

## Artist Talk: B. Ingrid Olson

Conversation with B. Ingrid Olson on March 26, 2025, where she discusses her sculptural, photographic, and performative practice.

This transcription is provided as a record of the live conversation, for educational use.

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## Transcript

**Emily Haidet** ([00:00:10](#)):

Hi, everybody. Hi. Welcome to the Wexner Center for the Arts. My name is Emily Haidet. I'm the curator of public programs here at the Wex. Thank you all for being here today for an artist talk with B. Ingrid Olson. This talk is presented in partnership with our Department of Art colleagues. How many of you are students who are taking classes in the Department of Art? Wow. Awesome. Good to have you guys here. We have a few housekeeping notes. I want to give some special thanks to everyone at the Wex who makes these programs possible. Also, Dionne Lee for our partnership and leadership on these public programs. Also, all of the students who helped coordinate the visit today, Annelise Duque, Illya Mousavijad, and Alex Trippe, who's also here.

([00:00:59](#)):

So Learning & Public Practice programs are made possible by CoverMyMeds and Huntington. Following today's presentation from Ingrid, Alex Trippe, a graduate student in the Department of Art, will join Ingrid for a few questions before we invite you all to ask questions. We will come around with a mic, so please raise your hand so we can all hear you. But you may also text our Wex hotline if you have a question. So if the hotline isn't already in your contacts, the number is (614) 813-3416. We'll have a slide with that at the end of the talk as well.

([00:01:35](#)):

So I'll give a quick introduction to Ingrid. We were really excited to invite Ingrid to speak today around her sculptural, photographic, performative practice and beyond. In addition to her participation in the 2024 Whitney Biennial in New York, Olson most recently exhibited in Japan at XYZ Collective in Tokyo and Keijiban in Kanazawa. She has also held solo exhibitions around the world. Her work has been included in a bajillion group shows. I'm not going to get into all of them. They are listed on our website. And she's here visiting for a couple of days from Chicago, where she lives and works. So Ingrid, come on up. Thank you.

**B. Ingrid Olson** ([00:02:18](#)):

Thank you. Can everyone hear me? This microphone situation is amazing. I'm really happy to be here with everyone. This is my first time in Columbus and it's been a very warm welcome. The weather has been good and we had three amazing studio visits today. So it's a good start and this hopefully will be a good ending to the day. And we're live.

([00:02:55](#)):

So a way that I'm going to talk about my work is to actually show you images and documentation from exhibitions from 2022 until now. And the beginning of this, I think, was a real pivot point that happened in 2022 at the Carpenter Center at Harvard University. And this building is kind of not unlike this building, a very sculptural building more than it is functional sometimes, which is really attractive as an artist when you come in and see all of these kind of materials that you really like. Aesthetically, I really love it. But it presented a lot of problems, which I will get into. And as the slide says, built by the Swiss architect Le Corbusier in 1963.

(00:03:57):

And the Carpenter Center is the school for visual arts at Harvard. And they have this split exhibition program that you can see on the third and the first floor, and I don't have a pointer, but the ramp, the diagonal thing that you can see there is a connecting point between them from the outside or you can enter through a stairwell. So in either case, there's this kind of a time difference between how you experience the exhibition on the first floor and the third floor or whichever direction you see them.

(00:04:38):

So these are the two exhibitions that I made. And I decided with this split physically in the space, but also experientially in the building, that I wanted to really accentuate different parts of my practice and make it what felt like in the beginning kind of nominally two different exhibitions, but I wanted it to feel like just two different exhibitions rather than two parts of the same thing. And this was kind of inspired by a book that I read at the very beginning of working on this project. There was a book called *Meander, Spiral, Explode* by Jane Alison. And I would recommend it to anyone in the audience who hasn't read it or listened to it. I love a good audiobook.

(00:05:29):

And the book just explicates different ways of putting a narrative together and talking about different things that aren't a narrative arc, which she describes as kind of a masculine way of seeing the world, and instead thinking about these other kind of digressions, detours, meanders. And I thought that this was perfect in terms of thinking about the physical experience of the Carpenter Center and then also just things I wanted to bring out in the work.

(00:06:06):

So this is kind of a floor plan of the third gallery space, which is kind of the more traditional gallery space, if you will. And I'm highlighting here this kind of interior box that they put into the Corbusier building. So it was an add-on because the building is all glass and concrete and there's no walls where you can hang artwork in an art building. So they had to amend it. And this is the interior of that box. As you can see, very traditional white walled gallery space and parallel, an actual rectangle rather than all of the strange angles that Corbusier put into his building.

(00:06:54):

So this invitation to make the show was a really big challenge as far as the downstairs goes because I primarily to this point had made almost all wall-based hanging work, whether or not it was kind of sculptural or photographic. So this was an opportunity to put the things that hung on the wall on the wall. And it was also a way to kind of think about my practice in kind of a

retrospective way and put things in there that I bristled at the word retrospective because I've been making work for 12 years now. At that point, like 10 years.

(00:07:33):

And it just was a way of looking back at the things that I had made within a series. So there were works that were 10 years old in this show as well as works I had made that same year. And when you walk into the gallery, the oldest work that was, I think, from my second solo show was right in the door when you walk in. And these works were very much the entry point to photography for me. And there was... I would think of them as kind of a stoppage of time in the photographic process where I was very interested in re-photographing prints and then making new images of them. But there was a certain moment that I actually thought it might be nice to rewind the process and show the pile of photographs as they were, just in a vitrine almost maybe an archival sensibility.

(00:08:38):

This is another installation view of more photographic works. And primarily, aside from that more physical collage, there were a lot of works in the gallery that are from a series that I actually was able to wrap my head around titling during the show, which I started calling *Dura Pictures*, thinking about duration and also mental space. And I like language a lot, which might be clear from some of the titles maybe, or who knows, maybe it will come through in the talk.

(00:09:19):

But in these works there are two images from different times embedded with one another. And it was very inspired by Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, which I read right when I started taking photographs and his principles of memory inflecting from the past into the present always. And so that's where this series was inspired. And here's another closer up image. And something I'll say is, the photographs are all taken within the studio. If there's a figure pictured, it's my own body.

(00:10:05):

And it sounds contrarian, but I don't think about them as self-portraits. I think much more about performing an image and my body as a material to create a kind of composition that I see or feel or am thinking of when I have the camera in my hand. And it's not as much about identity or some kind of representation of me as an individual person, which is how I think of self-portraiture. So there's a lot of abstraction. And something that became very important very early on also was first-person perspective and looking down onto my own body with the camera, using the camera as my own perspective, and then mirroring, like juxtaposing that with mirrored images. So that was kind of the way that you can see your own body from a distance or a printed photograph of my body from a distance.

(00:11:08):

There's another installation view. This work—there's a few of these that I've made throughout my practice, usually one every couple of years—but I call them *Errata*. And I worked at a library for about five years and had seen these little printed errata lists, and that's what people used to put into books if there was a printing and then there were errors. And I really liked that there was a physical "I'm sorry" in a book. I think that's just amazing. And when I started scanning analog film, when you scan it, and I am a, I don't know, impatient person oftentimes, and also

didn't take photo classes with people to tell me to do these things, so I would just put the film on the scanner.

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And then there were a lot of hairs on it that I would spend hours dusting, which of course I could re-scan it, but I would screenshot these hairs and hold them in this file because I felt like they felt more of a photograph than the photograph that was being scanned at that point. It was actually the index. And then also something like a signature or an automatic drawing or something that was just given to me on the surface of all the photographs. So they're kind of just laid out in a grid without thinking about it much, just placing them together.

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And then the exterior image is... I can't even remember the name of the scanner, I'm sorry, but it's a scanner type that's a flatbed scanner that holds the film in place. And I just liked the, I think something maybe automatic again, the grid that was a given. And then portraying also all of these images that I had taken actually in the order I had taken them without editing them. So the things that I would probably be, I don't want to say embarrassed, but we talked about embarrassment in some of our studio visits today. But I think things that I wouldn't necessarily print larger. And I think there's something really great about putting bad images next to things that I think might be good images and then actually maybe the bad ones are better.

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And so yeah, celebrating the errata. And then this is an image that I think relates very well to that. And you can see my brain. I started using Lightroom for the first time in the pandemic because I had time to finally set it up and I used to make all of my image combinations in Finder, and when I used to go to the photo lab, people would cringe at me. And so Lightroom is a great program and you can kind of side by side compare images together, but you can also zoom out and see how many things you have. And this is just to portray that when I'm making a combination of two images within a frame, I'm actually looking at 5,000 images potentially together. Now it's even more, but at this time, this is just the 583 images just from 2022. So it's a lot of potential relationships that might happen, and it's kind of overwhelming, but Lightroom makes it a little more visible. But I think it's very related to just the letting images be.

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Let's see, in addition to some of the other things that I think about photographically, I think about architecture a lot, and that's come more into the exhibition making recently. But the picture to the left is me thinking about biomorphic architectural models and, kind of, the bodily... how you might evoke the body without actually picturing much. And my hand is in it, but it's much less of a presence and more of a reference to something that's not there. And I think on the right, thinking also about aerial point of views. I make a lot of work thinking about things like looking down. And so I actually make work on the floor a lot and there's no horizon line in this. It's a very, I don't know... It's funny to have an aerial view that's so close, but I still think of it as an aerial view. I'm not in an airplane, but it feels very overhead to me.

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Another view. I think also about orientation a lot in these photographic images. So these two side-by-side, I was thinking a lot about the outside view of something that is standing in front of

you versus when you're looking at your own body, that kind of first-person perspective. And in this work in particular, I rarely think about other people's work in my work, but I had really started thinking a lot about Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés* and the fact that this figure is always being looked at, but I wondered what it might feel like to be the figure in the box and look at this peephole with a little eye always looking at you. So that's kind of how that work came together.

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This was a work that was on the very end, and the curator of the show didn't write about it and didn't speak about it in any way. And I think at the time actually it was a gut instinct and I had to make something. And I think these things are important even if you can't articulate it at the time. But the one thing I knew is that it had some relationship to this older plexiglass work, but I really liked the idea that there could be something photographic without a representational image. So these, it's kind of a more sculptural form, but all of the little squares on there are photographic images that were stapled and then ripped off of the form so that it's kind of this thing that was there and it's not anymore.

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I don't know, maybe something about thinking still and being a little more in process than that archival sensibility to the left. Rethinking. And then right next to that is kind of a transition artwork into the next space, which was one of the very first sculptural forms that kind of came into my practice. And it was, so to the left is an actual found object that was in a studio drawer when I moved into a studio and it's kind of a hand-carved pencil tray. And as soon as it was flipped from sitting, holding in a desk drawer to being vertical and wall-bound, it was around the same time that again, I was falling in love with photography and I saw the crosshairs in it, but then this rounding made me feel like even though it was tiny, it felt like a recess that because it was round might hold something organic like a body more than just a flat rectangle of a painting or something.

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So I cast that object for a solo show and cast it a couple of times, so it could be throughout the space. And that work, now we're heading outside of that gallery. That work led to a whole series of work that I've made consistently from 2015–16 until—I still make them every now and then, but to that point, until 2022—And this work was actually the real response to the curator saying something about a retrospective sensibility because I thought it was, I was like, "That's too early, I don't like that." And he's like, "No, no, I just mean looking backwards." But just the word stuck in my mind. And once something kind of itches, you have to do something about it.

[\(00:19:22\):](#)

And so basically I decided to make an index or an archive of every single one of these relief sculptures that I had made up until that point as one installation artwork. And it was a lot of crates. It's like 30 works, 30 components to this one work. And they all, while stemming from this pencil tray, which was found, I kind of tried to make the most minor adjustments to each minimal form to, in scale or in a subtle shift in an angle or adding an additional feature, to make it reference some body part. And then there's also the slow morphing, where it becomes something completely unrecognizable to the first form.

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But it was something that was kind of a jumping off point to think about these minimal kind of markers for a body that is not there. And something, it also kind of came in tandem with the photographic process where I was thinking about the idea that photography, at its root word, is drawing with light. And I really liked the idea that these are basically shadow drawings. That whatever the kind of protrusions within the form, how they catch the light and how it flows down across the form, creates the image of the work. And it's shiftable depending on what the either natural or artificial lighting is above them, they can shift. And so it's kind of a different image form, depending on where it's installed.

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And just to show the craziness of this process, this was just the work in the studio as it was being made with other works for that show. And I rarely make models, but this was a time that it very much proved helpful. And something that I think might not be clear from looking at the work because they're machined, they're kind of milled out with this computer program and they all stem from me, from drawing. So I think they go back to a very early process for me. And in order to make a single form, I make thousands of iterations of angles until I get the exact kind of curve or outjet that feels right. And sometimes it's coming back to an earlier one as I'm working, but all of those forms kind of wind up leading to one end point, but still there can be a little variation.

(00:22:12):

So this work on the left was the first form and it has kind of curves in these inset, I don't know what you would call those, like piano keys almost. And then in the *Proto Coda*, *Index* work, they were flattened and very much more blunted. But little variations, evolutions in time. And then here's just some details more close up. And then another thing that comes with a crazy work like this is a crazy installation manual because they're supposed to be installed to one installer's body, whether that's me or an art installer or a curator, so that they kind of fluctuate at a height that references a single body throughout the space. So then just to give some sign of reference points that you understand about approximately where something is supposed to be on the wall, each form kind of has its own reference point that I've determined. And some are just on the floor.

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So then moving on to the second exhibition, *Little Sister*. And as you might be able to see from even just this floor plan, it's just much more open. It follows the kind of more sculptural experience of the building, if you will. And one of, I think, the most important artworks from that exhibition was maybe the most invisible. And it's this *White Wall* that is a kind of quadrant of four different very close tones of white on a wall that is normally painted red. And Corbusier, there's ventilation panels that are green and yellow and red, and this wall is always red. And then pipes are a specific color. Every function of the building is kind of labeled in its color code.

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And something that happened during a site visit when I came to do the show was, this was mentioned to me that you could build a wall in front of this wall, we could build almost something... we can use modular things, but you can't hang anything on this wall. And just the



idea that I couldn't also was coming around the time that I heard this story about this architect, mostly designer, named Eileen Gray. And she built a house in the French Riviera with her lover, Jean Badovici, and lived in it with him off and on, kind of, more vacation style while they were together. And then when they broke up, she was basically like, "Take the house, I can't have it." And he was friends with Corbusier, who had already seen the house and expressed his admiration for the house to her. But as soon as she wasn't really involved anymore, Badovici let Corbusier stay in the building.

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And this is a picture of Corbusier painting murals on her building, naked. And so this is a picture of her before, which unfortunately is not in color. And then the after, current because they actually maintained the murals. And there's a lot of Corbusier scholars and people who say it added value and that he respected the building. And you can see that in his letters to her. But there's also other documentation of him talking about his own buildings in which he won't allow art. He has very specific wall treatments and doesn't believe in murals. So there's a few feminist scholars, including Beatriz Colomina, who say that it was an act of conscious violation of her building, which he did admire, but he was kind of trying to claim a territory almost.

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So that was like the, "I have to make this mural on this wall." And the curator was like, "I feel like we're doing the right thing if I'm nervous about losing my job for painting a white wall." So I think we just didn't ask permission and no one said anything. And it's red now again, but my mural is still under there somewhere. And this little print was stapled to it, which was an earlier work that just felt right to kind of print another little proof print and stick it on there, but it was called *Kiss the architect on the mouth*. So it just felt like a nice, and it's not hung, it's just stapled. So it was actually also penetrating the wall with tiny little pinpricks.

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But yeah, this building was, as I said, very sculptural, but it was also almost like a camera where there was a lot of transparency and it was like a big open aperture where you could see entirely through from one end to the other. Everything was available all at once when you walked in the space. And as a person who likes to control when things are... Maybe not control but guide and maybe slow things down as to when things are revealed and how things are encountered, this was the immediate opportunity to me to part... I don't know, make things around my work that might change the way you view the work and the way you walk around the space and what becomes visually available when and where.

(00:28:07):

So that work to the right, which will be detailed later, was kind of almost a room in and of itself. And then that huge structure in the center from one end blocked the view of that mural wall. So there was this kind of at least three-part reveal to a room that otherwise is available entirely as soon as you walk into it. And this is that work. Here's some other views of it. So it from one side becomes a minimal kind of almost hallway object. And then you can almost see the whole image that's hung in the center when you're standing three-quarters view. And then there's a very small slit of an image from the frontal view.

(00:28:56):

And the structure was inspired actually by a light fixture that I'll talk a little bit more about later. But this is the patent drawing for that, and it's a light that is meant for illuminating shelves. So I actually encountered it in a library first, and it was illuminating the bookshelf so that it doesn't hit you in the eye as you're walking through the aisles, but illuminates the things on the side. And that's the illustration of it. But I thought the structure of it, this little narrow hallway was a really interesting way to kind of frame a couple of works for an exhibition where there were no walls for me to hang anything on.

[\(00:29:36\):](#)

And one other thing about the building, too, is you can see works from the outside. So this is actually the view of that work with another work that you cannot see very well from a distance because it's right against the window, but you can see it from the outside of a window. So yet another kind of distancing mechanism. And then this is actually something that I discovered once the work was well underway, but this is an Eileen Gray room divider. And I was thinking about her work with things that were kind of modular structures that changed the way that work... the way that spaces felt or functioned. And it was just like, I felt like this was a nice visual parallel to the work.

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And then this work is a work that you walked in right away and saw. And I liked the idea of it feeling like kind of a telescopic viewfinder, but like a lot of my work across the board, it kind of marries both masculine and feminine symbols. So there's a swan egg, which might feel more feminine, but it's an obviously very phallic structure and pointed at the viewer and then also at the work. And then again when you go around it, pointing at you and then away from you. But this work was another ode to Eileen Gray and an ostrich egg lampshade that she had made for a house that I don't unfortunately have a great picture of, but I just felt like it was a wonderful little bulb in her work.

[\(00:31:22\):](#)

And this was another thing that happens sometimes in working on shows. This article stumbled across my lap, but this was... basically the title of the work comes from this news article where they discovered the two swans that were obviously coupled up and in love were actually two women instead of Romeo and Juliet. It was Juliet and Juliet. And Eileen Gray actually was primarily with women. Jean Badovici was the only one documented man that she was with, so it felt appropriate as a ode to her.

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So then there's not a great picture of the whole thing, but to the left you can see this vestibule entryway into the building, and it's this holding space where it's a cube that's half in half out of the building that you enter two doors in order to enter into the space. And after many kind of iterations and thinking about how this affected the way that you entered, I decided to make this work, which is obviously not a cube, but thinking about different kinds of vestibules. This work came out and the title of it came from kind of the simple autocorrect that Google does, and so often how it suggests that we might be in pain or trying not to go see the doctor and just Googling our problems.

[\(00:32:54\):](#)



But something about it that was surprising to me, actually, I had modeled it on a small scale and knew that it would be an interesting way to see sculptures from a distance because you can't actually enter, but I didn't understand that it actually felt photographic and like a photographic kind of mirroring without mirrors, which was very interesting. Sometimes these things happen only later once you make the thing.

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I feel like I'm taking a lot of time, so I might start being a little speedy because this is an older show and I just have a lot to say. So outside, this was a light fixture that was something I really wanted to work with, and it was an industrial light fixture that just illuminated the space. But when I was loading all of my photographs into Lightroom, I came across the very first photographs I took when I was working at the library at the Art Institute of Chicago. And on my break, I was trying to learn to take photographs and had taken a picture of their light fixtures in the stacks. And it was that perfect confluence of like, "Oh, that's the sculpture. It just has to be." I was going to make a sculptural light. And then I thought, "It's just this light." And it felt like, funny enough, the lights felt more like a self-portrait than sometimes the photographs do. More biographical.

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I'm not going to say anything about that. Here's an outdoor work and the first—and still to this day only—outdoor works that I've made. And they were responding to the columns and trying to make them more concave than convex and altering the way that you might understand these really present architectural elements of the space. And there were two of them. So that was the first one. This is the second one. And then right after that show, I was invited by my gallery in Iceland to do a year-long show at this space that only one other artist had done a year-long show at previously, but it's a program they're running. And they said, "You can change it as much or as little as you want. It's kind of like a exhibition residency to think about the work that you've made over the last year and kind of just process these things, make new work in tandem, see it in a new space," which was and still is, I think one of the most generous invitations to be able to think in space.

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And for me, the effect actually was also kind of taking the pressure off of what an exhibition feels like sometimes, which is the finished, the perfect, the show that you want to make in the space. And I think instead, then, you have to have multiple responses. And in my case for this show, there were 10 distinct iterations of the show. So it was 10 responses which changed sometimes very mildly, sometimes a lot. And to rethink the way that work is situated in space and time was, I don't know, something that I'm still thinking about in my work, which I'm very thankful for. But this shows the progression from January where there were lights throughout the space, and August, September, and then almost the end at the very bottom. And there were, I want to say three very ever-present elements to the show, one of which was the table that you can see in that entryway.

[\(00:36:52\):](#)

The lights that are above that do come from a similar idea of the same thing of the Carpenter Center at Harvard. And then there's a very small subtle line that was a mural throughout the space that never went away that was this kind of glossy, just very subtly toned shoulder height

wall because I wanted it to have some bodily presence to the space. And then little did I know actually oftentimes in Iceland there's almost the same height wall line painted. So I don't think it had the same effect that it did for me, but I only noticed it after I had already done it. But this is a view of that same table which has only a subtle shift from month to month, but different sculptures on it. And then a side view. And here is actually the kind of inspiration for it, which was a studio table that I actually make work on.

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And it was both an inspiration to me to use that entryway space as basically the table kind of occupied enough of the space where you can walk around it and it was still technically accessible, but it was a kind of narrowed hallway rather than kind of a little cube room. And I also liked the fact that I would be able to be in the studio and make work and think about the work that would be far away that I can't go to Iceland every month. So I could imagine the way it looked in a very accurate way and understand that, which I think it is not always possible, but it's something I usually try to do.

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And for all the students out there, I think trying to mimic—and it's not always possible with the proportions of a gallery or something—but if you can mimic some portion of something, some quality, if it's a gray floor but you have a wood floor, then putting a piece of gray paper down because these kind of elements change the way things feel and look and trying to make a little pre-exhibition in your studio before you send things out I've always found to be really helpful. Even if it's not quite as big, you can test the theory so then you're not going in without any preparation when you start an installation.

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So here are some artworks that were on the table, and here on the left is a view of it more fully assembled where it's just a single plane of planks where it was like the table in my studio rather than to the right where it's restacked again, kind of disassembled and the planks are striated almost on top of each other. And also, one thing I didn't mention, I did open the windows. There were hidden windows in the gallery that they wanted to open, and I said, "I think I would like to let that be a part of my process." And so we drilled holes into the wall to reveal the little light and then fully revealed them later.

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And to be concerned with light in Iceland kind of felt like maybe a little obvious because it's one of those places that's very dark in the winter and very light in the summer, but basically throughout the run of the show, there's this amazing transformation of the light. So it felt really nice to be able to do that with the windows as well and let light in in a very specific way.

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It's a ceramic work. And this work to the right is actually, I want to say, the first time that I've exhibited drawings since my BFA show. And I was a painter-drawer in school, and once I started taking photographs because of the, "Why does it have to be a drawing," that's basically what prompted taking photographs was. I don't know why I'm drawing this. And led to all of the things I've done, but I still have always made drawings and I just didn't know what to do with

them. And they were always piled in these little boxes together and not really by time. So they intermingled things from when I was in school up until now.

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And I liked the idea of rather than framing them and making it, I don't know, feel like it stopped producing itself, this somehow felt like, not to say that it's still in process, but like a book, it could be read and reread and experienced in time in a different way than a framed drawing could. And you can experience both sides of the drawing in not a way that's so double-sided frame. And it's also, I think something that's interesting to me, which may or may not be obvious, but also kind of the view of it is restricted. You can't see all of it at once. So I think there's something about that too, where if you're seeing one of these images, you can't see any of the others. So I think there was, it's time, but it's also not all revealing itself all at once.

[\(00:42:35\):](#)

It didn't quite have a huge overlay onto the show like maybe the Eileen Gray Corbusier thing did in the Corbusier building. But something I was thinking about a little bit in the show, because of the table, was this set of Dieter Roth prints that I always hated just because they're called *A Feminine...* I mean, I love them actually as drawings, but I also hate them. Called *A Feminine Thought*. And I just always thought that was such a strange thing to see a woman as a table, as such an object. And so to think about the way that maybe *A Feminine Thought* might be understood from my perspective rather than Diderot's and something that was maybe a little bit messier.

[\(00:43:19\):](#)

And then this is his other version where it's more clearly a woman as a table who slowly becomes a little table, which also then was very guided into this work. And then the table actually procreated in the show. And when we were first installing the table base, the tabletops were in the gallery before the show opened while we were doing other things, and they were stacked like this. And this was in January, and then I think it wasn't until August or September that I thought, "I really want to put another set of tabletops in the show that are stacked like they were, that will feel like you can't see them at the same time, so maybe it's an after image or maybe it's the strange conceptual child that's just sitting on the floor."

[\(00:44:14\):](#)

So that's the first moment. Then it kind of splayed out as though it were fully installed, and then the things that were on the other table were resting on the floor on this table. But the tabletop itself that you're seeing was actually in those moments hidden behind this half wall so that it truly became something more like an image of a sculpture rather than something that you could walk around. The angle was very set in which you could view it, but it was also still very important to me. So that shoulder wall came up to my shoulder height and those still restricted, it was very important to me that if a small child came in or someone in a wheelchair, that they could view it. So there's still the slit that you can still view some portion of it through, which actually you can see everything really.

[\(00:45:10\):](#)

This is a little closer, so it kind of becomes this little photographic crop through that rectangular slit. This was another work that came out of working on that show. I don't have a ton to say

about it, but I wish I had a video of it is what I wish I had because the image in this reflective bowl really moved as you walk around it. And I think I want to give the kind of freedom of working within this open exhibition to make something like this. I think some weirder sculptures came out of this time that felt really like less pressure than a lot of exhibitions. It just felt like I was able to try new things. And this was, I think, one of the more exciting things that came out of it.

[\(00:46:10\):](#)

So then, later on in the year I was invited to do a show in Santander, Spain, at a space called Fluent. And this, I was not able to do a site visit. It's a small space, so it's not like it would've been possible, and it's not always necessary to do these things anyway. But I do usually respond to spaces very physically. If I walk into a space, I feel very different than when I'm looking at a floor plan and you can understand things about how you encounter a space, what else is around it, the site, whether or not you want to respond to these things. But there are quite a few things that were mildly surprising. And the documentation images, I could see that this was an inset kind of lamp-like jewel box within this space that used to be kind of a mall and had turned into more of a storage unit for a lot of it.

[\(00:47:03\):](#)

There was one key maker, everything else was a storage unit. And then not until I arrived was I made aware that up above was a sex shop. And so the only people that were coming in and out were actually people making keys or going to the sex shop. And I named the title *Pleasure Traffic*, and I didn't know this. I was actually just looking at the floor plan and thinking about the ways there were three doors that you can see. And I was thinking about controlling how and when someone can, again, a very similar... you enter in and you can have the whole space all at once. So then this space is not always open. So there is something that you can, kind of, what you can see if you can't enter the space, and then also what you can see in time by going into each room and out again.

[\(00:47:58\):](#)

So that's why I was thinking about this kind of controlled pleasure of looking. Little did I know the whole space is pleasure traffic. But the solution I would say, I guess, that I had to thinking about this whole space almost being a frame and how I didn't want someone to just be able to walk in when the gallery people were not there and not be able to see my images from a distance in a very specific way. So I made images that were an inch big. They're really small. And that was the revelation of maybe scale being a way of protecting the images.

[\(00:48:42\):](#)

And I think oftentimes, as you saw, I was using, I guess, abstraction and different ways in the more concretely framed things, but then also plexiglass perimeters in which you had to stand directly in front of it to see the image and playing with these, kind of speed or directional cues in how you view something. But this was very much about proximity. You have to come close, you have to bend down, and even then it's still as big as something on your iPhone maybe. So yeah, that's a staple for scale.

[\(00:49:43\):](#)

This is a lot of those that I'm not going to detail, but this was an installation at Croy Nielsen in January of last year, just a slew of them. So it was almost like a little filmstrip of tiny, tiny images. And then this is the most recent show that was in November of last year, and it's at the space called XYZ Collective in Tokyo. It's an artist-run gallery. It's in a basement with no windows and it's, kind of, a cube. And there were two things, again, this is another moment of understanding things from images and floor plans rather than feeling it in space. But this is another instance of it was small enough to where I actually installed this all and painted my walls in the studio to see the way that this worked before I shipped it out, which I think is the only time a whole show was ever installed in my studio before, but this was small enough that it was possible.

(00:50:53):

And the main thrust that I wanted to have happen was this mental, psychological space that was a continuation of thinking about the little collages that you saw here, which I was calling *Psycho Indexes*, as thinking about these little mental notes and these little, I don't know... I've been thinking a lot about hysteria and the, kind of... I haven't really articulated this entirely yet, but I think the histories of hysteria and the mental space of making things, but then also these questions of scattered thoughts and/or possible mental illness and all of the sexual things that go into thinking about the ways that hysteria was treated. And so, yeah, just thinking about these things. But in essence, this installation I wanted to feel like a overwhelming cluster of thoughts in the corner of the space, which was some sort of analogy for a corner of my mind.

(00:52:09):

So the lighting was all taken away from everywhere in the space minus the two above the corner of the gallery. And the corner of the space was painted a gray to match the floor. But in my hopes and my designs, and I think it mostly was effective, I wanted the whole space to be painted gray with the lack of illumination so that it almost felt like the whole space was the same tone of gray. But there was this fluctuation of what was painted, what was lit, what was shadow, and these were a couple of the works detailed.

(00:52:59):

And then there's also a continuation of the drawing practice and thinking about these piles of unframed drawings. And this particular one that I'm detailing felt very related to the small sharp objects that are installed all over the wall that had each their own title. So there were actually 41 individual works. So the checklist was actually the thing that seemed the most hysterical to make, but I feel like it's that overflowing, overwhelming sense of thinking about all these things all at once. So there's a shift in the work, I think, thinking still about physical, but I think, kind of, this... I don't know, bringing in the mental space and that bridging between mental and physical, which I think is such an interesting thing that your mind can affect your body so much and your body can affect your mind.

(00:54:02):

And bringing that into this work that has primarily been mostly very corporeal, figurative, and not so much about thought. And I'm very much in thought and body space now. And this is a view that shows a little bit more how dark it was on the other side of the gallery versus the lit. And on the right you see this hole, which was cut into the wall. And the thing that I was very interested in as I was looking at the floor plan was the entire cube of the gallery is surrounded

by a moat of storage. And the first impulse I had was almost to pull out all of their storage and exhibit in the hallway. But once I got there, I was like, I know I made the right decision because it was packed. And because it's an artist-run gallery, they show other artists, but they also have their own work store there, and space is a premium. So it was really packed with stuff.

[\(00:55:01\)](#):

And I think there was something that was really fitting to me about having this overwhelming show that secretly, behind the walls, is very overwhelming. And this work was just this hinting at this thing that you can't see, which of course they have curtains and you can kind of see that there's storage, but you're never supposed to see back. But I liked this idea of opening it up and showing in, which, I don't know, showing you inside of the storage space, which actually might just be like an artist talk or something, seeing into my storage space. And that's all I have actually.

**Alex Trippe** [\(00:56:07\)](#):

Hello. Is this working? Okay, thank you so much. That was wonderful to get such a insight, really walking through your process, even getting to see the floor plans and seeing the initial sketches. Something I was curious about that you mentioned that you used to work in libraries and that also, I was realizing during the talk that that was what you were doing as you were discovering photography as a medium that you wanted to use. And I was thinking about the functions of a library in relation to your work as spaces of collection and indexing, but also research and discovery and, kind of a place where that's facilitated. And so I was wondering if working and spending time in libraries, how spending so much extended time in those architectural spaces might've influenced your approach to exhibition and how you see mounting your work in space?

**B. Ingrid Olson** [\(00:57:18\)](#):

That's a nice question. I didn't see it at first, but actually in the very, very first thing that someone ever wrote about my work was the first show that I did in Chicago. He had an inside scoop because he actually worked at the Art Institute also in the drawing room, but he mentioned that there was an archival sensibility, and I was like, "Really?" In the very first Plexi works that you saw one image of, but I think sometimes you can't quite articulate something right when you're doing it. But once he said it, I was like, "Oh, I guess so." And I think things are latent until either you spend enough time, you have distance where someone mentions it, and I'm guilty of the same thing where it takes sometimes an outside perspective to see these things.

[\(00:58:07\)](#):

But yeah, it was a huge influence. I mentioned to someone, I think it was you today, that I don't have an MFA and that working there for five years at the Art Institute, reading books, seeing how curators research, going into their office to inventory books, being able to go into the museum when it was closed, and I think just actually pulling out books on your own when I was supposed to be shelving, was like my MFA. It was a long program, very low paid, but it was amazing. And I think I still research there now. I just finished a little stint of anytime I begin a show, I'm thinking about a very specific thing, and I don't know about it or an architect or an artist, and I will go sit and read for a couple of weeks, and I can't unfortunately go to the stacks anymore, but it's still a very special space to me.



[\(00:59:09\)](#):

And I don't know, research is a very important beginning part, reading a lot. But yeah, I think in a different studio visit, we were talking about star signs, and I am a Scorpio, but there's a little Virgo in there and I think the organizational comes in. But I think... I haven't read a ton of theories about archives, but I know that there's a lot of things that reference this, I'm not an originator of this idea, but I think archives are made by people. They're subjective, they're messy. And I think that's the interesting thing is actually making... There's no such thing as objectivity, at least as far as I'm concerned.

[\(00:59:54\)](#):

And so you can make an archive and make a system, but you can make it your own. You can make it as wild and complicated as you want it to be. And I think that's a very interesting thing that I wouldn't think of. And I didn't know about archives and systems in the same way before I worked there, I think.

**Alex Trippe** [\(01:00:12\)](#):

Yeah. Yeah, I can really see also those relationships too, then developing your own system of organization and indexing. Something that a few of our grad students here, we went to your studio in Chicago last year, right at this time. But something I remember really clearly is this large, it might've even been, like large table that was covered in images, but also material surface in photographs. And we, kind of, talked then about how these new works can, sort of, emerge from processes of sorting, rearranging, even cleaning. And I was thinking about that in what you're talking about too, where it's like in the studio, those are if you are concealing and revealing certain aspects of the images in your work, but that also sort of happens in the studio when things are in piles or folders. And I was wondering if you could give a little insight into that process of how material comes together or sometimes can surprise you in the studio.

**B. Ingrid Olson** [\(01:01:32\)](#):

I feel like you said it. I don't know. That was asked and answered. I think cleaning sounds funny, but it is a part of my process because things become a tornado as I make photographs, as I make work, and then like any type of work, it all comes off the shelves, everything's on the floor. Remarkably, I don't think I've ever stepped on anything and broken it. I just don't allow studio visits during this time. And then as soon as things...they never get put back in the same place. And it's just the simplest, stupidest process. But seeing two things suddenly next to each other will make an artwork sometimes. Or just like a, "Huh?" And then it might lead to something else, but it's the physical form of thinking that I think, I don't know, it's the process. Yeah.

**Alex Trippe** [\(01:02:28\)](#):

And then something I was curious about is you were talking about the images. Are you using your body as a tool for performance for the camera? And I was thinking about when you were speaking about installing the relief sculptures that it would be related to either your body or the installer's body, and yeah, I was wondering if you could talk about that and how when it can be installed, it can be the body of the installer and not to the scale of your body.

**B. Ingrid Olson** [\(01:03:10\)](#):



I mean, something I didn't quite articulate is that the reliefs are obviously not going to fit anyone's body in them. They're kind of scaled, but none of them are organic enough. They're all sharp, they all have protrusions. So I think—and they're all mis-sized in some way, so they're, kind of, in that way... The way that minimalism excludes a lot of bodies and subjectivities, and I think it shifts and it's not going to fit anyone's body, but the height can kind of, change—it's just important that it, kind of, relate. We all have different proportions, even so it doesn't really matter, but it's like if someone who's five feet tall is installing one part of it and someone who's 6'5 is installing another part of it, it won't quite have the same effect of conveying, I don't think, the same body parts potentially.

[\(01:04:07\)](#):

So that was always important to me that it be one body register for an installation, but they can be installed in any permutation, any amount of distance apart from each other. There's all of these variabilities so they can change and yeah, I don't know, there's a possibility of them feeling almost like a documentation of a performance that happened or something. And one of the very first relief works I made was in a group show in Aspen, and it was exhibited in a video room, so it was very dark, and it was going to be by Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti, and it was this very performative kind of thing. But I thought, I really like the idea of these feeling like if you're on a stage, you need the stage markers to know where your body's supposed to be in the dark, and it's a little moment. So they had little blips of reflective light, hinting at that, but that was, kind of, the instigation of thinking of them not just as single works, but thinking about them as almost a choreography marker of sorts.

**Alex Trippe** [\(01:05:20\)](#):

Great. Thank you so much. Should we open it up to the audience for questions? I think Jess over here has a mic or there's the hotline for text questions.

**Jess Xiao Long** [\(01:05:33\)](#):

Yep. Just raise your hand up high and I'll come give you the mic. Or text if you're shy.

**Audience 1** [\(01:05:44\)](#):

Thank you, Ingrid and Alex. I don't want to project onto your practice that I personally think about sculpture and photography, and I think they speak to each other in unique ways. I was just curious if you do see your photo work in your sculpture work as related or feeding each other?

**B. Ingrid Olson** [\(01:06:13\)](#):

Great question. I actually specifically am a stickler for language about this because I see all of my work as all of it. And so I never want, when you're working with curators or something, I can't put words in their mouth so they can say photograph and sculpture and I'm not going to deny them that in a text, but I will never write photograph or sculpture because the photographic works are all photographic, sculptural, performative, architectural. The sculptural works are all of those things. The architectural works are all of those things. I think of all of these mediums in each work to varying degrees. So I think that each one of them bleeds into each other and the

amount of things I'm thinking about and including, I think in the beginning I was like, "Photographic and sculptural," and then I was like, "No, these are performative."

(01:07:10):

Now I'm installing them, and I'm like, "Oh, architecture is in all of these," and I'm sure there'll be something next year that I can say also is in everything, but for now it's just those four. But yeah, absolutely. And I think that's something that I would say is... we talked a little bit about language today, but I think there's different interpretations of every word, but I think the way that you speak about your work, the way that other people speak about your work is so important to not just let people say, again, I'm just so particular about those things, but it's very difficult.

(01:07:51):

You have to work around sentences to not say photograph or sculpture or form and image, but I think if there's a particular word that's ever of interest or you definitely don't want to be used about your work, it's like that's the way that things are understood. So I think it's really important to understand your language and the barriers of those things because it helps guide how you make work, I think.

**Audience 2** (01:08:18):

Thank you. Hello. Speaking of language, I was wondering, could you elaborate on your feelings about self-portraiture? Because you mentioned it kind of offhand, and I'm really interested in moreso of what you think about that.

**B. Ingrid Olson** (01:08:34):

I think my feelings are probably limited to probably what I already said. A lot of people in offhand or in reviews or in the beginnings of curatorial texts in the very beginning might have said self-portraiture because I'm in the work. And that's something that I fought against and I said, "Nope, do not put that in there." If it's a review, you can't say anything. But if it's something that, it's a show that I am working on, you can say those things and I say, "It's not, you cannot use that language." Because it's not for me. And it never felt like it. But I was actually inspired to stand my ground on this pretty early on because there was an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago curated by a wonderful curator named Kate Nesin, who did a show with Helena Almeida.

(01:09:31):

And she is in all of the works. She's full-bodied in the works. Her husband actually took all the photographs directed by her because there was no, whatever, trigger... What are they called? What are they called? Trigger release? I don't know. I'm such a bad, I'm not... Sorry. I don't know the words. But she said they weren't self-portraits, her body was used as a material. And she was adamant about it. And to me I was like, "That kind of looks like self-portraits." But I understood it. She was making images and they were very much about, they didn't seem as much performing an image, but she was making constructions and sometimes it would be like she's holding a blue pencil and then she'd paint on top of the photograph in blue so it looked like it was actively being made. But I really liked that she was in them and she said that, and I think it also, the converse side of this, I'm just giving you anecdotes to give you my reasonings.

(01:10:35):

I was also in, I had a solo, or no, two-person show at the same time as this other artist that was showing in another portion of this gallery. She's also a Chicago-based artist named Autumn Ramsey. And I was saying something about them not being self-portraits in the gallery text because they tried to do it. And then on the other side, she makes paintings that are, kind of, Greco-Roman figures, cats, birds, very beautiful, but figurative animal figure paintings that are definitely not anywhere close to looking like her. And she was calling them self-portraits.

(01:11:18):

And it was another clarifying moment for me because she was like, "Well, they're like my psychic space, they're my mental space when I'm making them. They're everything. They're an emblem for me." And I was like, I'm very rarely thinking of, "This is me." And when you think of a self-portrait, it's like, "This is me and this is my interest and I am doing this thing that this is my character, this is my persona." And I am making a composition and an image and a gesture and a language with my body sometimes in the picture and sometimes not. So I think that's the line I draw. Yeah.

**Jess Xiao Long** (01:12:03):

More questions? Raise your hand up high if you have one.

**Audience 2** (01:12:15):

Hi, Ingrid.

**B. Ingrid Olson** (01:12:16):

Hi.

**Audience 2** (01:12:17):

So something I'm kind of thinking about and I've been trying to maybe voice something that feels like it keeps turning over in my head, but I'm thinking about the errands or the aerates, the things in texts that you spoke to.

**B. Ingrid Olson** (01:12:32):

Oh, errata?

**Audience 2** (01:12:33):

Errata. Thank you.

**B. Ingrid Olson** (01:12:34):

Yeah, I like errands. That's nice, too.

**Audience 2** (01:12:37):

Well, I guess I've been thinking about errors and revision are, kind of, where my mind went with that word. And something that I enjoyed seeing was the image of the outline of the body as a reference point, which isn't again specifically yours, which, I think, then it becomes something

for me having had experienced the work in-person before as gesturing to sort of an absence of a body. So it maybe becomes a container that something happened. And I've also been thinking about how much the work maybe feels like a way of really pointing to not just how the work is in space, but also the history of the space and ways in which maybe I'm moving through space in a very habitual way and all of the politics, the gender dimensions of space, the invisible histories of it, which reaffirm themselves through me not knowing that they exist. So I guess maybe what I'm saying is do you feel like your work also is a errata, in that sense, in regards to, kind of, gesturing to the sort of permanence or objective qualities of space and how maybe I'm interpreting them normally?

**B. Ingrid Olson** ([01:14:07](#)):

That's a really nice articulation. I will credit you. I don't know. I don't think I've ever actually thought about this more recent practice of thinking critically about space as a form of errata, but I haven't articulated it. But that is accurate. I think I'm going into spaces and usually, I think, it's totally related because there is a... Like for instance, that red wall, the artist that was exhibiting when I came to do a site visit had built a wall and kind of made an enclosure so that you didn't have to see her work in installation views with that red wall. And to me I was like, that just feels like you're drawing more attention to this thing you don't want to look at when you're physically in the space. If you don't come, then, whatever—you just see her work in a tiny cube that she built inside of that space.

[\(01:15:07\)](#):

But for me, I really like pointing out the things I don't like about a space or that make me feel like I should point this out and exaggerate it. And I think that that's exactly it, like pointing to the list of things that I might change or I don't know. So instead of actually making them better, sometimes it's making it more pronounced, the issues. Yeah, I like that.

**Emily Haidet** ([01:15:32](#)):

So I think that's all the time we have, but I want to thank you, Ingrid and Alex, one more time. And thank you all for coming tonight. We really appreciated having you here. There is a free Cineseries shorts screening tonight, too. If you are looking for things to do, you can hang out for an hour and then have a free screening. Thanks for coming. We'll see you next time.

**B. Ingrid Olson** ([01:15:56](#)):

Thank you.

**Alex Trippe** ([01:15:57](#)):

Thank you.