

BEING PLAYED

michael drummond



michael drummond

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PLAYED



INTRODUCTION

// *Michael Drummond: Being Played* marks the second time the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF) has presented a chess-themed solo exhibition of a regional artist. With a mission to celebrate the history of the game of chess, we strive to make everyone feel welcome here, whether you are a grandmaster, or you have never picked up a chess piece. Since opening in September 2011, we have presented an array of exhibitions that showcase the great players and contributors to the game as well as examining chess as it relates to popular culture, journalism, history, world cultures, science, and fashion.

// In March 2017, the WCHOF opened the exhibition *The Imagery of Chess: Saint Louis Artists*. This was directly inspired by the groundbreaking 1944 exhibition *The Imagery of Chess* at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York City. Organized by Marcel Duchamp, Julien Levy, and Max Ernst, the original show included the work of over 30 painters, photographers, sculptors, critics, and composers among others and sought to challenge the general conventions of the ancient game. The highly-publicized exhibition was well received by the chess, art, and general communities, and the project went on to inspire artists of the last 70+ years to reinterpret the game in an artistic way and later became the basis of the artistic programming at the WCHOF.

// Our contemporary exhibition featured 20 leading local artists, writers, designers, musicians, and composers and their newly-commissioned artwork and performances inspired by the game of chess. This new exhibition was so inspiring because it celebrated the impact of chess culture in Saint Louis and promoted local artistic talent. Among them was Michael Drummond, who created a dynamic pair of connected black and white knit dresses—*Queens*—which is on view in the exhibition *A Beautiful Game* currently in our second floor gallery. I knew immediately that the WCHOF needed to create more local artistic programming and exhibitions.





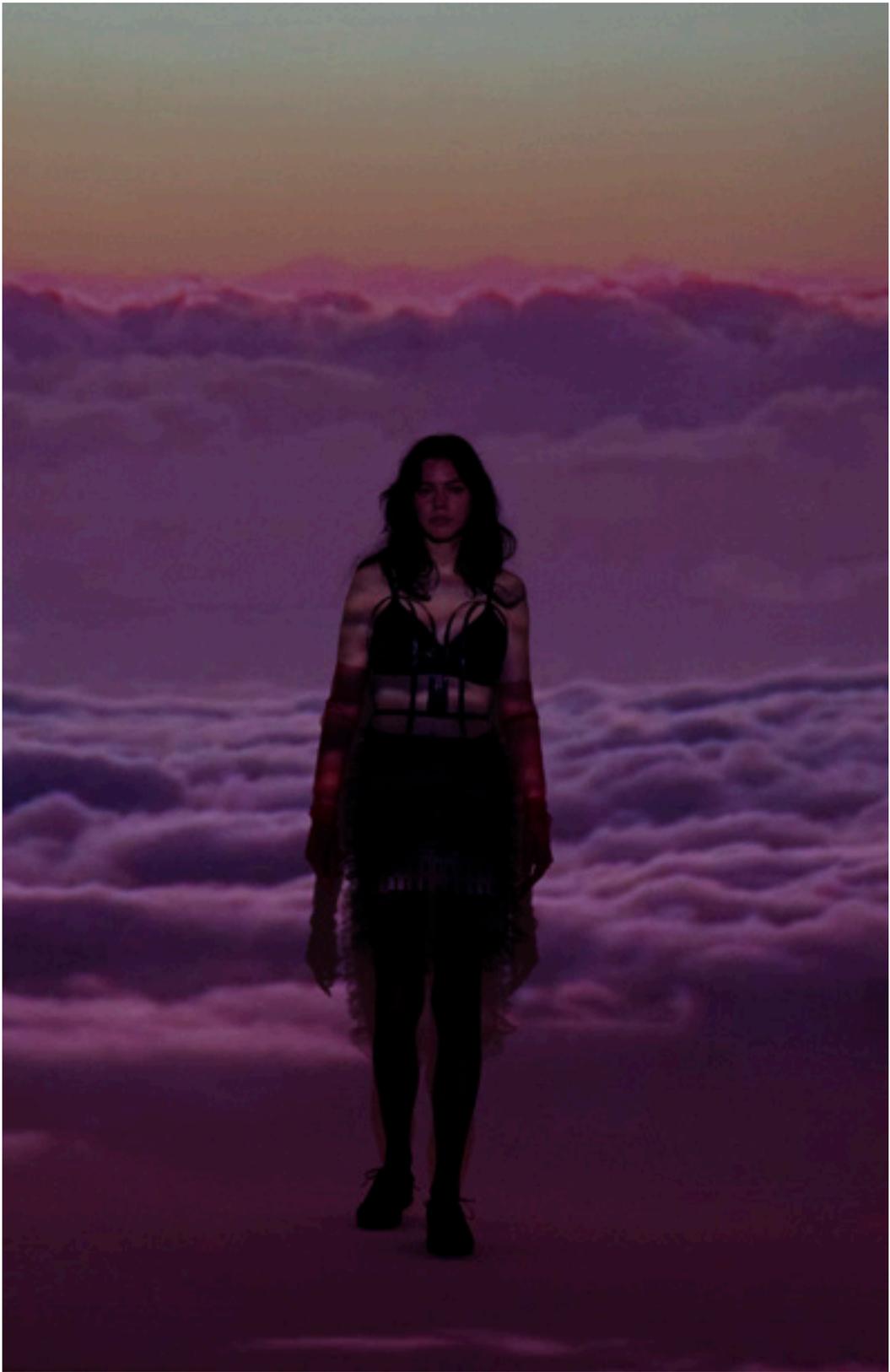
// Peter Manion was the first artist to participate in this new wave of commissioned regional artist exhibitions with his show *Universal Turf* (October 5, 2018-April 24, 2019). Manion's innovative exhibition created an immersive environment where the viewer engaged with a series of drawings, plaster, and felt sculptures, and installations where one could get lost in endless interpretations of the universe, of time, of space, and of the mind of a chess player. The show was brilliant and so unbelievably well received that I could not wait to invite the next artist to exhibit at the WCHOF, and I wanted that person to be Michael Drummond!

// I contacted Michael a year ago, and he seemed slightly nervous but agreed immediately. Our entire staff became so enamoured with him. His dedication and beautiful spirit have been an inspiration to all of us, and we are so fortunate to have him as an artist at our institution. I first was "introduced" to Michael when he was a contestant on the Season 8 of *Project Runway* and was fortunate enough to be personally introduced to him casually from time to time. He exhibited white wood and leather platform shoes in the 2013 WCHOF exhibition *A Queen Within: Adorned Archetypes, Fashion & Chess* alongside the likes of Alexander McQueen, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Gucci. When curating *The Imagery of Chess: Saint Louis Artists*, I selected Michael to represent the intersection of chess and fashion. From some wonderful conversations we had as he created his piece for that exhibition, I knew how thoughtful and innovative he would be in developing a solo show for us.

// *Being Played* is an exhibition that could be loved by anyone...just as I try to make chess loved by everyone. Lovers of fashion, chess, film, and the environment will enjoy this exhibition. Drummond has somehow managed to successfully thematically marry the issues surrounding climate change and the stresses the fashion industry places on the environment with noted chess fan Stanley Kubrick's 1968 sci-fi film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

// Though he has dedicated his life to celebrating and creating fashion, Drummond seeks to educate the viewer about the waste and pollution caused by the fashion industry. To represent the challenges climate change poses to humanity, he was driven to find a famous game depicting an underdog playing against a superpower. He was led to Dr. Frank Poole playing against the supercomputer HAL 9000 in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Though Poole ultimately resigned, HAL 9000 was programmed to win 50% of the time to encourage good morale.





// The majority of the pieces in the exhibition are based upon moves in the famous game and are named with algebraic notation of each move. Drummond's hope is that, "If you are a chess fan, you can follow along as the game is being played in the exhibition, but if you just enjoy art, then you can enjoy the art." As Michael likes to define his work as "practical and dramatic," I have seen the show evolve to become something encompassing both "zen and chaos." We hope you enjoy this installation, whether as a chess player appreciating the beautiful narrative blending fashion and chess, or as a fashion aficionado who may ultimately become inspired to study the game and pick up a piece.

// Special thanks to Michael for his unbelievably creative exhibition. And thank you to Sarah Stallmann for her thoughtful and beautifully written essay about Michael and his work. Additional thanks to the photography crew: Attilio d'Agostino, Sarah Carmody, and Austin and Crystal Fuller, as well as the models, all of the staff at the World Chess Hall of Fame, and Dr. Jeanne and Rex Siquefield who all made this exhibition a huge success. Enjoy!

–Shannon Bailey, Chief Curator

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// With his head down and the sound of a harpsichord rhythmically chiming in the background, Michael Drummond slides from one part of his at-home studio to another, masterfully and meticulously bending, shaping, and attaching bra underwires to a vinyl form. In the corner, a dress form boasts a series of black ruffles that are delicately attached to a shapely boned core; nearby, a set of vibrant red cast resin fossils are strewn across the table; and below, a black and white cat slinks by, eager to head into the backyard for his daily security watch.

// What could be described as a real-life tribute to the Anna Pan illustration *The Witch's Son* is just another day's work for the reclusive fashion artist. Despite being thrust in the limelight for a stint on the hit reality show *Project Runway*—and frequently after as a headliner for fashion weeks and shows across the country—Drummond actually prefers the solitude of creating his work at home to the sounds of M.I.A., George Michael, or various classic and industrial goth instrumentals in the late 1800s farmhouse he's rehabbing deep in South City Saint Louis.

Anna Pan, ***The Witch's Son***. Courtesy of Anna Pan.





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// The home is a testament to Drummond's taste and visual aesthetic. Its freshly-painted black exterior (which is a stark, yet equally surprising change from the previous cotton candy pink) and large, white-trimmed porch stands out amongst its surroundings like a dark and stoic landmark. Inside, painted white from floor ceiling, you are surrounded by sleek and minimal finishings, a selection of collected art, plants galore, workbenches, fabrics, and a cat. Progress.

// Drummond approaches the rehab of his home in the same way he approaches his work. It starts with an idea, and morphs and evolves as needs change and as inspiration strikes. What appears to be a dress is actually a politically-charged tribute to feminism. A living room is now a fully-functioning workshop. A shoe, now a table centerpiece. Everything is considered, placed, questioned, tested, questioned again, and tweaked to become something that elevates the space in which it resides. Most importantly, it's in flux and ever-evolving, open to the changes that the surrounding environment requires. This very concept inspires and leads the narrative of *Being Played*. *Being Played* not only explores what's directly linked to the evolution of the world around us, but the evolution of Drummond as an artist, which plays an important role in the narrative he creates.





// The Queen's Gambit

// From his formative years as an experimental artist, Drummond took to fashion first and foremost as a way to express his own personal style. What began as a hobby of finding, foraging, and refitting items to craft new pieces for himself, became a passion and affinity for knitwear—a focus that became the center point of his work that followed. This niche opened doors in the fashion world locally and nationally and earned Drummond a steady fan base and loyal clientele—most of whom became close friends with him over the years due to his down-to-earth approach and personalized process.

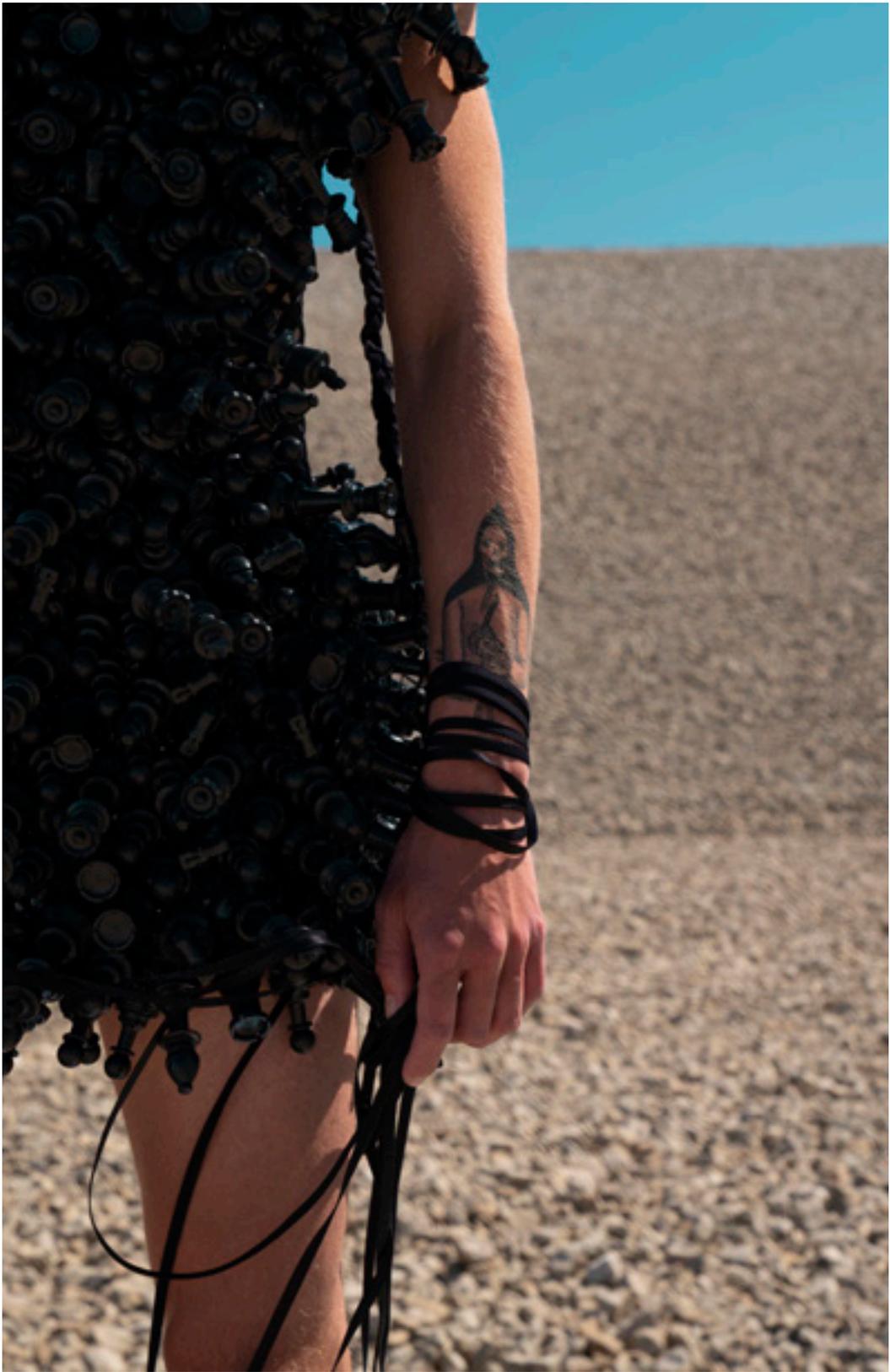
// But the excessive nature of worldwide consumerism in fashion has always caused Drummond pause. As one of the most resource-intensive industries in the world, adding more fuel to the fire—literally and figuratively—is, quite simply, not something he is willing to do. For him, fashion is more than the final product, more than moving units, more than more. It's about the creative process, the materials used, the energy it creates in a room, and the feeling it evokes for the creator, the viewer, and the wearer. It's practical yet dramatic. Obvious yet ambiguous. Beautiful yet dark.

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// Fashion is also often placed in a box that separates it from art. Because of fast fashion, trends, and pop culture, it's often perceived as elite, shallow, and wasteful. The craft has been overshadowed by the drive for money and speed, and the result is a one-time-wear piece that all too often ends up in a landfill. And the cycle continues.

// But take a sharp left turn back to the little black farmhouse deep in South City Saint Louis, and you'll see Drummond doing his part to inspire the world around him to experience fashion and art in a new, evolved way. If you look beyond his signature shapely knits, pleated skirts with leather accents, and form-fitting wrinkle-look dresses in custom prints, you will discover a new and evolved body of work that explores materials beyond the traditional garment including resin cast sculptures, laser-cut leathers, steel, wood, digital printing, and plastics.





// Positional Play

// *Being Played* balances and explores three overarching themes that are interpreted through this evolved body of work—chess in strategy and form, the climate change crisis, and the concept of “predatory delay.”

// In a chess game, players use strategy and tactics to outmaneuver their opponent and overtake their king. While each player begins with the same circumstances, the same number of pieces, and the same odds, ultimately, one player’s strategy will advance him into a position to checkmate and win the game. There is both a sense of challenge against our opponent and within ourselves to make moves and sacrifices that will ultimately lead to victory.

// In Drummond’s game, “predatory delay”—a term coined by futurist Alex Steffen to describe “the blocking or slowing of needed change, in order to make money off unsustainable, unjust systems in the meantime” is placed as one opponent, and us—the consumers and humans of Earth—are the other.

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// In this case, the “predatory” opponent is multi-faceted. It’s climate change, it’s time and evolution, it’s the fashion industry, and it’s corporations whose profit-driven processes have caused reprehensible damage to the planet in which we live. Sometimes, this opponent is also us, who, by the systems put in place by those in power, become the “predator” of the world around us in one way or another.

// For Drummond, it’s the game between Dr. Frank Poole and HAL 9000 that inspires the trajectory of his works for *Being Played*. In the game (which occurred in Stanley Kubrick’s iconic classic film *2001: A Space Odyssey*), Dr. Frank Poole plays a game of chess against HAL 9000, a supercomputer that is programmed to win 50% of the time to encourage good morale. While HAL ultimately wins the game, Drummond was driven to dive deeper into the overarching storyline: A player (in this case, our “predator”) who has all of the strategy and resources of an actual supercomputer, vs. Man, or us as a people who are trying to navigate and strategize our moves for the future, despite being in the midst of a game with an unfairly advantaged opponent.



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// Endgame

// Using chess as a guide, each piece in *Being Played* represents a piece on the board and is aptly titled using algebraic notation to represent its move. Chess fans and players can explore the exhibition as an active game, while those who are less familiar with chess can connect to the overall themes from a consumer's point of view.

// As you navigate the space, works that are ripe for your individual translation spring into action like a series of hieroglyphs. What's left behind from a former society has turned into the gems of a new one. A tale is woven of the options we have as far as creating sustainability moving forward. What will the plastics we leave behind become? The trash left behind by corporations? These fossils of items left behind take new forms, create questions, and inspire conversations.





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// With *Being Played*, Drummond takes something that, for most of us, is hard to discuss or comprehend, and creates a narrative that opens the discussion of “what’s next?” for the generations to come. We know that the earth is resilient. But are we? How will the climate crisis affect the way we think and interact with the world around us? With our clothing, with our consumerist tendencies, with our relationship to fashion, with our strategies for making the best moves? How will we come out on top when we are playing against an opponent who seems to enjoy prolonging our defeat?

// Using a variety of media and mostly found and sourced materials, Drummond creates a story about evolution that in and of itself is still evolving. While viewers won’t walk away with a resolution, they will walk away with something to consider. Perhaps they will be inspired to adopt more sustainable habits for themselves, or buy less stuff, or learn how to play chess. Maybe they will leave feeling nostalgic, hopeful, or captivated. Regardless, it’s the emotional connection to the work and the personal feelings that you walk away with that intrigue Drummond the most and inspire his quest to create.

// Realistically, the little black farmhouse, the works by Drummond and other artists of our time, our cities, our homes, our processes—are always evolving. While we can create and do and progress what we can while we are here, ultimately, we merely have the collective authority to not “mess things up” for those that are here after us. And while it seems like a losing game for those that are more collectively conscious, it’s grounding and freeing perhaps to remember that despite change, despite destruction, despite obliteration, and despite the “predator”—there will always be beauty. And the game isn’t over.

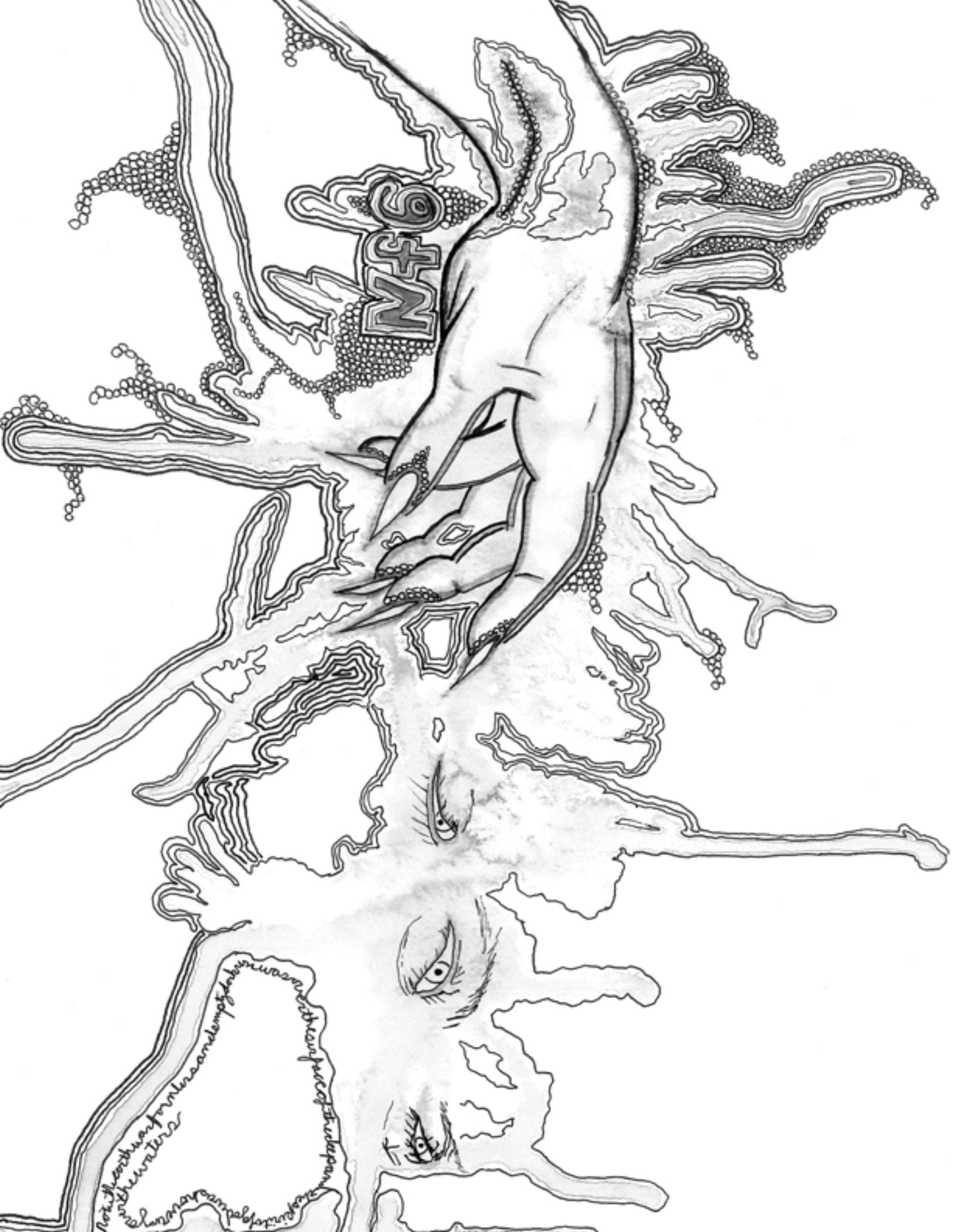
—Sarah Stallmann











Not the author of the water
in the water
Lanana Campbell
The author of the water
in the water
Lanana Campbell













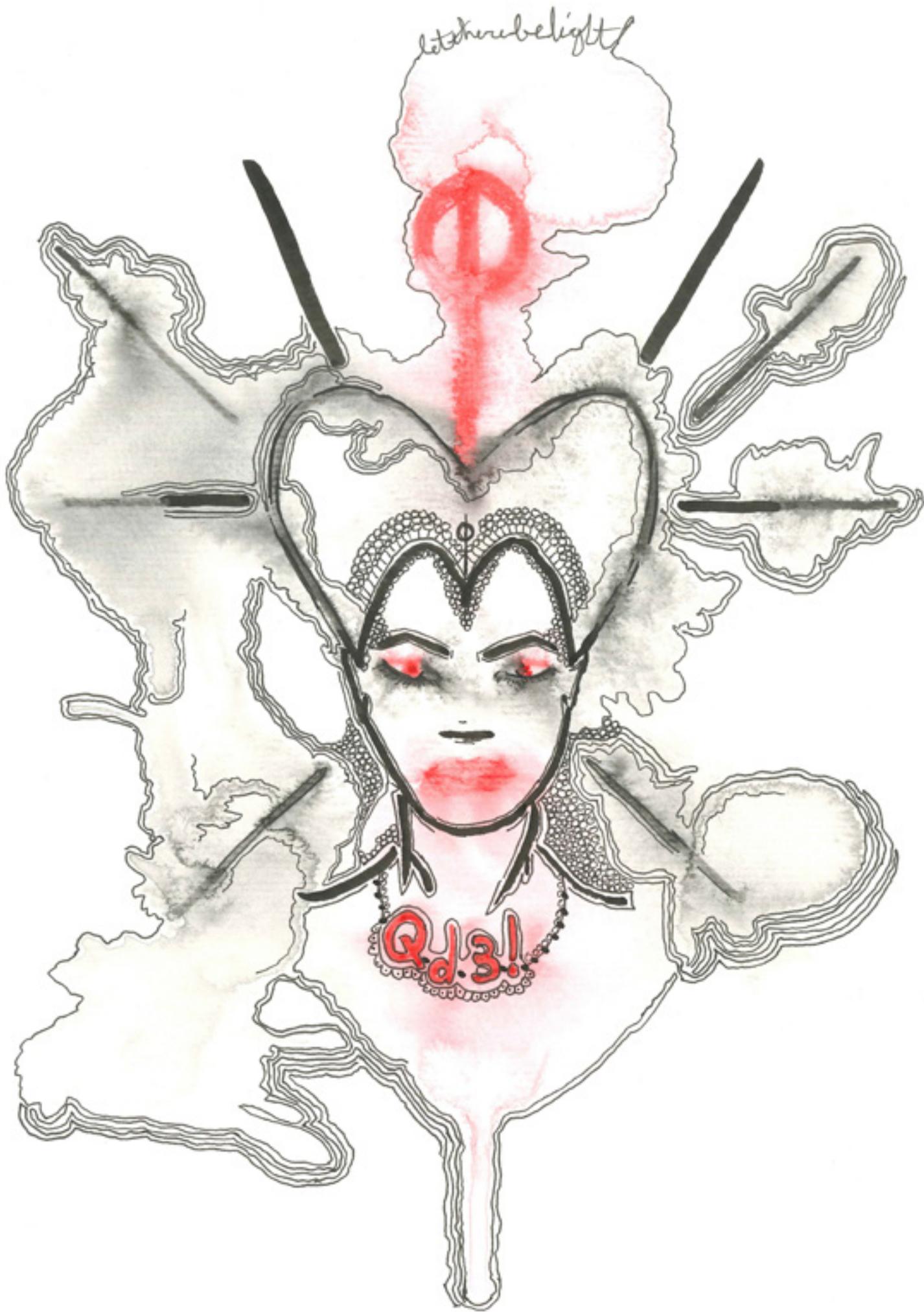








let's her belicht



B C

+ 5

4

3 +

2 + 2 +

1 + 1 +

G H +

5 +

// It's a tricky predicament to simultaneously give yourself over to the glamor and fantasy of fashion and yet be repelled by the industry's excess and its hold on the public psyche. Often a client will express a "need" for something, a one-night-only look or simply shop out of boredom. How much of this zeitgeist is the work of a sort of shadow merchant, developed by the few in power to make us dissatisfied with life as it is? A ruse to make us desire something new, something chic, something slimming, something distracting, something "more." Walk into any vintage shop or thrift store and you see monstrous loads of unwanted goods. Some destined for your home, some for the rag mill, but mostly for the incinerator. While it is difficult to trace fashion's effects on the health of our environment there is little doubt it is a resource-intensive industry. Toxic textile industry runoff poison our rivers and oceans. Low-wage workers toil in pesticide-soaked cotton fields. Fossil fuel-based fast fashions designed to last no more than a season could take 450 years to finally decompose. A simple cardigan sweater can travel several continents before landing in a local department store, on sale.

// In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its report, which painted scenes of wildfires, famine, bleached coral reefs emerging as soon as 20 years from today—well within most of the current population's lifetime. Today is September 2, 2019, and the Brazilian rainforest has been on fire for four weeks. Many of the people of that region believe President Jair Bolsonaro is to blame for some of the blaze by turning a blind eye to loggers, ranchers, and miners as they set flame to biodiverse lands so that a profit may be made. Bolsonaro claims this is fake news.





// I still hold foolish optimism that maybe the climate crisis could be the great unifier. How could we all continue to separate from one another if our shared home is collapsing around us? Much of the art in *Being Played* represents this hope for a connected fearless future. I felt the best way to explore these complex issues was to create a wild science fiction romp—one heel in reality and the other in complete whimsy.

// While searching for a game that features a definite underdog playing against a superpower, I remembered Frank Poole vs. HAL 9000, which was briefly featured in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It proved perfect for a point of departure and became the basis for my work in *Being Played*. First, it provided a tale for time and space by using algebraic notation. The first moves on the board brought to mind Adam and Eve vs. The Big Bang—one a narrative of humanity, religion, dogma and the other a beginning, rooted in science, God perhaps, something bigger than us, a mystery. As the game is played, a tension develops—our underdog, representing humanity, is conflicted within itself and as a grouping. Would sacrificing one piece over the other free up space for movement and ultimately victory? HAL 9000 becomes the machine of time and Dr. Frank Poole the Yin and Yang.

// At times creating this work felt like a theatrical play, but the actors had all gone home. The curtain fell, and I had hung up their costumes and put away their props. Here we have the knight's armor dusty and damaged, oh look, the queen forgot her shoes again.



// The color red is used to signify HAL 9000, a state of emergency, and harken back to one of the earliest colors to appear on the chessboard. To represent humankind I felt multiple colors should be present, to speak to an inner conflict and diversity. Gold, black, silver, and white are used throughout the center of the gallery. Serendipitously at the time of *Being Played's* creation, several sources donated deadstock fashion trims and notions. Pounds and pounds of bra elastic, underwire, buckles, leather, and fabrics, all destined for the landfill or incinerator. I was able to employ these items and give them a second chance. On my bedside table there is a collection of fossils and meteorites. In my fantasies, a world was created where these items became fossilized once again—but this time in our discarded artifacts.

// Meteorites are forged into jewelry, woolly mammoth's fur is caught in a resin locket. Bold corseted sculptural silhouettes recall the beauty of the Staunton chess set. A garment covered in black pieces tells of overpopulation and possibly war. A pair of women's heels becomes a feminist call to arms. Algebraic notation is used to allow the viewer to follow the game being played in real time. As the match approaches an end, we see our player in red speaking in varied negotiating tactics. Mirroring and labeling are used to grab the attention of the other player. "It looks like you are finished playing games" is etched onto a red reflective surface, calling to mind that last wardrobe check in the mirror before leaving the house or convincing a terrorist to evacuate a building.





// *Being Played* considers the systems of power at work in the climate crisis, and the ever-changing flow of our universe. Our ability to be both the dark and the light at once, balanced and unbalanced. All placed on an imaginary chessboard, with multiple alliances and opponents. Some seen, unseen, and perhaps a few a distant memory. A totem representing a time before us that also suffered a climate catastrophe.

// The pieces beg the question: our planet always heals itself, but are we accelerating an inevitable climate event? Will greed and fear lead the charge for our future (demise?), or could beauty, honesty, justice, and action elevate us to the next rung of human evolution?

—*Michael Drummond*







MICHAEL DRUMMOND

// Michael Drummond is a veteran of *Project Runway* season eight whose client list includes actress Tika Sumpter, New York Fashion Week founder Fern Malis, and supermodel television host Heidi Klum. Largely self-taught, the multi-talented artist works as a fashion design consultant, a commercial stylist for print and film, and produces a line of clothing under his given name Michael Drummond. In this work, he seeks to marry practicality and dramatic design. Drummond's use of large scale prints, delicate knits, effortless comfortable shapes, deconstruction, and an often tenebrous palette have become his signature. Rather than creating new collections twice a year, his approach is to build upon a narrative which sometimes takes years to develop. This process allows Drummond to craft a more thoughtful and ethical advancement in clothing design, thereby creating a more useful and sustainable garment that functions in the wardrobe timelessly.

Drummond's work has been reviewed and showcased in publications including *The New York Post*, *Huffington Post*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *The Tennessean*, *Alive Magazine*, *St. Louis Magazine*, *Hipster Magazine*, and *The Vital Voice*.

// Drummond's work has been featured in several exhibitions, including: *A Queen Within: Adorned Archetypes*, Museum of Pop Culture, Seattle (2019) and New Orleans Museum of Art (2018); *The Imagery of Chess: Saint Louis Artists*, World Chess Hall of Fame (2017); *Little Black Dress: From Mourning to Night*, Missouri History Museum, Saint Louis (2016); *Spread*, Reese Gallery, Saint Louis (2016); *Pants!*, Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (2016); *A Queen Within: Adorned Archetypes, Fashion & Chess*, World Chess Hall of Fame (2013-14); *Unraveled: Crossing the Line Between Fashion and Art*, Sheldon Art Galleries, Saint Louis (2007); and *Layered, Stitched, Assembled*, Art St. Louis (2006). In 2013, he curated *Dressed*, an exhibition at the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis. Drummond has also worked as a costume designer for many operas, dances, and theatrical productions in the United States and Europe. The most recent include: *Medea*, The Junction, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (2017); *Kinetic Field Work*, Washington University Dance Theatre, Saint Louis (2011); and *Three Penny Opera* (co-designed with Bonnie Kruger), Washington University Dance Theatre (2011). He has shown his work in countless fashion shows, including Mercedes Benz Fashion Week, New York (2010). In 2017, his work was shown at Omaha Fashion Week; Kansas City Fashion Week, Kansas City, MO; Nashville Fashion Week; and The Factory Fashion Show, Saint Louis.

// Sarah Stallmann is an award-winning writer, digital producer, and creative consultant who specializes in strategizing, managing, and executing creative projects while providing a distinct point of view. From production and project management to crafting engaging content and working as the fashion editor of a leading Midwest publication, her wide breadth of experience brings a thoughtful and edgy approach to creative projects. She has interviewed top designers and assisted with events that have featured international fashion leaders –including Rebecca Minkoff, Fern Mallis, Iris Apfel, Yigal Azrouel, Timo Weiland, and more. Her work has also been featured nationally on *Vogue's* digital publication and in campaigns worldwide. She also serves on the board of the Saint Louis Fashion Fund, where she specializes in inclusive community engagement, event production, and curated styling events.

// Artistic director, photographer, and cinematographer, Attilio D'Agostino is best known for his captivating visual explorations. Across work that encompasses fashion, still life, people, and place, his motion and still imagery is characterized by a unique point of view that blends a conceptual frame with a highly impactful spiritual resonance. D'Agostino cofounded Novel Creative, a marketing agency and small press publishing house that specializes in brand strategy, identity, web design, digital marketing, photography, cinematography and specialty publications.

APPENDIX

// e4

Laser etched leather, shou sugi ban
cedar tree trunk, and waxed cotton cord
28

// Nf3

Deadstock underwire and vinyl
7, 15, 32-33, 38-39, 40-41

// Ba4

Polyester, deadstock elastic, and laser etched
3M reflective fabric
21, 46, 51

// Bb3 (1)

Deadstock yarns, elastic, lurex, and cotton
17

// Bb3 (2)

Deadstock silk and elastic with metal findings
17, 30

// c3

Corset boning and polyester sublimation print
12, 37, 42-43, 60

// O-0 Top

Cotton, deadstock, and bra closures
38, 46, 51, 56-57

// exd5

Silk organza, steel, copper, elastic,
aluminum, and rubber
5, 11, 25, 31, 39, 46, 51, 59

// Nxe5

Polyester sublimation print, deadstock elastic,
bra closures, and aluminum chain
18, 54

// Nf4

Marker and watercolor
35

// Qxa8

Plastic chess pieces, deadstock polyester
sequin fabric, elastic, and bra closures
7, 22, 37, 39, 61, 68

// Qd3!

Marker and watercolor
47

// Bd1

Deadstock bra elastic and metal findings
44-45, 59

// Bxg2

Plastic
27



// **Untitled Pullover**

Woven deadstock elastic
8, 52

// **Untitled Pullover 2**

Raffia and plastic
38

// **Untitled Halter**

Deadstock sequins on nylon and
deadstock elastic with plastic findings
15, 30, 52

// **Untitled Skirt**

Deadstock sequin and silk wrap skirt
with elastic waistband
8

// **Untitled Skirt 2**

Silk and polyester sublimation print
38

// **Untitled Knit Trousers**

Cotton and elastic
5, 11, 39, 52

// **Untitled (Ammonite)**

Marker and pattern paper
28, 49, 71

*All garments and artwork created in 2019 by
Michael Drummond, unless otherwise noted.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Michael Drummond: Being Played

October 10, 2019 - March 22, 2020

This gig has my name attached to the title, but *Being Played* would never have been possible or as much fun had it not been for these incredible folks. You all gave me more than I could ever have hoped, your expertise, beauty, books, walks, support, texts, avenues to explore, love, laughter, elbow grease, wine, coffee, and a cube! Thank you from the deepest regions of my soul, it has been my life's joy and honor!

—Michael Drummond

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Locations: Bad Dog Studios, Tammi Coleman and the Park Hills Chamber of Commerce, Lee Mechanical Contractors, and the St. Louis Fashion Fund

Curated by Shannon Bailey, Chief Curator,
World Chess Hall of Fame.

MIND. ART. EXPERIENCE.

Related programming and a pdf of this brochure are available for download at worldchesshof.org. Donations support our exhibitions, education, outreach, and events.

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