

FLESH OF THE FOREST

activity and reflection guide



Image: Josèfa Ntjam, still from *matter gone wild* (2023).

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Flesh of the Forest brings together nine artists from the African diaspora whose work engages with the forest as a rich, multilayered site of history, memory, sensation, and feeling. Through sculpture, video, installation, photography, and painting, the forest emerges as a surreal landscape of danger, whimsy, enchantment, vulnerability, abundance, and darkness that precipitates alternate ways of seeing, hearing, and knowing beyond what is immediately visible. The works on view also imagine new forms of human and nonhuman interaction that dispense with exploitative entanglements between empire and land.

*definitions of **bolded** words can be found in the back of this booklet.

Land Acknowledgement

OXY ARTS sits on the land of the Gabrieleno/Tongva people. We acknowledge the Gabrieleno/Tongva as the original caretakers of Tovaangar, spanning LA County, parts of Northern Orange County and the Southern Channel Islands. The Gabrieleno/Tongva people continue to remain in relationship with these lands through ceremony, culture, and stewardship.

We pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders), and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging.

To go beyond acknowledgement, visit tongva.land/donate and consider making a financial kuuy nahwá'a guest exchange, to the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy—the Tongva-led land conservancy in Tovaangar/LA where land has rightfully returned to their hands for the first time since colonization.

FIND...

El Secreto del Rastro

The Secret of the Trail

by Reyson Velásquez

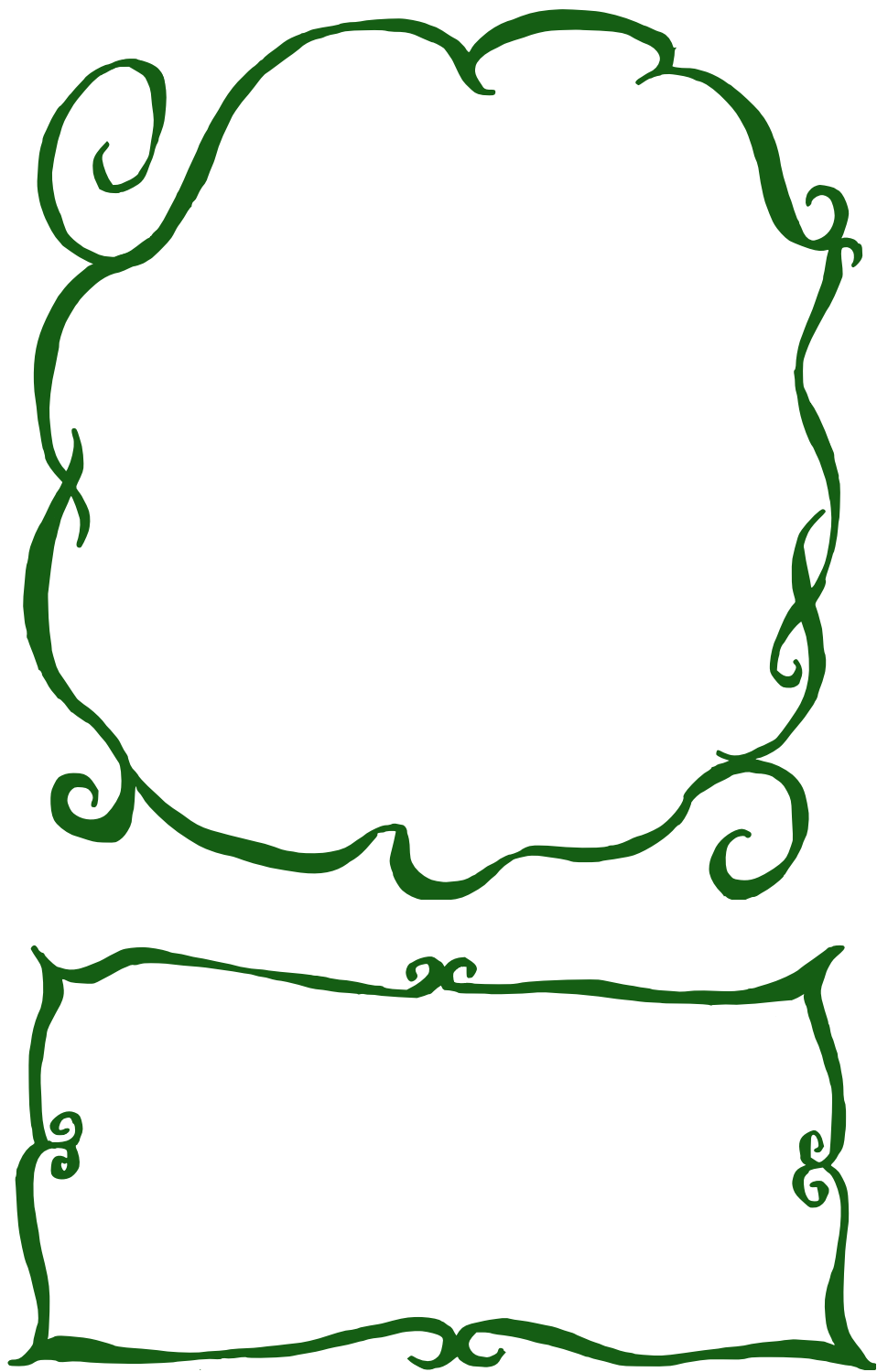
El Secreto del Rastro is a short fiction film where the main character, Yaira, is rendered unconscious by the powerful sorceress, Dorodoro.

With guidance from the wise elders of the forest, Yaira must confront Dorodoro in the realm of dreams.

ACTIVITY: Dream Drawing

In the top bubble on the next page, make a drawing inspired by something you have dreamt of. In the lower bubble, write a poem or caption to go along with your dream.

Your interpretations can be **abstract** or **realistic**.



FIND...

Forest Notebooks

by Mario Lewis

Mario Lewis investigates the connection between science and art within the context of his lived experience in nature. He draws to collect and record his interactions, fascinations, and theories. He writes down these ideas and translates the words into drawings.

ACTIVITY: Interview a Plant

Spending time in dialogue with nature is an important part of Mario Lewis' process.

For this activity, find a nearby plant (or plant-like object) to interview. You may need to go outside.

You can also picture your favorite plant, or interview another type of object.

1. what is your name?

List the name of the plant's species or give your plant a name of your choice.

2. where are you from?

Was the plant brought here from someplace else or is it **indigenous**?

3. what do you do?

How does this plant's presence change the room or **ecosystem** it is part of?

4. what are your hopes and dreams?

What support does it need from its environment? How can we make the earth more hospitable for plants and all life?

Draw a portrait of your interviewee:



by Jonathan Barber

FIND... Spectacle

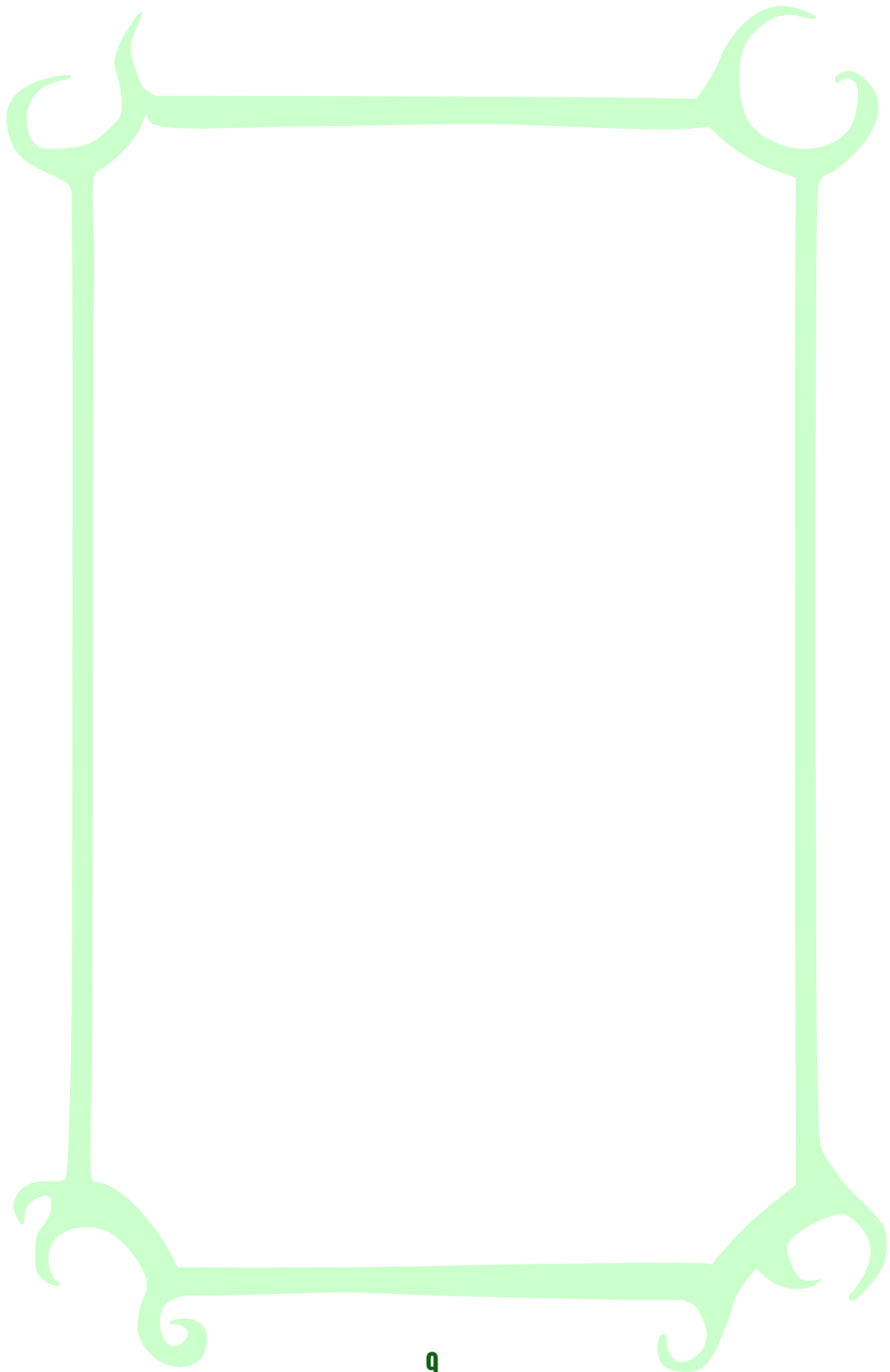
One of the ways that **white supremacy** maintains power is by upholding harmful **stereotypes** and generalizations about non-white communities. Jonathan Barber explores false “fantasies” of Black culture by depicting two figures behind a mask of unicorns.

ACTIVITY: Layered Self Portrait

On the next page, draw a self portrait using one color. Then, draw a mythological creature on top of the portrait with another color.

Notice how the image of your self is abstracted behind the mythic layer.

How can our imagined ideas about a person make it hard to see the truth of who they really are?



FIND... Blood and Breath

by Alicia Piller

Alicia Piller transformed an older sculpture into this reimagined art piece. Covered in the **synthetic** materials of latex and resin, the original bore headlines spanning 200 years of racial and gun violence in the United States.

The artist repurposed this sculpture into **organic**, tree-like forms, with manzanita branches extending into canopy adorned with images of **activism**.

Through natural and synthetic materials, the piece expresses the complex relationships between **oppression** and **resistance**.

ACTIVITY: Create a Cyborg

Draw a creature that is half-organic and half-synthetic. For example, you might draw a lion turning into a robot, or a sunflower turning into an iPhone, or a person becoming a car.

natural being + unnatural invention = name your creature!

VOCABULARY

Realistic: represents an accurate depiction of reality.

Abstract: doesn't represent an accurate depiction of reality; tends to use colors and shapes to express emotion.

Indigenous (plant): occurs naturally in a particular place.

Ecosystem: a community of living beings (animals, plants, microbes) and their physical environment interacting together.

White supremacy: the belief that white people are inherently superior to people from all other racial and ethnic groups. This belief is central to the social, economic and political systems of oppression in the United States.

VOCABULARY

Stereotype: a widely held, oversimplified belief about a particular group of people, usually based on race, gender, religion, or ability.

Synthetic: a substance that has been chemically changed; artificial.

Organic: made of, or derived from, living matter or nature; natural.

Activism: organized collective efforts that seek to enact social, economic, environmental, or political change.

Oppression: cruel and unjust use of power over a group of individuals that suppresses their freedom, safety, and opportunities.

Resistance: the refusal to accept or comply with state-imposed laws, expectations, and norms.

These prompts were developed by **Blue Reinhard**, a visual artist and OXY ARTS educator who works with the Community Studio after school art program.

The Community Studio program offers free visual art classes to local 4-8th graders at OXY ARTS. Blue Reinhard also leads a workshop series called Making Space, that provides free art workshops based on the current the exhibition.

Visit our archive of video and online lessons to follow along at home!

To learn more: bit.ly/communitystudio
and follow us @oxyarts

