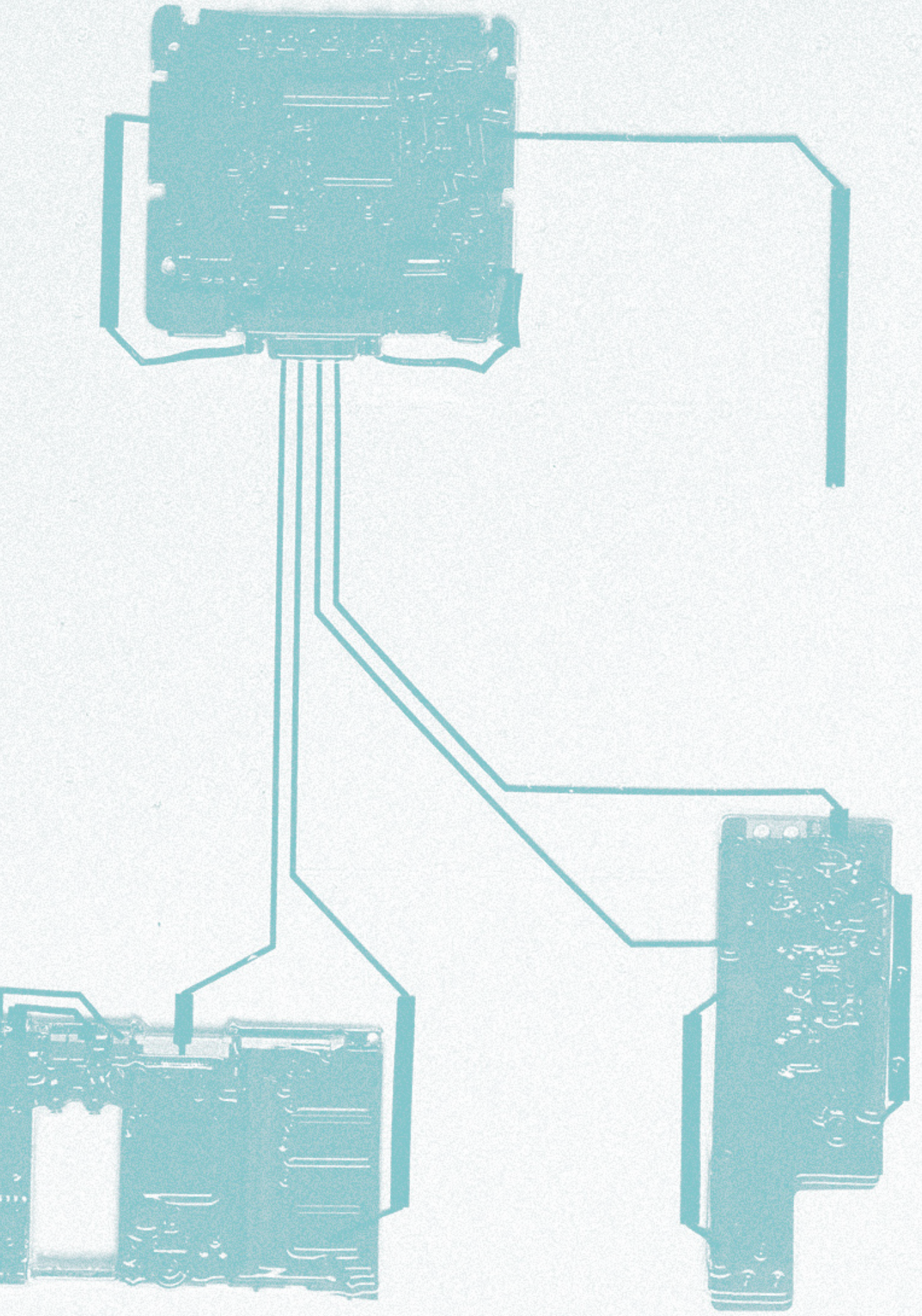


COLLEGIAL TEAMWORK: AN INTERVIEW WITH JOEL LITHGOW AND JOSEPH BLAKE

Interview by Gordon Fung

BFA seniors Joel Lithgow and Joseph Blake's 10-foot tall printed receipt installation in CCA's Nave amazed visitors who attended the Fluid Mutualism Symposium in early March. This acclaimed work, *Shades of a Garden Campus* (2022), celebrates not only the legacy of the Oakland campus but also the friendship and partnership between this duo. I first became aware of Lithgow's work at the Martinez print studio on the Oakland campus. His *Circuiture* series (2020) features plastic casts of a printed circuit board mounted on a plastic sheet. Alongside the ink-printed circuit, *Circuiture* showcases his transdisciplinary take to infuse technologies into his practice. Besides electronics, Lithgow also hacks artificial intelligence learning and generative arts (an automated creative process by coding) to create prints and plotter works. *Geometric Cubes* (2019), demonstrates this practice by creating the design with Artificial Intelligence, making it an algorithmic screen print. Lithgow's affinity and passion for referencing daily experience also resonated with Joseph Blake's signature use of printed images on thermal paper, which tackles the impermanent nature of receipts. His senior show exhibited two large-scale works using thermal prints: *The Vain Image* and *Troubled* (2022). The thermal papers are carefully planned, aligned, and printed to create enormous images that viewers can perceive from a distance. Blake's installation, *Prophet* (2022), extends the printing process for visitors to experience. The thermal paper loop is fed into the thermal printer. Upon the user's execution, the printer starts the printing process on the already over-printed loop. Lithgow and Blake's interdisciplinary mindset and audacious projects intersect perfectly to foster collaborations. To understand their practices better, we had a conversation regarding their practice as a duo.



Joe Lithgow, Whitney, 2020 - 15" x 15" - Vacuum-formed circuit boards & Ink

**Gordon
Fung
(GF)**

How and when did you start collaborating?

**Joel Lith-
gow and
Joseph
Blake
(L&B)**

You could say we started collaborating years ago when we became roommates. Although we never worked on a project together at the time, we developed a personal framework to approach our creative practices together. This development laid the necessary foundation for future collaboration to be successful. After spending a couple of years apart we reconvened in our shared senior studio allotments, which we happily found nested together, side by side.

Our creative discourse throughout our time in the studio already influenced our respective projects. It was only a matter of time before we created something we could show collaboratively.

GF

What is your most compelling collaborative work so far?

L&B

Our most recent work *Shades of a Garden Campus* is our most comprehensive statement as a duo yet. The two-week workload of that project, with the time at hand, would have been impossible to complete as a solo artist. Our existing friendship lets us focus on building the work and not get caught up in the intricateness of working with one another.

*Joel Lithgow and
Joseph Blake,
Shades of a
Garden Cam-
pus, 2022. Photo
by Nicholas Lea
Bruno.*



GF How does teamwork inspire your individual practices?

L&B The biggest gain from working collaboratively is foregoing a focus on individual branding. This lets us distill our processes into a more focused means of making. The result is a new body of work that is less bound by personal identity.

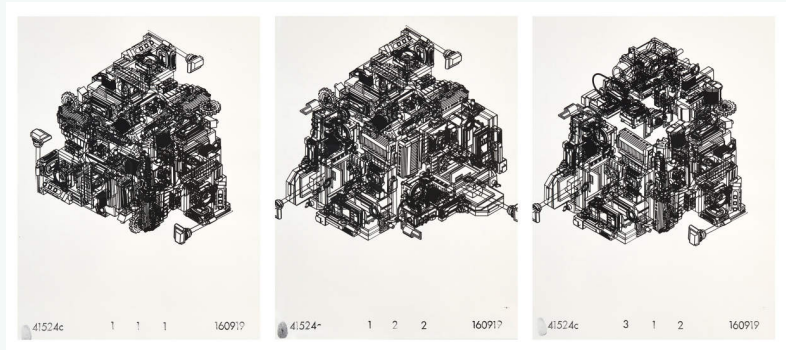
GF How does collaboration expand the creative practice in a way that is “unachievable” through solo practice?

L&B Aside from creating a collaborative identity, the velocity at which we can produce work allows us to create at a greater magnitude with a considerable amount of flexibility.

*Joseph Blake,
The Vain
Image, 2022
- 7' x 7' -
Thermal print
on found
receipt paper,
reclaimed
pallet wood
frame*



*Joel Lithgow,
Geometric
Cubes, 2019
- 15" x 20" -
Algorithmic
screen prints*



GF What are some challenges and obstacles you faced as a duo?

L&B We would like to think that maybe in another world, or in a coming world, it could be possible that a new material economy might develop in which capital is decentralized and we as artists may have to worry less about sculpting our individual merits in a way that makes us marketable. We might also pose that artists working together can come to know their individual selves and corresponding practices by combining them with others. Nothing delegates identity better than community. In other words, you get in where you fit in.

GF How do you continue this collaboration after graduation?

L&B Our future is unlimited. We have many ideas that range from complex to ordinary: converting a cargo boat into an artist enterprise, residing in an artist warehouse with the homies, conveying a van into the desert, collecting screenshots on a Google drive, moderating a sub-Reddit, drafting and sending grandma-styled mail letters, performing with texting or calling, etc.

*Joseph Blake,
Troubled, 2022
- 12' x 18' -
Thermal print
on paper*



GF What are your influences or source of inspiration?

L&B The places we inhabit and the people we surround ourselves with are our greatest source of inspiration.

GF What is your next project?

L&B We have two opportunities to show *Shades of a Garden Campus* again. The first event will be as part of the Oakland Campus Legacy Project coming this April to the Oakland Campus. We are excited to grapple with new installation challenges, as it will be an outdoor installation this time; variables like wind, temperature, and ground-level will influence our decision-making.

The second showing will be in May, at BOOK/SHOP Gallery on Broadway in Oakland. We are planning to alter the images that make up the piece while keeping the structural elements the same.

*Joel Lithgow,
2b2t, 2022 - 8'
x 8' - Thermal
receipt paper &
label stickers*



GF What is your main statement for your collaboration?

L&B Idols always die, homies live forever.

Gordon Fung is a transdisciplinary artist who works across various fields, including installation, music composition, sound art, video art, multi-/new media, experimental and conceptual arts, etc. With the use of unconventional materials like noises, lo-fi presentations, and glitches, his immersive and synaesthetic works challenge the viewers to expand their experiential horizons.

Joel Lithgow is a multidisciplinary tech-based artist with a BFA in Fine Art from California College of the Arts. He was born in Australia but raised in the US. Growing up in the Santa Cruz Mountains in California. His work often goes through a series of exploratory transmutations between the digital and physical. The process involves interfacing with all aspects of technology, from laser cutters to rubber stamps and defunct machines to complex systems such as material distribution systems.

Joseph Blake is an artist. He grew up in rural Washington and attended California College of the Arts, graduating with a BFA in Print Media. He currently resides in Berkeley, California.