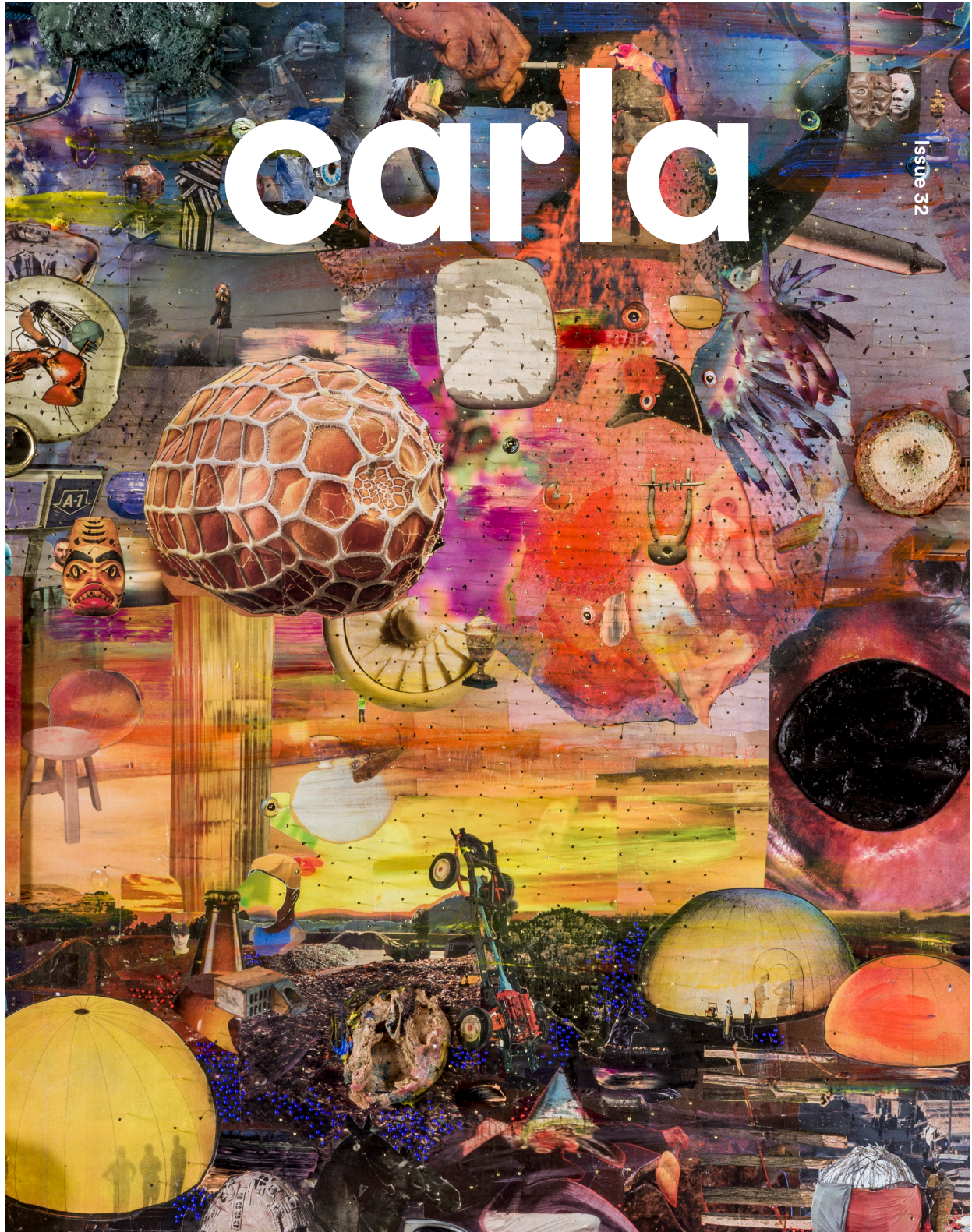


carla Issue 32

Hayden, Christie: *Entanglements at Hollyhock House*
Summer 2023



on the procedural secrets of Williams' abstract paintings. The primary materials used to construct the figures—cork and styrofoam—were given a false sense of weight by the sgraffito carvings on their dark, oily surfaces. *Balken* (2022), a humanoid figure of roughly human scale, has the unflinching presence of unhewn wood or stone, but the blue foam left visible at the figure's head conveys a secret vulnerability behind the appearance of strength. By contrast, Williams' paintings—thanks to scattered paint drips carefully contained by white outlines—often have the aloof, atmospheric quality of glimpsing through a gentle rain. His process, which involves painting atop inkjet photographic prints, distills legibility and spatial relativity into an elusive essence guided by an unknown internal logic. In *Crying Watercolorist* (2022), the result is a dense maybe-landscape, maybe-interior, comprising heaps of muted puzzle pieces punctuated by shards of electric green and orange.

The second, larger gallery was more fully committed to figuration than the first, charging the room with confrontational energy: 2-D portraits by Bhabha and of artists at work by Williams were surrounded by more of Bhabha's figural sculptures. Her *Untitled* works on paper (all 2022) were drawn with sweeping gestures and scrawled linework in psychedelic hues. With doubled eyes and eyes-within-eyes, the hallucinating subjects project their externalized delirium outward. Williams' figures, by contrast, are preoccupied, poring over artworks of their

own. In *Studio/Office* (2022), he swaps abstraction for a surreal scene. An artist made of scribbled lines with a long phallus scrawled onto its arm paints diligently, his single large eye bulging with focus. Surrounding the artist, a Buddah-like figure is rendered in washy colors while a bearded man with long eyelashes is stylized differently, outlined in what looks like black pen. While Bhabha's figures maintain an outward, confrontational presence and Williams' working artists possess a neurotic inward focus, they are each cobbled together from an array of elements that work together to convey an idiosyncratic logic.

For both artists, this patching together of elements is heightened by the fact that neither is concerned with concealing the seams. Depending on the viewing angle, Bhabha's shapeshifting *Pilot* (2022) appears to be either a sphinx or a reclining figure. An ill-defined face is carved into either side of its head: One has the gaze of an unflinching voyeur, the other that of an indifferent deity. This duality found a striking resonance when the sculpture's forward gaze was followed to Williams' *Paired Puzzles with Interpolation (Studio/Courthouse)* (2020–22), a puzzle painting made of two conjoined canvases interrupted in the middle by a narrow third slid between them. The sliver of canvas is painted in approximately (but not quite) the same fuchsia, olive, orange, and blue color palette as the other two, working to both connect and disrupt the generously fragmented content of the two larger halves. Though

Bhabha's *Pilot* and Williams' *Paired Puzzles* could not be more stylistically or materially distinct from one other, they share a tender approach to their respective medium wherein the gestalt of the final product does not obliterate the individual components.

Throughout *Bhabha Williams*, the wide assortment of conceptual and material approaches across the work of both artists never attempted to reconcile into a singular vision. Rather, each body of work reflected the matter-of-fact, existential inevitabilities that so often confound and bewilder a lived reality that insists on complexity. Sharing space, Williams and Bhabha allowed multiple realities to coexist without being reductive, suggesting a self-aware acceptance of difference that inspires a more utopic way of being.

61

Entanglements at Hollyhock House

February 15–
May 27, 2023

In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes explains that humans originated as pairs of lovers unified in a single being, only to be split in half by the gods.¹ Here, love can be understood as an innate desire to reconjoin and return to our original state: "Now, since their natural form had been cut in two, each one longed for its own other half," says Aristophanes.² *Entanglements*, a two-person exhibition by married artists Louise Bonnet and Adam Silverman on view at the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Hollyhock House, echoes Plato's sentiment. Both

Christie Hayden

artists present works that express a bodily desire for togetherness that is whimsical and grotesque. Across the show, intentional defects on otherwise-impeccable stoneware vessels imply eerie incompleteness, while images of squeezing limbs communicate a violent longing for sweet embrace. In the repetition of these motifs, Bonnet and Silverman propose a new visual lexicon for the duality of romantic relationships, exposing love in all of its hopes and flaws.

Perched on a ledge near the front entrance of the home, Silverman's ceramic work, *Entangled* (2018), is an exquisitely constructed vessel with a tumor-like orb adhered to its spout. Its off-white glaze appears fragile, as if it were flaking off—the crackle adds both beauty and precarity. Across the show, flaws are an integral part of Silverman's vernacular. A large vessel adorned with two bulbous nodes, also titled *Entangled* (2023), is Silverman's largest sculpture in the exhibition. One of the large abscesses, supported from below by a metal bar, has a rougher surface and contains a mouth-shaped crack mended with stitch-like bands of clay. These imperfections contrast the second bauble, which has a smooth, undisturbed surface. Likewise, the roughly two-foot-tall *Tide Jar* (2023), installed in the living room, shares *Entangled*'s fissure and reparative strip motifs and sits beside another nearly flawless vessel by the same name (*Tide Jar*, 2022). Silverman mirrors these pairs, their contrasts made evident through proximity. Like Aristophanes'

speech, in which wounds are meant to remind the individual of their lost other half, Silverman's sculptures exhibit imperfections, perhaps indicating that we are forever marked by romantic partnership.

Though we are aware of love's risk—its potential to wound—we are often still overcome with an undeniable desire for closeness. ("They would throw their arms about each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to grow together,"³ Aristophanes proclaims.) Across the exhibition, Bonnet's paintings highlight this yearning. Hanging at the south end of the Hollyhock's interior walkway, Bonnet's painting *Hollyhock Green* (2022) depicts a pair of disembodied, intertwined hands that sit on a table draped in golden fabric against an emerald backdrop. Gravely enmeshed, the hands squeeze together so tightly that they bulge at the force of their mutual embrace. In the living room, Bonnet's *Hollyhock Gold* (2022) also features a pair of bulbous fists grasping each other; this time, two long fingers point toward the left of the canvas as if to divert the viewer's gaze from this display of desperate intimacy. If Silverman's sculptures focus on the ways that the individual can be changed by romantic partnership, Bonnet shows lovers unabashedly coming together—exposing romantic connection in all of its intimate (though sometimes gruesomely codependent) glory.

While Bonnet and Silverman's pieces differ in medium, the two bodies

of work presented in *Entanglements* deploy color to communicate their shared themes, using the Hollyhock House as a kind of intermediary. Bonnet's *Untitled* (2023), the only work on paper in the exhibition, depicts a pair of mauve hands against a teal background—both hues are similar to those found in the vivid carpet of Hollyhock's study. The brown tone of a sleeve shown in the drawing also recalls the deep hazel coloration of another of Silverman's *Tide Jar* (2023) works, which stood only a few feet away. Back in the living room, the golden brown tones of Bonnet's *Hollyhock Gold* ripple across the house's wood floor and up through Silverman's *Entangled (Reading Room)* (2022). When viewed from afar, the eye easily connects Silverman's umber piece, in which the pour spouts of two vessels kiss each other atop a walnut table, with the ochre drapery behind the loving embrace of Bonnet's painted hands. These chromatically coupled moments across *Entanglements* unite the two disparate bodies of work.

Much like Plato's ancient myth, Bonnet and Silverman illustrate irresistible, turbulent intimacy. In the domestic space of Hollyhock House, viewing *Entanglements* feels like eavesdropping on the intimate ebbs and flows experienced within the snares of love.

1. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 25–26.

2. Plato, 27.

3. Plato, 27.



Louise Bonnet and Adam Silverman,
Entanglements (installation views) (2023).
Hollyhock House, Los Angeles, 2023.
Images courtesy of the artists and
Galerie Max Hetzler. Photos: Joshua White.