

Kara Nelson

Artist Statement

My art practice is a ritual that transforms discarded items into artifacts. I bind, knot, sew, and pile my materials together, choosing each item for its story; building a narrative within each work. I create sculptures, installations, and drawings that investigate and process the systemic oppression of women through the archetype of the eurocentric witch. Using symbols and long-standing tropes such as broomsticks and cauldrons, paired with references to historical witch panics, I evoke a playful, pop-culture witch while calling forth the dark and violent histories she came from. The labeling and subsequent hunting and killing of perceived witches during Western European and Colonial American witch panics embedded fear of women in our collective consciousness. I create artworks that draw a line between oppressive structures imposed during witch panics and residual harmful elements that persist in our current power structures. Distress and violence experienced by women of the past is carried within the bodies of those in the present. I digest this intergenerational stress in my work through repetitive motion. This takes the form of intimate movements of my hands to weave and crochet, mark making, and movements that involve my entire body. Through labor, structural tension is created within each artwork. With my movements, I remember generational pain, and am a conduit for its release.

Contemporary materials such as clothing, junkmail, broken jewelry, and household plastics ground my work in the present. By collecting and working with discarded materials that are culturally associated with women, I re-assess the potential and value of what has been discarded. I connect what has been rejected with the otherness and devaluation bestowed on “witches,” restoring power.

CV

Education

2008 BFA, Painting and Drawing, California College of the Arts
2021 MFA, Studio Art, Mills College

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2018 Featured Artist, Five and Dime Vintage, Oakland, CA
2018 *Discarded*, L7 Apartments, San Francisco, CA
2016 *Patterns*, Glama- Rama Salon and Gallery, Berkeley, CA
2016 *Verge PDX Presents Kara Nelson*, Flickerbox, Portland, OR
2016 Open Studio, Harrison House Studios, Oakland, CA
2015 *The 30 Project*, [#getitinunderthewire](#), [#theinternetsaysiamtooold](#), Instagram
2015 Featured Artist, Tailored Salon, San Francisco, CA
2012 Featured Artist, Piedmont Springs, Oakland, CA
2011 Featured Artist, Cafe Crush, Oakland, CA
2011 *Green Gray*, The Rare Bird, Oakland, CA
2010 *Somewhere Out There*, Moishe House Oakland, Oakland, CA
2008 *Trash and Trees: Solo Undergraduate Exhibition*, Bruce Gallery West, San Francisco, CA

Selected Group Exhibitions

2021 RePurposeful, The Art of Collage and Assemblage, Randall Museum, San Francisco, CA
2021 Crystal Ball, Mills College Art Museum, Oakland CA
2020 10xTen, Faultline Artspace, Oakland, CA
2019 *Flora + Fauna*, Jen Tough Gallery, Benicia, CA
2016-19 *Drawn Together Fairyland Fundraiser*, Oakland, CA
2016 *Flow State*, Faultline Artspace Gallery, Oakland, CA
2015 *Vanishing Points*, Reese Bullen Gallery, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA
2012 *Art is a Gift*, Interface Gallery, Oakland, CA
2011 *SLIDESLAM* slide show participant, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA
2010 *California College of the Arts Staff Exhibition*, Irwin Gallery, CCA, Oakland, CA
2008 *Second Coming*, Rock Paper Scissors Collective, Oakland, CA
2008 *30 Under 30*, Varnish Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2008 *California College of the Arts Baccalaureate Exhibition*, San Francisco, CA
2008 *Three Little Kings*, Bruce Gallery West, San Francisco, CA

Professional Experience

2021 Virtual Artist Talk, Las Positas College
2020 Organizer, Spring Open Studios, Mills College, Oakland, CA
2019 Organizer, Fall Open Studios, Mills College, Oakland, CA
2015 Panelist, *Vantage Points* artist panel discussion, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA
2012 Artist in Residence, Castro Valley High School, Castro Valley, CA
2009 Art Director, *Little Sheep*, short film Directed by Kristina Willemse, Oakland, CA
2009 Curator *Running Reel Film Festival*, Piedmont Theater, Oakland CA