

Summary Report to Faculty Development Committee

Faculty Development Grant Project

Summer 2025

Report Submission Date: 12/26/2025

Name and discipline?

Christina Kerns, Visual Arts

What was the focus of your Faculty Development grant project?

This grant was requested to support the development of a fine art project experimenting with photographic images printed on a holographic paper. While part of the funds supported this material exploration, it was also used to create new photographic images in collaboration with Ava Hassinger through a 4 week cross country road trip (May 2025). This creative exploration culminated in a collaborative exhibition in Amos Gallery with programmatic events for students and the wider University community.

Why was the project important to you: what led you to propose it?

This work is a continuation of my creative practice/ research through image making and material exploration. The funds from this grant allowed me to push my practice further, as creating art through experimentation requires financial resources. Specifically, printing on holographic paper requires a commercial printer (UV) and does not work well with every image.

Funds were used to:

- Work with a local printer to experiment with printing different images
- Purchase specialized paper and other materials
- Work with a company to develop a custom frame with fluorescent acrylic (image included at the end of this document.)
- Work with local printer to create a prototype print on die cut acrylic
- Pay for travel from Philadelphia to Los Angeles and back to create new works

In conjunction with the exhibition and my project, I began writing a supplemental essay that accompanies the work. This is my first attempt at this type of creative exploration and will likely continue into future projects.

What did you learn from doing it?

While my practice often questions the idea of American Culture, it is important for me to experience different cultural and physical landscapes to focus on specific interests. Through the roadtrip, I created

many images which raised new creative threads for future projects, for example: fantasy, escapism, scale and immensity, memory and forgetting.

Where will the project go from here?

The holographic prints/ project continues to be developed conceptually and physically, and I'm currently working on the best display method for them. Concurrently, I have also been working on a smaller project printing images direct to die cut acrylic. Funds from this grant supported the first prototype for this series, which will be a collection of roughly 10 images printed in this manner.

Following the collaborative exhibition with Hassinger on campus, we have applied for multiple exhibitions to reimagine our project in alternative spaces. We were invited to exhibit at Fjord Gallery, Philadelphia in March 2026. This exhibition will take ideas and work conceived during the road trip (as well as new work) in a new direction that is more experimental.

How has this project informed your teaching: what did you learn about the topic or about yourself as a teacher that has made a difference? What is the "takeaway" for the other instructors?

Generally, it is important for me to continue a creative practice alongside teaching. This allows me to bring a renewed enthusiasm to projects and critique with students. It is important for students to see professors pursuing personal projects to understand how classroom pedagogy can translate to real world actions.

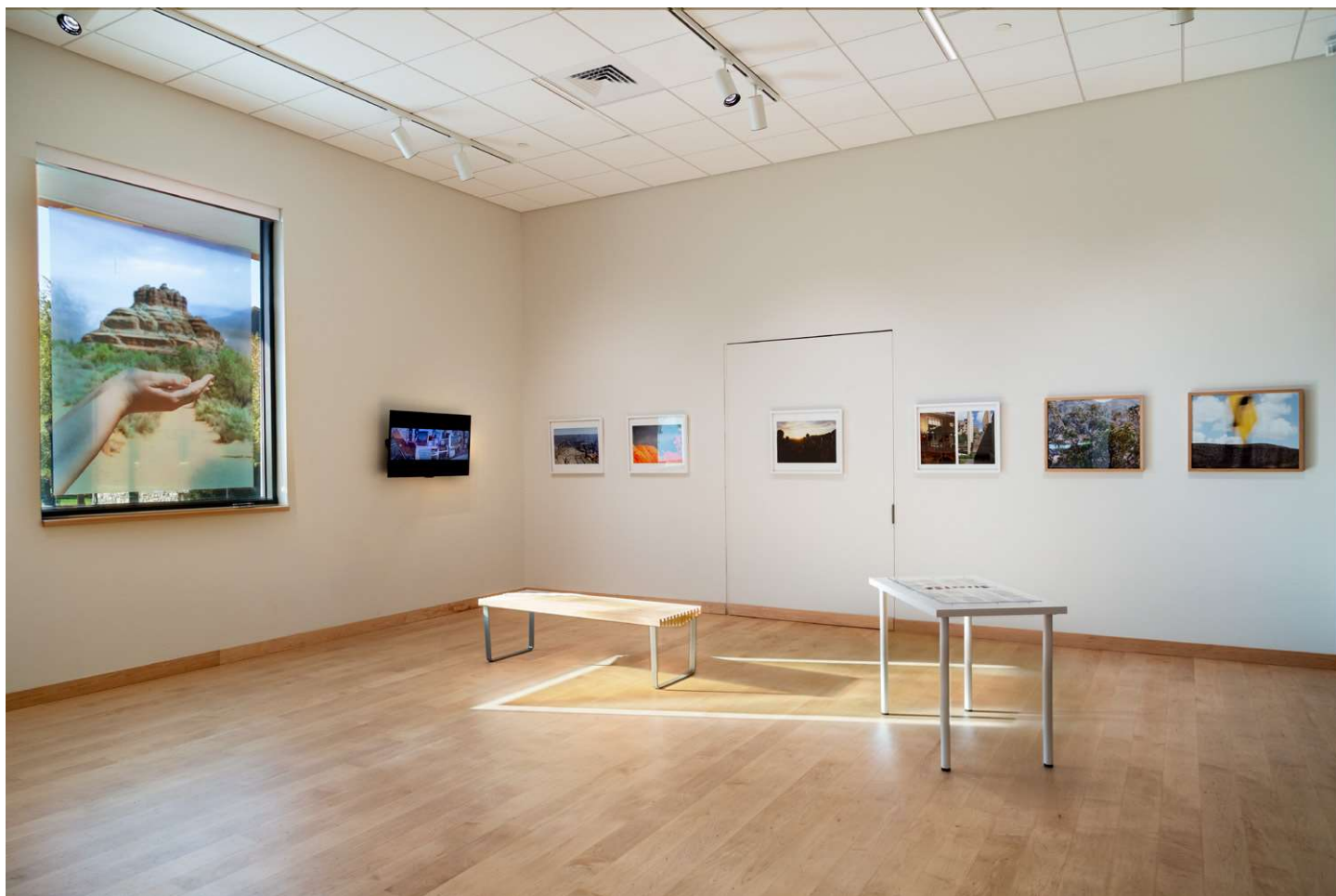
In connection with the exhibition on campus, Hassinger and I developed multiple programmatic events with students including: A formal artist discussion; film screening; walk-throughs with the gallery interns. This exhibition and the programming allow students to experience the life of a professional artist outside of the classroom. Specifically, this project, and discussion of it with students, shows an example of art works created with themes and ideas without a *literalness* to it. As a professor, (particularly in senior seminar) creating work with abstract ideas is a significant learning challenge with student artists. I believe that students' work will grow stronger with more concrete examples of work or projects which convey abstract ideas and themes through layered creative works.

*****The following pages include selected examples of work created through the grant.*

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Rubbernecking and Other Tales
Exhibition Documentation
September 2025



Rubbernecking and Other Tales, is a collaborative project between artists Ava Hassinger and Christina Kerns. In May 2025, the artists, whose individual practices are rooted in photography but extend into other media, traveled across the Southern portion of the Continental US. The work created during their journey is a culmination of forging their individual artistic interests through points of connection, shared ideas, images, and friendship. Following the trip, the artists developed an exhibition which expanded their collaboration into a deeper process of experimental cross-pollination. The first iteration of *Rubbernecking and Other Tales* marks the beginning of this dialogue, opening space for more playful and responsive approaches to the exhibition that echo the spirit of their time on the road. Drawing on the dual meaning of “rubbernecking”—to look with curiosity or fascination — the project situates itself between observation and memory, presence and displacement.

View More at: <https://christinakerns.com/alien/>

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RUBBERNECKING AND OTHER TALES EXHIBITION STATEMENT

The word Rubbernecking, meaning to look or stare with curiosity, often at an event which is dramatic, can be considered in multiple ways. On a road trip, much of the journey is spent looking out the window while driving, observing the new and unusual sights just outside. Simultaneously, there is an inevitable daydreaming or looking back - thinking about the past, memory, and what might be left behind.

Ava Hassinger and Christina Kerns explore ideas of motion, time, memory, culture, and reality in the exhibition *Rubbernecking and Other Tales*. In May 2025, the artists embarked on a month-long road trip through the southern half of the continental United States, documenting their experience through photography and video. This exhibition continues to develop through the development of their collaborative and personal practices.

Both artists' practices and education are deeply rooted in a photographic language and shared interest in the influence of technology and digital experiences on the body and mind. Hassinger's work often results in a sculptural or performative product utilizing repurposed materials, with reference to the relationship between the body and digital technology. While Kerns is also interested in the impact of digital experiences, her work largely focuses on the role photography and social media play in an emotional and psychological understanding of personal identity.

Hassinger and Kerns reflected on the parallel between the diversity of the land and American culture as they traveled through locations from Philadelphia to Los Angeles and back. They considered the current point in history, politically and socially, and how this shifted as they entered different regions and spaces. Through the deeply rooted photographic tradition of the road trip, they remained acutely aware of their reception and physical presence as women with cameras in unfamiliar spaces.

The artists spent much of their trip in the Southwest, primarily in New Mexico, Arizona, and Joshua Tree, California. For both, this landscape felt exceptionally unfamiliar. Perhaps influenced by the focus on aliens in Roswell, NM, or feeling the effects of the dry heat, they both remarked on their extra-terrestrial alienness to their environment. How does one look at a space differently when it feels bizarre? How do the familiar spaces (rest stops, restaurants, the road) become a comfort from the unknown? What would aliens think?

As the artists weaved in and out of fearlessness and apprehension to escape their everyday lives, they explored external and internal spaces unknown. Photographs and videos showcase the points of contact with the country; however, much of the trip was spent in the car. Traveling through time, from Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific time zones (often questioning which zone they were in), the artists talked, thought, listened, and looked. Despite the physical closeness to each other, there was also a quiet space for internal reflection; Each considering personal experiences left in other spaces and the 'realness' of their remembering. Hours of highway hypnosis, eyes and skin burning from the unrelenting sun, became an opportunity to retreat into memory and imagination. What happens when trust in memory is abandoned and a new vision that combines real and imagined forms is created? Is this mirage any less real?

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Untitled Polaroids
2025



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"Sedona Airport Scenic Lookout"

Archival Pigment Print

20" x 24"

2025

"The Grand Canyon, Arizona"

Archival Pigment Print

20" x 24"

2025

"From the Parking Lot in Joshua Tree
National Park, California"

Archival Pigment Print

20" x 24"

2025

"The Venetian Hotel and Casino,
Las Vegas, Nevada"

Archival Pigment Print

20" x 24"

2025



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UV Print on Holographic Paper
Framed with custom acrylic frame
2025

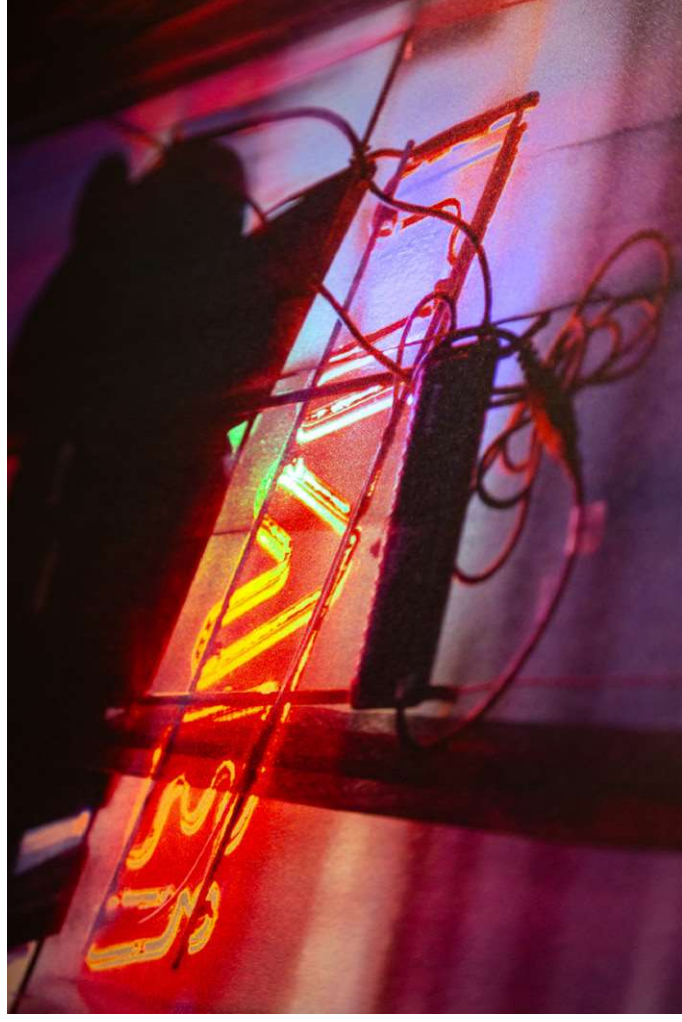


In my current body of work, distortion and reflection are depicted through prints on holographic paper. The type of holographic card stock used is typically found in small scale crafts like scrap booking or in stationery that is targeted toward young girls. A shift in scale creates a different type of interaction with the viewer, as the image changes depending on position and requires movement to fully examine the work. The image becomes obscured and then clear as the viewer moves, highlighting the difficulty of understanding during a transition.

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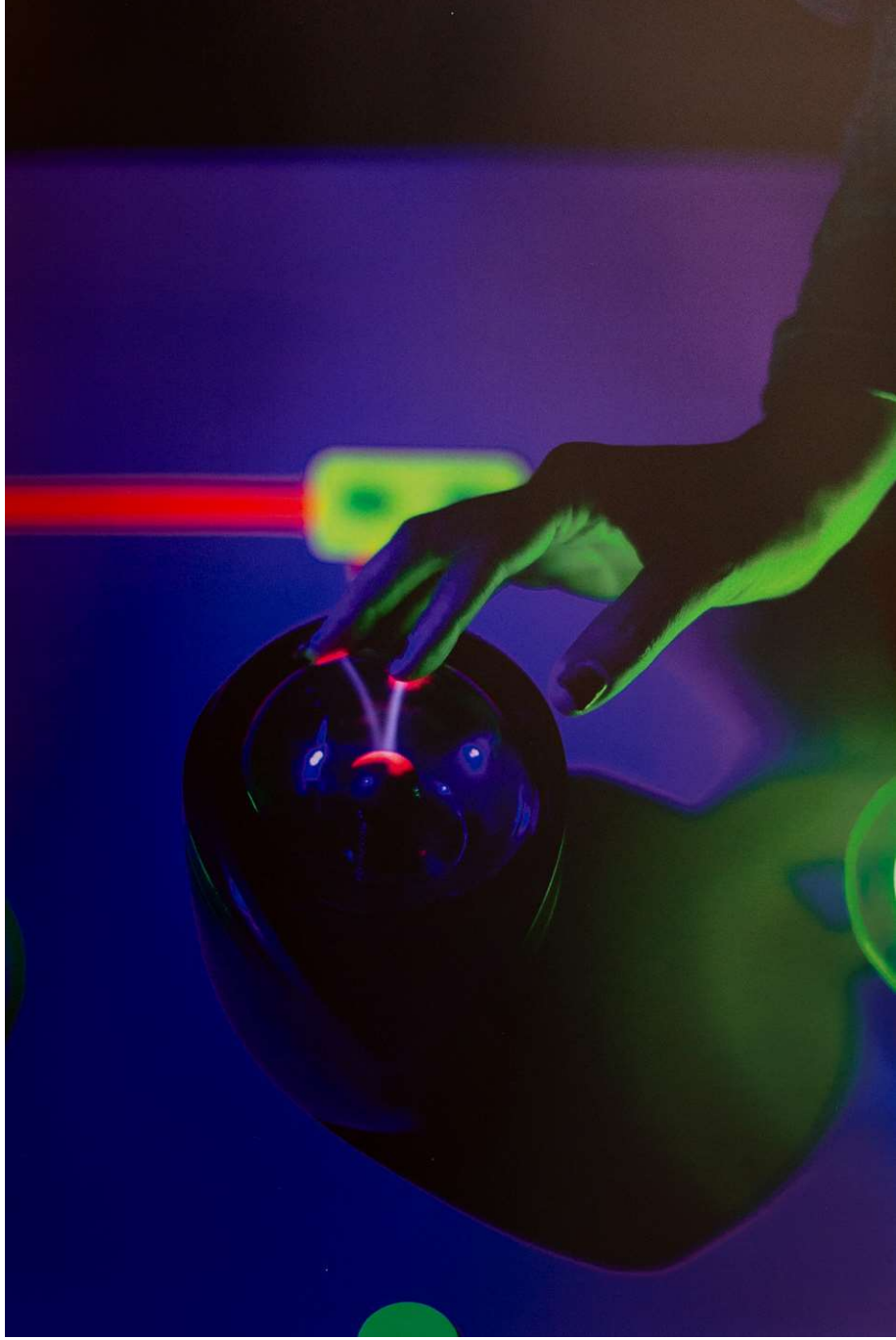
UV Print on Holographic Paper
Edna's (Detail, right)
26" x 39"
2025



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UV Print on Holographic Paper
Untitled, Ava's Hand (Detail, right)
26" x 39"
2025



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Die Cut UV Print Direct to Acrylic
Untitled (Prototype)
~12"x18"
2025

