and has shown broadly including the Fitchburg Art Museum, the Griffin Museum of Photography, the Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Portland Maine.



*Garden Shears. 2021. Photograph.*

# Scott Niemi



*Royal Poinciana View. 2015. Oil on canvas.*

# Scott Niemi



*Rindge Freshet. 2014. Oil on canvas.*

## **SCOTT NIEMI**

(Teaching Professor, Becker School of Design & Technology)

### BIO

Scott Niemi was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts and then went on to complete his formal education at Florida Atlantic University where he earned an M.F.A. in Visual Art, focusing on painting and drawing. Currently he is a Teaching Professor in the BSDT at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Before that, Scott was a professor at Becker College (Worcester, MA), where he taught in the Interactive Media/Design program from 2005- 2021. Additionally, he has worked for Florida Atlantic University as an adjunct art professor, as a part-time lecturer at Franklin Pierce University and for the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art.

Scott has participated in many shows both on the national as well as the local level. His work can be seen in the corporate collections of the Oak Brook Bank (Oak Brook, IL), the Essex Inn (downtown Chicago), the Schacknow Museum of Fine Arts (Plantation, FL), UMass Ambulatory Center (Worcester, MA) and Clinton Hospital (Clinton, MA). He has work in hundreds of private collections, ranging from Beverly Hills to Australia. In addition to The School Street Art Studios (Gardner, MA) where he maintains an active studio, Scott's artwork may be found at The Boulder Art Gallery (Fitchburg, MA) and at Collins Artworks (Clinton, MA). He resides in southwestern NH.

# Rox Samer

## ROX SAMER

(Assistant Professor of Screen Studies)

### STATEMENT

Taken up as a transfeminist creative critical praxis, vidding challenges the transphobic and cissexist common sense on which our reality relies, including its teleological histories that cast trans as “new,” ignoring the contributions of trans people to feminist and queer movements and the historical and geographical range of gender variance; liberal discourses that approach trans as yet another matter of civil rights, neglecting how visibility renders trans people more susceptible to violence and surveillance; and media narratives which tell the same fetishizing, isolating, and tragic stories of trans lives time and again. In these three transfeminist vids, I remix our transphobic, transmisogynistic, cissexist reality so as to try to make perceptible a future when trans people, queer people, people of color, and all women and femmes are free.

To read more about what I do in these videos, why, and how, please see my essay “Remixing Transfeminist Futures,” in *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Nov. 2019).



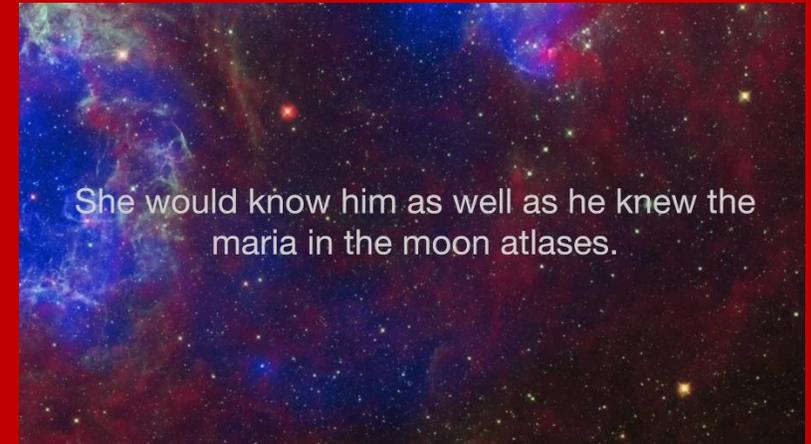
# Rox Samer



*Six Inch Heels. 2019. Digital video.*



*Gold Rush. 2014. Digital Video.*



*When the Stars Are Ours. 2017. Digital Video.*

## **ROX SAMER** (Assistant Professor of Screen Studies)

### BIO

Rox Samer (they/them) is Assistant Professor of Screen Studies at Clark University. A feminist, queer, and transgender media studies scholar, Rox has published essays in *Jump Cut*, *Feminist Media Histories*, *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. Their first monograph, *Lesbian Potentiality and Feminist Media in the 1970s*, will be out with Duke University Press in April 2022. Rox is also a documentary filmmaker and remix artist. Their remix videos regularly premiere at WisCon, the feminist science fiction convention where they were first immersed in fan vidding as an art and culture.