

# RRR

## Capstone Intricacies:

Fall 2025 Fine Arts  
Senior Exhibition, Week 1



*Photography Courtesy of Susan Skeele*

**By Susan Skeele**

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# VOL.11

# RRR Rewind Review Respond

Volume 11 — Capstone Intricacies: Fall 2025 Fine Arts Senior Exhibition, Week 1

Warm light poured from the large windows of the Novack Gallery, pushing back the early winter darkness. The opening reception for Week One of CCA's BFA Senior Exhibition was already buzzing with conversation as a diverse audience of students, faculty and friends—many holding congratulatory bouquets—gathered to witness and celebrate the culmination of the cohort's artistic efforts.

I entered the space and was immediately struck by distortions of perspective and vivid colors in Yangjingyi Ling's trio of oil paintings on the left wall. All three seemed to center the gaze as subject matter, playing with how our experiences of being observed influence our viewpoints in public spaces (ferry, gallery, bench). I caught up with Ling as she posed for photos, and asked her for a comment on the show. "Every piece is speaking about the conflict in my heart between sensitivity and efficiency in modern society," she said.

Against the opposite wall, concentric displays of ZHIZHI X's delicate jewelry and small sculptures engaged in quiet conversations between fragility and permanence. When I asked her about the exhibition process, she said, "This was my first time having my own exhibition in a gallery. I was scared, but at the same time, I said, "Just do it!" Entitled *A Universe in Bloom and Decay*, X's group of wearable pieces, wall art and sculpture spoke in highly symbolic language, both in choice of material and content. Cosmological references to the elements, the seasons, and the Earth's tilt, grounded in the artist's Chinese heritage, were melded with her personal symbols for fragility, loss and transformation, such as a flower rendered in pliable silver or copper, a paper butterfly wing asymmetrically torn, or a jade and silver bracelet exposing a wire



Photography Courtesy of Susan Skeele

gap that functioned as a ghost of breakage. X writes of her work, "Each piece is a bridge—between hand and mind, tradition and tomorrow." I experienced a vibration between emerging and receding layers that gave these objects an intensity of presence belied by their light physical weight.

In the northeast section of the gallery, Helena Garzotto's expertly crafted furniture and sculpture commanded the corner. Her pieces expressed a dynamism that spoke to the importance of process. The bench was perhaps the most obvious example of an orientation to elements in motion: giant rusted clamps gripped thick, finely sanded blocks at the edges of the curved white oak and aluminum seat, their threaded metal rods angling downward to leave just enough space for a sitter's legs and feet. The tool became design. Fast-paced moments of a glue-up were captured in freeze-frame to expose and highlight the tension between coming together and falling apart. In another nod to process, the bench stood not on the floor nor on a finished rug, but on a piece of rough cotton batting, the kind used to pack fragile objects. Garzotto explained that she had to rush to install here in a quick turnaround from her Wornick Award exhibition at the Campus Gallery on 17th street, which displayed a much broader selection of her work. "It was a challenge to narrow it down. I chose pieces that related to each other and worked well in the space, and even though the process was quicker than I would have liked, I'm happy with the result."

Nearby, curious onlookers gathered to take in the multisensory elements of Amrit Sandhu's installation, *Ishnaan*. Water dripped at a meditative pace from a hammered metal vessel suspended from the ceiling. The drops fell to the floor, softly splattering in the center of nine pairs of cupped hands carved from soap in a square of black steel that functioned both as base and basin. The redolent scent of Pear's soap hung in the air as the amber-colored palms softened. Sandhu spoke about entering the project as a way to get to know her grandmother better. She remembered how her grandmother had washed with Pear's as part of "Ishnaan," the Sikh ritual of bathing in preparation for prayer. I mentioned the sense of grace, reverence and receptivity in the gesturing of the hands, the floral aroma, the slowly dripping water. Sandhu nodded, "I'm interested in impermanence and wanted to experiment with something that would eventually dissolve."

Directly across from Sandhu's work, Anna Lippert's installation of paintings and sculptures, *Hold You Soft and Tender*, rendered human bodies as vessels attenuated and contorted by emotional forces. Lippert's placement of the figures highlighted the agency inherent in intro-

spection, and the capacity to bear with suffering and eventually heal. She said of the exhibit process, "After so much work in the studio preparing, to see it come together as a cohesive whole is really rewarding."

Abby Tillman's nearby collection of richly-hued enamel and metal jewelry and sculpture was intriguingly entitled *Threshold of Fear*. Tillman's subtle use of curve and proportion created both whimsy and emotional power. The piece I found frightening was *the Man in the Window*, a small copper wall sculpture depicting a floating head with a gaping mouth and protruding narrow-set eyes behind the crosspieces of a window pane. He appeared terrified, confused and insatiable, like the specter of a man seduced by power, terrified of what he has become, yet unable to stop committing atrocities.

Turning toward the far side of the gallery, I was drawn first to the installation showcasing Lily Marylander's jewelry work. The symmetry and punk/Goth aesthetic of *Carnivorous Catharsis* conjured an animé portal of initiation, with a guardian in ripped stockings, heavy eyeliner, platform boots and vivid hair dye on each side. The models sported intricate bolo ties created by Marylander—exquisitely colored orchids and lilies in metal and gemstone—with piercings through their veined petals echoing the rings in the guardians' noses and ears. Through the condensed delicacy of the flowers, I was invited into the viscerally disquieting elements of the bolos along the back wall. There, the sense of initiation was complete as I was entertained and provoked with: a disembodied human nose, a pair of lips, an ear, rendered in bronze-colored metal. Sculpted and painted everyday objects dangling at the tips of the ties commented on what we take in and express through these sense organs: rolled bill and drill bit, lipstick and cigarettes, wax spoon and ear bud. Marylander said of the installation process, "It was grueling, yet rewarding. It's validating to see so many people show up for you, after all the hard work."

In contrast to the drama and vibrant color of Marylander's work, Hongling Wang's mixed-media small sculptures, jewelry and wall installations achieved emotional impact through subtle textures and muted



Photography Courtesy of Susan Skeele



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colors. The titles, such as *Where the flame stops* and *Crystallized Grief*, provided clear context for receiving the artistic intentions of the pieces. Fragments of memory, detritus of flame, half-recovered treasures held an evanescent yet magnetic sway. In shades of charcoal, ash blue, smoke gray, the subdued red of ember and the cream of wilting chrysanthemum, grief found a voice that spiraled outward into shared mourning and communal solace.

Weaving through the crowded gallery, I exited back into night's embrace, deeply impressed by the skill of each artist to convey the individuality of their vision with force of imagination, precision of technique, and vulnerability of thought and feeling. I particularly appreciated how the pieces were situated in relation to each other, highlighting and complementing one another's sensory impact. Congratulations to all of the artists, staff, and faculty on a brilliant show!

## Susan Skeele

Susan Skeele is in her second year of the MFA Writing Program at California College of the Arts. Her work has appeared in *Ekphrastic Review*, *Humble Pie*, and *Woman.Life.Freedom*. As a mother and physical improviser, she connects to the life of the body as a rich source of language and curiosity toward the world that deeply informs her poetry.

