

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

January 9 – February 22, 2025

Box Spring Gallery, Philadelphia, PA 19122

About CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Opening Reception: Thurs, January 9, 6–9pm

2nd Thursday Reception: Thurs, February 13, 6–9pm

Exhibition Duration: January 9 – February 22, 2025

Crane Arts, 1400 N. American St, #100C,

Philadelphia, PA 19122.

*Open Hours: Thurs–Sats 1–6pm, or by appointment
by emailing contact@boxspringgallery.com*

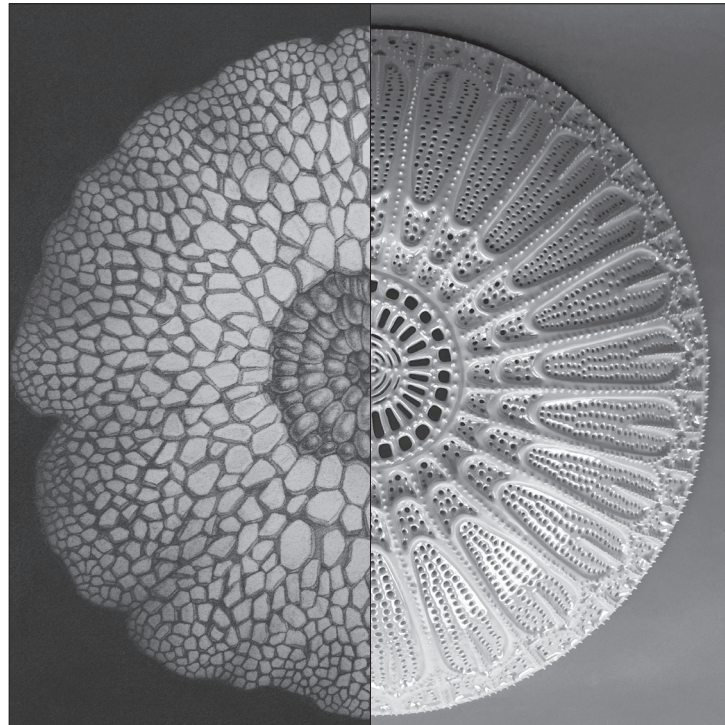
The phrase “Close Encounters” usually indicates a scale of human interaction with unidentified flying objects and/or alien lifeform. Whether it’s an encounter of the first, second or third kind, answers arrive regarding spacecraft and extra-terrestrial beings from

outer space, likely from Mars. But what if the unknown is closer than we thought, worlds of organisms actively living among us, miniscule but enormous in number, and provoking scientific research?

Box Spring Gallery is starting the year off with a close-up analysis of other-worldly, fantastical specimens, that are actually right here on Earth. Gregory Brellochs’ intricate graphite drawings and Marguerita Hagan’s detailed ceramic studies, enlarge what can only be seen under a microscope for all of us to experience. There is a powerful connection between the micro and macro worlds in that the behavior of large systems and phenomena can often be explained by the interactions and behavior of their smaller component parts.

Brellochs wants his work to capture a sense of awe, reverence, and adoration for nature, and through that, help foster both inquisitiveness and a subsequent sense of respect and stewardship for the natural world. Likewise, Hagan brings to light the beauty and engineering of our planet’s diverse ecosystems. Her lacelike ceramic shines light on the wonder and respect for the fragile, diverse life with which our lives are intrinsically linked. The two artists provide viewers these close encounters of their own kind, in perfect harmony, and with complementary media. The works feature structure and design; delicacy over color.

Organic symmetry and patterns in growth, validate Mother Nature as the ultimate divine designer, and remind us that we too, were created with purpose.





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GREGORY BRELOCHS gregbrellochs.com / [@gbrellochs](https://twitter.com/gbrellochs)

Artist Statement

I find that the immediate and direct process of drawing serves as a means by which I can reflect on concepts that explore the fundamental nature of things. Image-making is a way of creating not just a physical relationship to abstract concepts, but a sensual and emotional one as well. I want my work to be felt, not just intellectualized. I want the subjects that I am exploring to resonate with the viewer on a basic visceral level while simultaneously encouraging them to ponder a layer of reality that exists beyond the immediate senses. Perhaps, most importantly of all, I want my work to capture a sense of awe, reverence, and adoration for nature, and through that, help foster both inquisitiveness and a subsequent sense of respect and stewardship for the natural world.

My work is inspired by my interest in, and appreciation for, science and the respective fields of biology, cognitive science, and theoretical physics. The lines of scientific inquiry that have captured my interest and imagination most are linked to the following ideas: Evolutionary biology and the study of the genome reveals common heritage. From our nearest primate ancestors to the most primitive bacteria, each organism has a percentage of its genes in common. In other words, all biological life on Earth is expressed in a common, programmed language (what are genes other than code written in organic materials?). Theoretical physics presents us with the concept of Planck-length 'strings' that must somehow interact in order to create ever larger amalgamations of energy resulting in the physical universe we perceive. Ultimately, out of this chaotic soup of brute matter we must be able to account for the emergence of self-replicating organisms and their corresponding levels of consciousness. Similarly, intelligence and the theory of panpsychism begs the question, is intelligence, in its most rudimentary form simply the byproduct of the organization of physical matter? Is intelligence an emergent characteristic inherent in any highly organized system?

Biography

Gregory Brellochs is a Philadelphia based artist, Professor, and the Visual and Performing Arts, Chair at Camden County College in Blackwood, New Jersey. Brellochs' work has been recognized through awards such as the 2018 Meyer's Family Award for Contemporary Arts, the Center for Emerging Visual Artists CDP Fellowship, the Wind Challenge Exhibition Series at the Fleisher Art Memorial, and the William D. Davis Award for Drawing at the Art of the State Exhibition in Harrisburg, PA. Brellochs has held numerous solo exhibitions and has been featured in a number of prestigious juried and curated group exhibitions both regionally and nationally. His work is included in the contemporary drawings collection of the Viewing Program through The Drawing Center in New York City. Brellochs earned his BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, and an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.



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MARGUERITA HAGAN margueritahagan.com / [@marguerita](https://www.instagram.com/marguerita)

Artist Statement

What does light talk about? I asked a plant that once. It said, 'I am not sure, but it makes me grow'

—Thomas Aquinas, 1225–1274

Oak trees know. Their roots graft into one flesh so they may share mutual sustenance, benefiting the community. When one tree is in need, the healthy ones direct their energy in support. This goes macro with fungi, the underpins of the terrestrial realm. Their fiber optic-like mycelium liken a high speed internet connecting diverse subterranean life. Micro-marine organisms connect in exquisite mutually beneficial systems or colonies in the ocean and provide over 50% of all oxygen for the planet. Rich diversity and reciprocity fuel thriving communities and environments.

This light-giving flow has enabled all life to thrive for eons. Inherent potential realized moves everything, even light itself. It certainly moves me. My work is a response to this light. Interdependent projects grow in a continuous heliotropic adventure, energized with every opportunity.

Biography

Marguerita Hagan is a ceramic sculptor based in Philadelphia. She is an advocate for the thriving of all life in mutually sustainable communities and environments. The concept of interdependence plays throughout her sculpture, teaching and community arts.

Throughout her career, Hagan brings to light the beauty and engineering of our planet's diverse ecosystems and our powerful role as stewards. Her intricate ceramic shines light on the wonder and respect for the fragile, diverse life with which our lives are intrinsically linked. Hagan's practice is an ongoing discovery, magnifying our awareness, reciprocal responsibility and protection of each other and our planet.

She received her MFA from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and her BFA in Ceramics at James Madison University. Her projects include collaborations with artists, scientists and community, environmental art-science residencies, lectures. She is in collections and exhibits nationally and internationally.

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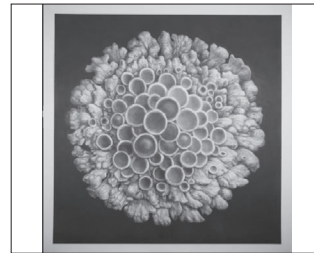
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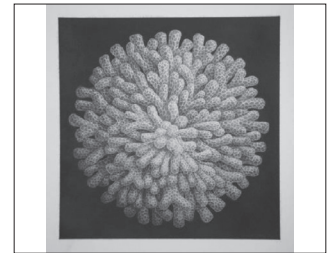
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen IX
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000



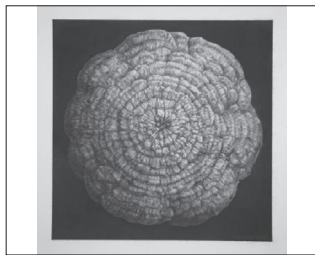
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen X
graphite on paper
36"x 36" (40"x 40")
\$2,800



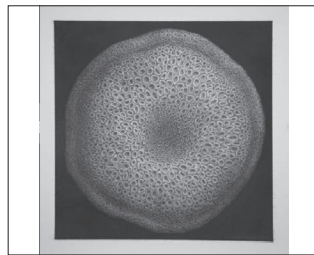
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XVI
graphite on paper
36"x 36" (40"x 40")
\$2,800



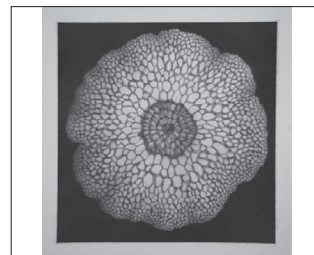
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XXV
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000



Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XXVIII
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000



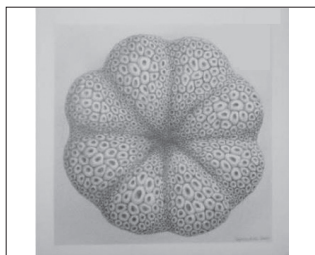
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XXIX
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000



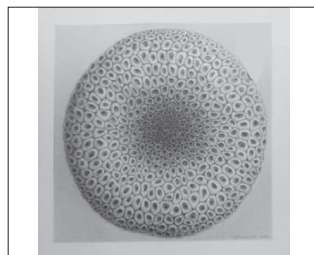
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XXX
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000



Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XXXXVII
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000



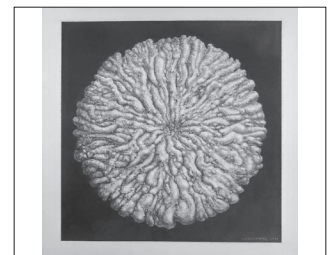
Gregory Brellochs
Sporangium II
graphite on paper
10"x 10" (11.5"x 11.5")
\$650



Gregory Brellochs
Sporangium III
graphite on paper
10"x 10" (11.5"x 11.5")
\$650



Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XLVI
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000

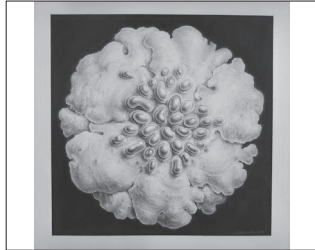


Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XLIX
graphite on paper
15"x 15" (16.5"x 16.5")
\$1,000

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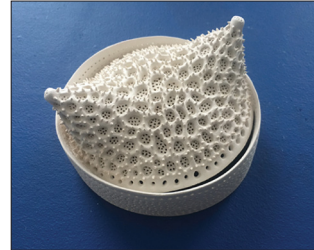
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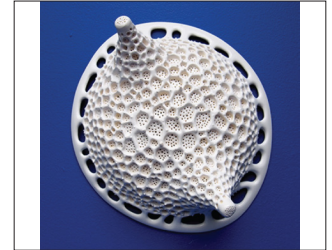
Gregory Brellochs
Lichen XXXIX
graphite on paper
15" x 15" (16.5" x 16.5")
\$1,000



Marguerita Hagan
Diatom Kittonia elaborata,
La Mer Micro Sculpture
ceramic, 5.25" x 5.5" x 2.5"
\$1,000



Marguerita Hagan
Diatom Odontella aurita
Petit Shield, La Mer
ceramic, 2.5" x 4.25" x 4"
\$900



Marguerita Hagan
Diatom Odontella aurita
Shield, La Mer
ceramic, 9" x 12" x 4"
\$3,000



Marguerita Hagan
Diatom Dance,
La Mer Marine Abstract
ceramic, 6" x 7.5" x 6"
\$4,500



Marguerita Hagan
Diatom Fragilariopsis,
La Mer Micro Sculpture
ceramic, 4.5" x 2.5" x 2.5"
\$400



Marguerita Hagan
Blushing,
La Mer Marine Abstract
ceramic, 3.25" x 5" x 2.5"
\$600



Marguerita Hagan
Aquamarine Whisper,
La Mer Marine Abstract
ceramic, 6.75" x 4" x 5"
\$3,000



Marguerita Hagan
Conservare, Marine
Diatom Arachnoidiscus
Shield, La Mer
ceramic, 13.5" x 13.5" x 2.5"
\$8,000



Marguerita Hagan
Rising, Micro Grow Shield
ceramic, gold leaf
15.5" x 14.5" x 3.5"
\$8,000



Marguerita Hagan
Champagne & Crinoline,
Fungi Shield
ceramic, 6" x 6" x 3.25"
\$2,500



Marguerita Hagan
Veiled Lady,
Petit Fungi Shield
ceramic, 3" x 3.75" x 3.5"
\$400

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Marguerita Hagan
Stellate Diatom
Thalassionema Colony,
La Mer Micro Sculpture
ceramic, 7"x 11.5"x 5"
\$1,000



Marguerita Hagan
Petit Stellate Diatom
Thalassionema Colony,
La Mer Micro Sculpture
ceramic, 3"x 3"x 2"
\$700



Marguerita Hagan
Diatom Thalassionema
Stellate Colony Shield,
La Mer
ceramic, 8"x 8"x 4"
\$4,000



Marguerita Hagan
Foraminifera Stars,
La Mer Micro Sculpture
ceramic, steel post
approx. 2"x 2"x 2"
\$75 each



Marguerita Hagan
Labyrinth, Fungi Shield
ceramic, 11.5"x 11.5"x 3"
\$6,000

Wildlife & La Mer

The Wildlife work (Flora, Fauna, Fungi and La Mer) is inspired by Nature's ingenious design constantly perfecting for each unique environment. Yet, as we stand at the edge of this ecological precipice, the environment is telling us in no uncertain terms it cannot survive without a global human reset.

The convex ceramic plays on the idea of a *shield*, a thing of protection. It also heralds honor of and sense of family and in this case the countless species with which we share this planet. Like the eye or focus of a lens, the shields reflect our powerful role and reciprocal responsibility.

We are in a time of epic shifts and are responsible for the changes needed now. The work intends to uplift spirits, awareness, renewable action and timely sustainable investments for all life. Everything is connected.

Jacques Cousteau said, *People protect what they love*. Hagan's work magnifies the unseen realms making life possible on our planet with a request to fall in love, now.



Marguerita Hagan
Lamella Love, Fungi Shield
ceramic, 6.25"x 6.5"x 3.25"
\$4,500



5. *Diatom Dance, La Mer Marine Abstract*: ceramic, 6" x 7.5" x 6"

The frustule's structure is usually composed of two overlapping sections or valves. This overlapping allows for some internal expansion and is essential during the reproduction process. The frustule also contains many pores that provide the diatom access to the environment, filtering and floatation. When in a colony or linked, the cells reproduce asexually expanding from the inside out. The newest cells are in the center of the colony and the process continues with each new cell smaller than the previous one. Eventually, when too small to split, they convert to sexual reproduction producing an ovum and sperm to begin the dance all over again.

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Wildlife & La Mer



7. *Aquamarine Whisper, La Mer Marine Abstract:*
ceramic, 6.75" x 4" x 5"

These Marine Abstracts are inspired by sponges seen diving Cayman Island in 2019 and their brilliant engineering. Sponges are the filter system of the ocean clearing 90% of its bacteria, viruses and more while also producing oxygen.

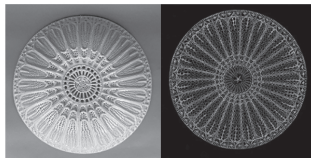
While this series was in process, the pandemic lockdown occurred March 13, 2020 in the United States. Later that year the COVID vaccine was developed, modeled after compounds in a sea sponge.

All life on Earth began in the sea which continues to sustain us providing over 50% of the planet's oxygen. Sea sponges also modeled the first HIV treatment and first marine sourced drug for cancer. The list continues, making protecting our planet's largest element a crucial investment as if our lives depend on it, because they do.



10. *Diatom Thalassionema Stellate Colony Shield, La Mer, ceramic, 8" x 8" x 4"*

Diatoms form exquisite and efficient networks or colonies, fusing together in star, spiral, zigzag and chains in sustainable mutual benefit. Their silica tests or shells are glass lace housing plankton. They can navigate nutrient waters best when working together. In the sunlit layer of the ocean, they are part of the marine micro producers powering 50% of Earth's oxygen, our every other breath. Although only one-cell the microscopic masters can be seen from space on satellite video when they bloom in spring. They are essential greens for the whale, the largest creature on Earth. Micro to macro. Imagine what we can do as engaged stewards of our blue planet when working together.



11. *Conservare - Marine Diatom Arachnoidiscus Shield, La Mer, ceramic, 13.5" h x 13.5" w x 2.5" d, 2024.*

Latin root of *conserve*: *con*=together + *servare*=to keep:
Protect (something especially environmentally or culturally important, a place or thing) from harm.

Diatoms are one-cell organisms living in fresh and salt water and the moisture in the soil. Their exquisite silica shells house phytoplankton. The holes or areolae of their glass lace take nourishment in and engineer filtering and buoyancy. Diatoms work together in colonies and are responsible for photosynthesizing over 25% of Earth's oxygen earning the title, *Lungs of the Planet*. A beautiful and powerful model for how we can move forward during this time of transition, individually and collectively.

They continue profound service after life as their fossils provide micro-paleontologist climate history past, present and future and more. Being a ceramicist offers an intimate connection for the brick of my kiln is made from the remains of ancient diatoms gathered from the ocean floor as *diatomaceous earth*. The silica structure of the diatom is the same material in my glazes and clay body particulates. This micro-organism not only provides oxygen for our planet, it makes this ceramicist's artistic breath and process possible.

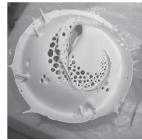
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Wildlife & La Mer



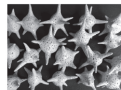
12. *Rising, Micro Grow Shield*, ceramic, gold leaf, 14.5"h x 15.5"w x 3.5"d, 2025,

Inspired by the Celtic Goddess *Brigid*, (*exalted one*) from Middle Irish, derived from the root, *berg*, to rise. Brigid is a triple goddess - the goddess of healing symbolized by the element of water, the goddess of alchemical force of fire and the goddess of poetry.

She embodies mastery of the perfect balance of feminine and masculine energy and equality, healing inner balance for collective balance. Brigid is associated with the natural world and a perfect matron of social and environmental transformation. The associations with water shine on the gift of diatoms, our blue planet, healing and growth; the alchemy of fire aligns with the ceramic process and poetry the message it carries. As we embrace 2025, this #9 year symbolizes transformation, sustainability and innovation resonating with Brigid.

The *Micro Grow* series is an abstract play on light and diatom engineering. *Rising* is the inaugural *Shield* of this sculpture series and a bow to a new way forward with this new year. Diatoms have done it for millions of years and yet are just one-cell organisms living in fresh and salt water and even the moisture in the soil. Their exquisite silica *shells* house the smallest flora on Earth, phytoplankton. Diatoms fuse together in beautiful networks or *colonies* of mutual sustainability. An inspiring timeless model for us. Even clay offers us a brilliant guide for its elasticity and memory lies within the microscopic hexagonal particulates giving it strength and plasticity. We have much to learn from clay's adaptive, regenerative ability and transformative design empowering its stellar strength.

La Mer Micro Sculpture:



13. - 16. *Foraminifera Stars, La Mer Micro Sculpture*: ceramic, steel post, @approx 1.5" x 1.5" x 1.5" - 2" x 2" x 2"

Foraminifera Baculogypsina Sphaerulata: Origin from Latin, hole bearer

The petite stars the size of a grain of sand are the remains of 500 million year old protozoa that form the beaches on the shores of Okinawa: Hoshizuna No Hama/Star Shaped Sand Beach.

Diatoms have been known to inhabit the foraminifera architecture. Protists are somewhat of a unique category, not quite animal, plant or fungi. This diverse group, named by Ernst Haeckel, is a significant interdependent contributor to life on our planet. This little starlet is found in the subtropic and tropic zones of the Pacific Ocean.

Wildlife Shields: Fungi Series

Fungi is the high-speed internet of the sub terrain soil and master collaborator. It has been working its magic for about 1,300 million years. Its fine mycelium network is an essential communication system connecting and supporting flora in its natural mutualism.

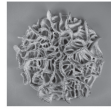
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Wildlife & La Mer



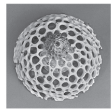
17. *Labyrinth, Fungi Shield*: ceramic, 11.5" x 11.5" x 3"

Inspired by the yellow morel, the cap is a maze of random ridges and cavernous pits where its micro spores nestle. Morels are completely hollow and a culinary treasure. Like many fungi they are a super source for health and nutrition. They are loaded with antioxidants, balance blood sugar, repair liver-damage, low in fat, are high in Vitamin D, protein and fiber.



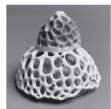
18. *Lamella Love, Fungi Shield*: ceramic, 6.25" x 6.5" x 3.25"

Inspired by fungi lamella/gill engineering of the Chocolate Milky, *Lactarius lignyotus*. This resourceful fungi exudes latex droplets as a defense mechanism to ward off predators. Sometimes a girl has to create a shield to protect what she loves. This mycorrhizal fungi is an example of one of the earliest alliances on planet Earth. 90% of all plants rely on mycorrhizal relationships, a partnership of fungi with different plant species. They collaborate yet remain recognizable as themselves. The plants can have many different fungi/mycelium (fiber optic-like roots) connectors. 500 million years ago it was mycorrhizal fungi that enabled algae to transplant from sea to land supporting our first terrestrial plants. It's clearly time that we got the memo on *mutualism*, the indelible interdependence between diverse species. We are in this together.



19. *Champagne & Crinoline, Fungi Shield*: ceramic, 6" x 6" x 3.25"

Fungi *Phallus luteus* inspiring *Champagne & Crinoline* is found in Asia, Australia and Central America. Some its names include *crinoline*, *bridal veil* and *veiled lady* but its best known as stinkhorn for good reason. She is a sassy play on the aptly named genus *Phallus*, a foul-smelling fungi performance artist and alchemist. This glamorously styled mushroom blossoms off of decay and rotting organic matter. After the phallus erupts, its crinoline skirt unfolds and the cap oozes with a spore-laden slime that smells like rotting flesh to allure insects. The insects disperse the tiny spores in their together. From waste we create wonder as we unfold like the champagne lace crinoline bejeweled in inclusivity, thriving, sustainability and solutions.



20. *Veiled Lady, Petit Fungi Shield*: ceramic, 3" x 3.75" x 3.5"

She is a sassy play on this clever fungi species, a foul-smelling performance artist and alchemist. This glamorously styled mushroom blossoms off of decay and rotting organic matter. After the stem emerges, her crinoline skirt unfolds and the cap oozes with a spore-laden slime that smells like rotting flesh to allure a loving insect. The insects disperse the micro spores in their excrement and on their ooze-slippered feet in this act of *mutualism*. This dramatic ritual lasts but a relatively brief moment. Fungi *Phallus luteus* inspiring *Veiled Lady* is found in Asia, Australia and Central America. Some its names include *crinoline*, *bridal veil* and *veiled lady* but its best known as *stinkhorn* for good reason.



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BOX SPRING GALLERY is the collaborative effort of Gaby Heit and Robert A. Stewart, Esq.

Crane Arts, 1400 N. American St., #100C, Philadelphia, PA 19122

*Open Hours: Thursday–Saturday, 1–6pm, or by appointment by emailing contact@boxspringgallery.com.
boxspringgallery.com / [@boxspringgallery](https://www.instagram.com/boxspringgallery) / contact@boxspringgallery.com*

Celebrating where art and design meet, Box Spring Gallery provides carefully curated exhibitions with opportunities to purchase contemporary art and design by a variety of creatives.

Box Spring Gallery aims to be an outlet for new audience visibility, educational exchange and cross-disciplinary discourse. Our main goals are to provide creatives with opportunities, guidance, and to educate the consumer public. We strive to show a wide range of creative discipline, innovation and purpose, and look to collaborate with like-minded partners.

GABY HEIT gabyheit.com / [@gabyheit](https://www.instagram.com/gabyheit) / gaby@gabyheit.com

Gaby Heit is an art/photo director, graphic designer and creative consultant with a master's degree from Pratt Institute. A four-time gallery director and independent curator, Gaby has represented artists from Philadelphia and New York, and has produced numerous exhibitions that celebrate connections between fine art, science, and design. Some include shows for Le Méridien Hotel, Main Line Health, AIGA, DesignPhiladelphia, Philly Tech Week, the University City Science Center, and more.

With many years of experience in print publishing, she has led the creative direction, rebranding and design for national magazines covering fashion, travel, women's services, business, and fine art. Gaby regularly consults with all kinds of creatives on presentation, organization and self-promotion, and her latest project is to open Box Spring Gallery in Philadelphia in June 2024.

ROBERT A. STEWART, Esq.

Robert is a long-time resident of Philadelphia and the husband of artist, Michele M. Tremblay, who passed away in 2022. As a college student he had the good fortune to attend art education classes at the Barnes Foundation in Merion taught by Violette De Mazia and Barton Church. Robert's first art purchase, made in 1973, was an oil painting by Edwin Brent and later he and his wife Michele acquired works by Roger Anliker, Charles Schmidt, Marie Bender, George Sorrels, Carol Oldenburg, Dan Wittels and Roberta Daar. His late wife's work can be viewed online at artofmichele.com, as well as a large mural opposite the entrance to Jefferson Hospital on 9th Street in Philadelphia, which Michele created with New York artist Polly Apfelbaum.