



Darren Lee Miller

How do You Want to be Seen



Ivette Spradlin

From a Distance



FOTOFOCUS
BIENNIAL

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From a Distance

October 3 – November 13, 2022

Rosewood Arts Center
City of Kettering, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts
2655 Olson Drive, Kettering, Ohio
www.playkettering.org/gallery

2022 FOTOFOCUS BIENNIAL: World Record
www.fotofocus.org/biennial/2022

How do You Want to be Seen and *From a Distance* are part of the 2022 FotoFocus Biennial.



FOREWORD

It now seems like a distant memory: the anxiety of COVID-19 taking hold of our lives in March 2020. As we isolated in our homes, glued to the news, the hours of the first COVID shutdowns became days, weeks and even months. Within these boundaries that were drawn between each other -visible and invisible - the desire to connect never ceased. Homemade rainbows were taped up in windows for neighborhood kids; collective noisemaking in the evening hours acknowledged those on the front lines of the pandemic.

As the speed of our world changed with the urgency of the pandemic, photographers Darren Lee Miller and Ivette Spradlin forged unique ways to link to their communities. *World Record* - the theme of the FotoFocus Biennial - captures layers of this moment; the virtual spaces that initially connected each artist to their subjects, and the domestic and public spaces that bond each subject to the physical world. The resulting bodies of work, **How do You Want to be Seen** and **From a Distance**, respectively, are exhibited concurrently at Rosewood Arts Center and remind us of the resilience of humanity in uncertain times.

This exhibition is possible because of the passion and commitment of so many individuals committed to creating meaningful connections. I am deeply appreciative of our small team at Rosewood, in particular our gallery coordinator Paula Willmot Kraus who brought these exhibitions to Kettering. Additionally Andy Dailey, Jennifer Holman, Madison Eaglowski, Brandon Lowery, Kristen Wagers, Claire Zook, Caroline Rock, Courtney Draper, Justin Ingram and Kaytlynn Wintermute for all their support. We are also incredibly grateful for our leadership in Mary Beth O'Dell, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts, and Mark Schwieterman, City Manager, as well as our elected officials Mayor Peggy Lehner, Vice Mayor Jacque Fisher, and Council members Bruce Duke, Tony Klepacz, Jyl Hall, Lisa Duvall and Bob Scott. The residents of Kettering continue to make opportunities like this possible through their overwhelming support for the arts. Every day we see new faces and old friends walk through our doors, eager to engage their senses and intellect through creativity - and for that we thank you.

Shayna V. McConville
Division Manager of Cultural Arts, City of Kettering

Darren Lee Miller
How do You Want to be Seen, 2020 – 2022

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Darren Lee Miller

I employ community-engaged, trans-disciplinary collaboration and anti-racist, anti-heterosexist advocacy to center the experiences and "subjugated knowledges" of individuals from marginalized identities. My collaborators are those who self-identify as queer or allies, and who are generous enough to share their lived experiences with me – to trust me with their image. Together we interrogate received assumptions about class, gender, sex, and race, working to complicate dominant narratives about subject-positionality. Looking critically at how people negotiate unequal power in relationships has been a throughline in my work all along.

I began working on my current series, *How do You Want to be Seen?* at the start of the pandemic. At first, I used gay dating apps to connect with potential collaborators. As the pandemic has worn on, I've expanded recruitment to social media (Instagram and Facebook), word of mouth, and sometimes I invite participants just by asking them. I relinquish my authorial privilege in order to give people in positions of marginality the power to control their own depiction. Since many do not have Art & Design training, my role is to be both a photo technician and a careful listener, extensively brainstorming with every collaborator to reach consensus on the image we create together. Each photograph is paired with a quotation from the person seen in the portrait, which is part of their answer to my question posed in the title of this series.

Darren Lee (Dee) Miller is an artist, educator, curator, and writer, originally from Endwell, NY, whose work employs community-engaged, trans-disciplinary collaboration and anti-racist, anti-heterosexist advocacy to center the experiences and "subjugated knowledges" of individuals from marginalized identities. They were invited to serve as Chair of Photography and Associate Professor at the Columbus College of Art & Design in 2019.

Dee incorporates a number of innovative strategies into their pedagogy to lead undergraduates and MFA candidates to teach themselves to learn, enabling student autonomy and accountability. They use discussion-based sessions for building cultural literacies and expanding critical capacities. This approach helps emerging artists use their own life experiences to create meaningful content, and it requires the use of techniques from facilitated intergroup dialogue to support equitable and inclusive learning spaces.

In 2019-20 Dee was awarded a Fulbright Research Fellowship to conduct a community art project, Palavras na Minha Boca, at the São Paulo State University (UNESP) in Bauru, Brazil. Their teaching, curatorial work, and artwork have been recognized through numerous residencies, exhibitions, and acquisitions. Before joining CCAD, Dee served as Director and Curator of the Art Galleries at Allegheny College, Meadville, PA. Prior to this, they were Program Director for the Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts, a non-profit community arts center in Blue Mountain Lake, NY.

Miller received an M.F.A. from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, and hold a B.F.A. in Photography and Printmaking from The School of Art & Design at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University; obtained also through study at Manchester Metropolitan University in the U.K. They live and work in Columbus, OH and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Darren Lee Miller: *How do You Want to be Seen*

Essay by Nicole Monahan

“When we strip away the veneer of self-reliance and individualism and allow ourselves access to our most vulnerable truths, we can’t help but be heartbeat present to the fact that our relationship with other bodies mirrors in tangible ways our relationship with our own body.”

Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body is Not an Apology*

Darren Lee Miller’s series *How do You Want to Be Seen* is an invitation not just to Dan or Nadia or Jehdeiah, but to us. At a time when constructed images proliferate our social, dating, and professional worlds, it is often a solitary and surface act to create a self-portrait. Miller’s process provides an alternative: a self-portrait made through vulnerability with another.

The brilliance of Miller’s initial doorway—a swipe on Scruff or DM on social media—is that they meet their collaborator through the false facade of a digital, manicured self. Beasts safely locked away, skeletons well hidden. Then, as if lucid dreaming together, they weave a delicious world where those same beasts reveal courage and strength; those skeletons, character and wisdom.

This exchange is the work. The fastidious way that Miller listens, refines, lights, positions, and composites each image shows a level of care—of, dare I say, love—that is about more than technique. It is about specificity as a condition of truly being known. These images are healer’s gifts: mirrors reflecting back to each subject how harmonious integration of one’s complexity might feel. They are dreams captured from a world that Miller longs to see, for themselves and for us.

Nicole Monahan is an artist, educator, and community weaver. With degrees in painting, art history, ceramics, and sculpture, her multidisciplinary practice combines many media. She has shown nationally and internationally, and been an artist-in-residence in the US, Ireland and Japan. Monahan currently serves as Director of Corporate & Community Partnerships at Columbus College of Art & Design.



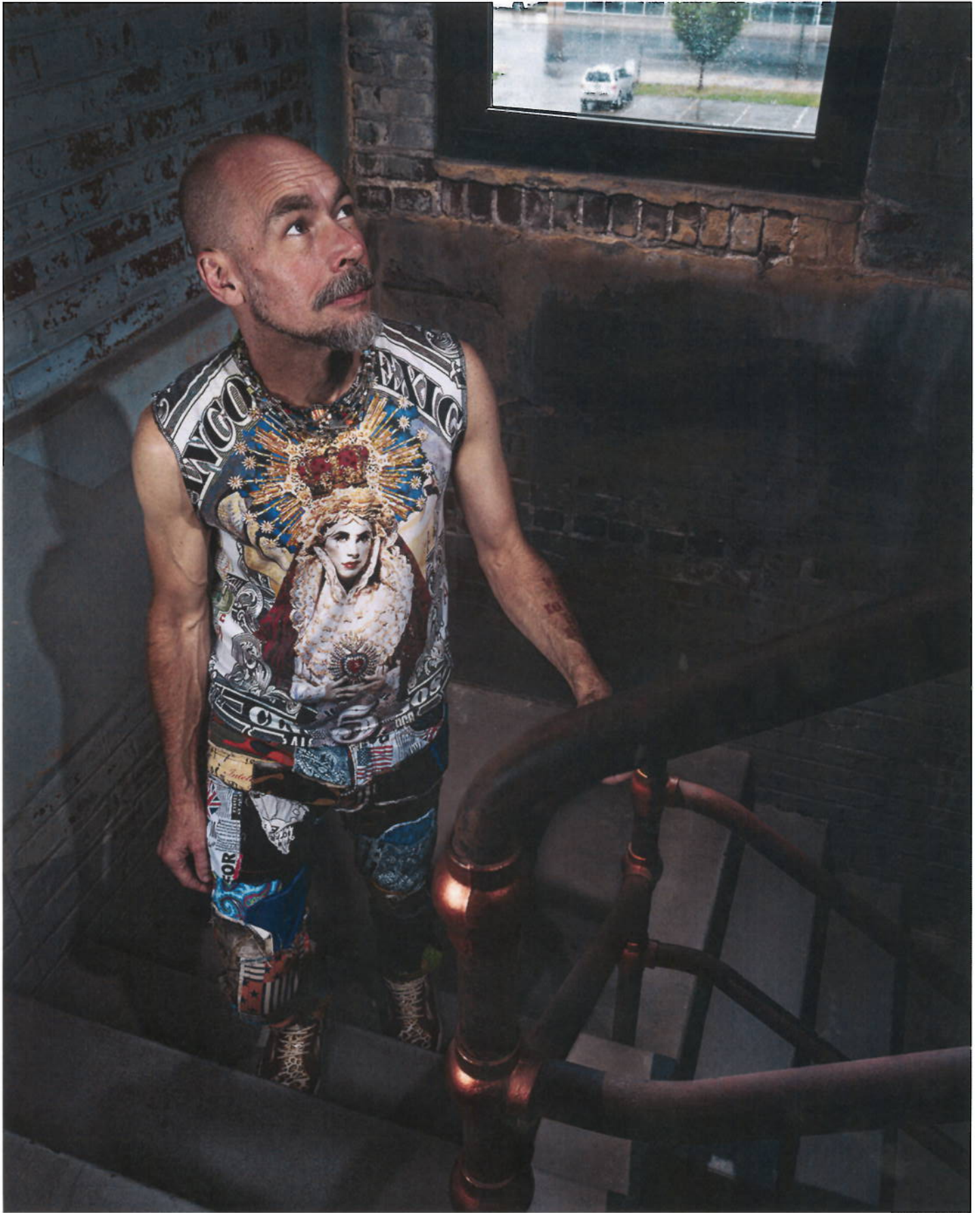
Travis in Pearls, 2022



Robert in the Woods, 2022



Corey in the Park, 2022



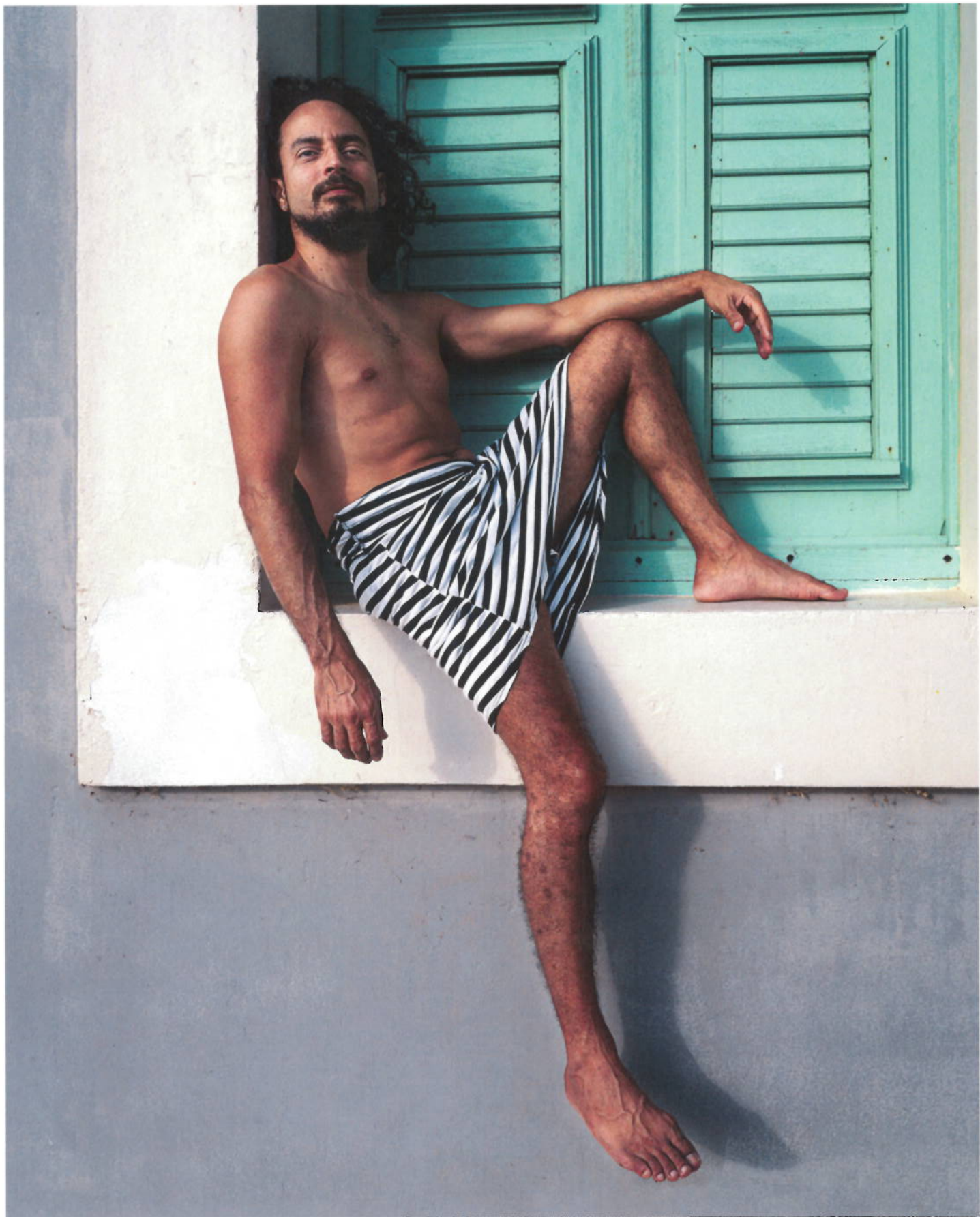
Jay During the Thunderstorm, 2022



Jehdeiah Reclining on the Sofa, 2022



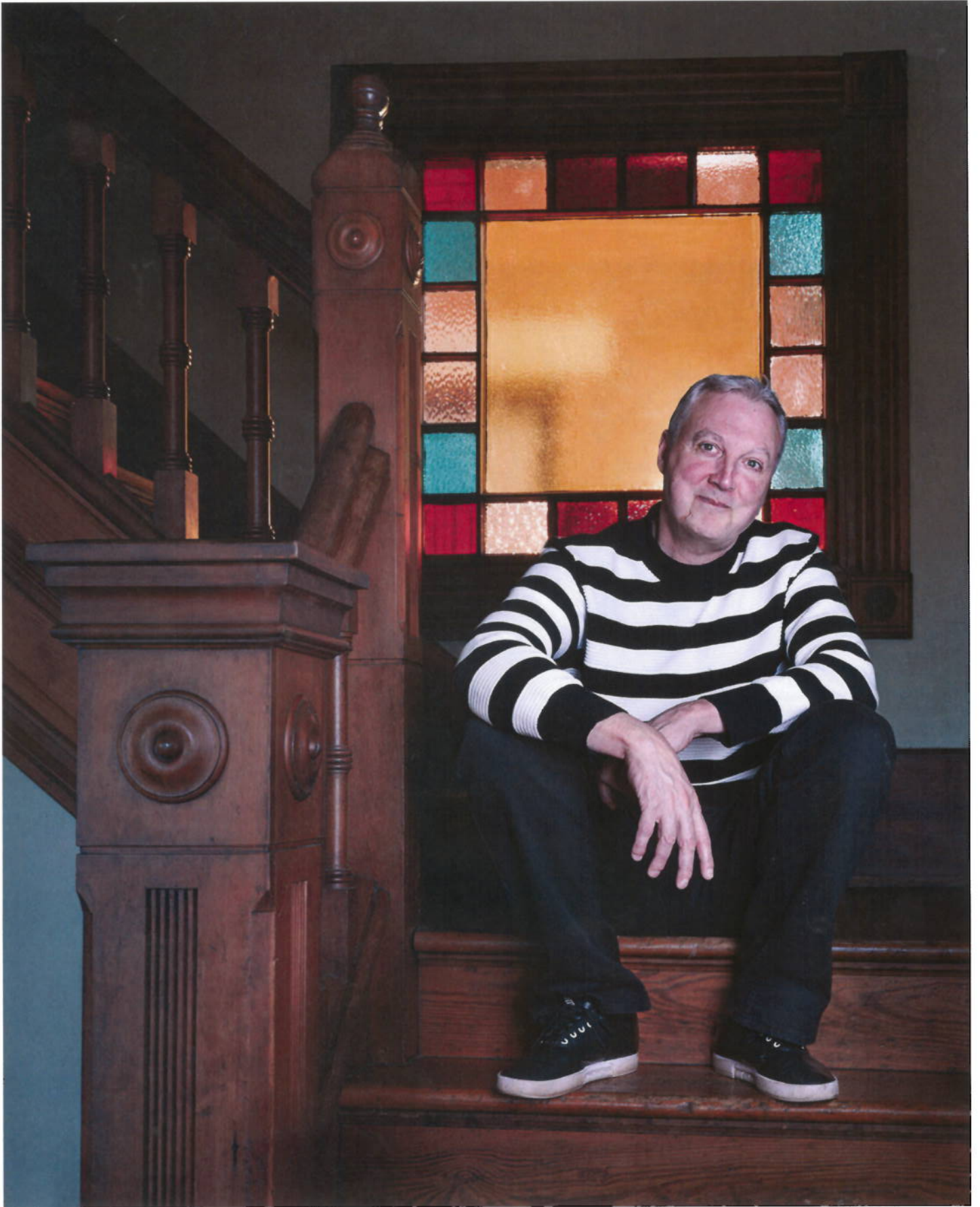
Nadia at the University, 2021



Heriberto en el Faro, 2021



Jim in the Garden, 2021



Jeffrey on the Steps, 2021



Dan Reclining in the Studio, 2021



Charles Bailando en la Plaza, 2021



Gabriel Reaching for Mangoes, 2020



Juanki, 2020



Lucho in the Garden, 2020



Pablo in his Studio, 2020

ABOUT FOTOFOCUS

FOTOFOCUS
BIENNIAL

How do You Want to be Seen and *From a Distance* are part of the 2022 FotoFocus Biennial.

The 2022 theme, *World Record*, considers photography's extensive record of life on earth, humankind's impact on the natural world, and the choices we now face as a global community. Since its invention, photography has recorded plant varieties, animal species, atmospheric conditions, and other nuances of life on earth and the beyond. This mass documentation has enriched our understanding of life but has also contributed to the exploitation of resources. *World Record* also refers to documentation of quantifiable human achievement, as well as its increasing associations of environmental extremes directly related to human impact.

The 2022 FotoFocus Biennial, now in its sixth iteration, activates over 100 projects at museums, galleries, universities, and public spaces throughout Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, Dayton and Columbus, Ohio in October 2022.

FotoFocus welcomes global artists, curators, critics, educators, and regional visitors to Cincinnati with exhibitions, talks, performances, screenings, and panel discussions during an expanded week of programming, September 29 – October 8, 2022.

www.fotofocus.org



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ABOUT ROSEWOOD ARTS CENTER



Rosewood Arts Center is dedicated to enriching the quality of life for the residents of Kettering and the greater Dayton area by providing creative experiences through a variety of art forms for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Rosewood Arts Center accomplishes these goals through multi-arts educational programs and classes for a wide range of skill and interest levels, artist studio spaces, exhibitions, performances and special events.

A division of the City of Kettering's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts, Rosewood presents over 400 classes annually and is home to specialized facilities including a black and white darkroom, ceramics, glass

and jewelry studios. In addition to direct programming, Rosewood Arts Center is a pillar for collaborations with other organizations including area schools and arts organizations, businesses and community programs.

Established in 1986, Rosewood Gallery specializes in the exhibition of contemporary art by local, regional and national artists. It is dedicated to promoting the visual arts to audiences in the Kettering and Dayton, Ohio region. Rosewood Gallery presents four group exhibitions and eight solo exhibitions annually.

playkettering.org



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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