

Unfamiliar Patterns

Eleanor Spiess-Ferris & Michael Ferris

November 6 to December 14, 2026

The Art Center Highland Park

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A PATTERN CAN SIMPLY BE DESCRIBED AS ANY FORM REPEATED. ONE EXAMPLE: THE DNA STRUCTURE OF A DOUBLE HELIX; ITS TWO STRANDS OF ALTERNATING SUGARS AND PHOSPHATES COMBINE TO CREATE PATTERNS THAT DICTATE THE VERY MECHANISMS OF LIFE.

MUCH LIKE THE GENES THEY SHARE, MOTHER AND SON ARTISTS ELEANOR SPIESS-FERRIS AND MICHAEL FERRIS LINK FORCES FOR THIS EXHIBITION; EACH MANIFESTING THEIR OWN SET OF PATTERNS AND SYMBOLS: ONE IN GOUACHE, AND THE OTHER IN WOOD.

ELEANOR SPIESS-FERRIS PAINTS SCENES FROM STORYBOOKS NEVER WRITTEN. HER GOUACHE PAINTINGS COME ALIVE WITH FICTIONAL MARSHLANDS, TEAMING WITH CELESTIAL FIGURES AND ENTANGLED SWANS. THIS COLLECTION CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO SERIES: THE GARDEN SERIES, FEATURING A DELIGHTFUL WORLD OF PLAYFUL FIGURES SURROUNDED BY VARIOUS FLORA, AND THE MONSTERS SERIES, WITH EYE-RAISING CREATURES LIKE A GOOSE-HEADED HYDRA AND BANDS OF GHOULISH CLOWNS. IN ALL HER WORK, SPIESS-FERRIS FINDS INSPIRATION IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN AND SPANISH TRADITIONS PRESENT THROUGHOUT HER CHILDHOOD IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO.

MICHAEL FERRIS DEPICTS A MUCH MORE TANGIBLE WORLD, CARVING WOODEN PORTRAITS OF FIGURES FROM HIS LIFE. EACH SCULPTURE IS COVERED IN SYMBOLS, INSPIRED BY THE ANCIENT WOOD INTARSIA PROCESS PRESENT IN DAMASCAN FURNITURE. MICHAEL FERRIS'S PATTERNING BECOMES A STAMP OF BELONGING, TRACING BACK TO HIS LEBANESE HERITAGE, AND THE MEMORY OF A FAMILY BACKGAMMON TABLE THAT INSPIRED A SENSE OF WONDER FROM AN EARLY AGE.

ELEANOR SPIESS FERRIS AND MICHAEL FERRIS ARE NOT SIMPLY THREADING USUAL PATTERNS, BUT ARE EMBARKING ON ENTIRELY NEW METHODOLOGIES; REWRITING—OR WRITING OVER—WHAT HAS COME BEFORE THEM; IN DOING SO, THEY ARE MAKING THE FAMILIAR UNFAMILIAR, AND VICE VERSA.

CALEB J SMITH

CURATOR

The Art Center Highland Park

ELEANOR SPIESS-FERRIS



Distraction, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Moon Behind Trellis, (2026), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
From Private Collection
NFS



Spilling Light, (2026), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



A Lascivious Romance, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



At Midnight, (2026), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Listening- For the Bird That Never Flew, (2026), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



The Tulip, (2026), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



The Bull Frog, (2026), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Stranded between, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Remembering Spring, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Selecting the Lily, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Clowns, (2023), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Night to Day, (2021), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



The Hat, (2022), 9" x 9", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$1,500



The Hat #2, (2022), 9" x 9", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$1,500



The Wound, (2026), 22" x 30", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,800



Hush, 22" x 30", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,800



The Thief, (2025-2026), 22" x 30", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,800



The Flood, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



The Koi, (2025), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



Pond With Moons, (2021), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



My Mothers Chair, (2024), 22" x 22", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$3,600



The Universal Egg, (2019), 9" x 9", Gouache
Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
$1,500

MICHAEL FERRIS



Rosemarie with Stretchy, (2025), 52" x 39" x 22", reclaimed wood and pigment
Collection of Margaret Russell
Michael Ferris
NFS



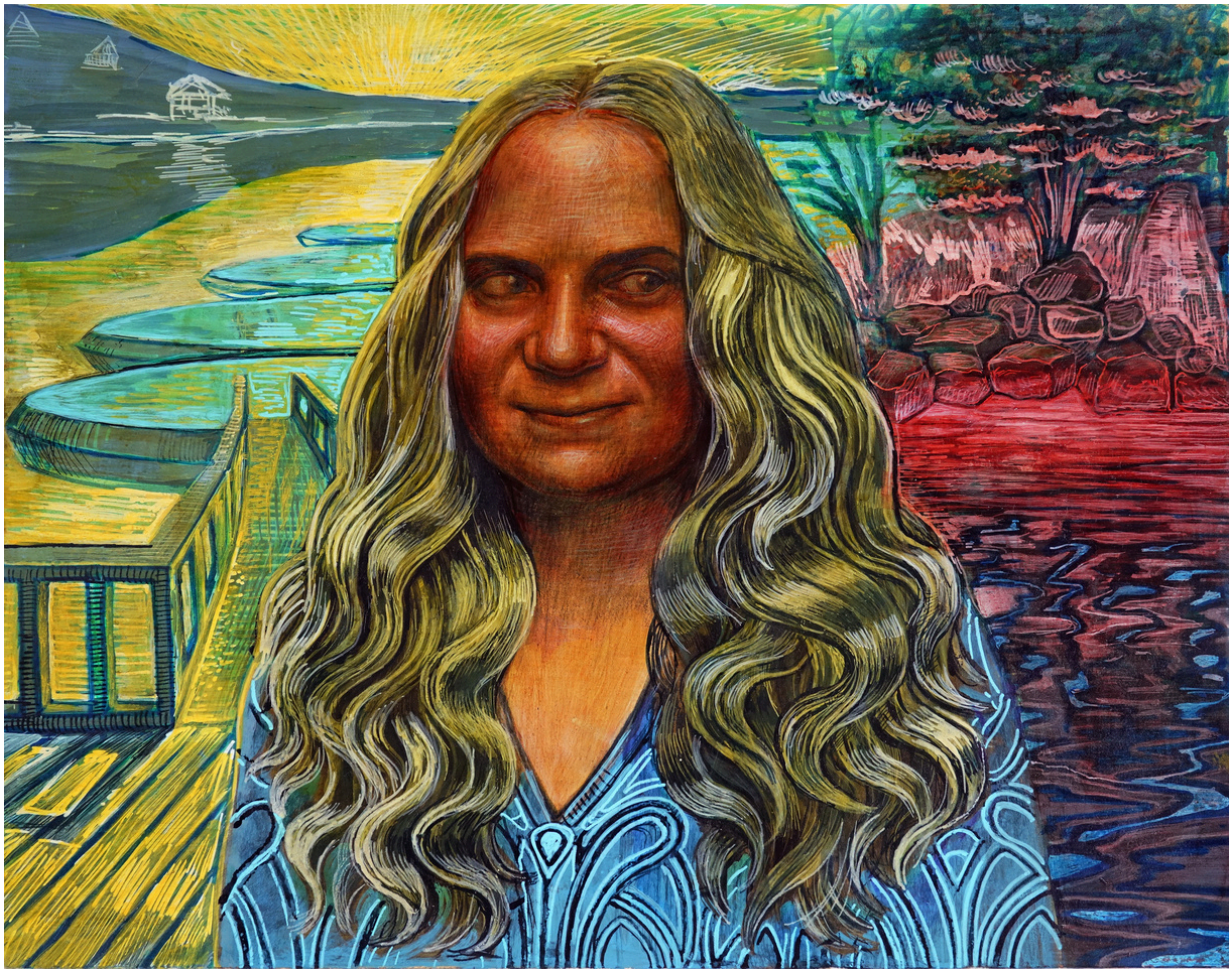
Rosemarie with Stretchy Study 1 (2025), 12" x 9", Mixed Media on paper
Michael Ferris
$850



Rosemarie with Stretchy Study 2 (2025), 12" x 9", Mixed Media on paper
Michael Ferris
$850



Orchard Beach 2 (2025), 11" x 16", Mixed Media on paper
Michael Ferris
$1,800



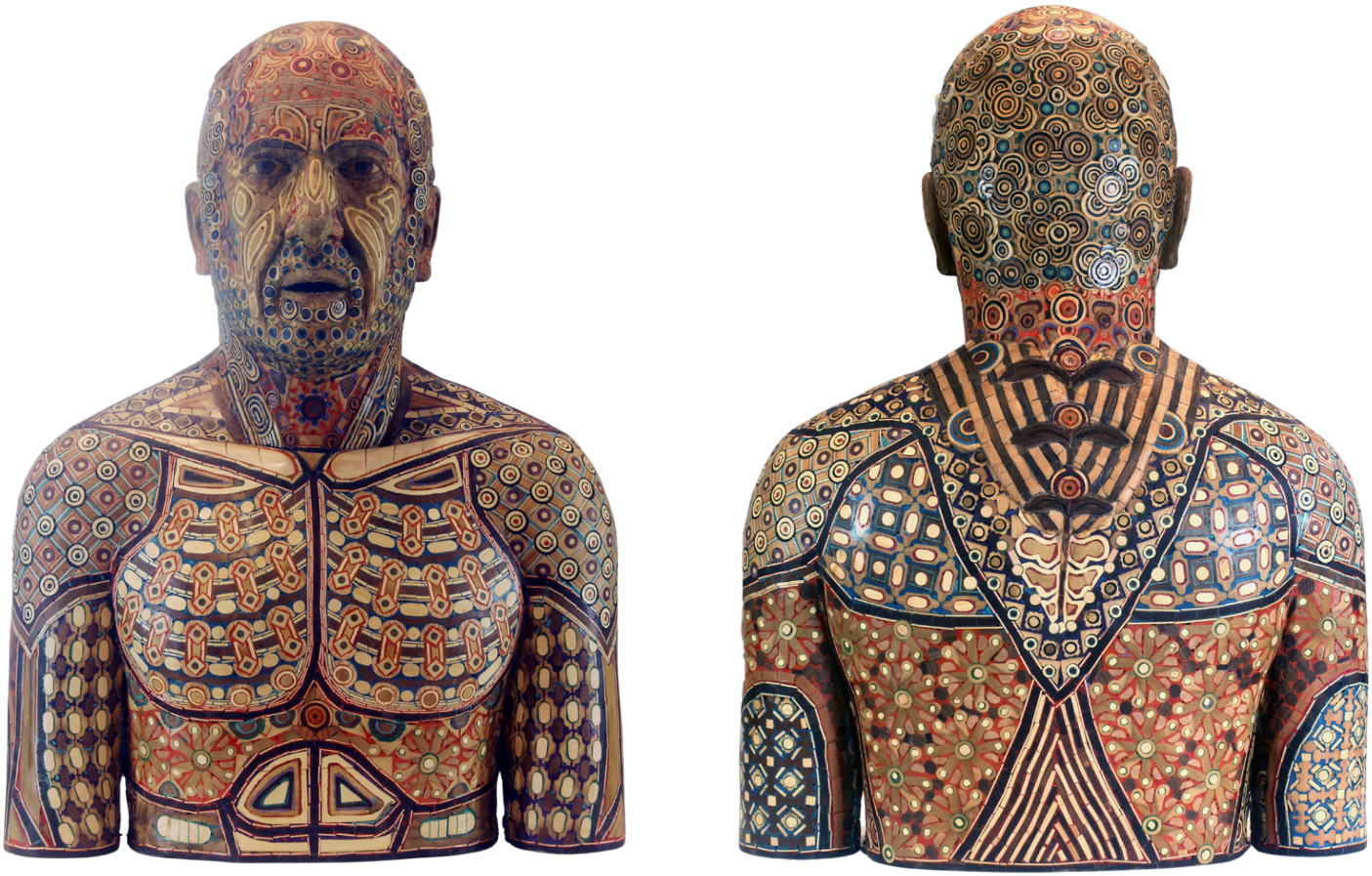
Orchard Beach 3 (2025), 11" x 14", Mixed Media on paper
Michael Ferris
$1,800



Julian, (2008), 21" x 13.5" x 16.5", reclaimed wood and pigment
Collection of Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
Michael Ferris
NFS



Nora, (2021), 40" x 32" x 20", reclaimed wood and pigment
Michael Ferris
$45,000



Steve, (2021), 43" x 32" x 16", reclaimed wood and pigment
Michael Ferris
$45,000



Joe, (2021), 43" x 33" x 16", reclaimed wood and pigment
Michael Ferris
$45,000



Tom, (2026), 20" x 13" x 16", reclaimed wood and pigment
Michael Ferris
$20,000

ABOUT THE ART CENTER

THE ART CENTER HIGHLAND PARK, A NON-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, IS THE NORTH SHORE'S HOME FOR ARTISTIC DISCOVERY AND CREATIVE EXPLORATION. THROUGH INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS, EXHIBITIONS, AND CLASSES DESIGNED FOR ALL LEVELS AND AGES, THE ART CENTER PROVIDES A WELCOMING SPACE FOR OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS.

1957 Sheridan Rd, Highland Park, IL 60035 , 847- 432- 1888, theartcenterhp.org

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