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## Fever Dreams: Butterfly Chasers, Pollinators, Sun Gazers.

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FEVER DREAMS

Butterfly Chasers, Pollinators, Sun Gazers

By

Alexis Beucler

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
Master of Fine Arts  
degree in Art in the  
Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

May 2020

Thesis Committee: Ronald Rozencohn, Thesis Supervisor  
Susan Chrysler White, Thesis Supervisor  
Anita Jung  
Laurel Farrin  
Tom Christison

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To Mark Messersmith

You sparked my love for painting and never stopped believing in me.  
For that, I am deeply grateful.



*Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide.*  
Helene Cixous, *The Laugh of Medusa*, 1975



*The answer is dreams. Dreaming on and on. Entering the world of dreams and never coming out. Living in dreams for the rest of time.*  
Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, 1999



*Some people reflect light, some deflect it, you by some miracle, seem to collect it.*  
Mark Z Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 2000



*And in the movement of the sun, I felt something I hardly know how to name: some huge, cosmic love.*  
Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, 1994

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Much love to my graduate colleagues: found friendships, late nights at Georges and the Mill, Chicago and New York City adventures—ponchos and otherwise.

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## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

*Fever Dreams: Butterfly Chasers, Pollinators, Sun Gazers*, is a series of paintings and artist books that build a world, magical and real. This world explores identity, sexuality, human futility, anxiety, passion, love. Figures and landscapes merge with *Razzle Dazzle* patterns—a curious camouflage, a mask. Heat intensifies color and figures find themselves and lose themselves. We are spectators.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
PREFACE .....	1
FEVER DREAMS: Butterfly Chasers. Pollinators. Sun Gazers. ....	2
CHAPTER ONE: Pollinators.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: Celebration in the Form of Comets, Eruptions, & Sun Gazers .....	10
CHAPTER THREE: Butterfly Chase .....	20
CHAPTER FOUR: Butterfly Sighting .....	25
CHAPTER FIVE: The Chase .....	36
CHAPTER SIX: Beyond the Mangroves: An Index of People, Patterns & Places .....	41
STUDIO VIEWS .....	44

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1a: <i>Here, Together</i>   gouache on paper, glitter & dye on canvas, pink textile   42 x 32 x 2"   2020 .....	5
Figure 1b: <i>Here, Together</i>   gouache on paper, glitter & dye on canvas, pink textile   2020 .....	6
Figure 2a: <i>Reaching</i>   gouache on paper, glitter & dye on canvas   27 x 33.5 x 2.25"   2020.....	7
Figure 2b: <i>Reaching</i>   detail .....	8
Figure 3: <i>Pollinators</i>   gouache on paper   22 x 30"   2020.....	9
Figure 4a: <i>Moonlight Bloom</i> / gouache on paper, dye on canvas   33 x 28 x 2.5"   2020.....	11
Figure 4b: <i>Moonlight Bloom</i>   detail .....	12
Figure 5a: <i>Rite of Passage</i>   gouache on paper   47.5 x 31.5"   2020.....	13
Figure 5b: <i>Rite of Passage</i>   detail .....	14
Figure 6a: <i>Eruption</i>   gouache on paper & acrylic on canvas   59 x 42.5 x 1/2"   2020.....	15
Figure 6b: <i>Eruption</i> / detail.....	16
Figure 7a: <i>Appearance of an Afternoon Rainbow</i>   gouache on paper   47.5 x 31.5 x 1"   2020 ..	17
Figure 7b: <i>Appearance of an Afternoon Rainbow</i>   detail.....	18
Figure 8: <i>Sun Gazers</i>   watercolor on paper   9 x 14"   2020 .....	19
Figure 9: <i>Butterfly Chase</i>   detail of covers .....	21
Figure 10a: <i>Butterfly Chase</i>   flower figure panorama view .....	22
Figure 10b: <i>Butterfly Chase</i>   landscape panorama view .....	22
Figure 11a: <i>Butterfly Chase</i>   detail of carousel structure.....	23
Figure 11b: <i>Butterfly Chase</i>   detail of carousel structure.....	24
Figure 12: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   pages: 1v & 2r .....	26
Figure 13: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   pages: 2v & 3r .....	27
Figure 14: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   pages: 3v & 4r .....	28
Figure 15: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 1r .....	29

Figure 16: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 4v and 5r .....	30
Figure 17: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 5v.....	31
Figure 18: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 6r .....	32
Figure 19: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 7r .....	33
Figure 20: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 8r .....	34
Figure 21: <i>Butterfly Sighting</i>   detail of 8v.....	35
Figure 22: <i>The Chase</i> / detail of front doors .....	37
Figure 23a: <i>The Chase</i> / detail of tunnel.....	38
Figure 23b: <i>The Chase</i> / detail of tunnel.....	39
Figure 24a: <i>The Chase</i>   detail of book structure .....	40
Figure 24b: <i>The Chase</i>   detail of book structure .....	40
Figure 25: <i>Beyond the Mangroves: An Index of People, Patterns, &amp; Places</i>   detail of shaped paintings and ceramic container.....	42
Figure 26: <i>Beyond the Mangroves: An Index of People, Patterns, &amp; Places</i>   detail of opened box holding ceramic container and index paintings .....	43
Figure 27: Studio View .....	45
Figure 28: Studio View .....	46
Figure 29: Studio View .....	47

## PREFACE

I'm interested in spaces maximized with day-glow colors, patterns, and plants inspired by my hot and sticky homeland. These dense spaces simultaneously comfort and spur anxiety. Figures camouflage into the landscape around them-- they blend with their surroundings naturally or take on Razzle Dazzle characteristics with complex geometric shapes and contrasting colors, full in spectrum, that vibrate off the landscape.

Occasionally adorned with flower collars and patterned skin, figures reach out – in hopes of catching butterflies, in the warmth of another's hand, tender noses extend—ready to pollinate. These actions are both external and internal: figures reach into themselves, deeper and deeper, connecting to their unconscious— earnestly unearthing psychological terrain accessed as frequently as the flickering light of the sun beaming into the bottom of a well.

When figures find themselves occupying such a space-- one both familiar and estranged-- the excess within the landscape flows into excess of action. The landscape initiates this action and figures respond intuitively-- sometimes by indulging in a picnic and other times in vice. Here we stumble upon complex moments that examine abuse, passion, femininity, sexuality, violence, impulse; motives uncertain, rights and wrongs are displaced and challenged. Post-action and post-figure, the landscape holds secrets and absorbs the aftermath of intensity-- attention diverted, ambiguous space mirrors ambiguous motives. The futility of human action at its finest.

I think in words, in stories, in places transcending our own: liminal and intersexual. My hopes are to explore different chapters and stories of this world in paintings, artist books, and soft sculptures. Excavate the complexities of this Queer Space—delicate as a butterfly's wing, constant as the sun, and rooted in mystery.

FEVER DREAMS: Butterfly Chasers. Pollinators. Sun Gazers.

The air is hot. A fever. A rush of light. Heat intensifies color. Figures are threaded together into a landscape inundated with pattern— *Razzle Dazzle*—skin, comfort, camouflage.

I think of liminal and intersexual spaces— spaces where light intensifies in a fever of color— fearless and fierce; subversive and seductive; daring in full spectrum; a *Queering of Space*. And of *Swamplandia*—wandering around the mangroves and cypress trees; identifying flower friends; believing in a space other than our own; the trauma, the world warping, an inability to identify the familiar— A dizzy spell.

Isolated figures reach out in search of touch and comfort—a task of transformation—a symbol of bravery. They find themselves with growing noses—maybe they sang too many stories; chased one too many butterflies; or maybe they're so accustomed to drinking sweet nectar that their bodies are adjusting.

Romping around—digging deeper into the flowers. They love. They drink. They chase and dance and make whoopie. They loose themselves and find themselves. Digging deeper and deeper— wells—what's at the bottom? I think about being at the bottom of the well and waiting for that instant of flickering light as the sun moves past. *The Wind-Up Bird* unwound.

*The Wasteland*, a world is stitched together by fragmented stories. And the moment in *IQ84*— looking up at the sky and spotting two moons; wondering if they've always been there; wondering if anyone else can see them too; watching the news and searching for hints of this



new phenomenon; the moment of realization that this new moon is there, really there, but alone, distant, and unknown by most; holding this new moon, and digging deeper into a world of our own.

Paintings, artist books, and soft sculptures are tools to explore this world with which I discover different chapters and stories within.

Digging. Searching. Staring at the Sun.

## CHAPTER ONE: Pollinators

*A series of paintings made in isolation amidst a global pandemic.*



Figure 1a: Here, Together | gouache on paper, glitter & dye on canvas, pink textile | 42 x 32 x 2"  
| 2020





Figure 1b: *Here, Together* | gouache on paper, glitter & dye on canvas, pink textile | 2020



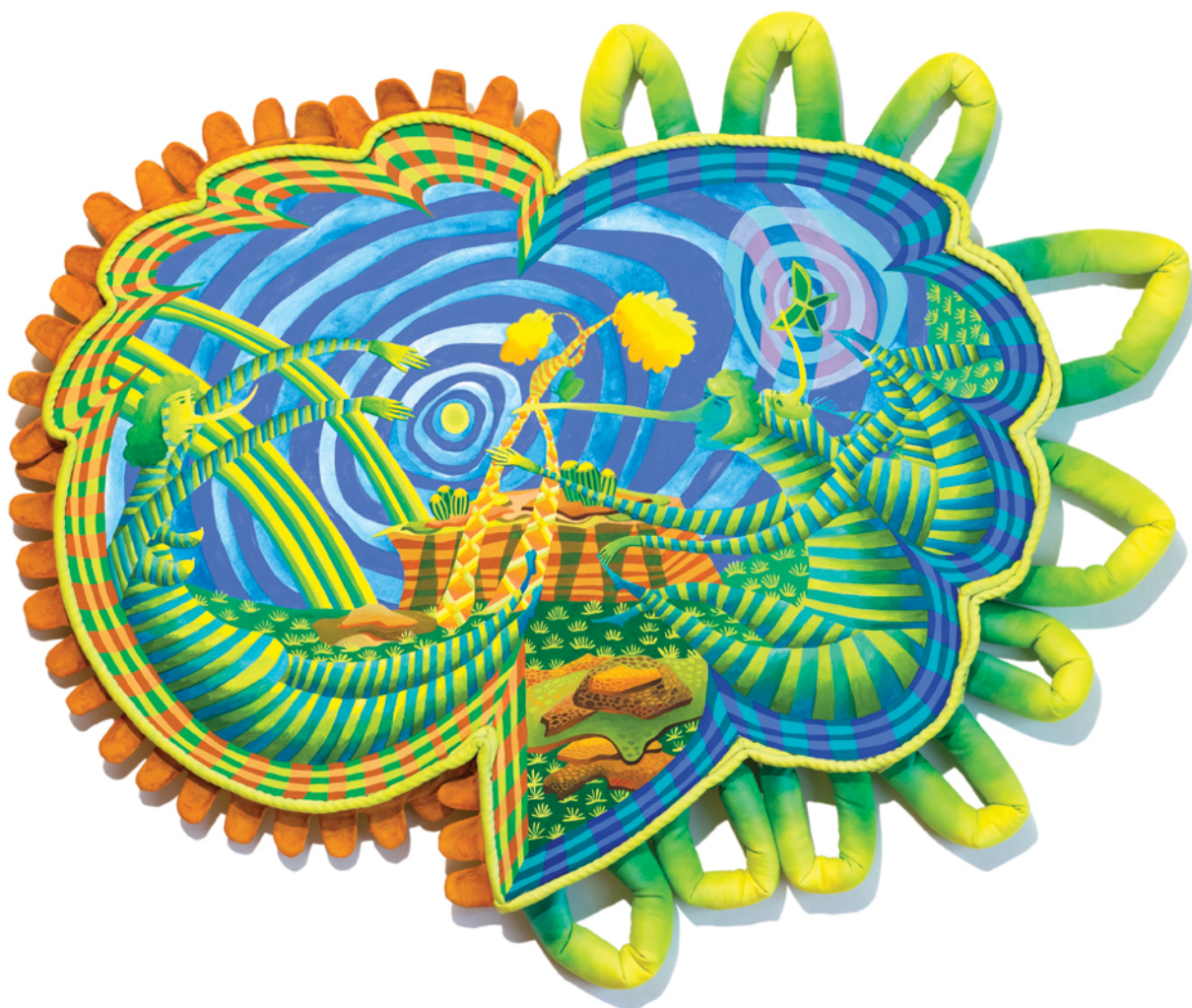


Figure 2a: *Reaching* | gouache on paper, glitter & dye on canvas | 27 x 33.5 x 2.25" | 2020



Figure 2b: *Reaching* | detail





Figure 3: *Pollinators* | gouache on paper | 22 x 30" | 2020

## CHAPTER TWO: Celebration in the Form of Comets, Eruptions, & Sun Gazers

*A series of paintings made after a trip to Oahu, Hawaii*





Figure 4a: *Moonlight Bloom* / gouache on paper, dye on canvas | 33 x 28 x 2.5" | 2020

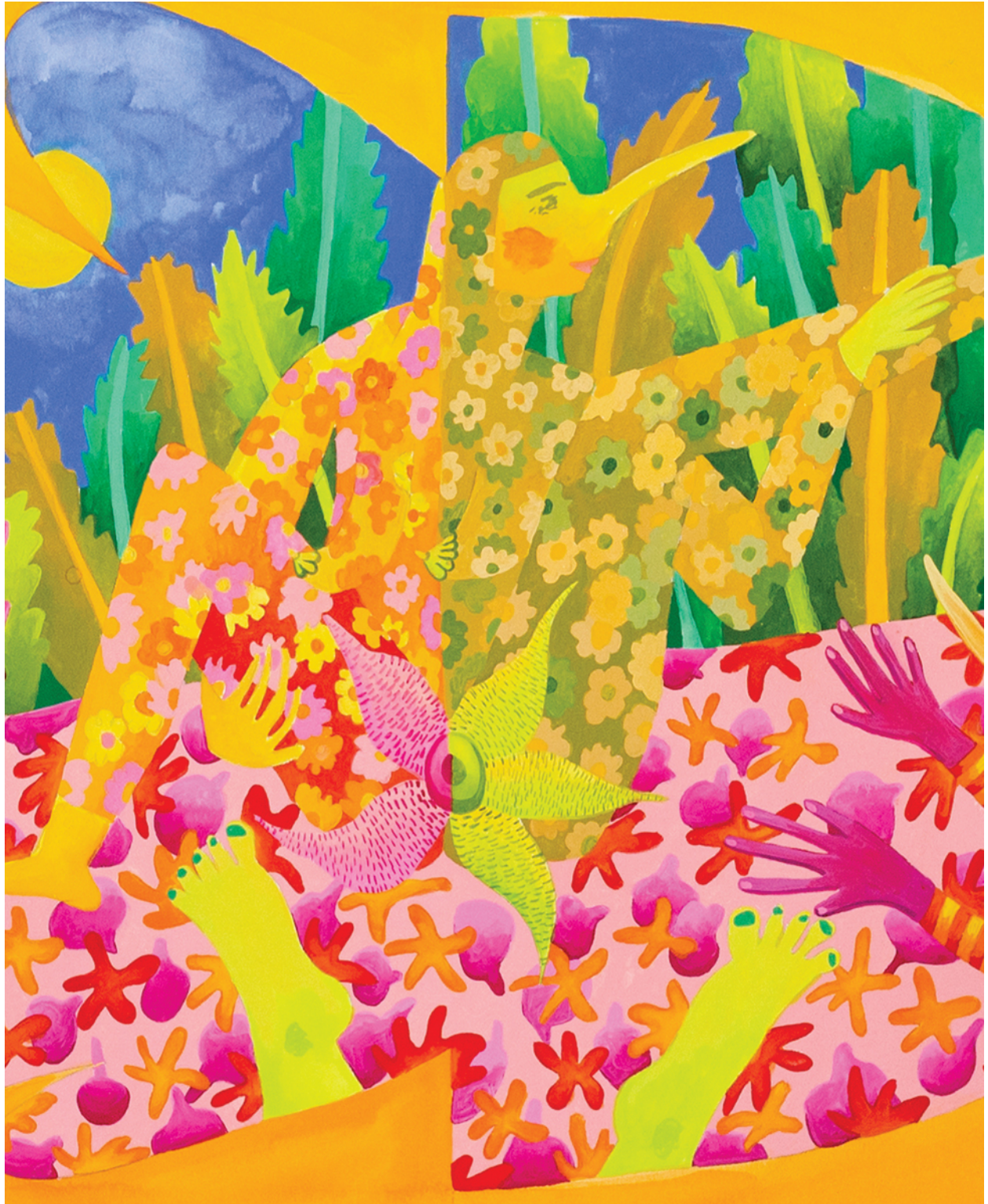


Figure 4b: *Moonlight Bloom* | detail





Figure 5a: *Rite of Passage* | gouache on paper | 47.5 x 31.5" | 2020



Figure 5b: *Rite of Passage* | detail





Figure 6a: *Eruption* | gouache on paper & acrylic on canvas | 59 x 42.5 x 1/2" | 2020



Figure 6b: *Eruption* / detail





Figure 7a: *Appearance of an Afternoon Rainbow* | gouache on paper | 47.5 x 31.5 x 1" | 2020





Figure 7b: *Appearance of an Afternoon Rainbow* | detail





Figure 8: *Sun Gazers* | watercolor on paper | 9 x 14" | 2020

### CHAPTER THREE: Butterfly Chase

#### *Artist Book*

Gouache on watercolor paper double carousel accordion book

A 6-sided panel reveals a landscape void of human interaction

A 5-sided panel reveals flower figures

Closed 7 x 10" | 20



Figure 9: *Butterfly Chase* | detail of covers





Figure 10a: *Butterfly Chase* | flower figure panorama view

Figure 10b: *Butterfly Chase* | landscape panorama view

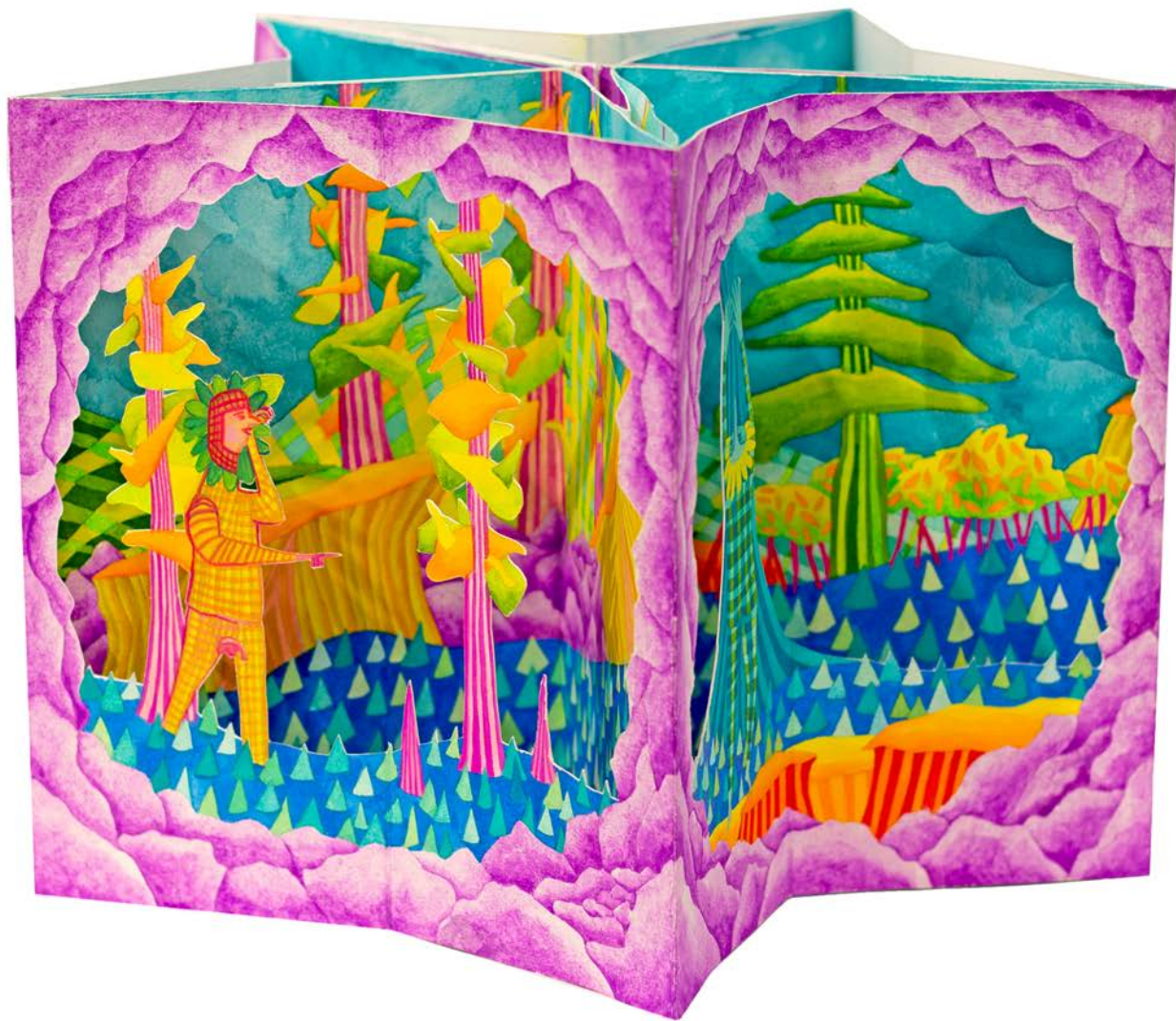


Figure 11a: *Butterfly Chase* | detail of carousel structure





Figure 11b: *Butterfly Chase* | detail of carousel structure

## CHAPTER FOUR: Butterfly Sighting

### *Artist Book*

Gouache on paper single pamphlet text-block

Unattached soft cover made with canvas, dye, fabric paint

27.5 x 18" | 2019



Figure 12: *Butterfly Sighting* | pages: 1v & 2r





Figure 13: *Butterfly Sighting* | pages: 2v & 3r



Figure 14: *Butterfly Sighting* | pages: 3v & 4r





Figure 15: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 1r





Figure 16: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 4v and 5r





Figure 17: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 5v



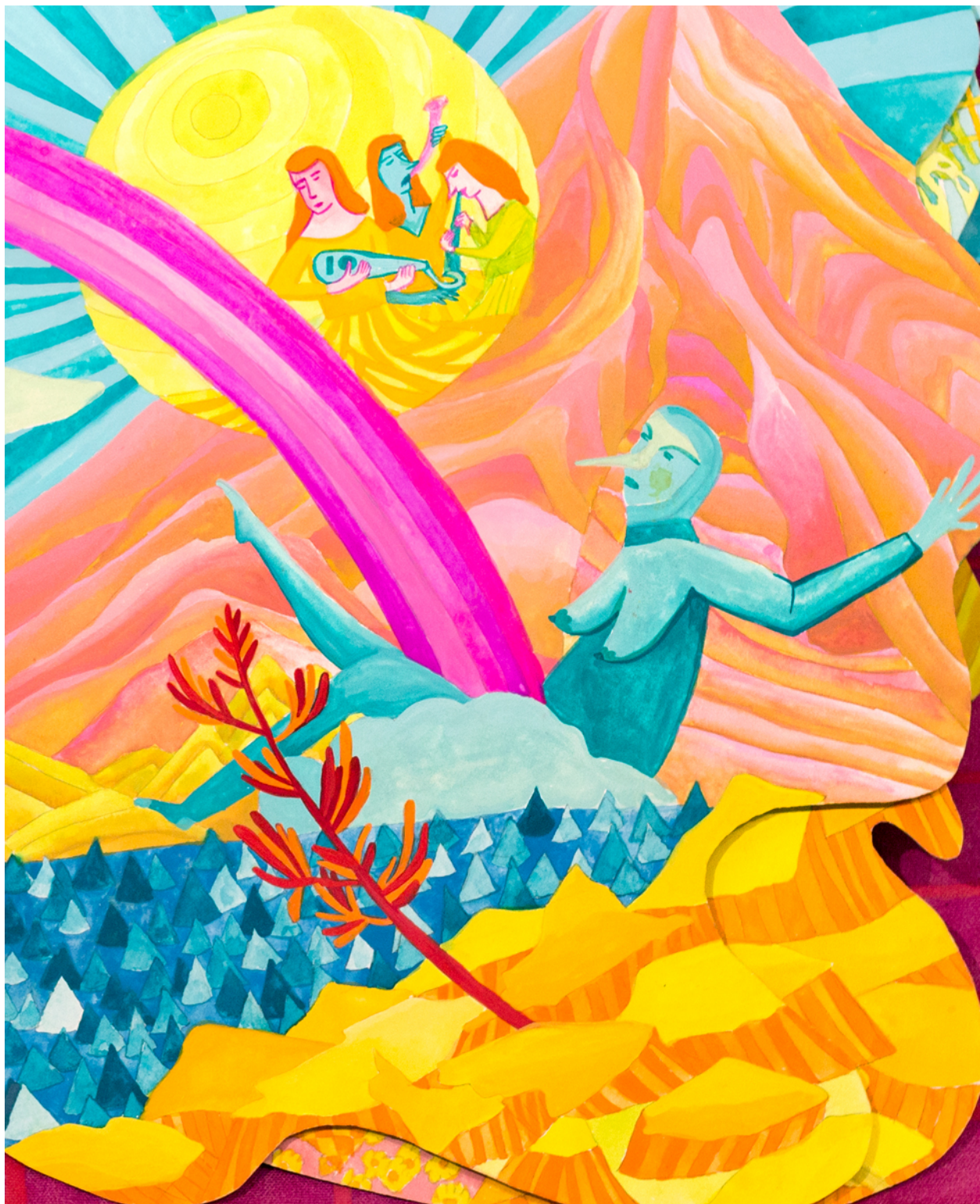


Figure 18: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 6r





Figure 19: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 7r





Figure 20: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 8r



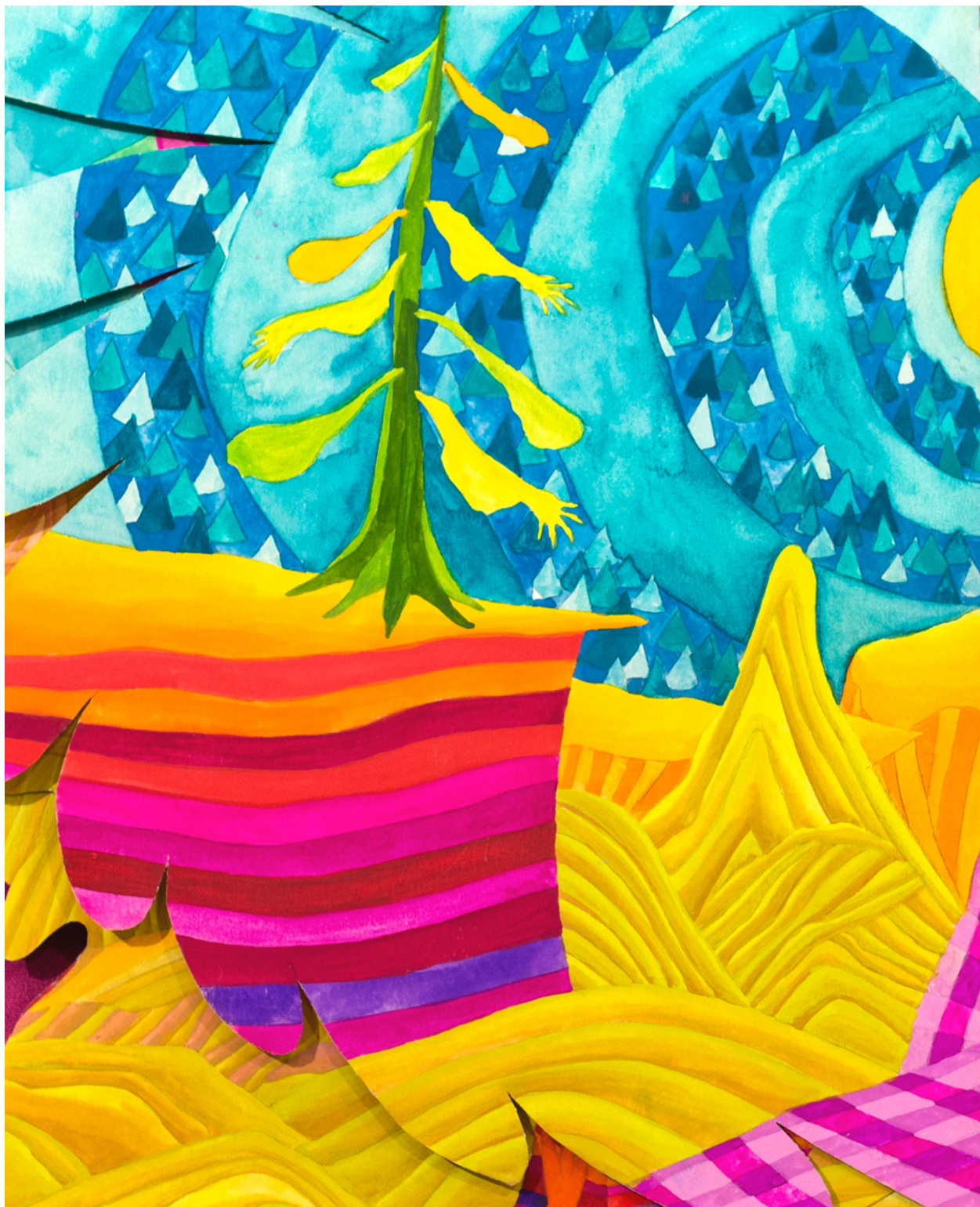


Figure 21: *Butterfly Sighting* | detail of 8v

## CHAPTER FIVE: The Chase

### *Artist Book*

Gouache on paper tunnel book

2019

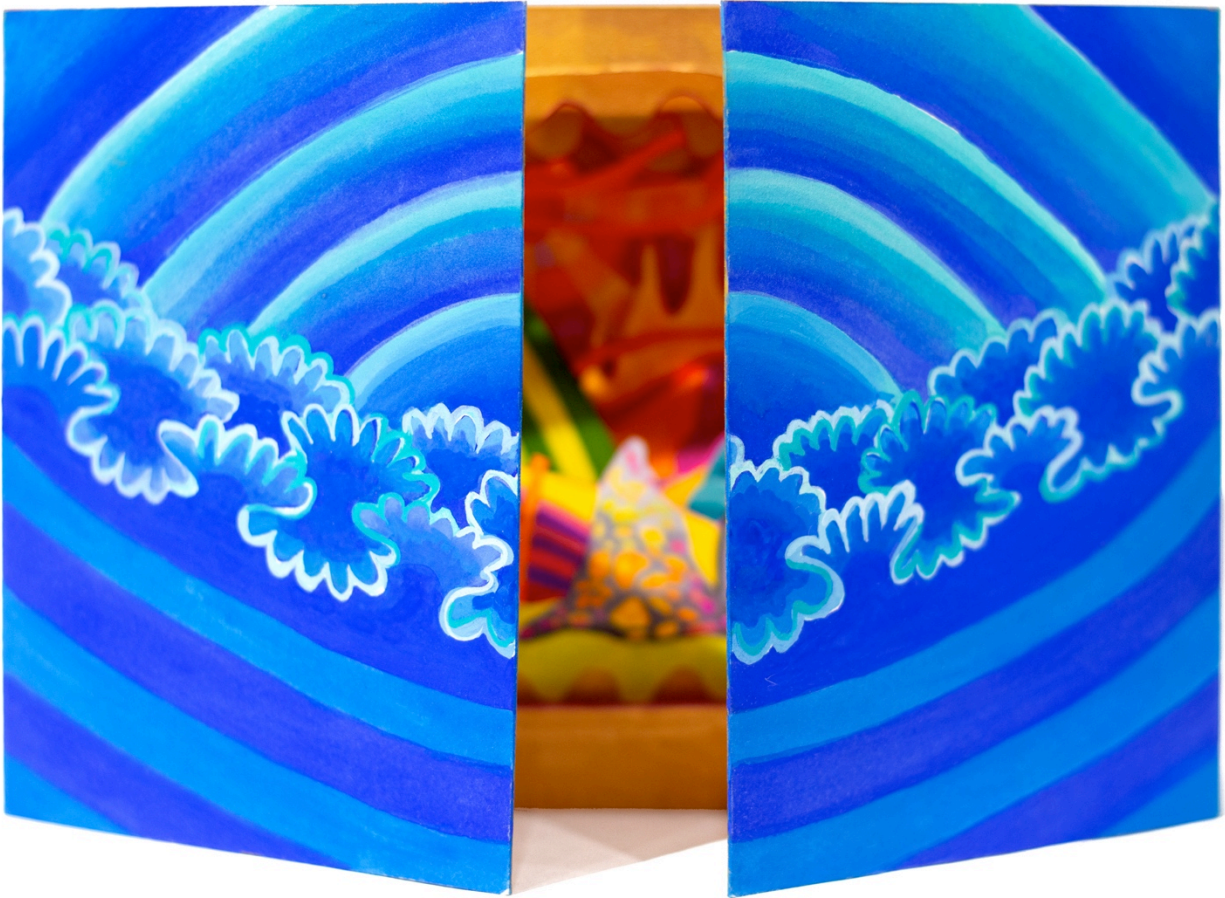


Figure 22: *The Chase* / detail of front doors





Figure 23a: *The Chase* / detail of tunnel



Figure 23b: *The Chase* / detail of tunnel



Figure 24a: *The Chase* | detail of book structure

Figure 24b: *The Chase* | detail of book structure



CHAPTER SIX: Beyond the Mangroves: An Index of People, Patterns & Places

*Artist Book*

22 paintings: gouache on paper

Container: oil on ceramic

Box: Cloth, board, paper, paint

2019



Figure 25: *Beyond the Mangroves: An Index of People, Patterns, & Places* | detail of shaped paintings and ceramic container



Figure 26: *Beyond the Mangroves: An Index of People, Patterns, & Places* | detail of opened box holding ceramic container and index paintings



## STUDIO VIEWS



Figure 27: Studio View



Figure 28: Studio View





Figure 29: Studio View