



**IN PLACE: A STUDY OF LONELINESS IN UTAH'S LANDSCAPES**

**Nathan Francis (Professor Jaclyn Wright)**

**Department of Art & Art History**

*In Place* is a series of works exploring my experiences of growing up gay in Utah, at the geographical, social, and cultural epicenter of the LDS faith.

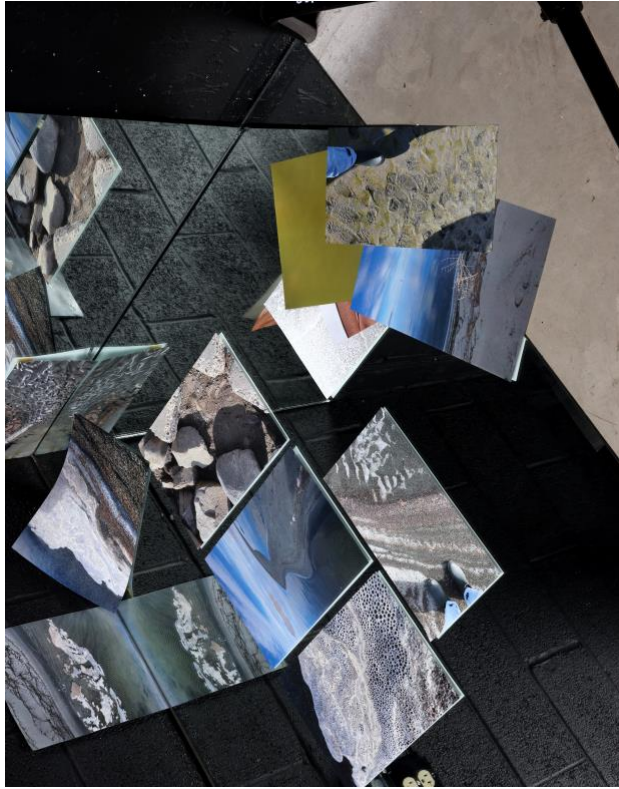


*In Place*, inkjet prints and red rock, 2020

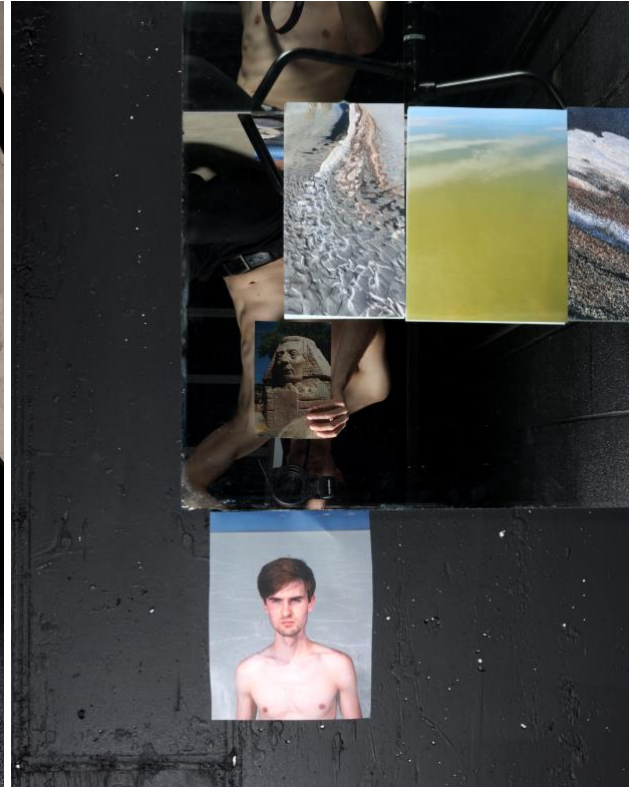
Coming out as queer after living as a member of the Mormon faith and serving a two-year mission for the organization was a wake-up call for myself, my family, and my friends. I began my studies in art around the same time that I came out and it has been a premier facet of my work over the past few years. My work is concerned with the experience of living in Salt Lake City as a gay ex-Mormon. Utah's desolate geography serves as a metaphor for those experiences. The physical emptiness and desolation of the red rock deserts and expansive salt flats are symbols of the emotional and mental isolation of queer people in Utah's cultural landscape. Through the use of the camera, my body, the land, and the photo studio, I capture the relationship of my identity to my surroundings. I rearrange my world to make sense of it and recapture it, again and again, my fragmented figure a constant reminder of the difficulty of being verbally dissected by the people around me. I carry the weight of otherness along with me internally. I feel a physical burden pulling my body down, down, down to dust. I see fulfillment in a future outside of Utah and cling to it with every stroke of energy I can muster. The camera is my guardian angel and tool for self-creation, carrying me from day to day until I find that future.



*The Death of Me*, inkjet prints, 2020



*Mirror Study #6*  
inkjet print  
2021



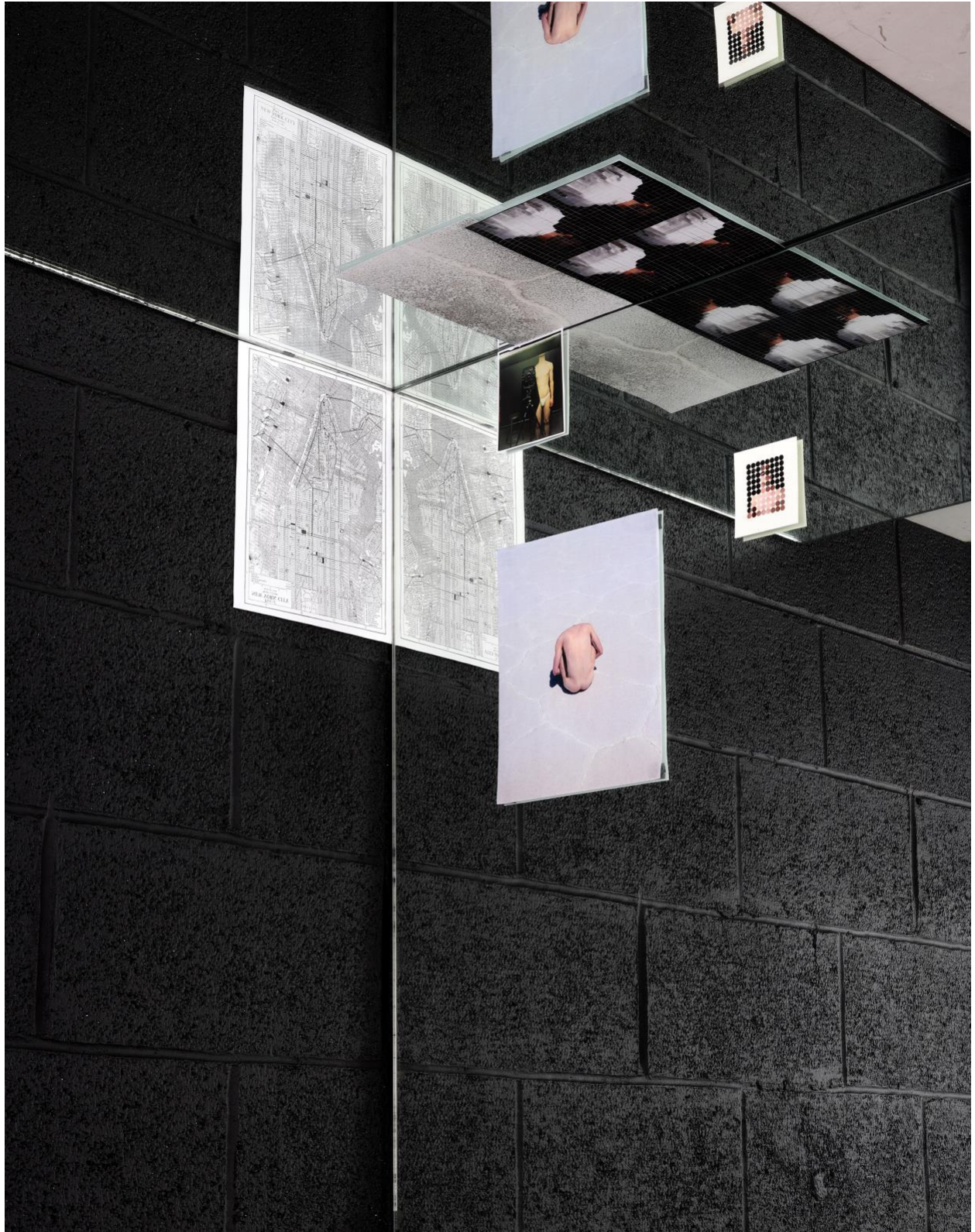
*Mirror Study #6*  
inkjet print  
2021



*Mirror Study #1*, inkjet print, 2020



*Mirror Study #2*, inkjet print, 2021



*Mirror Study #3*, inkjet print, 2021



*Mirror Study #4*, inkjet print, 2021

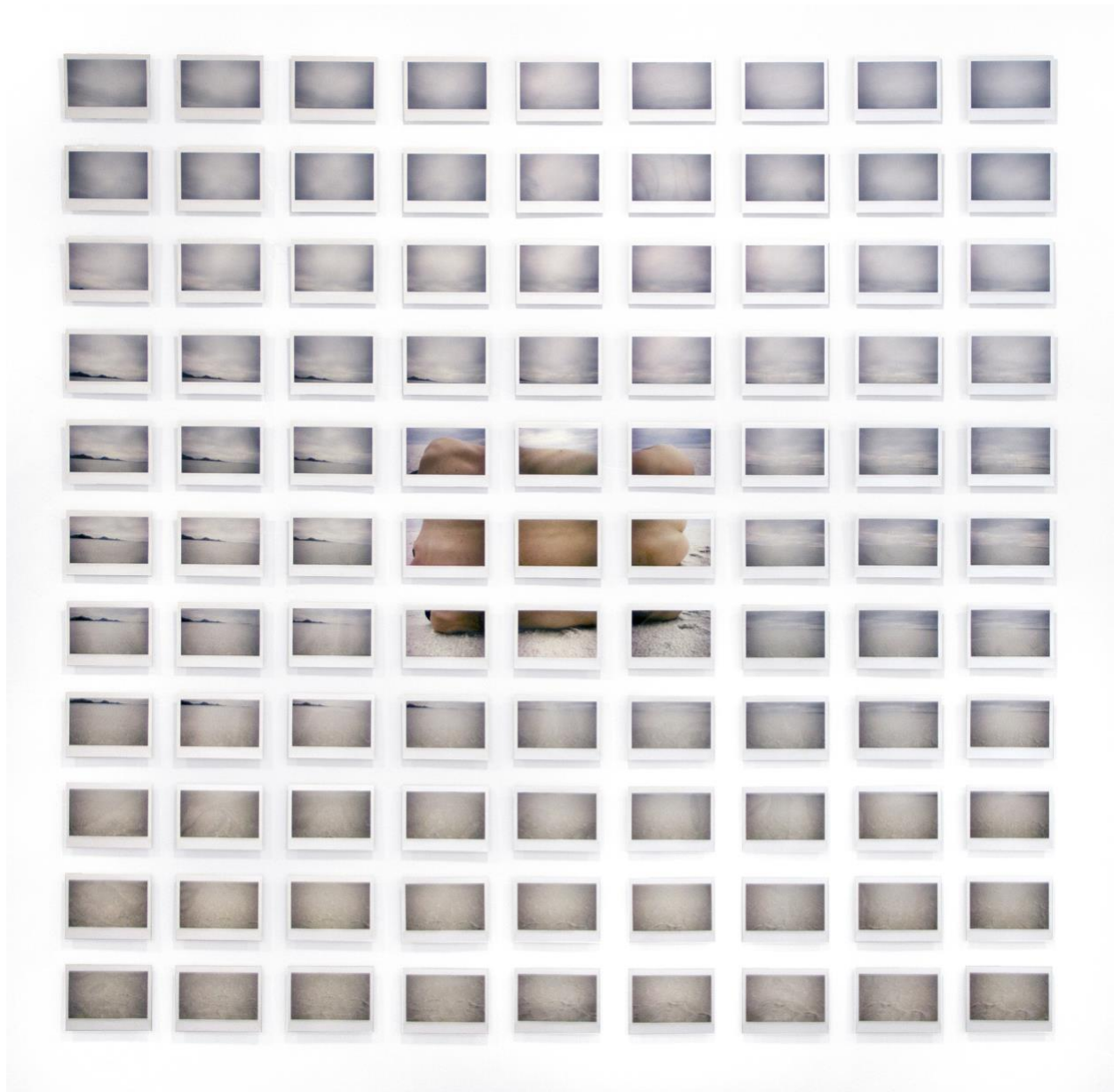


*Image Study #1*, video still, 2021



*Them & Me*, video still, 2019





*Body & Salt*, Instax instant film, 2020



*Arm Study #1*, Instax instant film, 2020



*Arm Study #2*, Instax instant film, 2021

Nate Francis is a photographic and sculptural artist who works with issues of identity and isolation. He often appears in his work by documenting his body or performing for the camera. Nate grew up in Provo, Utah in an LDS family of nine children. His work explores the consequences of his upbringing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as a gay youth, the challenge of creating a home after coming out, as well as the hope of finding a new and more suitable environment in the future.