

Abigail Heuss Biography

Abigail Heuss is an Associate Professor of Art at Valdosta State University, where she teaches Foundations and Metalsmithing courses. She holds an M.F.A. from East Carolina University and a B.F.A. from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Abigail's work has been shown in exhibitions around the country and been published in several books and magazines, both nationally and abroad.

Abigail makes small sculptures and wearable objects with an eye toward the domestic, and an unapologetically sentimental focus on narrative. Her work tends toward stories about how we connect to each other, as well as the cultures, and physical spaces we inhabit. Her work is based in the tradition of metalsmithing but is largely multi-media.

Make Your Way Home

The product of a collaborative investigation between myself and metalsmith Ashley Gilreath, the pieces in this series are based on the overlaps in our two lines of creative inquiry. Ranging from jewelry made in precious metals and enamel, to sculptures constructed from reclaimed wood and rusty steel, this series centers around the ideas of memory, locational identity, and lineage.

Pouring over our two collections of family photographs and memorabilia, we are working to point out parallels, elevate poignant details, and collage interesting overlaps. We have chosen to focus on the architecture of our families' historical spaces, the objects within, and the plants passed from one generation to the next. Just like the rose bush grown from cuttings by four generations in as many states, my great grandmother's peonies thriving in my sister's yard, or the mint moved from Louisiana to North Carolina, we each move from place to place taking root in new surroundings. Like these plants we are each adaptable but have necessary conditions that must be met in order to thrive.

By removing the people and specific stories from our source materials, we have tried to bring the context into focus. Our design process for this series de-centers individuals and focuses on the backdrop of our family histories. Sharing source material and sketches, we work to flatten and simplify imagery, isolate shapes, and play with perspective. Tracing, re-drawing, and trading imagery back and forth is akin to the process of recreating a memory every time one thinks about an event. With time memories shift, compress, and flatten, experiences are condensed. The texture of our lives and histories smooth over, creating the silhouette of a life lived, or a family history. By collaging imagery together, we hope to design pieces that feel simultaneously familiar, unsettling, and sentimental.