

for immediate release:

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# VIRGINIA FLECK

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November 11–December 18, 2022

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Northern–Southern

Downtown Austin  
E. 5th Street between Brazos and San Jacinto

[northern-southern.com](http://northern-southern.com)  
[@northernsouthern](https://www.instagram.com/northernsouthern)

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**WHAT**      **Virginia Fleck**  
***Shimmer***

Virginia Fleck's tour de force installation fills the gallery with shimmers of sound and light.

Aluminum can tabs are strung into ethereal columns. A trinity of them drape from the ceiling, rotating slowly. A moth-like tapestry of tabs clings to a wall. A relay of globe cages-intended for bingo balls, are dangled in aluminum tabs, each a hand-cranked sound bath. The installation is a song to the transformative power of devotion.

From salvage and discard, Fleck weaves serenity, wonder, and peace.

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**WHO**      **Virginia Fleck** has been working primarily in reclaimed materials for three decades. For the last seven years, she has explored the sensory possibilities in assemblages of can tabs. In the material of the can tab, Fleck sees a metaphor for hope and a token of magical thinking. In the ritual and patience of the weaving, Fleck finds painterly and sonic light.

Born in 1960 to a devout family, in Inwood, the last recognizable Irish enclave in New York City, Fleck's childhood was steeped in the magical thinking of religious doctrine and the sensory drama of the Catholic Mass. She attended art school briefly in New England and settled in Austin in 1990.

Shimmer is Fleck's second show at Northern-Southern.

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**WHEN**      November 11—December 18, 2022

visiting hours:  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday,  
2-6pm (except holidays when posted)

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**WHERE**      **Northern-Southern**  
Downtown Austin, off 5th Street, halfway between San Jacinto and Brazos, 501 East 5th Street.

Look for :

- the ← **N** or the ← **S** sign
- the blue door with art by Kel Brown and a blue bike rack

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**events**      Opening Reception, Friday, 11-11 at 11:11 am  
Other events to be announced.

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**images**      <http://dl.northern-southern.com/2022/N-S-55-Virginia-Fleck-images.zip>

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**www**      [northern-southern.com/2022/virginia-fleck-shimmer](http://northern-southern.com/2022/virginia-fleck-shimmer)

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**'gram**      [@northernsouthern](https://www.instagram.com/northernsouthern)

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## *in her own words:*

Growing up in a 1960s Irish neighborhood in New York City, my childhood was steeped in the magical thinking of religious doctrine, and the sensory drama of the Catholic Mass. The nature and direction of my work is influenced by the sensory saturation of my childhood and the healing, hands-on work I performed for decades as a massage therapist.

I make sculptures and installations that draw on our sensory capacities and inclination for magical thinking.

Aluminum, an element rarely found in its pure state, must be mined, smelted and electrified to reach purity in an involved alchemical process that mirrors the magic of transubstantiation. Purified, aluminum is fabricated into branded cans that contain the beverages that we consume. I am drawn to aluminum can-tabs as a material because, depending on one's beliefs, they are either treated as disposable or valued like currency. Can-tabs have near-magical social metrics pertaining to their value, illustrated by long-lived urban legends, among them, the belief that a gallon of saved tabs is worth \$100, and that can-tabs are like tokens- redeemable for chemotherapy for children in need.

As I begin the ritual of cleaning the can-tabs, I consider my invisible collaborators; those who performed the labor of removing the tabs from the cans to collect and save, and those who drank the canned beverages. Their beliefs, motives and labor, in the name of can-tabs, imbue my work with layers of meaning.

While I sort the can-tabs I consider their beauty. In the name of brand recognition distinctive features have been added to can-tabs, such as color and laser cut-outs, that distinguish them from other brands.

The can tabs in my sculptures are no longer in service to consumerism. The slow, mindful, handwork of transforming individual can-tabs into long chains is a potent devotional ritual that rescripts the original intention of their branding.

—Virginia Fleck