

SHELLEY JORDON

Recent Work 2018

Drawings, Paintings & Animations with Music by Kurt Rohde

Shelley Jordan Recent Work 2018

Links to Animations in two shows:

Forest Leaves & Family Trees

Maine Jewish Museum

Portland, Maine

[*Anita's Journey*](#) (2011)

[*De-Compositions \(over time\)*](#) (2017)

[*Cha-Cha Lesson*](#) (2012)

[*Bananas*](#) (2015)

[*Coney Island/ Far Rockaway*](#) (2018)

[*Water Stories*](#) (2018)

Still Streaming

Ildiko Butler Gallery, Fordham University, Lincoln Center campus

New York, New York

[*Against the Tide*](#) (2012)

[*Blue Balance*](#) (2012)

[*Coney Island/ Far Rockaway*](#) (2018)

[*Drown*](#) (2018)

[*Fountain*](#) (2018)

[*Peaks Island*](#) (2018)

[*Rat!*](#) (2017)

[*SeeChange*](#) (2018)

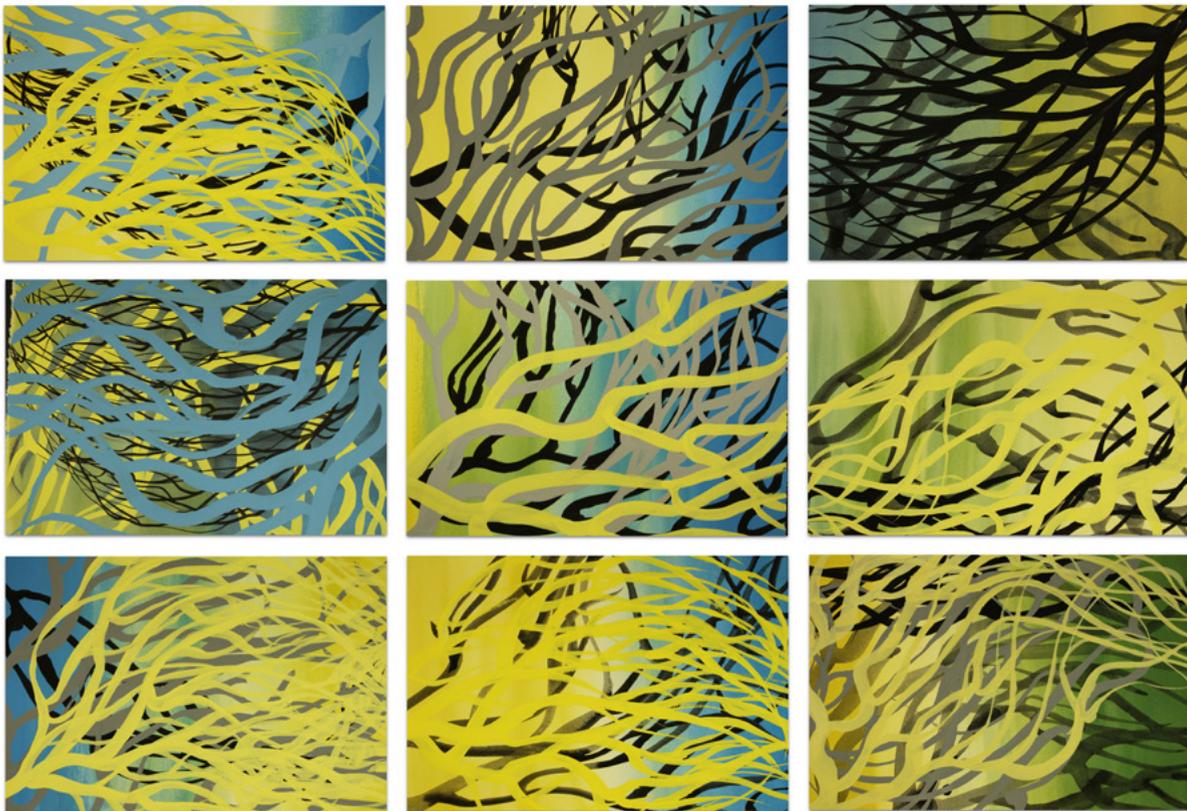
[*Splash*](#) (2018)

[*Swim*](#) (2014)

[*Turtle*](#) (2018)

[*Water Stories*](#) (2018)

[*Peaks Island*](#) (2018)



Nine Sea Whips, Color
Gouache on paper, 11"x15" each, 2016

This catalog celebrates recent work by artist/ animator Shelley Jordon in two shows:

Forest Leaves & Family Trees

(September 6, 2018 — October 26, 2018)

Maine Jewish Museum

Portland, Maine

Still Streaming

(September 20, 2018 — October 31, 2018)

Ildiko Butler Gallery

Fordham University, Lincoln Center campus

New York, New York



Alder Branches, Willapa Bay
Gouache on handmade Khadi paper, 12"x16 3/4" each, 2016

SHELLEY JORDON

Recent Work 2018

by Lois Martin

Shelley Jordon's new shows: *Forest Leaves & Family Trees* in Portland, Maine, and *Still Streaming* in New York City, both open in September of 2018. For Jordon—who lives in Portland, Oregon, and teaches as a Professor of Art at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon—the venues represent something of an East Coast homecoming, because she grew up in Brooklyn, and has summered on Peaks Island in Maine since the 1980s.

Both exhibitions feature works on paper alongside hand-painted animations on video screens, and the still and moving pictures complement each other. While the videos provide glimpses into Jordon's memory and imagination, the paintings reveal the physical poetry of her surfaces and strokes. Both exhibitions also feature original music by Kurt Rohde, composed in response to Jordon's artwork. The two artists have a long-standing practice of collaboration, and Rohde's beautiful and bracing soundtracks parallel Jordon's visual compositions in feel and form, for they both combine naturalistic effects with passages of sheer abstraction.



Fallen Leaves & Broken Branches
Gouache on birds-eye maple paper, 8 ½"x11" each, 2016-2017

In her still work (of paintings and drawings), Jordon uses traditional materials (gouache, watercolor, pastel, ink, and charcoal) on medium to large sheets of paper. These approximate the size of house windows: which is appropriate, as the finished pieces have an expansive feel, like an open view. Jordon paints and draws from life, in a loosely figurative style, with direct and athletic urgency. Her subjects are either outdoor scenes, or single natural objects brought indoors from the forest or shore, like tree branches or sea whips. Throughout, her surfaces are dense and rich, and her brushwork calligraphic and expressive.

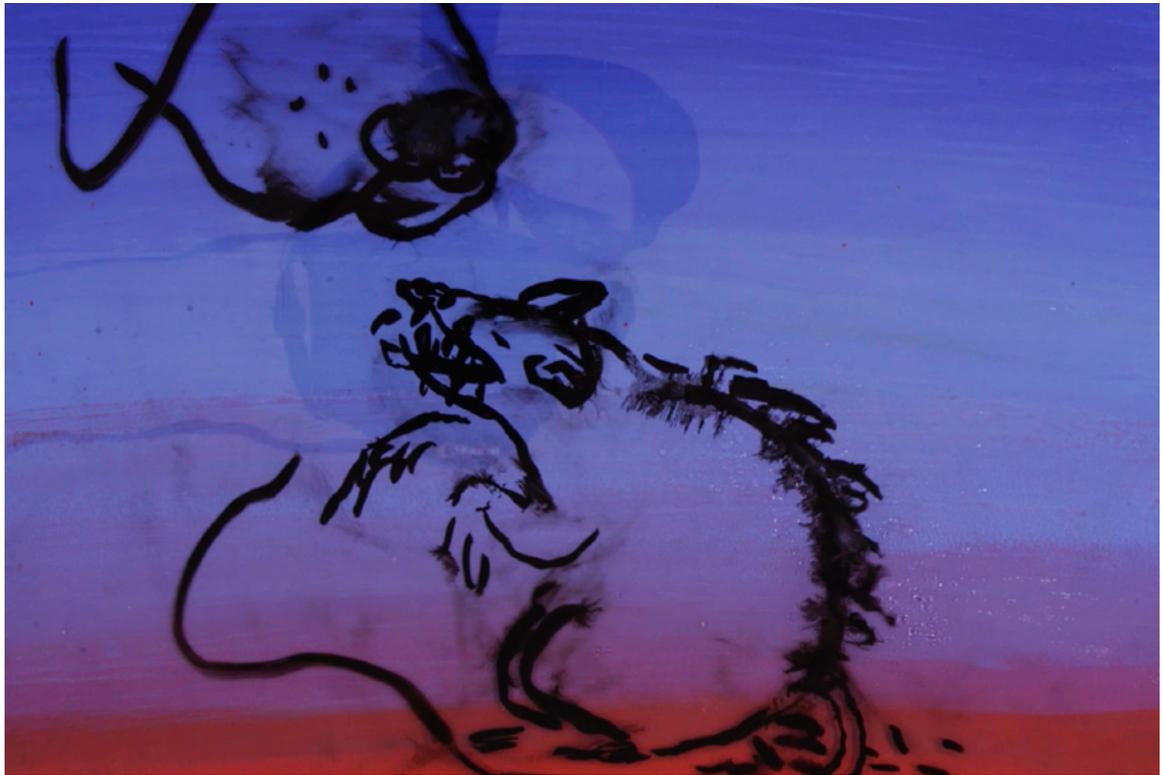


De-Composition #22
Mixed media on paper, 30"x22", 2017



Hand-painted stills from *Water Stories*
Mixed media on paper, 30"x44", 2018

In the videos, Jordon's paintings come alive, as shadowy tales, both remembered and imagined. Although she edits the videos digitally, she conjures their imagery by hand, using the same media and tools that she employs in her paintings. She begins with a roughed-out theme, and as she works, she photographs the progress with image-capture software. The best parts often arise serendipitously, from subconscious depths, and the deft motions of her brush. Some videos begin as one painting that gradually morphs into another, as Jordon over-paints or erases. In others, an old painting serves as a backdrop for new drawings or brushwork. Through stop-motion, scenes evolve, and figures emerge and move. With dream-like logic, they resolve, and then slip away. Often, after-images—of paint smears, or ghostly chalk-dust clouds—trail behind, like fading memories. And although the narratives are frequently based on specific events or experiences, the telling is vague, and sometimes with an undercurrent of nightmare; poignant moments of dread and sorrow are intercut with humor and joy.



Hand-painted stills from *Rat!*
Mixed media on paper, 2017



Hand-painted still from *Water Stories*
Mixed media on paper, 11"x14", 2018

All of Jordon's work moves between memory, observation, and gesture, but the Maine and New York shows explore distinct territories.

The New York Show, *Still Streaming*, explores overlapping themes of water and memory. The paintings include views (of seacoasts and lakeshores), and close-ups (of marine life and swimmers); the videos mingle watery and family scenes. In the animations, glimpses of "real" stories flash by in the slipstream of images. The shortest pieces record moments with the economy of a sketch. Others tell extended stories. *Coney Island/Far Rockaway* is a fond recollection of Jordon's grandparents. The first half follows her maternal grandfather (one of the first motorcycle cops in Coney Island), patrolling Neptune Avenue, against an iconic skyline of amusement park rides. Its second half focuses on long childhood summer days spent with her paternal grandmother, in the surf and sand on packed Rockaway beaches. A more dramatic video, *Water Stories*, opens with Jordon's paternal grandfather escaping from Russia. We catch him—fleeing Cossacks by diving into a frigid lake, and swimming for his life—as bullets spray the waves. Later, he voyaged to America, landing first in Cuba. Eventually, his American dream—of marrying and starting a family—fal-

ters when a daughter contracts polio. That extraordinary aunt, Jordi, struggled to overcome her disabilities, but wore heavy leg braces for the rest of her life. Jordi was a favorite relative, and hugely positive influence on Jordon. At the end of *Water Stories*, we witness Jordi's brief release from her crutches and brace, as she pilots a small sailboat. Other videos are grim: *Against the Tide* chronicles the dreams of a cousin, dying on a hospital ward, who dreams of drowning; a passing boat hails, offering rescue, and he recognizes the pale faces of long-dead relatives. Some videos, like *SeeChange*, commingle dire moments from recent headlines (Black Lives Matter, plastic trash at sea, migrants clinging to rafts, drought) with observed seascapes. But there is levity, too. Funny moments dot all of the videos, and a few are purely hilarious. *Rat!*, for example, recounts the domestic mystery of a dishwasher that keeps flooding ... until at last the rat culprit—who has been biting through the hose—is identified. Although these tales are all generated from life, in Jordon's telling, they are fragmentary and impressionistic. Stories flow by in a stream of consciousness—more like scraps and mementos washed up on shore than photos neatly arranged in an album—and the particulars matter less than the flood of reminiscence and the glorious kaleidoscope of colors and strokes. Though personal, the events are universal: all humanity wades into these same waters, through crosscurrents of happiness and pain.



Hand-painted still from *Coney Island/Far Rockaway*
Gouache on paper, 22"x30", 2018



Hand-painted stills from *Coney Island/Far Rockaway*
Mixed media on paper, 22"x30", 2018



Hand-painted still from *Drown*
Mixed media on paper, 22"x30", 2018





Hand-painted still from *SeeChange*
Mixed media on paper, 30"x44", 2018

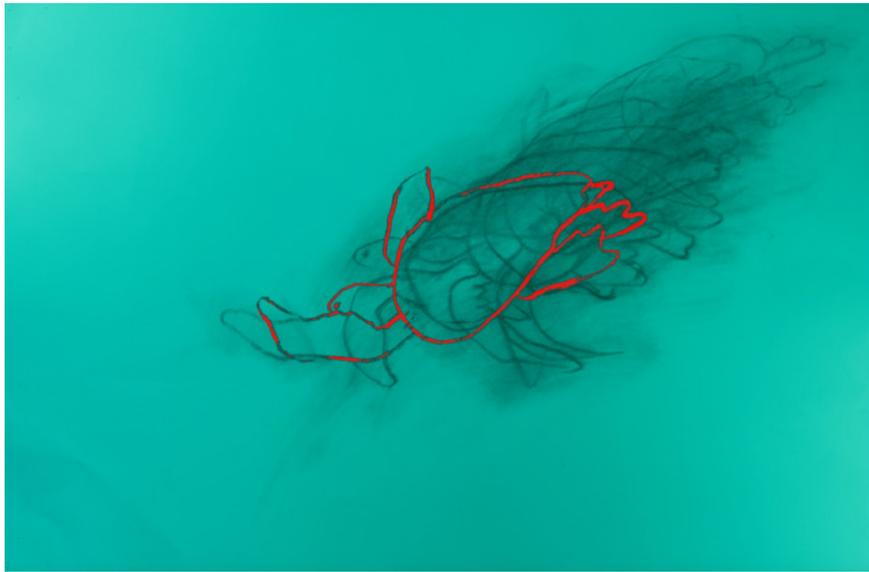


Jordon's Maine show, *Forest Leaves & Family Trees*, examines seasons, cycles, and generations, so both its setting (at the Maine Jewish Museum in the historic Etz Chaim Synagogue in Portland) and its timing (over the High Holy days, including the Jewish New Year) are fitting. The paintings in this show are a series of oversized studies of single leaves, or branches, gathered from the forest floor. It is as Jordon has chosen to do the opposite of "turning over a new leaf." She insists, instead, on turning over an old leaf, and examining it minutely. At first, the rotting leaves and mossy tree limbs seem macabre subjects. Some have become hosts for new life, like fungus and bugs, but most are simply dying. In all of them, Jordon finds an eerie beauty within their moldering surfaces and decay, and translates it into paint. In a way, this work harks back to the beginning of Jordon's career, when she exhibited mainly as a still life painter. In many languages, the term for the genre (such as the French *nature morte*, or



Tangled Pine Branch, Blue, Yellow & Orange Skies
Gouache on four birch panels, 9"x48", 2015

Italian, *natura morta*) translates back into English as “dead nature:” which is definitely what we have here. Jordon gazes steadily at the dissolution of vegetable flesh, and records the lovely colors and mottled patterns that appear in its transformation. In this show, the videos fall into two groups: some, like the leaf paintings, are brief spectacles of decay. But most tell extended stories from Jordon’s past and family history. In these, Jordon’s gaze doesn’t waver from the awful, but she celebrates sweet and funny moments, too. Two, in particular, bookend the range from tragedy to comedy: *Anita’s Journey* illustrates her mother-in-law’s childhood experience of hiding in Nazi Germany for three years as a young child, and *Cha-cha Lesson* looks back fondly at the dance craze in 1960s Brooklyn. In all of the films, Rohde’s music winds around Jordon’s themes, and provides a wonderful counterpoint to her color play and gestural brushwork. ♦



Hand-painted stills from *Turtle*
Mixed media on paper, 30"x40", 2018



Twelve Sea Whips, Black and White
India ink on paper, 11"x15" each, 2016

Shelley Jordon Biography

Artist/ animator Shelley Jordon lives in Portland, Oregon. A Professor of Art at Oregon State University (OSU) in Corvallis, Jordon also teaches as a Visiting Professor in Italy.

Jordon's extensive exhibition record includes solo shows at the University of Oregon's Whitebox Gallery and the Oregon Jewish Museum (both in Portland, Oregon); the Frye Museum in Seattle, Washington; the Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio; and a two-person show at the New Media Gallery at Oranim College, in Oranim, Israel. She has exhibited in numerous national and international group shows, and her short films have won awards in film festivals around the world. Her work is held in major collections, including the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Jewish Museum, and the Jüdisches Museum in Berlin.

Work for these shows were accomplished at several artist residencies: Djerassi (Woodside, California); Playa (Summerville, Oregon); The Studios of Key West (Key West, Florida); and Willapa Bay (Oysterville, Washington). Previous artist residencies include the Wexner Center (Columbus, Ohio) and the American Academy in Rome. A Lucas Artists Residency Program at the Montalvo Arts Center (Sarasota, California) supported two seasons of collaboration with musician Kurt Rohde.

Jordon was the first Visual Arts Fellow at the American Academy in Jerusalem. She has received support from the Ford Family Foundation, the Oregon Arts Commission, and the Regional Arts and Culture Council of Portland, Oregon. She has also received a Fulbright-Hayes Travel Award, and two Oregon Artist Fellowship Awards. On-going support from Oregon State University includes exhibitions, an OSU Center for the Humanities Fellowship, two College of Liberal Arts Research Grants, and on-going Faculty Development and travel support.

Further details on Jordon's website at <http://shelleyjordon.com>.

Kurt Rohde Biography

Violist/composer Kurt Rohde lives in San Francisco, plays viola with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and teaches music composition at UC Davis. In his own work, Rohde threads together traditional and novel forms, and explores themes that range from philosophy to catastrophe.

Rohde's newest works are for the Brooklyn Art Song Society, Lydian Quartet, Lyris Quartet, cellist Michelle Kesler, tenor Joe Dan Harper, cellist Rhonda Rider, and pianist Genevieve Lee. He has received the Rome Prize, Berlin Prize, fellowships from the Radcliffe-Harvard Institute for Advanced Study and Guggenheim Foundation, and awards from American Academy of Arts and Letters, Barlow, Fromm, Hanson, and Koussevitzky Foundations. A CD of his song cycle *It wasn't a dream... and Treatises for an Unrecovered Past for string quartet* will be released on Albany Records in the Fall 2019.

Further details on Rohde's website at <http://kurtrohde.com>

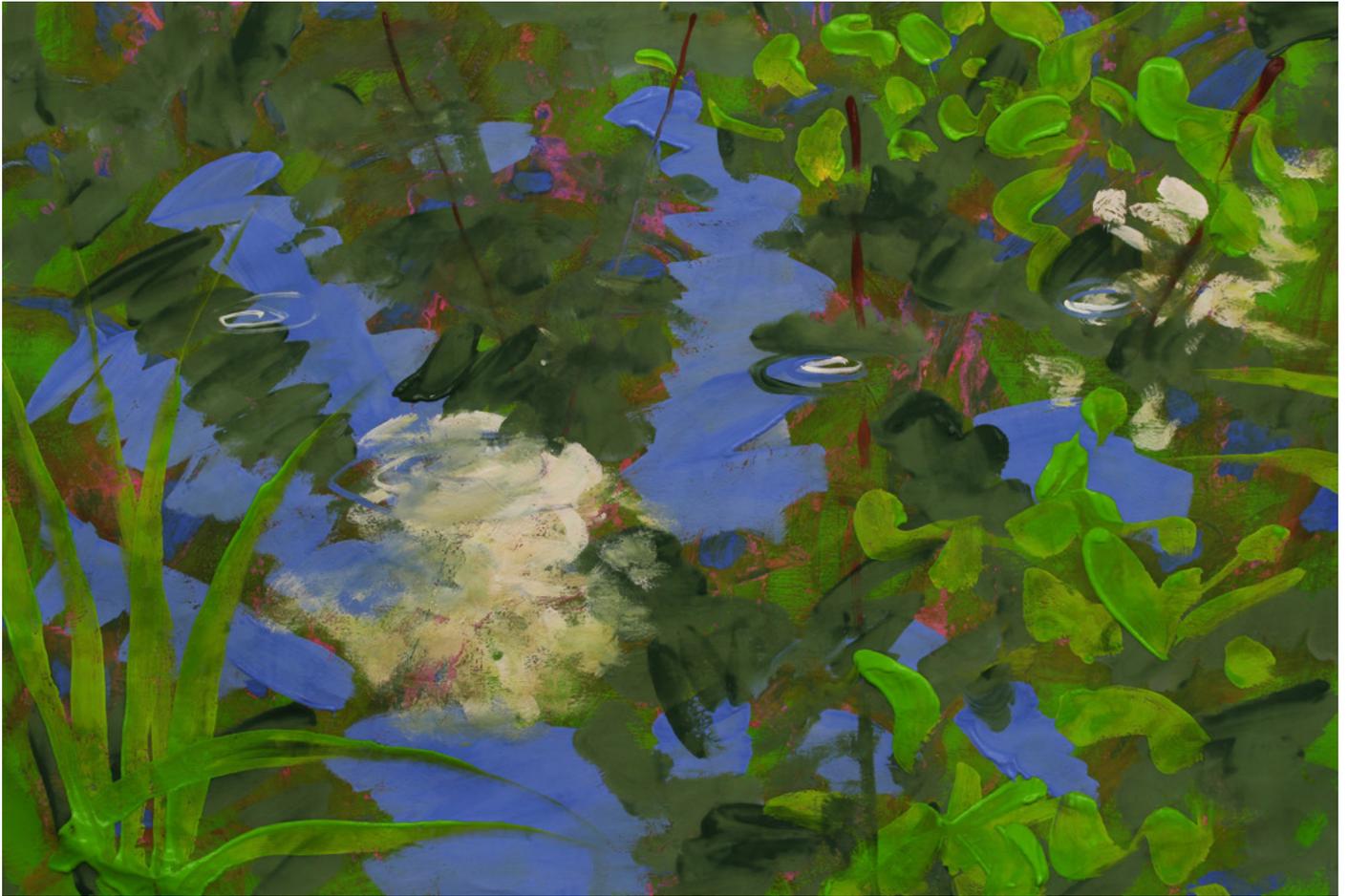


Shelley Jordan in the studio at Djerassi, 2016,
Photo by Alice Marshall

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the Oregon Arts Commission and the Ford Family Foundation for their support of this catalogue, created on the occasion of two exhibitions of recent work: *Forest Leaves & Family Trees*, curated by Nancy Davidson, at the Maine Jewish Museum, in Portland, Maine (September 6, 2018—October 26, 2018); and *Still Streaming*, curated by Lois Martin, at the Ildiko Butler Gallery, Fordham University at Lincoln Center, New York, NY (September 20—October 31, 2018).

I would also like to acknowledge the generous support of The College of Liberal Arts, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon; The Maine Jewish Museum, Portland, Maine; and the Visual Arts Department of Fordham University. Thanks are due as well to the wonderful art centers that provided space and time to produce. For artist residencies at: Djerassi (Woodside, California); Playa (Summerville, Oregon); The Studios of Key West (Key West, Florida); and Willapa Bay (Oysterville, Washington), I am very grateful. Thanks, too, for technical assistance and advice to Bruce Orr, and Stephan Apicella-Hitchcock.



Hand-painted still from *SeeChange*
Mixed media on paper, 30"x44", 2018

In Loving Memory of
Pearl "Jordi" Jordon
1927 - 2017

Photos by Dan Kvitka.

Essay by Lois Martin, an artist/writer in Brooklyn, NY, who teaches at Fordham University.

Catalog design by Russell Borne.

Back cover image: *Nine De-Compositions*, mixed
media, 30"x22" each, 2017-2018

