

PRESS RELEASE



Erica Fitzgerald, *We Never Do Anything Alone 1*, seagrass, weakened weft, opportunistic holes, birch wood, repression, 2023, Champaign, IL

From Under, Within Ourselves Artworks by Erica Fitzgerald

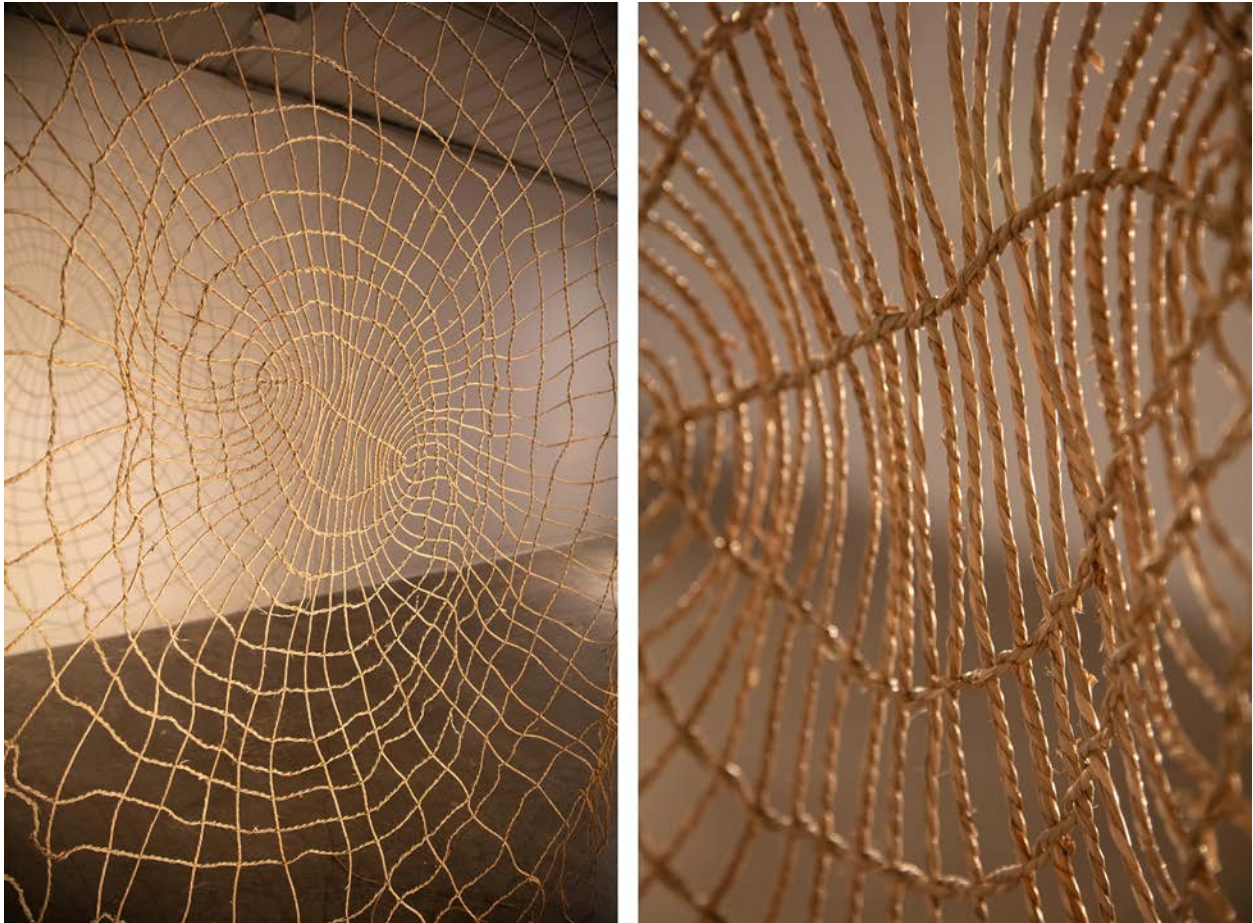
August 19—September 20, 2024
Pearlman Gallery, Art Academy of Cincinnati
1212 Jackson St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Public Reception: Friday, August 30, 2024, 5—8pm

The Art Academy of Cincinnati is pleased to present *From Under, Within Ourselves*, an exhibition of artworks by AAC alum Erica Fitzgerald (<https://www.elfitzgerald.com>).

About the Artist: Erica Fitzgerald is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice follows linear relationships between gendered labor, earth, and familial traditions through the lens of

materiality. She earned her BFA in sculpture with a minor in art history from the Art Academy of Cincinnati and is currently an MFA candidate and educator at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.



Erica Fitzgerald, *We Never Do Anything Alone 1* (details), seagrass, weakened weft, opportunistic holes, birch wood, repression, 2023, Champaign, IL

Artist's Statement About the Exhibition:

I was never taught to weave. My great-grandmother was never inclined to show me how to make a vessel to haul our heavy fish from the sea to the hearth. No one showed me how to set up a loom, stitch a basket, or twine grass into an object meant to hold our food.

I was taught to bury things; shown how to hide roots in deep, dark, damp soil with the assumption that that's what was necessary for them to grow. The greenery above the ground the only evidence of a healthy body below. I was instructed many times to dig holes for the squirrels and rabbits the family dog had killed. Each impact of the shovel to dirt reminding me that an innocent animal had been killed simply for the pleasure of the hunt. I was taught to bury my tears because wet eyes are a sign of weakness. Often scolded for being the kid who let their emotions run around on their sleeve, unprotected and wild.

These experiences have concentrated my work on understanding what gets buried. What feelings, roots, and memories are allowed to slip through the stitches of a familial basket, when others are held tightly? I wonder if they're the things that I can afford to miss or the feelings I

allow to be free to nurture themselves back into the earth. Never made to feel like they are hidden or stored away, not held so tightly that they are no longer seen at all.

This work lives at the intersection of ritual and learned behavior. Using ancient ritual techniques found in weaving that traditionally provided necessity as a road map to explore the way learned coping behavior is passed along generationally. I create large open weave structures using seagrass and collected fibers that combine basketry practices with loom weaving techniques to emphasize how tightly woven wefts hold the warp in place, while others unintentionally let the pieces sag, weakening it. The unintentionality of assumed weakness offers the opportunity for what's being held to fall through. Maybe a small piece is meant to get away.

These pieces were created in response to time spent at The Burren College of Art in Ballyvaughan, Ireland, funded by the generous support of the Wilder Traveling Artist Scholarship awarded in May 2022.

Gallery Hours:

Monday through Friday 9am—9pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am—5pm
(Closed Labor Day, September 2)

Gallery admission and reception are free and open to the public

Contact: exhibitions@artacademy.edu, 513-562-6262

About Us: Art Academy of Cincinnati, established in 1869, is an independent college of art and design. Degrees granted are the Associate of Science in Graphic Design; the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, Design, Illustration, Painting and Drawing, Photography, Print Media, and Sculpture; and the Master of Arts in Art Education. Accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the Art Academy is a charter member of both NASAD and the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design. The Art Academy is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the Greater Cincinnati Collegiate Connection. The Art Academy's Office of Engagement department offers extensive visual arts courses to children, teens, and adults, including a Portfolio Preparation program and an award-winning summer camp. The Art Academy of Cincinnati is located in historic Over-the-Rhine at 1212 Jackson Street Cincinnati, OH 45202. Please visit www.artacademy.edu.