

Liza Butts

Liza Butts (*1993, Birmingham, AL) is a graduate of Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, Washington University in St. Louis, MO. She has participated in residencies at Brooklyn Arts Space, the New York Arts Practicum, and will attend a 2024 residency at In Cahoots in Petaluma, CA. She has worked at the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in NYC, and was recently awarded a Visual Arts Fellowship by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. A monograph filmed by Alabama Public TV was included in the 2023 Sidewalk Film Festival. She lives and works in Birmingham, AL.

Fantastical landscapes are depicted moving, shifting, and glowing. Tangled spaces that are seemingly untraversable bloom and glisten with vibrancy and energy. Using a saturated palette, the artist creates landscapes from imagery found in overgrown areas of the South, primarily in Alabama where the artist lives.

Imagery of kudzu and vines form visually dense compositions. The image spaces are tight fields of color and shapes, tapestries of marks, that form environments the artist refers to as “Fields.” The repetitive frames of the paintings—rectangles and squares—serve as a type of sequencing, informed by the artist’s interest in meditative and yogic practices that are used to access the subconscious mind and make subtle changes in the body. Memories and dreams become accessible through meditation, where phrases are repeated as a way to turn off the automatic mind and make subtle shifts in the subconscious landscape.



Figures are absent in the works. Wilderness spaces of solitude and reflection reveal subtle shifts that show themselves in patterned mark-making. The artist explores ancient myths and symbols of marshlands with titles like *Field of Rushes* (image on left), coming from an Egyptian myth of afterlife that speaks to transition and change. Marshlands serve as a metaphor for liminal in between places, hidden states of becoming, rich in growth and plant-life. Kudzu plants with their long overgrown vines that grow rapidly over terrains, hide abstract forms underneath.

Some paintings appear to be underwater, with expressive and fluid gestures. The artist uses oil paint diluted with mediums, applied over many layers. Mark-making reveals a history and a progression, with small movements coming in and out of focus. The paint’s fluid materiality points to liminal unfixed spaces where things change, move, and adapt quickly.

The artist grapples with personal and collective pressures where tensions are held both internally and externally in the landscape, situated within a political environment that is pulled between two poles; opposite ends of a spectrum. The work also deals with the early part of an artist’s career where pressures exist that the artist must reconcile with. The work attempts to hold these tensions to allow for something to rupture and emerge so transformation can take place.

Education

- 2016 BFA, Studio Art, Washington University in St. Louis, graduated with honors, St. Louis, Missouri
- 2012 High School Visual Arts Program, Alabama School of Fine Arts, graduated with honors, Birmingham, Alabama

Awards and Residencies

- 2025 Alabama State Council on the Arts Visual Arts Fellowship
- 2024 In Cahoots Residency, Grant Recipient, Petaluma, CA (forthcoming)
- 2022 YoungArts Foundation Project Grant Recipient
- 2021 Center For Cultural Innovation Business of Art Entrepreneurial Program
- 2017 Brooklyn Arts Space Open Studio Residency
- 2016 New York Arts Practicum Residency Program
Hazel H. Huntsinger Memorial Prize in Painting, Washington University in St. Louis
- 2015 Santa Reparata International School of Art, Studio Program, Florence, Italy
- 2012 Nominee for U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts
YoungArts Foundation Visual Arts Finalist

Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *A Spectrum of Echoes*, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, AL
- 2022 *Nothing Left Unveiled*, Hoover Public Library, curated by Jennifer Marshall, Birmingham, Alabama
- 2022 *Oracles, Shelters, Pilgrimages*, Lowe Mill Arts Center, Huntsville, Alabama

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2023 *Fresh Perspectives*, Wiregrass Museum of Art, Dothan, Alabama
Megafauna Land Dwellers, curated by Naomi Fisher, YoungArts Gallery, Miami, Florida
- 2022 *LaGrange Southeast Regional*, Lamar Dodd Art Center & LaGrange Art Museum, LaGrange, Georgia
SouthWorks National Juried Exhibition, Juried by Marcia Wood, OCAF, Watkinsville, Georgia
Coined in the South, juried by Hallie Ringle, Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina
- 2021 *Hierophanic Territories*, Ground Floor Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
Painting National Juried Exhibition, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Intersections, Ground Floor Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
- 2020 *Vicissitudes*, Ground Floor Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
Roots and Wings, Arts Revive, Selma, Alabama
Works on Paper, Paperworkers Local with Alabama State Council on the Arts, Montgomery, Alabama
- 2019 *West Alabama Artists Juried Exhibition*, Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Harnett Biennial of American Prints, Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, Richmond, Virginia
Mana Decentralized, Mana Contemporary Jersey City, New Jersey
- 2018 *Members Exhibition*, Blackburn 20:20 gallery, EFA Project Space, NYC, New York
Invader Species, sound by Leo Chang, International Computer Music Conference, Daegu, South Korea
- 2016 *Surfaces for Rent*, Des Lee Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri

Public Collections

Wiregrass Museum of Art, Dothan, Alabama
LaGrange Art Museum, LaGrange, Georgia

Commissions

2024 YoungArts New York Gala Featured Artist, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, New York

Workshops / Lectures / Panels

2023 Panelist, Juried for Hambidge Center Spring Residency Program, Rabun Gap, Georgia
 Watercolor Monotypes, Paperworkers Local (PWL), Birmingham, Alabama
 Intro to Monotypes, PWL, Birmingham, Alabama

2022 Collagraph on Sintra Plate, PWL, Birmingham, Alabama

2021 Nontoxic Aluminum Plate Lithography, PWL, Birmingham, Alabama
 Intro to Pronto Plates, PWL, Birmingham, Alabama
 Artist Community Talks, Ground Floor Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama

2020 Monoprinting with Textiles, PWL, Birmingham, Alabama

Employment / Professional Projects

2021-24 Studio Manager, Paperworkers Local, Birmingham, Alabama

2022 Coordinator for the Inaugural Alabama Printmaking Conference, with the Alabama Visual Arts Network, Birmingham, Alabama

2021 Community Coordinator, Ground Floor Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama

2020-21 Artist Assistant to Sara Garden Armstrong, Birmingham, Alabama

2017-19 Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop Monitor, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, New York

2019 Artist Assistant to Gene Kiegel, Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ

2017-18 Teaching Artist, LEAP, Brooklyn, NY

2014 Assistant to the Master Printer, the Island Press, St. Louis, MO

Bibliography

- 2023 *"Paying Attention to the Hidden Language of Layered Southern Landscapes,"*
Monograph Documentary Short, Alabama Public TV, PBS,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5CgkjXuPjI>
"Alabama Documentary Shorts," Sidewalk Film Festival, Birmingham, AL