

## Melissa Shaak - Artist Statement

### Out of Nowhere

Seven oddly archetypal figures inhabit the exhibition “Out of Nowhere” in various forms—portrait-like paintings on the wall, cutouts standing tall in the gallery, and as an ensemble captured on video. In espionage parlance, the term “cutout” refers to a trusted intermediary. These figures serve as trustworthy personas made manifest to help us navigate and mediate the world today. Each raises a torch, or scepter, holding the light for us, signaling and leading the way.

This series was inspired by the three unruly strands of hair in Braque’s painting *La Nuit (The Night)*. The strands started, and the raised arm completed, the outline layer of each painting. *Djuna* came first. The others followed quickly, with facial features, names and poetry flowing. The process, one of seeking and finding form, was filled with creative sparks and enigmatic turns. The figures ultimately took a dare and stepped out of their paintings into space and time—first in sculptural form and then in video and performance art. The invitation inherent in the work is to catch and take hold of the creative impulses that come, seemingly out of nowhere.

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