

**Umico Niwa's** (b. 1991, Japan) new works explore shoes as a motif for considering the lived experiences of transgender individuals in early childhood. The practice is influenced by her own experience of nondirective play therapy. The forms begin from organic materials she collects and plates in copper. Depending on the composition of the organic matter enclosed within, different colored patinas gradually form on the outside, which then inform the colors she uses to paint them. Over time, some of the shoes will begin to rattle as the vegetables and fruits desiccate within the copper shell; the anti-microbial properties of the metal forming a miniature time capsule, a seed vault instilled with hope and potential.

Niwa graduated with an MFA from the Sculpture Program at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2020. She is currently writing a series of speculative medical journals regarding novel forms of body modification to combat gender dysphoria as well as exploring the possible efficacy of including fecal matter transplants as part of the hormone replacement therapy for transgender individuals. In her free time, she helps facilitate support groups at Side by Side, a queer and transgender youth center.

**Tara Walters** (b. Washington, D.C., 1990) makes large scale paintings using oil and water-based paints, pure pigment, crystal-based watercolors, and saltwater from the Pacific Ocean. Dropping into a deeply meditative state as she paints, her process is one of centering, stillness, and listening. The paintings often begin with a specific color or gesture, sometimes with a composition in mind and other times responding to forms that unexpectedly appear. A student of mediumship and esoteric traditions,

psychic signs and symbols are both influences and tools. Celestial bodies, prismatic auras and other optical light effects hint at the Spirit that guides her creative process.

Walters lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her MFA in 2020 from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA and her BFA in Painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA. Walters