



MILLER & SHELLABARGER
Photography

At (northern) Western Exhibitions
February 11 to May 6, 2023

Married artist collaborators Miller & Shellabarger use self-portraiture, laborious material processes, and considered craftsmanship to meditate on love and death, across a myriad of media. The possibilities of connection, partnership, interdependency, and the eventualities of loss penetrate the objects and enactments of their work. While known primarily for how they adopt traditional American craft techniques, including silhouette cutting, sewing, crocheting and bookmaking, *Miller & Shellabarger: Photography* focuses on the role photography plays in their ongoing projects dating back to 2005 and extending to the present. This exhibition is presented at Chicago contemporary art gallery Western Exhibitions' second location, **(northern) Western Exhibitions**, in Skokie, Illinois and opens with a free public reception on Saturday, February 11 from 5 to 8pm and runs through May 6, 2023.

Miller & Shellabarger have had solo shows at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Chicago Cultural Center, and the Hyde Park Art Center, all in Chicago and at INOVA in Milwaukee, the University Galleries at Illinois State University, The Carnegie in Greater Cincinnati, and Gallery Diet in Miami. They have performed and have been exhibited in group shows across North America, including the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis; the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati; the Time-Based Arts Festival in Portland, Oregon; Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York; Sun Valley Center for the Arts in Idaho; Institute of Contemporary Art in Maine; and Sala Diaz in San Antonio. Miller & Shellabarger are a 2008 recipient of an Artadia Chicago award and a 2007 recipient of a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation award. Their work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, the DePaul Art Museum, the Newark Public Library, Eskenazi Museum of Art at Indiana University and the National Gallery of Canada. Their work has been written about in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Art & Auction*, *Frieze*, *Artnet*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Flash Art*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger also maintain separate artistic practices. They live and work in Chicago.

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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Untitled (Pink Tube)



Untitled (Pink Tube) is an ongoing non-theatrical performance by Chicago-based artists and married couple Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger that began in 2003. It is a lifelong artwork, performed together publicly, in which they simultaneously crochet at opposite ends of a long tube of pink yarn. The couple's ongoing co-crochet of soft pink yarn maps their marriage, and the ever-growing tube is a metaphorically loaded object that both unites and separates them. As the tube grows, it keeps them tethered together as it pushes them apart.

Stages of the piece are visible in shifts in the shades of pink yarn available at any given time. Connective but also gradually distancing, the couple will find themselves in discussions with audiences while they work. The artists have agreed that when one of them is no longer able to perform, the other will unravel the tube. The unraveling will also be performed in public.

This is the first photograph in the series from 2005. It was taken at The Suburban, an artist-run gallery helmed by Michelle Grabner and Brad Killam, in Oak Park, Illinois.



Untitled (Crochet, The Suburban, Oak Park, IL), 2005
Archival inkjet print
11 1/2h x 18 1/2w in.
Edition 5 of 5
\$3000



This photograph is from a performance enacted during the VOLTA art fair in Basel, Switzerland, in 2008.

Untitled (Crochet, Basel, Switzerland), 2008
Archival inkjet print in artist-made custom frame
50h x 30w in.
Edition 2 of 4
\$8000



This, the third photograph in the Crochet series, was taken in 2013 during a performance on the steps of Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, during an exhibition marking 10 years since the piece was started.

Untitled (Crochet, MCA Chicago), 2014
Archival inkjet print, 19 3/4h x 26w in. Edition 3 of 3
\$5000



This, the fourth photograph in the Crochet series, documents a performance on and around the tree on which they were married in Palmer Square Park in Chicago.

Untitled (Crochet, Palmer Square, Chicago), 2015
Archival inkjet print in artist-made custom frame
39 1/2h x 25w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$7000



This, the fifth in the Crochet series, was taken at The Carnegie, an art centre in Covington, Kentucky (greater Cincinnati) at the end of the Cincinnati Art Book fair, of which Miller & Shellabarger were featured artists.

Untitled (Crochet, The Carnegie, Covington, KY), 2020
Archival inkjet print in artist-made custom frame
51h x 32w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$8000



installation view



Untitled (Graves)

For the performance *Untitled (Graves)* Miller & Shellabarger dug, in close proximity to one another, two holes, deep and large enough for each man to lie in. Upon completion of the holes, they then bored a small tunnel between them so their hands could clasp underground and out of view.

Untitled (Graves) explores connection through and beyond death. Says Miller, of lying in the holes: “You’re really thinking about death in a very purposeful way that doesn’t necessarily occur in life all the time and what it means to anticipate the loss of your lover.”

Untitled 1 (Graves, Basel, Switzerland), 2008
Archival inkjet print in artist-made custom frame
26 1/2h x 20 1/2w in.
Edition 3 of 4
\$4500



Untitled 2 (Graves, Basel, Switzerland), 2008
Archival inkjet print in artist-made custom frame
17 1/2h x 23w in.
Edition 3 of 4
\$4000



Untitled (Graves, Oregon), 2010
Archival inkjet print in artist-made custom frame
33h x 44w in.
Edition 3 of 3
\$10,000



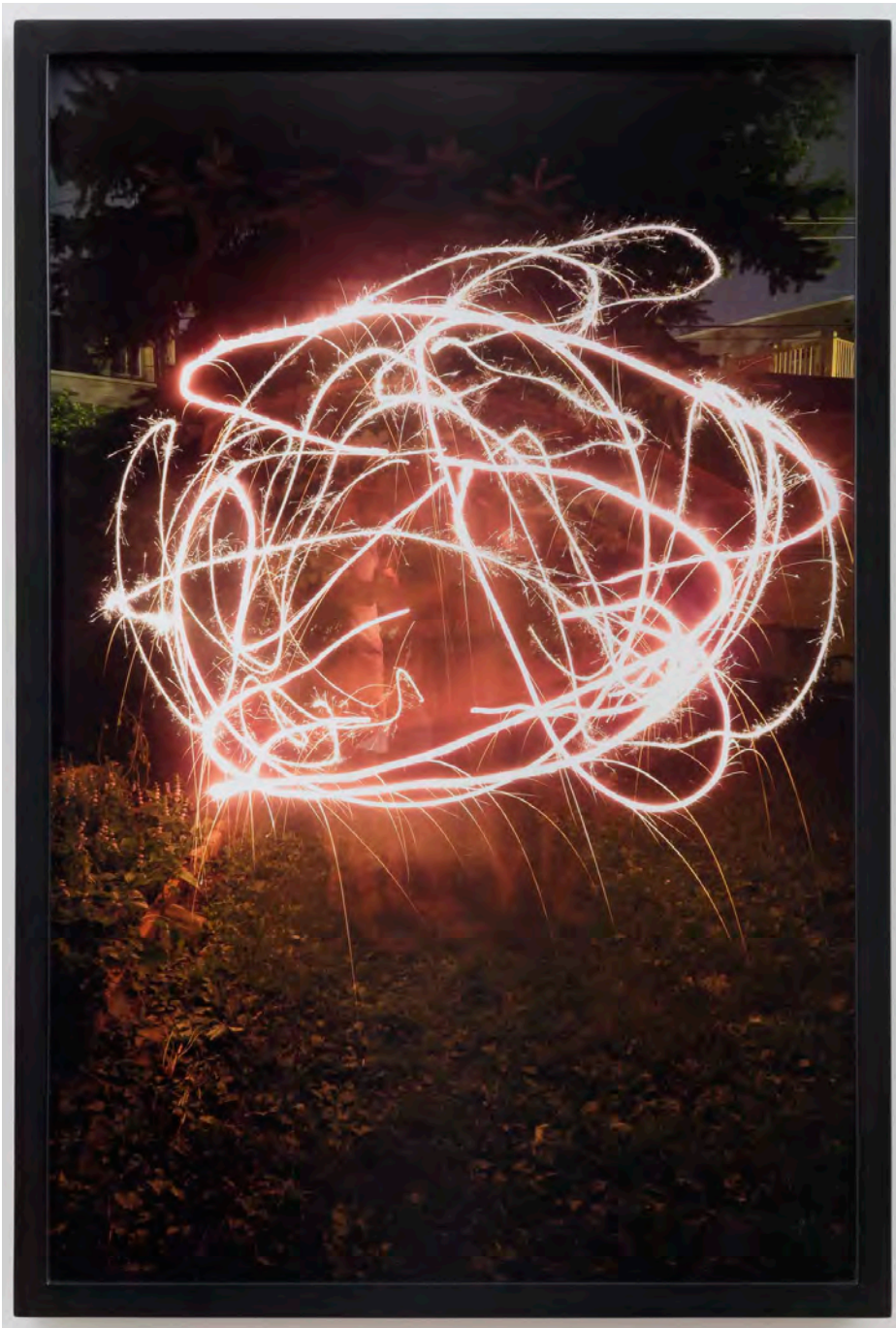
Spooky Distant Action

Miller & Shellabarger explore the physics phenomenon of spooky distant action—the quantum entanglement of two particles ensures their connection, even at great distance—in this series of action photos. To create the composition, images of each artist twirling in space with lit sparklers at dusk were overlaid atop one another, akin to a multiple exposure photograph. Mimicking spooky distant action, the artists' bodies whirled in tandem, creating a particle trace of their two mirrored selves.

Spooky Distant Action #1, 2015
Archival inkjet print
36h x 24w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$6000



Spooky Distant Action #3, 2015
Archival inkjet print
36h x 48w in.
Edition 2 of 3
\$9000



Spooky Distant Action #4, 2015
Archival inkjet print
36h x 24w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$6000



Spooky Distant Action #5, 2015
Archival inkjet print
36h x 24w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$6000



installation view



installation view

Seed Drawings



Miller & Shellabarger's sunflower seed drawings blend performance, the body and sexual energy. To make these outdoor, in situ drawings, one partner laid down and the other traced his form with the energy-packed kernels, leaving behind a vacant contour line shape reminiscent of a crime scene. The seed drawings are as impermanent as the corporal bodies they outline. Often executed outside, the seeds were simply left to let nature and the forces of entropy take their course. Periodically Miller & Shellabarger gather the sunflower seeds from existing drawings to make new ones.



Seeds (1), 2010
Archival inkjet print
24h x 30w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$5500

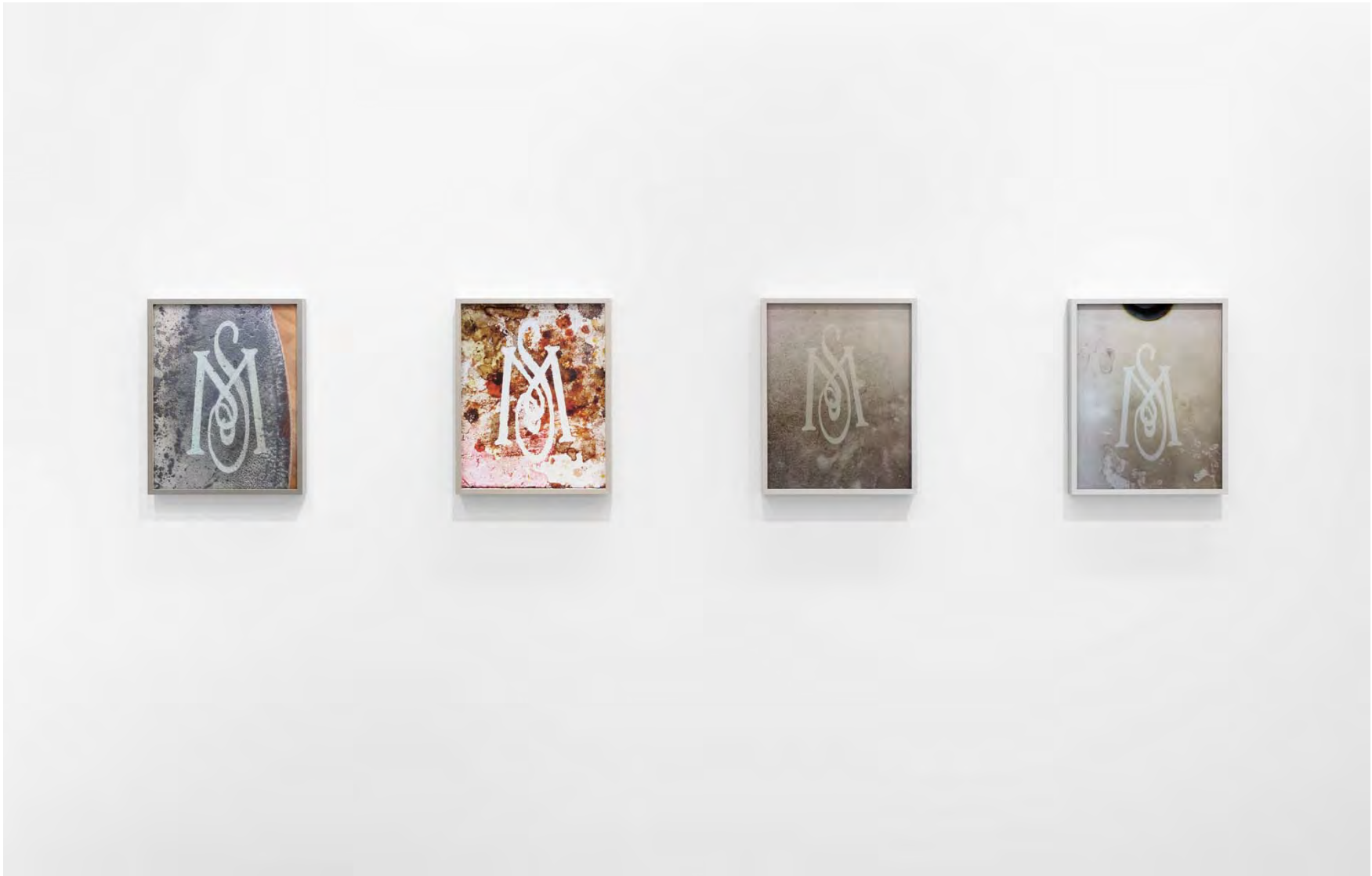


Seeds (2), 2010
Archival inkjet print
24h x 30w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$5500



Snow Seeds (2), 2010
Archival inkjet print
24h x 30w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$5500

Erasure



The *Erasure* series involves in situ magic-eraser drawings of the artists' intertwined initials, "S&M." Miller & Shellabarger made a stencil of this cypher and overlaid it atop resonant spaces in their shared home – their desk, the kitchen, the wall that abuts their bed – and erased through the stencil the accumulation of their daily life (dust, dirt, etc.), imprinting the monogram into their shared existence. This is an ongoing trope in their work, the turning of domestic actions onto themselves – in this case, cleaning – to intervene in their own physical traces.



Erasure (Desk), 2015
Archival inkjet print
14h x 11w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$2000



Erasure (Wall), 2015
Archival inkjet print
14h x 11w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$2000



Erasure (Stove), 2015
Archival inkjet print
14h x 11w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$2000



Erasure (Tub), 2015
Archival inkjet print
14h x 11w in.
Edition 1 of 3
\$2000

Untitled (Origami Cranes)



For the piece *Untitled (Origami Cranes)*, Miller & Shellabarger folded paper into origami cranes over the course of three Saturdays, 8 hours at a time, on a bed in the window of a Chicago futon store, as a part of the 44/46 Lakeview Festival in Chicago in 2006. As they sat together, participating in a shared activity, a barrier of cranes built a wall of separation between them.



Untitled (Origami Cranes 1), 2006
Archival inkjet print
13h x 18 1/2w in.
Edition 2 of 5
\$3500



Untitled (Origami Cranes 2), 2006
Archival inkjet print
13h x 18 1/2w in.
Edition 2 of 5
\$3500

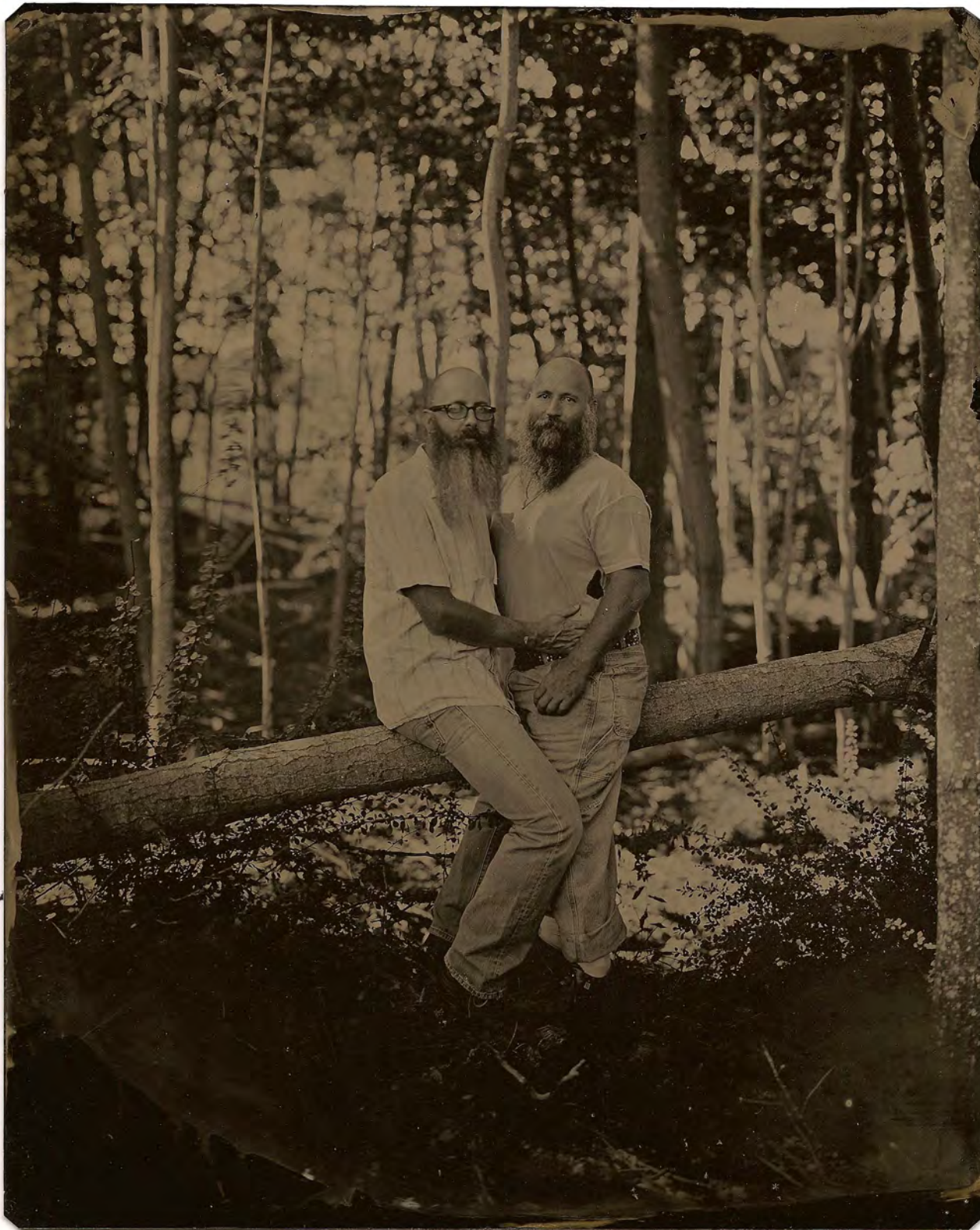


Untitled (Origami Cranes 3), 2006
Archival inkjet print
13h x 18 1/2w in.
Edition 1 of 5
\$3000

Tintypes



Miller & Shellabarger's tintypes were taken on Peaks Island just off the coast of Maine near Portland. The photographer, Cole Caswell, used traditional materials and methods to achieve the look of 18th-century works. Since tintypes require long exposure times, sitters often braced themselves against one another. In vintage tintypes, men were often seen arm in arm, arms around shoulders, or even sitting in one another's lap. This was commonplace, but when viewed today the sexual orientation of the sitters is thought to be ambiguous. When considered amid their larger practice, here Miller & Shellabarger queer the history of tintypes by explicitly depicting their relationship.



Large Tintype #2, 2010
Tintype
9h x 7 1/4w in.
\$2000



Large Tintype #3, 2010
Tintype
9h x 7 1/4w in.
\$2000



Small Tintype #1, 2010
Tintype
4 3/8h x 3 3/8w in.
\$1000



Small Tintype #5, 2010
Tintype
4 3/8h x 3 3/8w in.
\$1000



This artist book is a documentation of “Untitled Performance (Sewing)” in Rome, Italy, where Miller & Shellabarger sewed themselves together and then ripped the seams apart, a metaphor for the ever-changing rhythms of human relationships, of working together and coming apart.



Sewing Book (Rome), 2008
Artist book: color Xerox, book repair tape, embroidery thread
5h x 5w in. closed
Edition of 40
\$50

Sewing Books



Sewing Book (Chicago), 2008
Artist book: color Xerox, book repair tape, embroidery thread
5h x 5w in. closed
Edition of 40
\$50



installation view



installation view



installation view



installation view



installation view

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Gallery hours are Wednesday - Saturday, 12 to 6, and Sunday, 12 to 4.

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