



UNCW Presents: **Madison Creech, “There But Not There”**
August 25 – September 30, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 22, 2022
MEDIA CONTACT: Keltsey Mattachione, CAB Art Gallery Director
E-mail: cabartgallery@uncw.edu; Phone: (910) 962-3031

“*There But Not There*” is an exhibition by Madison Creech and will open in UNCW’s Cultural Arts Building Gallery with a public reception on Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022 from 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Following the opening reception, the exhibition will run through Friday, Sept. 30, 2022. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The CAB Art Gallery is located in the UNCW Cultural Arts Building.

“The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) removes an estimated 55,000 deer carcasses from its roadways each year at a cost of more than \$4 million per year. Many VDOT maintenance facilities have a need for viable, environmentally compliant, and cost-effective carcass management strategies. Disposal challenges include a decreasing availability of conventional disposal methods, such as landfills, and a lack of viable burial areas” (Donaldson, and White 1). Forced air roadkill composting was researched and implemented at a few VDOT maintenance facilities. The solution was piloted by a small woman-led team made up of one researcher Bridget M. Donaldson, one research coordinator Jimmy White, and a handful of VDOT workers. This process is common for composting livestock mortality, but is slow to be incorporated by government entities for roadkill in the States. *There But Not There* is my response to visiting the VDOT compost sites.

The compost smelled like dirt. I leaned over the compost bin door, questioning the material. It was no longer animal, but was definitely not *not* animal. *To Dust You Shall Return* is a miniature recreation of the compost bins in Lynchburg, VA. The bins are divided into three sections - animal carcasses, partially composted carcasses, and completed compost. The ritual of stirring compost to incorporate air, wood chips, and leachate produces a significant amount of heat and steam that rises from the pile. Could this steam be the last exhale of a deer’s spirit leaving the physical world before the body transitions to dirt? *To Dust You Shall Return* acts as an alter and a gravesite holding composted remains of animals. Veiled with checkered stained glass, the light from within the alter passes through a thin barrier of color, subtly transforming its form, and mimicking the final breath of steam.

VDOT’s compost bins had attracted another creative - author Erika Howsare. She shared with me that deer and humans exist in the same zone, both live on the edge of the forest. It is this close proximity that leads to high numbers of abrasive encounters between human and deer. Our collaborative text installation *Mixing. Dissolving.* indicates a division in the gallery, however

it does not block passage between sides. The front of the gallery is spacious, bright and contains palatable illustrations of compost. The front is human territory. As you pass the partition, you cross into deer territory. Illustrated depictions are replaced with compost sourced from VDOT and trail cam footage of the compost process. The lights are low and the smell of compost is earthy. With text, Erika addresses and poses questions to traveling animal and human audiences.

Immediately in front of the text installation is *Ground Cover*, a jacquard weaving draped over a fawn taxidermy form. Intersecting warp and weft threads embed imagery of roadkill silhouettes into the cloth. These intersections resemble networks of roads and animal migration whose paths cross and collide. *Flattened Fauna Gingham* continues a cadence of collision in an enlarged print of the iconic checkered picnic blanket. A cloth whose purpose is to shield us from dirt. It is a thin barrier between our world and the animal world; a permeable layer of protection. Similar to the steel door on the bins that sat between myself and the compost. A curious reach defuncts its purpose.

Another historical textile referenced throughout the exhibition is *toile de jouy*. You may recognize this print as a monochromatic French-styled pattern that displays illustrated scenes of flora and fauna, great scientific discovery, vast landscapes seemingly untouched by colonialism, and hunting conquests. Within itself, animal mortality compost contains all of these themes. Starting out as fauna exploring their native landscapes and becoming inadvertently “hunted” though a vehicle encounter. The physicality of the deer’s body finds its final resting place as compost spread along eroding roadways; creating and maintaining landscapes. The nutrient rich compost propels the growth of new flora attracting the eye of deer – and the cycle continues.

Donaldson, Bridget M. and James W. White, JR. “Composting Animal Mortality Removed From Roads: A Pilot Study of Rotary Drum and Forced Aeration Compost Vessels.” *Virginia Center for Transportation Innovation and Research*, 2013.

Many thanks to:
Erika Howsare
Matthew Creech
Jimmy White
Bridget Donaldson
Corey Creech
Countless VDOT workers

Bio:

Madison Creech is a UNCW Lecturer in the Department of Art and Art History teaching graphic design and art foundation courses. Creech grew up moving from base to base with her military family. Her father was a Missile Launch Officer, so her family was stationed in rural areas like North Dakota, Wyoming and Nebraska. Her family loved exploring the “wild” and embraced the unexpected creatures that graced their backyards — rabbits, antelope and badgers. On base,



this same landscape functioned as a cloak for an intercontinental ballistic missile, ready and waiting beneath the surface, paralleled by her father, standing at attention waiting for the command to push the launch button. This juxtaposition of nature and anticipated destruction inspires a great deal of her work.

Madison Creech was the 2018-19 Fountainhead Fellow in the Department of Craft and Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. She holds an MFA in fibers from Arizona State University and a BFA and BS in textile, merchandising, and fashion design from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She has served as faculty associate at Arizona State University, instructing surface design and served as Visiting Assistant Professor and the Brown Visiting Teacher-Scholar at Stetson University teaching digital art and textile art courses.

Creech has held residencies at Praxis Fiber Digital Weaving Lab in Cleveland, Ohio, Metro Community College Prototype Lab in Omaha, Nebraska, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft in Texas, and Techshop in Chandler, Arizona. Her work has been widely exhibited across the country, and she has been the recipient of a number of distinguished awards, including the Juror's Award from the ARC Gallery's *Frayed* exhibition in Chicago, IL, the Rudy Turk Award for History in American Craft from ASU, and the Mary Beason Bishop and Francis Sumner Merit Scholarship from the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. She was a co-founder of [Fresh As Fruit Gallery](#) in DeLand, FL, and currently co-runs [Fried Fruit Art Gallery](#) in the Cargo District in Wilmington, NC.

Interested media should contact Gallery Director, Keltsey Mattachione, at cabartgallery@uncw.edu or 910.962.3031.