

# DEFER

# UNGALLERY

March 20 - May 17, 2026

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE  
EXHIBITION COMMUNITY TEAM

Team leader: Greg Donley

Team Members: Rita Betts, Boni Gelfand, Stephanie  
Murray, Evelyn Marinelli, Amia Frazier, Heather  
Patterson, Kate Snow, Grace Robin



Use the QR code to download  
the program to your device.

2175 Lee Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Leigh Brooklyn  
Leo Covault  
Mary Defer  
Jake Kelly  
Nate Puppets  
Marcus Schafer

43

KODAK 400TMY-2



*Secret Family 20 by Mary Defer*



## About The Show

Ungallery brings together a group of artists whose practices expand beyond the conventions of traditional gallery presentation, not as a rejection of the gallery, but as an invitation to stretch its boundaries. Bringing together artists working across puppetry, experimental photography, comics, zines, and design, the exhibition foregrounds modes of making that often exist outside of traditional exhibition framework. These are practices rooted in material exploration, storytelling, and process.

Mary Defer's photographic works move through cycles of exposure and destruction, using fire and re-photography to visualize the instability of memory and inherited histories. Leo Covault constructs intricate scenes through paper dolls, handmade sets, and photographic staging, drawing from folklore and historical dress to examine gender as something performed, adapted, and reimagined. Nate Puppets builds vividly colored, tactile figures that balance absurdity and sincerity, channeling emotional extremes through craft, pop culture, and surrealism.

Leigh Brooklyn's painted grenades confront cycles of control, manipulation, and resistance. Referencing the dynamics of "love bombing," her pieces reframe the grenades from an object of destruction into one of empowerment. Marcus Schafer's laser-cut constructions negotiate dualities between two-dimension design and three-dimensional form, utility, and abstraction while emphasizing structure, repetition, and precision as both aesthetic and conceptual tools. Jake Kelly's graphic pen-and-ink works draw from Cleveland's history, operating as both documentation and interpretation.

In bringing these practices together, Ungallery considers the gallery not as a fixed container, but as a site that can hold multiplicity: of mediums, of approaches, and of ways of engaging an audience. The exhibition asks what happens when works shaped in these ways are given space to exist in dialogue, retaining their distinctiveness while collectively challenging expectations of how art is created and encountered.

# Leigh Brooklyn

## Biography

Leigh Brooklyn earned her degree in Biomedical Illustration from the Cleveland Institute of Art and worked with several hospitals, museums, and research facilities. In 2011 she began moving throughout the US pursuing street photography, switching her focus back to figurative art and oil painting. In 2019, Brooklyn began learning techniques for clay sculpture, mold making and casting. In 2021, she earned her certification in structural welding and in 2023 began an apprenticeship learning traditional and modern techniques for stone carving and masonry. Brooklyn has worked on various public art works, architectural stone carvings and has won countless national and international awards. Her work has been displayed in galleries, museums, and art fairs across the country.

## Artist Statement

Specializing in figurative art, my earlier work was created with the intention to give a voice to the voiceless, creating compelling portraits and figurative-based narrative paintings that provide representation for underrepresented communities and people. Although my current body of work still focuses on stories and people, I have now narrowed my focus toward women and our current social and political context.

Inspired largely by personal experiences and partly by the military presence in my family, my work is focused on building an army of women warriors, armed and ready to defend the good in the world. I want to contribute to this world while I am here, and my art is the way that I can do that. Guided by the tumultuous times in our culture, as well as my own personal battles, my work must uplift and motivate awareness and change. Through my work, I want to capture the issues that are important to our collective community, and inspire others with my symbolic soldiers.

## Included work(s)

Love Bomb (OG Blue LMT ED 15), hand-painted inert grenade, 6" x 4.5" x 4.5", 2023

Love Bomb (Teal LMT ED 15), hand-painted inert grenade, 6" x 4.5" x 4.5", 2023

Love Bomb (Purple Tropics LMT ED 15), hand-painted inert grenade, 6" x 4.5" x 4.5", 2023

No Justice No Peace Grenade (LMT ED 15), hand-painted inert grenade, 6" x 4.5" x 4.5", 2022

Gurlz Grenade (LMT ED 15), hand-painted inert grenade, 6" x 4.5" x 4.5", 2021

# Leo Covault

## Biography

I am a Cleveland based transgender artist with an interest in exploring gender through the lens of historical fashion and folklore. I was inspired by stop motion animation, shadow puppets, and stage design to create my photographic illustration style. I create two-dimensional, articulated paper dolls and place them in three-dimensional sets. These sets are made with a combination of found objects, dollhouse furniture, paper mache, and fabric. I then light the work with colored gels and photograph it.

In addition to this style, I enjoy printmaking and jewelry making. I use a variety of mediums in printmaking, including screenprint, intaglio, and linocut. I also make necklaces and earrings out of polystyrene "Shrinky Dink" plastic. In all my mediums, I am inspired by the handmade, often rough or stiff shapes of historical folk art. I also want to convey the changing concept of gender expression over time and the ways it is subverted and played with in fairy tales.

## Included work(s)

I WANT TO BE, Video: Stamp, paper, risograph, 1 min 50 sec, 2024, NFS

I WANT TO BE, Zine, 2.75" x 4.25", 2024 NFS

LOWELL, NIGHT 1837, 12 page comic: linoleum block print cover, papercut and risograph interior, 2026, \$12

FAIRY HORSES, Acrylic paint, craft gems, water marble, collage, 10' x 10", 2025, NFS

FOX DANCERS, Acrylic paint, tissue paper, collage, 8.5" x 11", 2024, NFS

# Mary Defer

## Biography

Mary Defer (she/her) is a Lakewood, Ohio-based artist primarily working with analog photography. Her work centers around the unreliable nature of memory, the natural world, and the unearthing of family history. Raised on a family farm, she discovered a love of photography her first semester of college, when she enrolled in an introductory course and found the darkroom to be a quiet refuge from anxiety.

Defer received a BA with distinction in Studio Art from Kenyon College in 2014 and, since then, has dedicated herself to independent study of alternative processes. She is inspired by artists such as Keliy Anderson-Staley and Lia Halloran, who address contemporary social issues through historic photographic techniques.

Defer's work has been exhibited both regionally and nationally through organizations such as Praxis Fiber Workshop (Cleveland, OH), the Erie Art Museum (Erie, PA), Soho Photo Gallery (New York, NY), and the Filter Photo Festival (Chicago, IL). In 2012, a book of her photography was included in "DIY: Photographers & Books," the first-ever museum exhibition of print-on-demand photobooks at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

## Included work(s)

Secret Family 19, Inkjet print on Moab Juniper Baryta Rag, 15" x 18", 2026, \$400

Secret Family 20, Inkjet print on Moab Juniper Baryta Rag, 15" x 18", 2026, \$400

Burned Negative Display, Burned negatives, acrylic display case, light table, 12" x 7" x 10", 2026, NFS

don't think i have forgotten you, Inkjet prints on Moab Juniper Baryta Rag, digital negative, expired unfixed darkroom paper, found glassine envelopes, found negative sleeves, 37" x 31", 2026, NFS

# Mary Defer (continued)

## Artist Statement

This work is part of the “Secret Family” series, an ongoing project created in response to the discovery of a family secret. The secret: following my grandmother Betty’s death, my father discovered a stack of letters in her house in Ohio from a man named Jack Merritt, who lived in West Virginia. Among these were several letters from my great-grandmother—writing on behalf of Betty, then a child—to Jack. After reading the letters, my father and I concluded that Jack was Betty’s biological father. I had never heard of him before.

I use a panoramic Holga camera to create evocative black and white images of locations in Ohio and West Virginia where Betty and Jack’s lives intersected, along with self-portraits and portraits of family members engaging with the sites. The larger film surface area is crucial because after developing the rolls, I undertake an experimental process of attempting to strategically burn parts of the negatives using an open flame. The gnarled negatives are then rephotographed atop a light table.

In her research on family secrets, sociologist Ashley Barnwell writes that they, “operate as a form of social censorship that can play out slowly over lifetimes, affecting both specific families and stoking wider social ideas and values about what kinds of family lives and experiences are worthy or acceptable.” The act of burning the negatives allows me to visually manifest the concept of social censorship.

Additionally, I am expanding the series to involve an ephemeral installation piece. The installation incorporates images of the letters themselves, found vintage glassine envelopes that mirror stationery used by Jack, and unfixed darkroom photo paper that shifts in color throughout the duration of the exhibition. This piece encourages a consideration of what we obscure or choose to reveal in our lives.

# Jake Kelly

## Biography

Jake Kelly is a Cleveland-based artist. Over the last 25 years he has created around 1,500 posters and fliers for various local clubs and internationally touring bands. He is also a muralist and has painted dozens of murals around the eastern United States for clients like Melt Bar and Grilled, Condado, Mickey Mart, Nice Guys Pizza, and many, many others.

He is the creator of the Cleveland 230 Mural Project, a year-long mural-painting project where he recreates historic photos, artifacts, and ephemera across the city as public wall art. In his spare time, he is the author and artist behind the non-fiction graphic novel series Death, Destruction, Vice, and Sleaze about Cleveland in the 1960s and 1970s. The latest volume, Death, Destruction, Vice, and Sleaze: HARDHAT WEATHER is a 500 page odyssey exploring the Weather Underground, bombs, nazis, Hardhats, pornography, outlaw bikers, busing, and more. It is due this year from from Pave the Ocean Press, Kelly's publishing imprint.

## Included work(s)

Page from "Doomsday Map", Pen and ink on Bristol board, 11" x 17", 2020, NFS

Page from "Doomsday Maps", Pen and ink, photography paste-ups, on Bristol board, 11" x 17", 2020, NFS

Page from "Blowing Minds", Pen and ink on Bristol board, 11" x 17", 2020, NFS

# Nate Puppets

## Biography

Nate Puppets was raised on a diet of fine art and absolute trash. A sculptor, puppeteer and general surreal cartoonist, Nate Puppets has spent the better half of 20 years working to develop a whole new world that has never been seen before. Using a combination of hot glue, oil pastel and polyfoam. Nate, aggressively and tirelessly works, to somehow shove it altogether into one strange, surreal, cohesive vision. Which if you happen to squint at just the right angle, you may just see what all is actually being said.

## Artist Statement

I have my influences obviously. I was born in 1992, and around that time, the students of JHU (Jim Henson University) had graduated and started to produce their own incredible puppet work. With a developing mind, this certainly was the seed planted in my brain to germinate. I also spent more than an inappropriate amount of time at Big Fun on Coventry. Which just filled my brain with pretty much, everything and I mean G@#damn near EVERYTHING that I enjoyed and made my brain tickle. I feel like those two things really fueled who I am an artist the most.

I like to think, my work has two big themes at the end of the day. Those themes are America and all that's in it, and humanity. Now, not America in a jingoistic sense, but very much the undeniable culture, sensibilities and darkness that it tends to produce. It's heavy, brightly colored constant cope, it's overwhelming sense of I am number one and you, you are everything beneath that. Then there is humanity, humanity in the sense of this is what we all feel, what we all experience as human beings. Great loss and grief, with an overwhelming sense of pain, incredible happiness within huge guy feelings of joy and accomplishment, emotions so extreme in all directions that we try so hard to oppress the thought, with our everyday routines, just so we don't go absolutely bonkers trying to think about it. Also you know, a heavy handed dose of kitsch with some serious psychedelic, surreal energy.....

## Included work(s)

Day-Glo's Cheshire Tide Kitty, Foam, faux fur, hot glue, Day-Glo paint, 37", 2020, NFS  
Liquor Buddy, Foam, faux fur, hot glue and oil pastel, 37", 2021, NFS  
Cigarette Buddy, Foam, faux fur, hot glue and oil pastels, 34", NFS

# Marcus Schafer

## Biography

I've been builder and a designer since I was young. And after earning a Master's in Architecture at Kent State University, I worked professionally in the field of architecture until I discovered what could be created with lasers. Even designing simple pieces takes time, as well as pages and pages of scribbles and sketches in notebooks all over the place. And so I design my pieces in 2D, and build them in 3D, to create functional art. I very much enjoy walking the line between functional art and art for art's sake. Because if a piece of art makes you feel something/anything, then it in itself has a function. And my mantra (Design | Construct | Inspire) comes from that function.

## Artist Statement

I enjoy breaking an idea down to its simplest parts, then designing a unique or unorthodox way to make it anew. My work is 3D, but I sketch, draw, and design in 2D. Each piece is laser-cut flat, and I determine which axis that piece will and on.

Using a laser cutter, as well as utilizing a mono or chromatic color scheme, gives each piece a solid industrial design aesthetic that pairs with my patterns and designs. Inspiration comes from everywhere, and my work continues to evolve as the design and construction methods adapt to what each piece requires.

Some items are functional, others make a statement. But they're all SWORKS.

## Included work(s)

Gatsby's Delirium I, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 22" x 22", 2026, \$1,300

Propulsion, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 10" x 10", 2026, \$275

The Comet, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Spiral Out, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Erra, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Hex, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Angulus, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Quarta, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Urbana, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 6", 2026, \$90

Ab Intra, Eucalyptus Fiberboard, 6" x 14", 2026, \$500

# COMING SOON

**Thursday, April 9 | 7:00 p.m.**

*ARTbar: Tongue in Groove*

Ray McNiece and his Tongue in Groove band feature a performance combining poems, songs and stories backed up by the multi-instrumental house band. This event blends jazz and spoken word into an unforgettable night of creativity and connection. T

**Thursday, April 23 | 7:00 p.m.**

*Ekphrastacy: Artists Talk and Poets Respond*

Poets Talya Ideozu, Jim Szudy, and Melissa Vincel join Heights Poet Laureate Michelle R. Smith to perform original works inspired by the exhibitions on view: Ungallery and Jeneen Hobby in the spotlight gallery. Artists also discuss their work. F R

**Saturday, May 2 | 7:00 p.m.**

*Gallery Concert: Klezmer Guy Trio*

Bert Stratton, Cleveland's beloved "Klezmer Guy" and longtime leader of Yiddishe Cup, leads his trio, featuring pianist/vocalist Alan Douglass and soul singer Tamar Gray in a playful mash-up of "matzo-meets-Motown" with storytelling, music and humor. F R

**Thursday, May 14 | 6:00 p.m.**

*Brave New Voices - Heights Poet Laureate Community Project*

Heights Poet Laureate, Michelle R. Smith, launches their community poetry project "Brave New Voices" at the Heights Library, Noble Branch. In tribute to the long-running Youth Speaks poetry and spoken word festival, this showcase features performances by local guest poets, followed by an all-ages open mic welcoming emerging adult, youth, and community poets to share original work. F R

**Sunday, May 17 | 3:00 p.m.**

*Close Encounters: Bach and Beyond*

The final concert in this year's series, Bach and Beyond, celebrates J.S. Bach's profound and expressive chorales arranged for string quartet, alongside Haydn's inventive String Quartet Op. 76 No. 5 and Beethoven's String Quartet No. 10, nicknamed the "Harp" Quartet. T

IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO

# expand your palette.

Downtown Cleveland Alliance SPARX! CITY HOP  
CODY YORK

**ClevelandArtsEvents.com**

connects you to the region's vibrant arts and culture scene.

With just a few clicks, discover hundreds of events made possible in part with public funding from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

