

# LOST & FOUND



November 12 – December 19, 2020



**Brew House Association (BHA)** is a non-profit art center located in the former Duquesne Brewing Company facility in Pittsburgh's South Side.

Founded in the 1990s, BHA works to help artists grow professionally and creatively by connecting them to audiences, professional resources, and other arts organizations throughout the region and beyond.

Throughout its facility, BHA supports the imaginative work of a wide spectrum of creatives including a gallery, artist studios, and more.

**Prospectus** is a program for emerging curators that recognizes the vital role of curators in the field and provides gallery space, mentorship, professional development, and the financial support necessary to present new exhibitions in the Brew House Gallery.

To learn more about Prospectus, visit [brewhousearts.org/prospectus](http://brewhousearts.org/prospectus)

Brew House Association is generously supported by The Fine Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Henry L. Hillman Foundation, Opportunity Fund, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and The Pittsburgh Foundation.

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Gallery guide edited and designed by Point Line Projects

Cover: Aleem Hurst, *get well NOW*  
2020, archival inkjet print; 24 x 30 in.

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Brew House  
Association,  
Pittsburgh

November 12 –  
December 19, 2020

Curated by  
Taylor Fisch

Hannah Altman  
Brendon J. Hawkins  
J Houston  
Aleem Hurst  
Brent Nakamoto  
Jameelah Platt  
Sheila Swartz  
Zachariah Szabo  
Heidi Wiren Bartlett  
Zeal Eva

Abandoned balloons, caught in a branch or tied to a gate for a party days before, remain suspended between identities, awaiting their next flight. In the 2018 performance and accompanying video that became *My Shadow* (2018) (fig. 1), Brendon J. Hawkins occupies this liminality by fastening a balloon to his belt, an appendage to his body, his visible shadow. At the end of the performance, Hawkins releases the balloon back into the world from which it came and proclaims, “Leaving my shadow into the world, free to live a life of its own, not held down by me. Goodbye.” No longer needed as a vessel for self-definition, he makes space for himself and the balloon to continue constructing their own identities.

Using still images, time-based media, and sculptural interventions, the artists in *Lost & Found* reframe and repurpose the found and the everyday in order to discover, reaffirm, and revise their understandings of individual and collective selves. They preserve the ephemerality in memories of the past to bring new meaning to the present, speaking to the human impulse to ascribe significance onto our surroundings. The works on view in *Lost & Found* are multi-layered and heavy—in meaning, and sometimes physically. At a time when we, like Hawkins’ shadow, feel the weight of the world, these artists lay bare the emotional weight of their losses and their desires to find themselves anew.

Like Hawkins, Sheila Swartz and Heidi Wiren Bartlett create palimpsests out of objects left behind by others. In the physical transformation of objects from heavy and raw to soft and light, Swartz and Wiren Bartlett present women as lost, held captive in the home, trying to break free. Swartz metamorphosizes the pain held in her body by transforming the decorative window drapery that belonged to the woman who used to own her home. In *Sodden* (2020) (fig. 2, left), drapes take shape as small decorative pillows: airtight, sporadic stitches, whitewashed with paint, as if internal wounds have been haphazardly stitched and then re-stitched back together. What was mourned in *Sodden* is released in *Splayed* (2020) (fig. 2, right): amorphous and weightless, hanging, strewn against the rough stones of the brick wall.

01 - Brendon J. Hawkins,  
*My Shadow*  
2018, video, balloons

02 - Sheila Swartz,  
*Sodden*  
2020, window drapery, lace,  
house paint, string;  
dimensions variable

*Splayed*  
2020, window drapery,  
string, 4 x 1 ft



01



02

## “Wide open, exposed, and free, she laid herself down to rest.”

- Sheila Swartz

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In *Her Shoes; Her Pants; Her Shirt* (2020) (fig. 3), Wiren Bartlett casts “the clothes my mother was wearing when she died on December 18, 2018; they were found on the floor of her garage.” The iron sculptures distill the evidence of a mother’s death into the weight of a daughter’s loss. Preserved in the state in which they were found, protruding nails and surfaced lint are forever fixed to the cable-knit turtleneck, trousers, and tiny fuzzy lined clogs. Framed on the wall next to the monument of her mother’s passing hangs *Her Mom* (2020), photographed standing in front of a house with a boarded-up window, holding a red flower. While the grandmother’s dulled purple-toned clothes remain intact, her wandering eyes and jutting tongue read as lost. Between the lightness of the photograph and the weight of the iron casts, viewers not only see the multi-generation lineage of loss, but also how the mind can be set free before laying down to rest.

Wiren Bartlett’s impulse to preserve the clothes her mother died in shows a human tendency to archive remnants of the past as physical placeholders for the immateriality of loss. J Houston and Brent Nakamoto also archive fragmented objects and images of painful pasts to honor the personal wounds that shaped their identities. For Houston, the desire to “recall what their body remembers” is seen in *a scale of 1 to 10* (2020) (fig. 4), where they present an archive of their years as a chronically ill transgender patient. Whereas one side of the wall installation shows still lifes and performative portraits alongside a collaged display of X-rays, hospital bands, and wallpaper made of elastic therapeutic tape, the other side plays video documentary footage of real pain and real blood alongside hyperbolic performances of female gender. As acrylic red nails sensually handle a glass dilator and goopy brown-tinted lip gloss gets applied, the words of Leslie Jamison come to mind: “Pain that gets performed is still pain. Pain turned trite is still pain.”



03



04

03 - Heidi Wiren Bartlett,  
*Her Shoes; Her Pants; Her Shirt*,  
2020, cast iron; 8 x 8 ft

04 - J Houston, *a scale of 1 to 10 (detail)*, 2020, kinesiology tape, archival pigment prints, chrome frames, paint, used identification bracelet, foam tiles, video; 10 x 10 x 15 ft



**“I revisit places and experiences where I could not, or cannot, exist fully as myself and—through the process of making photographs—construct an alternate narrative that I can inhabit without fear, inhibition, or shame.”**

- Aleem Hurst

In *Osamu Shimada, La Selva Beach, 1948* (2018) (fig. 5), Nakamoto paints a photograph from his grandmother’s photo album, which predates her entering a Japanese internment camp at age twelve. What begins as a means to validate the memory of his grandmother’s story becomes a projection of his desires: to know her, to recognize that what he desires to know is lost, and to paint a young man sitting on La Selva Beach. In painting the physicality of the photograph onto canvas, Nakamoto acknowledges the photograph as both a memento of his grandmother’s narrative and an invitation to create his own. By obscuring any identifying facial features, he leaves space for our narratives, as well. Houston’s and Nakamoto’s assertion of agency show that archives are interpretable, interruptible, and always incomplete.

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While the artists mentioned thus far present found objects as carriers of bodily wounds and bodies lost, the following artists emphasize the narrative potential of memories evoked through objects and places. If Nakamoto opens the door to narrative possibilities, Aleem Hurst and Zachariah Szabo use photography to create alternate narratives that suggest identity is a performance that begins in the childhood home. In *put something in* (2020) (fig. 6), Hurst returns to their hometown in Michigan, where they lived prior to transitioning to gender neutral pronouns. The performative scene of a figure laying on their back—bare- and flat-chested—trying to catch pastel colored marshmallows that fall from hands up above, subtly disrupts the domestic interior. In re-enacting a fantastical moment of play, Hurst suggests a possibility in which the life they knew growing up and the life they know now can coexist: a place where queerness and domesticity are compatible.



05 - Brent Nakamoto, *Osamu Shimada, La Selva Beach, 1948*  
2018, oil on canvas; 64 x 44 in.

06 - Aleem Hurst, *put something in*  
2020, archival inkjet print; 35 x 28 in.



05



06

**“I am the places that I have been ... the places that I have seen and want to return back to, the ones that I can no longer and the spaces that will always be home to me.”**

- Zeal Eva

9

José Esteban Muñoz writes in his book *Cruising Utopia*, “Queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future.” Szabo idealizes his past in a different way than Hurst, photographing constructed installations of both real and imagined interiors from his upbringing. The visual incoherence in *Arcadia* (2020) (fig. 7) shows an exploration of his mother’s design aesthetic as a means to correlate her taste with the sense of entrapment Szabo felt as an adopted child and “boy beauty queen.” The photograph also contains references to the marble fireplaces, cabinets of tchotchkes, and stucco exteriors of the homes that he often wished he lived in. Sourcing objects from thrift stores and estate sales that evoke memories from his past, Szabo, like Nakamoto and Hurst, blurs the lines between lived reality and the reality of his desires.

The imagining of places and objects from the past to better inform present identities brings us to the work of Zeal Eva, Hannah Altman, and Jameelah Platt. For these artists, memories are inconclusive, in a perpetual state of flux. In her series *The Spaces In-between* (2020) (fig. 8), Zeal Eva photographs lush streetscapes and abandoned lots in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where she grew up and temporarily returned to live. Viewers see empty cars, empty lots, and empty courts—spaces that for Zeal Eva trigger a flow of memories. Photographing spaces in temporal moments of in-between—never quite day, never quite night—Zeal Eva presents home as an ongoing process of leaving and returning that waits patiently for transformation and rediscovery.

For Altman and Platt, inconclusive memories of places make space for the spiritual. In Altman’s *Kavana* series, she addresses how the historical absence of space for the Jewish diaspora creates the need to place greater

07 - Zachariah Szabo, *Arcadia*  
2020, archival inkjet print;  
60 x 45 in.

08 - Zeal Eva, *Spending time  
with you (it was simple then)*  
2020, inkjet print; 18 x 24 in.



07



08

value in intergenerational memory and rituals to keep faith. This is achieved through the mindset of *kavana*, meaning “intention,” often described as necessary for the activation of Judaica, or Jewish ritual objects. The cross section of symbols and the performance of rituals in her photographs illustrate that through *kavana*, lighting candles on the makeshift, hand-waxed candelabra makes them *Shabbos Candles* (2019) (fig. 9). The various physical forms Judaica can take, and the various ways they can be used to perform rituals, speak to a spiritual practice that makes space for the formation of her own identity within Judaism.

In a single composition, Platt constructs narrative imagery of togetherness that honors the memories and rituals of her community. Platt is a storyteller; “I look for the anecdotes and fables of people of color, to reanimate the familiar narratives we are told and experience as children.” *The Great Together* (2020) (fig. 10) depicts a cookout in an Eden-esque garden. This piece, created against the backdrop of an ongoing global pandemic and the continued racism that plagues the United States, memorializes a space of gathering. Amongst all the chaos and uncertainty, Platt shows strength and resistance through mysticism and collective celebration.

When viewing *Lost & Found*, one might encounter a balloon or two—stationed outside the entrance or stuck in one of the high beams—that Hawkins placed around the gallery as an open invitation to continue *My Shadow*. In Hawkins’ positioning of the balloons, he also directs attention to the physical space in which viewers stand. When taking in the Brew House Association’s 25-foot ceilings, exposed pipes, and dangling electric cords, the brick walls and uneven cement and tiled floor, it is clear that this space was not originally built to show art. The works on view in *Lost & Found*—like the structure once used for brewing beer—reimagine the past and make space for ever-evolving possibilities.



09 - Hannah Altman,  
*Shabbos Candles*  
2019, archival inkjet print;  
25 x 20 in.



10 - Jameelah Platt,  
*The Great Together*  
2020, magazine cut-outs and  
paint printed on canvas; 6 x 8 ft



**Hannah Altman**  
*Kavana* series

*Tzitzit (Threads) II*, 2019  
archival inkjet print  
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

*Dead Sea Salt Wound*, 2020  
archival inkjet print  
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

*Shabbos Candles*, 2019  
archival inkjet print  
25 x 20 in. (63.5 x 50.8 cm)

*By the Window*, 2018  
archival inkjet print  
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

*Tallit*, 2019  
archival inkjet print  
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

**Brendon J. Hawkins**  
*My Shadow*, 2018  
video, balloons

**J Houston**  
*a scale of 1 to 10*, 2020  
kinesiology tape, archival  
pigment prints, chrome  
frames, paint, used  
identification bracelet, foam  
tiles, video; 10 x 10 x 15 ft

**Aleem Hurst**  
*Invitation to Pretend* series

*Toy with Two Tails*, 2019  
archival inkjet print  
28 x 35 in. (71.1 x 88.9 cm)

*Blair*, 2020  
archival inkjet print  
11 x 17 in. (27.9 x 43.2 cm)

*put something in*, 2020  
archival inkjet print  
35 x 28 in. (88.9 x 71.1 cm)

*get well NOW*, 2020  
archival inkjet print  
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

*In Memoriam*, 2020  
archival inkjet print  
11 x 17 in. (27.9 x 43.2 cm)

*Mini Marshmallows*, 2020  
pastel flannel, polyfill  
each 12 x 10 x 10 in. (30.5 x  
25.4 x 25.4 cm)

*Port-A-Floor*, 2020  
photograph printed on terry  
towelings, stained baseboard,  
crinkle paper, poly beads  
4 x 36 x 36 in. (10.2 x 91.4 x  
91.4 cm)

**Brent Nakamoto**  
*Osamu Shimada, La Selva  
Beach, 1948*, 2018  
oil on canvas  
64 x 44 in. (162.6 x 111.8 cm)

*Bomb Clouds over Hiroshima*,  
2020  
oil on paper  
30 x 22 in. (76.2 x 55.9 cm)

*Untitled, 1972*, 2019  
oil on paper  
30 x 22 in. (76.2 x 55.9 cm)

**Jameelah Platt**  
*The Great Together*, 2020  
magazine cut-outs and paint  
printed on canvas  
6 x 8 ft (182.9 x 243.8 cm)

**Sheila Swartz**  
*Sacramento*, 2019  
window drapery, artificial  
grass, Mom's scrabble pieces  
14 x 14 x 3 in. (35.6 x 35.6 x  
7.6 cm)

*Sodden*, 2020  
window drapery, lace, house  
paint, string  
dimensions variable

*Splayed*, 2020  
window drapery, string  
4 x 1 ft (121.9 x 30.5 cm)

**Zachariah Szabo**  
*Arcadia*, 2020  
archival inkjet print  
60 x 45 in. (152.4 x 114.3 cm)

*Spending time with you (it was simple then)*, 2020  
inkjet print  
18 x 24 in. (75.2 x 61cm)

**Heidi Wiren Bartlett**  
*Her Shoes; Her Pants; Her Shirt*,  
2020  
iron cast sculptures on wooden  
plywood with projection  
8 x 8 ft (243.8 x 243.8 cm)

*Missing Her (nights here)*, 2020  
inkjet print  
28 x 22 in. (71.1 x 55.9 cm)

*Her Mom*, 2020  
digital archival pigment print  
43 x 30 in. (109.2 x 76.2 cm)

**Zeal Eva**  
*The Spaces In-between* series

*Remembering (driving to sleep)*,  
2020  
inkjet print  
18 x 24 in. (75.2 x 61cm)



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