

HAWKINS HQ

Press Release:

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Sacrificial Surface

On view: April 27 - June 8, 2024.

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 27th, 6 - 9 PM.

On November 16, 2023, after self-harming for months – via cutting my forearms with a razor blade – I attempted suicide by cutting along the veins in my arms. The attempt was not caused by a single, precipitating event, but a continual build-up of mental malaise over an 11-month period. Following the attempt, I was hospitalized at an in-patient psychiatric facility for 7 days, I was fired from my job, and I have relapsed twice. Recovery has, thus far, been a daily struggle in finding ways to distract myself from thinking about self-harm and suicide. Self-harm was, among other things, a motivator for my studio practice. A constant, physical chastisement to do better, work harder, work longer. A sacrifice of my body's integrity for the sake of production. Self-mutilation was, in this way, successful as I created artworks with physical and conceptual complexity I had never previously achieved. This success also triggered a complete collapse.

My suicide attempt and budding recovery have been shadowed by the looming stress of exhibition commitments I made when I was still manic. Commitments I have wanted to withdraw from numerous times since my attempt. How could I possibly rise to the occasion when subsisting was already requiring all my energy? This despair was caused by thinking of exhibitions and my artistic practice as projections of myself, opportunities to meld myself closer to the life I desire, rather than as reflections of myself, honest and matter of fact. This exhibition is one part of an extended recovery process in which I attempt to make something of the wreckage of myself. The artworks in this exhibition cling to materiality tentatively, lacking certainty or stability. Each has been stripped of substance, both visual and physical. Cyanotypes, once richly pigmented with Prussian blue, have been erased so only a rusted after-image remains. The cotton substrate has been sliced apart and partially removed, leaving behind a stringy web. The detritus of this effacement is strewn around the gallery. A formless mass, ever-changing as its environment does.

What community can be found in wreckage? Are the figures in these artworks one silhouette caught in an endlessly repeating spiral toward self-obliteration? Or are they many different ones, collapsing in on one another until the only aspect that remains is their interrelation? In *The Recovering: Intoxication and its Aftermath* (2018), the author, Leslie Jamison, writes, "Recovery means giving what you need yourself, not what you already possess. Your own fragility isn't a liability but a gift. You bump suicide scars with a stranger. You don't kick the drunk out of a meeting. You find a way to let him stay in the room."