

# SAAG ARTS WRITING PRIZE READER 2024

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin is proud to present the 2024 SAAG Arts Writing Prize Reader. For the past 13 years, the Arts Writing Prize has recognized emerging arts writers, critics, poets, and creatives and provided them the opportunity to expand their practice. In 2020, the Gallery introduced the Aruna D'Souza Arts Writing Prize for BIPOC+ Arts Writing. This award is named after arts writer Aruna D'Souza, who served as a juror for this and many previous SAAG Arts Writing Prizes. D'Souza writes about race in modern and contemporary art, intersectional feminisms, and how museums shape our views of each other and the world.

Through the Arts Writing Prize and the Aruna D'Souza Award, the Gallery supports the development of emerging arts writers by providing cash prizes and opportunities to expand their practice through writing opportunities. For the 2024 Prize, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery also introduced runner-up awards for each category. All applicants to the prize have the opportunity to have their work published in this Reader which is mailed to contributors and shared through the Gallery's library.

We were honored to receive submissions from 60 writers from across Canada for the Arts Writing Award and the Aruna D'Souza Award. This was the largest number of submissions we have received on record. We thank all of the submitters for their efforts and contributions. We hope you enjoy their work as we have. These are the art writers of the future and the future is in good hands.

We would also like to specially thank this year's jury members Aruna D'Souza, Shelley Boetcher, and Henry Heavy Shield for offering their time and expertise in selecting the winners. Thank you to Galleries West and Aruna D'Souza for their continued support of the writing prize and the reader.

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Southern Alberta Art Gallery  
Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin  
601 3 Ave S  
Lethbridge, AB  
T1J 0H4  
saag.ca

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitisitapiitsinikssin is a leading contemporary public art gallery in Lethbridge, AB. Over the course of forty years, the Gallery has evolved from a grassroots initiative to become a significant participant in the national dialogue on contemporary art.

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitisitapiitsinikssin is located on traditional territories of the Siksikaitsitapii, or Blackfoot Confederacy. We honour and acknowledge the Siksikaitsitapi, who have cared for these lands since time immemorial. We recognize that Treaty 7 territory is also home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, District 1, and many other Indigenous peoples.

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# 2024 JUROR BIOGRAPHIES

**Aruna D'Souza** writes about modern and contemporary art; intersectional feminisms and other forms of politics; and how museums shape our views of each other and the world. Her work appears regularly in 4Columns.org, where she is a member of the editorial advisory board, and she is a contributor to The New York Times. Her writing has also appeared in The Wall Street Journal, CNN.com, Art News, Garage, Bookforum, Frieze, Momus, Art in America, and Art Practical, among other places, as well as in numerous artist's monographs and museum exhibition catalogues. Her book, *Whitewalling: Art, Race, and Protest in 3 Acts* (Badlands Unlimited), was named one of the best art books of 2018 by the New York Times. Recent editorial project include Linda Nochlin's *Making It Modern: Essays on the Art of the Now* (Thames & Hudson, 2022) and Lorraine O'Grady's *Writing in Space 1973-2018* (Duke University Press, 2020); she co-curated the retrospective of O'Grady's work, *Both/And*, that opened in March 2021 at the Brooklyn Museum. She is the recipient of the 2021 Rabkin Prize for art journalism and a 2019 Andy Warhol Foundation Art Writers Grant, and delivered the Distinguished Critics Lecture for AICA (the International Association of Art Critics) in 2019. She was appointed the Edmond J. Safra Visiting Professor at the National Gallery of Art in 2022, and the W.W. Corcoran Professor of Social Engagement at the Corcoran School of Art, George Washington University, in 2022-2023.

**Shelley Boettcher** is the editor of Galleries West magazine and an award-winning writer whose work has appeared in newspapers and magazines around the world, including The Guardian, The Globe and Mail and New York Times. The author of three books about wine, including two Canadian bestsellers, she splits her time between Canada and Italy. Find her on Instagram @shelleyboettcher.

**Henry HeavyShield** is a Blackfoot (kainaiwa) writer. He completed his undergraduate degree (B.A. English/ Indigenous Literatures) at the University of Lethbridge, and he attended graduate studies at The University of British Columbia. His work has appeared in Joyland, C Magazine, Kimiwan Zine as well as in an anthology of Indigenous writing with Annick Press. When he isn't reading, writing, or tending to guinea pigs you can usually catch him on his bike or skateboard.

# ARTS WRITING PRIZE WINNER

**NALINI MALANI, *CROSSING BOUNDARIES* AT MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS,  
MONTREAL – EXHIBITION REVIEW  
BY PRABHNOOR KAUR**

Prabhnoor Kaur is a writer and art historian based in Tiohtià:ke / Montreal.

My research interests include contemporary art, diaspora narratives, and reality tv.  
I am currently pursuing my Masters in Art History at McGill University, exploring how  
airplanes form a visual vocabulary to express a Punjabi desire for migration.  
When not writing, I am, of course, reading.

## Nalini Malani, *Crossing Boundaries* at Musée des Beaux-Arts, by Prabhnoor Kaur

Do you know what a koel sounds like? Nalini Malani's *Can You Hear Me?* (2018 – 2020) sets 88 stop-motion animations to a frenetic track of synths and sitars, punctuated by the cooing of the koel. This nine-channel installation forms the centerpiece of the *Crossing Boundaries* exhibition at Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montreal, Quebec. The show also features a wall drawing/erasure performance titled *City of Desires* and a public video installation commissioned by the museum, *A Woman is a Ballad. Can You Hear Me?* is exhibited in a square room, with the animations projected onto three walls. Beanbags are placed on the floor, encouraging visitors to lay back and watch the flickering images. There is no vantage point from which all three walls are clearly visible at once; necessitating museum goers rearrange to catch the fleeting drawings. It is this ephemeral nature that I find particularly striking. Malani plays with the idea of impermanence and censorship, flashing excerpts of text, then obscuring them just as quickly. In one such glimpse, she writes "Pity the nation whose sages are silent and whose bigots haunt the airwaves."<sup>1</sup> This notion is echoed in the impending erasure of *City of Desires*, which emphasizes the role of memory in the experience of an artwork.



Nalini Malani, *Can You Hear Me?*, 2018 – 2020. Nine-channel animation chamber, eighty-eight hand-drawn iPad animations, sound. © Nalini Malani. Photo by MBAM and Jean-François Brière.

<sup>1</sup> Nalini Malani, *Can You Hear Me?*, Animated Video Installation, 2018 – 2020 (commissioned by Whitechapel Gallery).

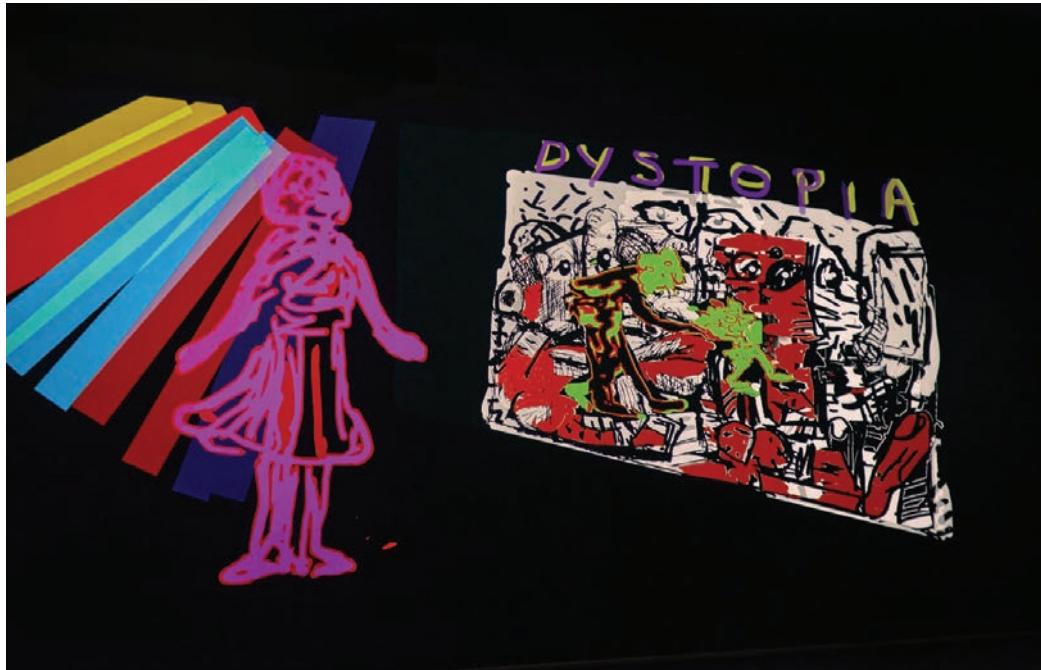
The curatorial note for the exhibition states: "Literary characters and mythological figures, accompanied by curious sounds, overlap with allusions to political events, personal thoughts and fragments of text by leading writers from diverse cultural backgrounds that together address global issues of social injustice, including gender inequality, civil conflict, and cultural hegemony".<sup>2</sup> While this is more or less true, it feels like painting in broad strokes. A fifteen second sequence narrates the "political event" of 2018 that the work hinges upon. In the city of Kathua in Jammu, eight-year-old Asifa Bano was abducted, sedated, repeatedly sexually assaulted, and murdered by six men, including a priest and two police officers, in a local Hindu temple. A mob appears on an animation channel, flashing in scarlet and saffron. The forms melt together, towering over a solitary figure. Malani's scrawl relays the news, quickly, appearing and disappearing. "She was only eight years old" the animation repeats like an incantation.

Asifa belonged to a nomadic Muslim community in the Indian-occupied settler state of Kashmir, and the violent attack was a premeditated assertion of India as a Hindu state. Protests sparked throughout the state, crying out for justice – as well as a protest in support of the assailants, attended by two ministers of the currently-governing Bharatiya Janata Party.<sup>3</sup> In August 2019, the same government revoked Article 370. This bill granted the state of Jammu and Kashmir the right to self-governance and was a key part of Partition negotiations between India and Pakistan. Despite having a Muslim majority, Kashmir was annexed as part of India. The state is heavily militarized to suppress the revolutionary independence movement. The revocation of Article 370 resulted in the BJP government placing the entire region under internet and telephone line blackout for over three months.<sup>4</sup> Activists, journalists, and scholars were arrested and disappeared. India's tourism website showcases scenic pictures of the Kashmir Valley with its green fields and vast mountains. "Incredible India" the site proclaims. "How do you divide the clouds?" Malani asks.

<sup>2</sup> Curatorial note, *Crossing Boundaries*, Musee Des Beaux-Arts, Montreal, QC.

<sup>3</sup> Khadijah Ali, "The Horrific Rape and Murder of 8-year-old Asifa," *Crescent International*, May 1, 2018. <https://crescent.icit-digital.org/articles/the-horrific-rape-and-murder-of-8-year-old-asifa>

<sup>4</sup> Raja Muzzafer Bhat, "Two Years Without Article 370 Has Done Little to Benefit the People of J&K," *The Wire India*, August 5, 2021. <https://thewire.in/rights/article-30-kashmir-august-5-jammu-and-kashmir- two-years>.



Nalini Malani, *Can You Hear Me?*, 2018 – 2020. Nine-channel animation chamber, eighty-eight hand-drawn iPad animations, sound. © Nalini Malani. Photo by MBAM and Jean-François Brière.

There is locational specificity in the sitar and koel soundtrack, in the narrative of the Kathua case, yet when the work is presented to the public, it is generalized. What the wall text calls 'gender inequality' is actually gender-based violence, 'civil conflict' is Indian settler colonialism, 'cultural hegemony' is the systematic enactment of eugenics and ethnic cleansing. Each blow the work delivers is softened by text. Thinking from the perspective of an attendee that doesn't have the cultural context for the work, the curatorial note provides no point of entry. It seems like the operating sentiment is that the work is only legible to a global audience if it hinges on a shared experience. Yet this is the antithesis of Malani's work: in referencing writers like Noam Chomsky, Samuel Beckett, and Wislawa Szymborska, Malani emphasizes the collective experience of living under state violence. The specificity of the Kathua case, of the Hindu nationalist project, and the lingering violence of Partition give body to these references. We understand why these quotes made their way into Malani's notebook.

They aren't platitudes or empty revolutionary sentiments but a reflection of the world we live in, the world we have been living in. Pulling from vast array of literary sources, what Malani does in her work is create a tapestry of dissent in the face of state violence. I return here to Malani's work, an image of a gun labeled 'The State' places the viewer in its crosshairs. In the next frame, a hand reaches out - "the citizen". Like Malani, I have notebooks from 2018 somewhere in my childhood home, words like bile as we tried to make sense of what was unfolding on our TV screens. In this room, with the elusive flickering text and images, I lay back for over an hour, trying to piece it together and make meaning. Still now the afterimage of Malani's work lingers, but this is a testament to the work itself. The exhibition, through its wall text, does Malani a disservice in its refusal to locate it in its context. With language couched in genteelism, the note attempts to defang the work.

# ARTS WRITING PRIZE RUNNER UP

## **THE SEMIOTICS OF SPOONS: MORIDJA KITENGE BANZA'S *DE 1848 A NOS JOURS* MEHRNOOSH ALBORZI**

Mehrnoosh (she/her) is an Iranian-Canadian healthcare provider, researcher, and a student of art history at Concordia University. She is also an emerging writer and an editor at the university's student journal. Her interests include radical and protest art, insurgent spaces, and anything from the seventies.

## The Semiotics of Spoons: Moridja Kitenge Banza's *De 1848 à Nos Jours*

by Mehrnoosh Alborzi

These days, the Democratic Republic of the Congo frequently appears in the news: the upsurge of violence, the humanitarian crisis, the ecological catastrophe, the displacement of almost a million people. The "news" often obscures the fact that what it reports is rarely "new", that these are not simply incidents isolated in the now. The *now* is not a slice of seconds split from a broader span of time; time is and has always been a continuum—whatever is happening now, has been happening for a long time.

Moridja Kitenge Banza is a Canadian artist of Congolese origin, born in 1980 in Kinshasa. In *De 1848 à nos jours* (2006–2018), the multidisciplinary artist explores and exposes the apparatus of slavery as the continuity of exploitation that expands across centuries from the past into our present moment. The title, *From 1848 to Our days*, deliberately and carefully emphasizes the continuation of the economic structures that have enabled and enacted slavery: "The words, the vocabularies, have evolved. But the system has not changed, the system that sets values and distributes profit."<sup>1</sup>

The artwork is comprised of two components: *Coupe de bateau négrier / Cross-section of a Slave Ship*—a largescale ink on mylar drawing depicting a cross-section of a slave ship with representations of spoons symbolizing enslaved individuals, and an installation featuring 800 teaspoons meticulously arranged in orderly rows and columns on a wall. Banza has deliberately and diligently amassed this collection of spoons over the years; the official date of the artwork, from 2006 to 2018, refers to this duration of time. To acquire the spoons, he had first conceived and established a financial system complete with its own currency, the *mori*, for which he had

<sup>1</sup> National Gallery of Canada, "Moridja Kitenge Banza: Identity, Memory, and Place," YouTube Video, 0:50-1:16, National Gallery of Canada, October 13th, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO\\_SOfrbz-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO_SOfrbz-s).

calculated the value himself. Using this printed currency, he then purchased the teaspoons from various cafes, with their values likewise determined by Banza rather than the sellers. Through this exchange system, he satirizes the financial sectors that dictate the worth for everything from exchange rates to the raw materials they purchase in the Congo. This is the same system that assigns value to enforced labour, before and after the abolition of traditional forms of slavery.

Banza creates a universe in his art, or rather replicates a parodic duplicate of the colonialist economic universe within which we exist by reframing and reappropriating its codes. The result is a self-referential universe with its own sets of rules and relations; to decipher meaning from this world, I will be guided by the cultural theorist and scholar of narratology, Mieke Bal, who advises us to "read" visual narratives semiotically, the same way we interpret stories and texts. Approaching *De 1848 à nos jours* as a text, a semiotic sign system is uncovered that uses the spoon, this seemingly quotidian and banal yet omnipresent object, as its sign and vocabulary. For Banza, the sugar spoon is a particularly significant code of the colonial economic system, considering the historical ties of sugar to slavery. Through decoding the denotations and connotations of the spoon, the visual text unfolds a complex narrative enriched with contradictory counter-meanings.

Studying the spoon semiotically, we will uncover the counter-coherent connotations embedded within it as an object. In the semiotic universe of *De 1848 à nos jours*, the spoon signifies a human being, and this is most evident in the cross-section image of a slave ship. The spoon, with its exaggeratedly large head compared to its overly slender body, bears an uncanny resemblance to an undernourished individual. Yet the spoon itself evokes nourishment and abundance; it promises to be filled with food and to feed the starved figure. But despite its connotation of copiousness, the spoons in the installation, with their shining concave surfaces proudly facing the spectators, clearly contain emptiness. The spoons are exhibited in plenty, yet they are all empty; they are a multiplicity of zeros, they represent an abundance of barrenness. Promising fullness despite its emptiness, the spoon simultaneously creates a myth of profusion and demystifies itself—not unlike a mirage.

The spoon, as opposed to, let's say, a knife, signifies nourishment in a nonthreatening way. However, once organized in this particular syntax, the spoons become menacing. In the cross-section of a slave ship, the spoons are arranged in a way that resembles a monstrous set of teeth; the ship itself with its almost phallic or warship shape thus resembles a mythical sea monster that is ready to capture its prey. Whether in the military orderliness of the installation, or the predatory image of the slave ship, the initial notion of "feeding" signified by the spoon, once accompanied by a sense of invasion and aggression, is transformed into "devouring". What was supposed to nourish us, now attacks and consumes us.

The systems of exploitation, from 1848 to our day, cause desolation with the promise of profusion for the people, pretending to provide for the humans they devour. In "reading" the work of art as a text, Bal declares that even the smallest element of the image—in this case the spoon— are "saturated with meaning". In her view, "small elements turned into signs can subvert the overt, overall meaning so as to inscribe something that didn't seem to be there", appropriating the image for a counter-message.<sup>2</sup> In his critique of colonialism and slavery, Banza reframes and appropriates the image of a spoon to create counter-meanings that demystify the myths reiterated by colonialist meaning-making systems. The system triumphantly declares: "Slavery is abolished!" But *De 1848 à nos jours* is a poignant reminder that it is only the shapes of slavery that have shifted. In the metaphoric hands of Benza, the humble spoon transforms into a potent instrument for excavating and deconstructing the antiquated structures of exploitation, confronting us with their incessant violent existence despite their absurd senselessness.

<sup>2</sup> Mieke Bal, "Reading Art?" in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 1996), 49.

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National Gallery of Canada. "Moridja Kitenge Banza: Identity, Memory, and Place." YouTube video, 6:20. National Gallery of Canada. October 13, 2021.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lO\\_SOfrbz-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lO_SOfrbz-s)

# ARUNA D'SOUZA AWARD WINNER

## **A LOVE LETTER TO MY CANADIAN PUNJABI GIRL IN EDMONTON, FROM THEIR INDIAN BENGALI BOY FROM KOLKATA IN VANCOUVER BY PARI**

PARI (they/his) is an Indian storyteller and chronicler based out of Vancouver, Canada. An emerging BIPOC artist, they explore the intersection of collective and intergenerational trauma within Asian diasporic households and how their osmosis may uphold cycles of delayed grief across generations.

# A Love Letter to my Canadian Punjabi Girl in Edmonton, from their Indian Bengali Boy from Kolkata in Vancouver

by PARI

As I diffuse my way through downtown Vancouver's programmed osmosis, I find myself stopping - twice.

In the morning on my way to work, when *sélilw̓ et* burns like gold<sup>2</sup>

In the evening on my way back, when *sélilw̓ et* bathes like blood<sup>2</sup>

An iridescent plate halos above  
Canada Place.

It's the new Komagata Maru Place signage, my love.

The Guru Nanak Jahaz stands loyal among reckless waters, cradling a diversity of passengers wrapped in mournful silence; white railings contain the scene.

The artist, Jag Nagra, colors in volume: Marigold Orange - Indigo Blue - Neem Green, radiate through the early spring skies of so-called 'Vancouver'.

the gurmukhi script in the artwork proclaims, in a newsprint typeface, *how a story [can multiply] itself through the process of its transmission, how the meaning of the same story can vary depending on its receiver*<sup>3</sup>.

-

Forgive me if I am not making much sense, my love. I'm still jet lagged from Kolkata.  
I arrived in Vancouver this morning, but I cannot recall when I left...

Like a quiet drip, my extended family leaked into the living room.  
Ma served everyone chai but a thin film had developed. Questions cast, skimmed across the brew's surface to me.

1 *sélilw̓et* is the *her̓q əmihəm̓* (Hun'qumyi'num) name for the Burrard Inlet and relates to the *séliw̓etəʔt̓* (Tsleil-Waututh) people, connecting them deeply to this region. [www.sfu.ca/coast-salish-place-names/tsleil-waututh/sleilwaut.html](http://www.sfu.ca/coast-salish-place-names/tsleil-waututh/sleilwaut.html)

2 Ruskin, J. (1843). Review of Turner's "Slave Ship" [Art review]. *Reading Aloud*. [www.readingaloud.org/ruskin/turners-slave-ship.htm](http://www.readingaloud.org/ruskin/turners-slave-ship.htm)

3 Oba, A. (2021). *Recontextualizing the "Silence" of Japanese Canadians: Artistic Approaches by Cindy Mochizuki and Emma Nishimura* [Master's thesis, The University of British Columbia]. UBC Open Collections. [www.open.library.ubc.ca/media/stream/pdf/24/1.0396990/4](http://www.open.library.ubc.ca/media/stream/pdf/24/1.0396990/4)

"What time will you arrive in our time?"

"Have you packed everything?"

"When do you leave?"

At the airport gate, a moment felt like 61 days.

At the airport gate, I bid goodbye to Baba and Ma.

At the airport gate, I saw my ancestors circling around me.

I kept my emotions at bay.

-

I am writing to say I am sorry, sajni. I have not yet come to your rescue, to make ends meet, as is my duty, I know. The distance between us has been wearing.

You tell me how it's always been the long way around for you, how easy was never an option, how the treatment you receive from people, you accept as reflections of your own deficiencies, how your tragedies are diluted to incidents.

I recognize this conditioning, my love, a churning of comparison, a bubbling of cortisol, a spilling of blood, leaving behind generational stains, and other permanent markers.

You tell me about your fear of therapy, worried that the knots may unravel so quickly, you'll cut yourself if you try to stop it - and how do I respond? By lashing out.

Perhaps the two women in Jag's artwork were once deeply hopeful girls too, believing their diligence and devotion alone would grant them their New World.

They were betrayed.

-

On the flight back to Canada, I was reading about Guru Nanak's disappearance when he went to bathe in the Kali Bein River near Sultanpur Lodhi. Many started to fear that he had drowned. But Guru Nanak reappeared after three whole days in that same spot, brimming with a bliss he proclaimed was available to us all, through 'naam, prayer, praise and love' <sup>4</sup>.

Sure, I was upset with you as well, but as time passed, I couldn't argue with all the wonderful things you've done for me. In Kolkata, I would always go back to our messages, all the silly, ridiculous, adorable reels we've shared with each other, the kind only we would get.

*Kyun darta hai tu yaar mujhpe daav laga  
Gar himmat hai dildaar mujhpe daav laga* <sup>5</sup>

I really miss you, my sajni.

You know, when I was young, my mother's grandmother would often play the harmonium and sing her own kirtans. She would tell me that the spaces between the notes were as crucial to the melody as the chords she struck. She believed silence and sound created each other, and that either could lead to a healing.

-

I will come to Edmonton soon, don't you worry, my love.  
I plan to hold onto your hands for hours.  
That's why I keep my head down, commuting to downtown and back every day.  
That's why I pause to look up at the Komagata Maru Place sign.

Just like Jag, I will refuse to accept any mugshot; a homogeneous decomposition of our story.  
I won't let anyone dictate how it will be, is, or was.

*See how much we love each other. We've been married nine years, Mikey, over here.  
We've been married nine years and we still love each other very much.  
See the way we kiss each other...see how nice and lovely we look together? Michael, over here.* <sup>6</sup>

4 Kapur, K. K. (2015). The Singing Guru. What the River said (Chapter 6). [Page 63]

5 Chhaniwala, A. (2023, August 27). *Kyu Darta Hai Tu Yaar Mujhpe Daav Laga (Official Video)* [Video]. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqrm8gyvdbl>

6 Ramirez, [username: crazycoolstudios]. (2024, February 27). My parents back in 1987... [Instagram Reel]. Instagram.  
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C32lo43OvNS/?igsh=MXhqNmM2b2xiZnh6bQ==>

Instead, I will pray for us with great faith, sajni, so we may resist amnesia, so we may turn our elegies into hymns of hope, becoming like reckless waves, rippling toward a better nostalgia.

Then, from the silence of *se'lilw̓ et* waters will burst forth new laughter, as you and I, like wild children of spring, stare back at the large-format camera with a growing impatience - *cameraman jaldi focus karo*<sup>7</sup> - for we have a new life to live, and we will get busy living it.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous. (n.d.). '*Cameraman jaldi focus karo*' [Viral audio clip]. Social Media. Note: The audio clip recently surged in popularity across global social media platforms. It translates as a directive for the cameraman to quickly focus their camera, likely in the context of taking a photo or video. With its social virality, the phrase's meaning has multiplied, each rendition adding unique re-interpretations within diverse narratives.

# ARUNA D'SOUZA RUNNER UP

## **"HE IS ESSENTIALLY AN AFRICANIST": THE DECADE SHOW'S ABANDONMENT OF THE AFROCENTRIC FOR THE AFROVERTICAL BY OMAR FARAH**

Omar Jason Farah (b. 2000) is a Somali-Canadian curator, writer, and scholar based in New York, US.

He is currently a master's candidate at CCS Bard and incoming Curatorial Intern at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

He holds his BA degree (summa cum laude) in Religion from Princeton University. During his time there, he curated several exhibitions focused on the work of Black student artists and worked under Chief Curator Stamatina Gregory at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. His research is sharply focused on developing historical methods that allow for the preservation but not overdetermination of blackness.

## "He is Essentially an Africanist": The Decade Show's Abandonment of the Afrocentric for the Afrovertical

by Omar Farah

The May 1990 *Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity* — which opened as a collaborative exhibition between the Studio Museum in Harlem, the New Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art (MoCHA) — tackled the enormous, impossible, but imperative task of reflecting on the seismic cultural shifts that transpired in 1980s America. Although heavily maligned by contemporaneous critics as a "messy"<sup>1</sup> retrospective, the *Decade Show* has found increasing historical relevance — more often for its revelations about the then-emerging politics of 1990s multiculturalism than its real-time historiography of 1980s art.

One such historical insight of the exhibition is as an early window into how the nineties would answer the evergreen and intractable question of how Africa, aesthetically and culturally, would figure in late twentieth century articulations of Black American identity. Despite being focused on a decade that saw the climax of Africa fever in Black academia and Black radical politics, the exhibition shied away from placing Africa at the center. Instead, the show's curators opted to present what I call an Afrovertical politics — figuring the significance of Africa to African Americans only as a vertical lineage. This project consults the *Julia Ann P. Herzberg Papers*, held at the Center for Curatorial Studies (Bard College) to explore the archive behind the famed *Decade Show*.

For a show of this magnitude, which was to float among three major New York City institutions, an advisory council of scholars and community leaders was suggested as a means to bolster the political influence and clarity of the project. The first mention of an advisory council came up during a meeting of the show's curators on April 12, 1988 at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Upon New Museum Director Marcia Tucker's suggestion of an advisory council, a lively exchange erupted around some of the names thrown out. Studio Museum Director Kinshasa H. Conwill immediately objected to Professor Cornel West, who had been invested in the notion of building and articulating a distinct African-American artistic tradition, but who Conwill felt

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Roberta. 1990. 3 Museums Collaborate to Sum up a Decade. *The New York Times*. May 25.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/25/arts/review-art-3-museums-collaborate-to-sum-up-a-decade.html>.

had been too dismissive of existing Black cultural contributions in the visual arts. On the other end, Studio Museum Chief Curator Sharon Patton dismissed the suggestion of Yale art history professor Robert Farris Thompson whom Patton warned was, “essentially an Africanist and that his interest in African American culture is only in those aspects that refer to African culture and evidence of it in the new world.”<sup>2</sup> This tension over the complex question of Africa’s place in contemporary Black culture and art particularly is also evidenced in the curator’s preliminary and final checklists.

Initial checklists, as the broadest net of what an exhibition aims to cover, offer insight into the widest possible bounds of an exhibition. For the same April 12th meeting where the issue of the advisory council was broached, the Studio Museum prepared a preliminary list of artists. Across the list of 41 artists were only traces of connections to the African continent, with none of the artists being African born.<sup>3</sup> The message, by omission, was that Africa was not a necessary venue to directly access in order to understand 1980s America. Instead, the curators selected, edited, re-edited, and finally presented a group of artists in the *Decade Show* who made only gestures to African traditions both culturally and religiously, always an order removed from the physical continent itself.

Amongst 94 artists and with over 200 works, Houston Conwill’s *The New Cakewalk* (1989) is a rare nod to Africa in a *Decade Show* otherwise uninterested in the continent. In this performance work, Conwill choreographs an eccentric dance on an even more eccentric map. In line with the title, Conwill is riffing of a historical dance performed by enslaved peoples for white slave masters. The dance, acted out on a cartography of important cities in the Black struggle in the United States, is at once bewildering, brutalizing, frustratingly circular, and unrelentingly collaborative. In glistening leotards, purple for the women and silver for the men, a partially choreographed, partially improvised plot unfolds between the dancers as they move endlessly but in terms of

<sup>2</sup> “Review of the Decade meeting minutes and notes”, April 12, 1988, MSS.014, box 2, folder 34, item D, Julia Ann P. Herzberg Papers, Center for Curatorial Studies Library and Archives, Bard College.

<sup>3</sup> “Review of the Decade meeting minutes and notes”, April 12, 1988, MSS.014, box 2, folder 34, item A, Julia Ann P. Herzberg Papers, Center for Curatorial Studies Library and Archives, Bard College.

displacement and resolution seem to move nowhere. The performance is a stunning portrait of African-American culture in motion, ever-changing, and ever resisting.

In an explanation of the piece offered for *Project:19 Houston Conwill* shown at MoMA in November 1989, just under a year before the *Decade Show*, Conwill connects the piece heavily to the African continent. Citing Robert Farris Thompson, the very scholar Studio Museum curators blocked from consideration for their advisory committee, Conwill connects the map in his performance to Kongolese cosmology. Of the quartered circle that constitutes the cartography of the performance, Conwill says, "for the Kongo people, in addition to signifying a crossroads, the ideogram's horizontal line divided the living from the kingdom of the dead."<sup>4</sup>

Conwill's work, a rare engagement with the subject of Africa in the *Decade Show*, embodies the exhibition's conception of the African/African-American dialectic. In its limited presence, Africa is engaged as a spiritual and cosmic authority. When it surfaces, in art like Conwill's, it is a symbol of the ancestor whose traditions must be respected but are not necessarily acknowledged as ongoing but an ocean away. Africa – in this configuration – is surely not at the center as it existed in Black academic and political discourse in the eighties, but is actually relegated to a historical subject. It is a land of yesterday, a place that lives perpetually above Black America in a family tree that droops over the Atlantic.

Although not often regarded in such a manner, the *Decade Show* represents a significant inflection point in the public discourse around Blackness in America. Supposedly historicizing a decade that worked hard to figure Africa as a contemporary subject, the retrospective exhibition instead preemptively dove into the politics of multiculturalism that would come to dominate 1990s art – willing to only acknowledge Africa as a distinct and historical homeland.

<sup>4</sup> Conwill, Houston. *Projects 19 : Houston Conwill*. The Museum of Modern Art. 1989.  
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# 2024 ARTS WRITING PRIZE SUBMISSIONS

## The Little Girl Within

by Amanda Omilon

When people treat me with unkindness, I think of this little girl.

When people misjudge me, I think of this little girl.

When people take their anger out on me, I think of this little girl.

When, when, when.

This girl was always shy and timid, as she had to be so carefully kept that a gust of wind would be enough to shrivel her up. Some may say hypersensitive, others may say too emotional, and this little girl believed them at the time. But this adult knows that this girl's heart is soft because it is this softness that heals the greatest hurts. As an adult, she cries at things like cute stuffed animals, seeing other people cry, the ending of *Narnia's Prince Caspian*, or standing at the Vatican realizing she is so small compared to the gigantic realms of this earth.

Sensitive? Sure. Emotional? Absolutely. But compassionate? Definitely. Empathetic? All the time.

Ensued with passion and depth larger than the galaxies in her eyes? Most definitely.

When I look at this girl, she deserves more than the cruelties that come her way. She deserves protection, salvation, and preservation. She deserves me. Because the world tries to strip us of our softness, our sensitivity, our hearts. It hopes to turn pureness into molten rock and tell you 'that's just how life is'. *We* choose not to believe it. *We* choose strength and dignity that the harshness of this world cannot find a way to destroy.

This little girl tugs at my sleeve, begging me not to become cold, not to let the world dampen my spirit. Some days I shrug her off, other days I can't feel her tug. Sometimes I'm scared I've ignored her for too long. But it's in those special moments of laughter, friendship, awe, and love, that when I pause and listen carefully, I can feel a small, ever so gentle tug that whispers, "Come back."

This time I will listen.



## Sour Breath and Love with Liquor

by Amelie Gallant

“Sour Breath” from Julien Baker’s 2017 album “Turn Out The Lights” explores the brutally honest truth behind the balance of alcoholism and relationships. Baker, part of the supergroup “Boygenius” is known for her haunting and impassioned lyrics, which are most present in her solo work.

The song is introduced with the information that Baker’s partner does better when she is by herself, “free from the weight of my dirt poor health / New drugs to fix all my missing cells.” and that she (Baker) didn’t bring it up since she’s done so well this week. We learn in the first verse that Baker is struggling with her mental health, and keeping this to herself to avoid burdening her partner. “I thought that if I tried a little bit harder you’d change your mind / I’ve still got nowhere to be, I don’t do too well, nobody’s worried.” In this next line, she expresses how she is struggling and trying to keep her partner around. She feels nobody is worried about her (Baker), as everyone is focused on her struggling partner.

Approaching the second verse, metaphors bloom rapidly, “But I shouldn’t have built a house in the middle of your chest / Plywood boards joined at your breast.” The chest, also where your heart lies, is considered by most to be the core of a person’s being, or soul. Baker has built a house in the middle of her partner’s core and used plywood (a strong choice of wood) to build this foundation. It tells us that Baker has used her best resources to make this relationship work.

Baker writes, “Splinter in my arm where you rest your head” To bring her partner comfort, she must endure pain. Her partner’s wooden home is injuring her, even though she built it, “Checking my watch till you come to bed/ Kiss me goodnight with your sour breath / Breaks on my face like a wave of emptiness/ And when I talk just taste regret/ You’re everything I want and I’m all you dread.” Her partner finally comes to bed after she has stayed up waiting. She is met with her partner’s sour breath- referring to the smell of someone’s breath after they drink. This breath washes over Baker’s face “like a wave of emptiness” because it is the reminder of the addiction taking place in their relationship. When she talks, she tastes regret- she tastes her partner’s secondhand alcohol on her lips. Her partner dreads to be with her, possibly because she is the only thing holding her back from fully indulging in alcohol.

The alcohol has slowly deteriorated her partner and she can’t keep herself together anymore, “Watch the poison leak from your pores/ Think all the liquor’s gonna keep you warm / Burn everything down to prove you could leave me inside in a body made of wood” The liquor has left her body- the short term warmth has gone, and all that remains is the darkness alcoholism leaves behind. Her partner has burned down the home Baker built, leaving her in a hollow body ‘made of wood’. This tells us that the ‘house’ she made for her partner was part of herself. She used her own resources to give something that her partner would inevitably burn.

“The harder I swim the faster I sink” is repeated eight times until the end of the song. I picture this line being repeated in a storm of water, each breaststroke as a new repetition, a new vow that she is still trying, and yet still failing. She can’t pull herself out of the water, which should heal her from the burns her partner inflicted, yet all it does is make her drown.

“Sour Breath” is a reminder that you can’t save someone else, regardless of how much of you they hold in their heart. Even when you know this, you still want to try. Throughout the story, she hints that she knows- and has known all along that it was a lost cause. But the urge to try and save the relationship outweighs everything for her, even her own well-being.

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# Encyclopedia Isteris

by Autumn McDonald



# Wild Mushrooms



## Red-Ribboned *Lepista*

The red-ribboned lepista is distinguishable by its bright red rings around its cap. It can be found in wood clearings, however they can also be cultivated domestically. Red-Ribboned Lepistas are not edible, but, will emit a sweet, floral scent (similar to bergamot) when boiled.

## Witch's Wart

Witch's wart are found in bogs, growing off rotting trees. When witches wart is crushed, it secretes a thick paste often used to soothe rashes, burns and blisters.



## Fiddle-Bottomed *Moral*

Fiddle-bottomed Morals are edible when cooked and are favoured for their ability to soak up spices and brines. Unlike most morals, the ridges in their cap resembles more of a lattice than a honeycomb. Fiddle-Bottomed morals grow primarily in wooded areas, near the base of pine trees.



### *Bishop's Lung*

*Bishop's lung is an invasive species of fungi that populates forest floors. When touched, it will emit dangerous spores that, when inhaled, may cause severe muscle spasms.*

### *Pillup*

*Pillups are rare mushrooms found deep in caves. Pillups can be brewed into a tea as a treatment for late stage goose's warts, this is only if previous medicines prove to be ineffective.*



### *Pansy Peepers*

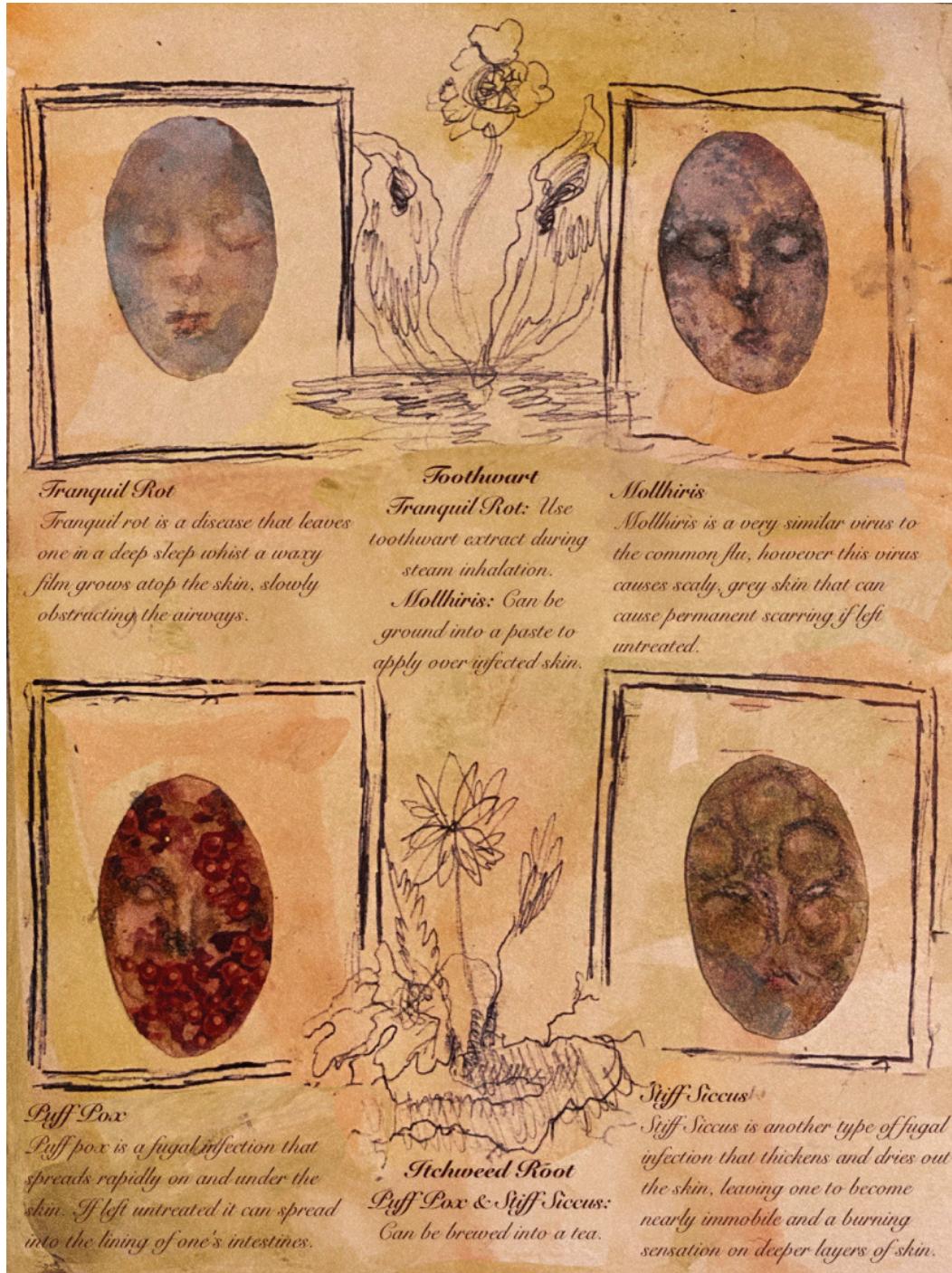
*Pansy peepers get their name from the fact they primarily grow along side wild pansies. Their name derives from the fungi's phosphorescent quality making them look like glowing eyes in the night or "peepers".*



### *Spotted Gnome's Cap*

*Spotted gnome's cap is found in bogs growing along side many variants of moss. Despite this fungi's unassuming name it is highly poisonous to consume and has been known to carry Puff Pox.*





### Goose Warts



Goose warts is a virus that practically eats away at the brain overtime, along side causing irritation in the eyes eventually resulting in blindness.



### Sour Milkssqueet

Juice is to be strained from it's berries and made into a tonic.

## Diseases & Cures

### Vampirism



Vampirism is spread by the saliva of others infected by this disease, often times being bats. It begins as an intense fear of sunlight and a severe silver allergy, it then develops into a ravenous thirst for human blood.

Vampirism cannot be cured but there are ways to prevent it. Wearing silver jewelry (specifically necklaces) is an effective way of keeping vampirism from spreading. Eating citrus fruits like oranges and lemons is also advised along side keeping garlic on hand. You may also want to use silver locks and chains around the house.



Garlic



There is a small chance that people infected by vampirism will revive themselves on their own, to keep this from happening there is a strategic burial ritual that insures they stay dead.

### *Vampires*

"Vampires" refers to individuals infected by vampirism. Identifiable by their almost translucently pale skin and sharp canines, it's advised to avoid these beings due to their aggressive behaviour.



### *Draids*

Draids are peaceful creatures that move as slowly as a snail. Wandering the world until they eventually rot and psychically cannot move anymore.

## *Inhabitants of Isteris*

### *Tuskcreast*

Tuskcreast is a serpent woman spotted in Cradle Creek. She aims to torment any fisherman that come into her creek. This torment can span from scaring fish away to dragging these fishermen underwater to drown.



### *Lady Bethel*

Not much is known about Lady Bethel. Her sobs seemingly cease the closer she gets to you.

## Womanhood and the universal experience of discrimination in sports

by Bailey Morrissey

Not man enough to go in the sauna with all my fellow boxers. Not woman enough to be represented by the vocabulary used to describe the class as a whole. Always the odd one out. Last to get a partner, or left out. Where others fit in like puzzle pieces I do not fit in at all. Working my ass off to prove I deserve to be in a place where everyone else naturally clicks. At least I have the locker room to myself, I think as I hear their laughing voices spill from the vents. Their camaraderie unintentionally taunts me through the semi thick wall separating us. The wails from a towel whip echo from the other room as I brush my dripping wet hair over the sink. It's because there's so few women, that's why the sauna was put in the men's room. That's why the garbage can in here is only half full and has been sitting unemptied for over a month. That's why there are so many lockers in here with so few locks on them. I think of any possible reason while staring myself down in the mirror that the neglect I feel is not my fault. It's not because of what I am. Or who I am. I tell myself the same excuse given to me by everyone my entire life and I force myself to believe it. They're just men. They are most likely oblivious to the questioning of my self worth they've caused me. So I do not blame them for our inevitable divide. We are only following the binary norms of society. Their actions are never hateful or cruel, only unequal. Some of you may be thinking, "If you're going to complain so much about the so-called inequality, why didn't you do a 'women's' sport?" I need to preface that I love my gym, I love my sport, and I love my people, however, as a woman I have never felt like I truly belonged in a sports setting. I

never joined my school teams at Bayview high school. In hockey, the girls were given the unwanted time slots and kicked off the ice before their game was even over, so the boys team could warm up for their game. The girls basketball team did not receive new jerseys after the schools rebranding until months after the boys teams, not to mention the amount of students coming to support the girls teams being counted on your hands.

As for football, there was no girls' team.

This all seems unfair but it is only the tip of the iceberg from a small town in Nova Scotia. Instances like this are not new. They have been happening for years and years. It's astounding how people can be mad at a woman for watching a sporting event and supporting her partner. Or the fact that the professional women's hockey league (PWHL) was founded in 2023 with only six teams while the national hockey league (NHL) has thirty-two teams, and women's boxing made its debut in the Canada games in 2023.

Gender discrimination is the unfair treatment of another person, or group of people based on their gender. This can mean harassment, bullying and being treated with disadvantages based on sex, gender expression, and gender identity. Gender discrimination has been present throughout sports history since the beginning of time. While researching for this essay I was disappointed to find that not only were women being given less desirable playing times on high school teams but also in many other places around the world.

Despite how far things have advanced for women's sports in more recent years, we are still disadvantaged. We continue to live in a world where daughters hear their fathers comment on ring girls chest sizes and the mansplaining apocalypse of sports is still at large. So we've addressed issues causing discrimination and gender imbalance in sports of many kinds, but what steps can we take to improve these inequalities? We can start by supporting these athletes, their teams, and games the way we do for men. Put in place equity policies to ensure female athletes have access to the same opportunities, benefits and wages as men. Avoiding sexist language, when writing or speaking about female athletes. Stopping the belittling of women who are athletes or are attending sports events by condemning them to the shackles of their gender or if their bodies fit stereotypical body image standards, which is honestly something that should not even need to be said. If you are a man watching a sports event with a woman, no matter who it may be, your mother, sister, girlfriend, wife, daughter or friend talk *with* her, not *at* her, trust me the difference between those two words is astronomical.

Sincerely, Bailey

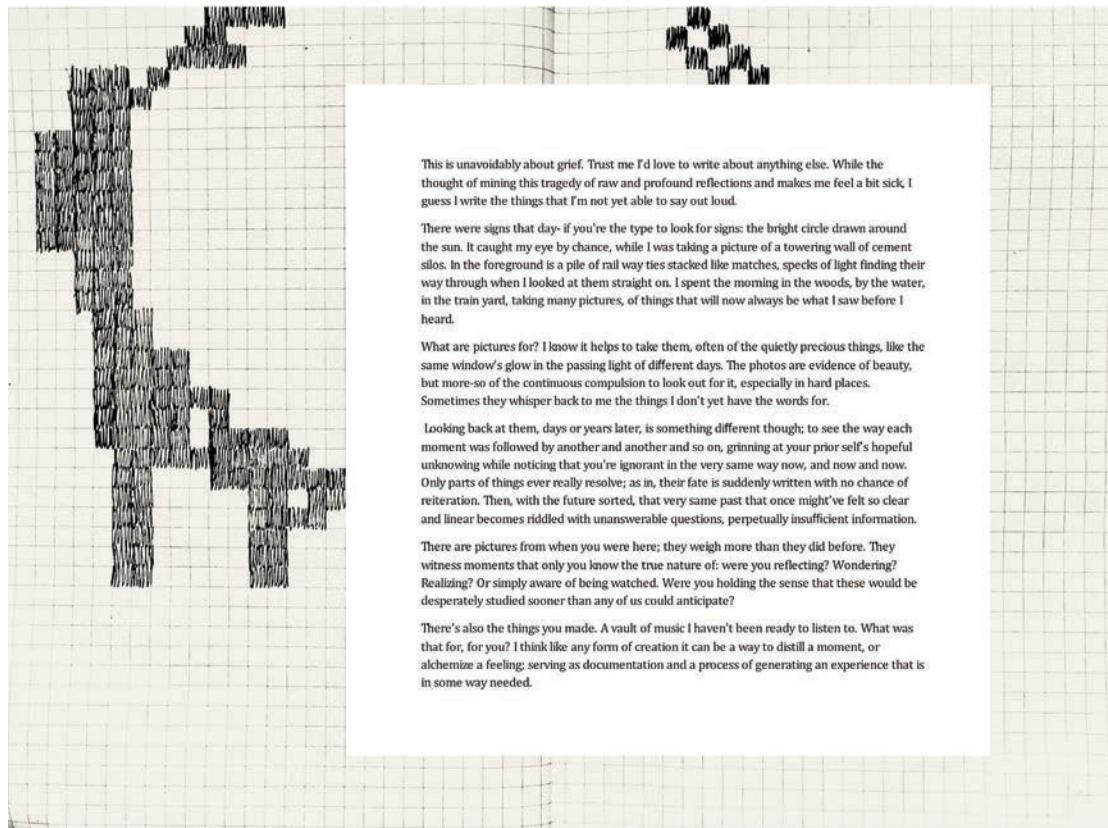
Photographs by: Bailey Morrissey





## New Moon In March

by Basia Evelyn



This is unavoidably about grief. Trust me I'd love to write about anything else. While the thought of mining this tragedy of raw and profound reflections and makes me feel a bit sick, I guess I write the things that I'm not yet able to say out loud.

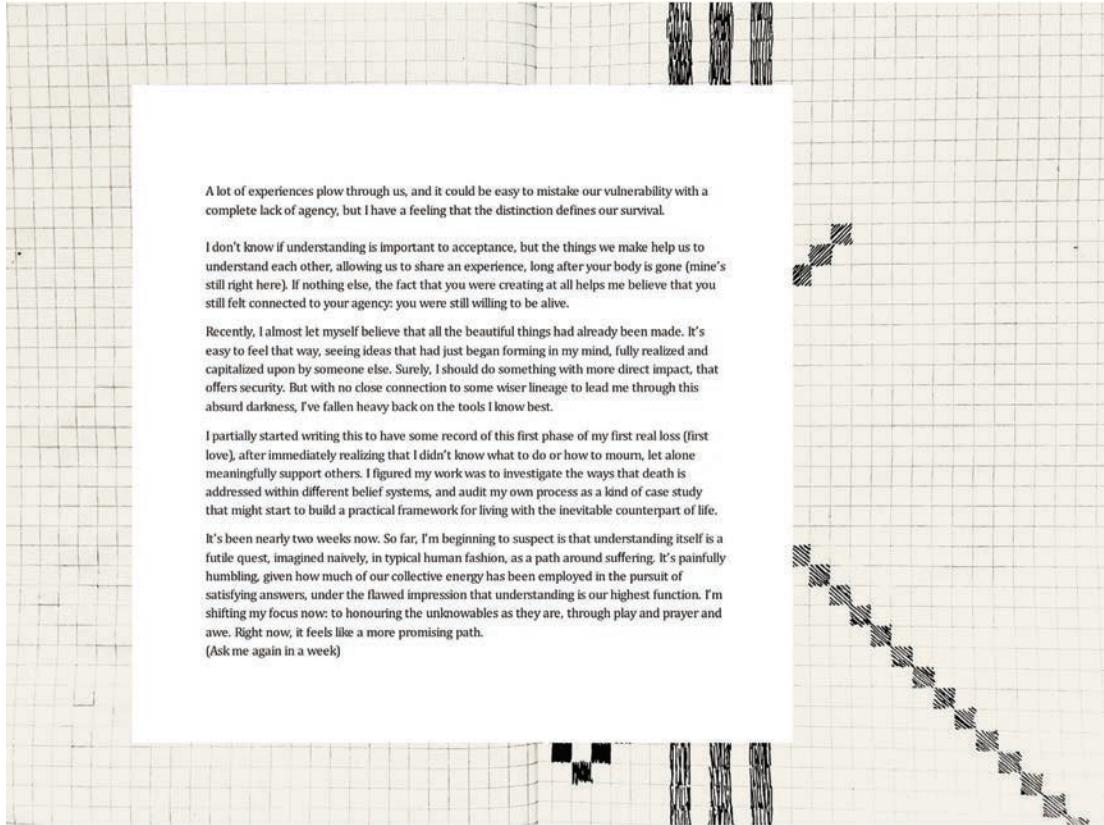
There were signs that day- if you're the type to look for signs: the bright circle drawn around the sun. It caught my eye by chance, while I was taking a picture of a towering wall of cement silos. In the foreground is a pile of railway ties stacked like matches, specks of light finding their way through when I looked at them straight on. I spent the morning in the woods, by the water, in the train yard, taking many pictures, of things that will now always be what I saw before I heard.

What are pictures for? I know it helps to take them, often of the quietly precious things, like the same window's glow in the passing light of different days. The photos are evidence of beauty, but more-so of the continuous compulsion to look out for it, especially in hard places. Sometimes they whisper back to me the things I don't yet have the words for.

Looking back at them, days or years later, is something different though; to see the way each moment was followed by another and another and so on, grinning at your prior self's hopeful unknowing while noticing that you're ignorant in the very same way now, and now and now. Only parts of things ever really resolve; as in, their fate is suddenly written with no chance of reiteration. Then, with the future sorted, that very same past that once might've felt so clear and linear becomes riddled with unanswerable questions, perpetually insufficient information.

There are pictures from when you were here; they weigh more than they did before. They witness moments that only you know the true nature of: were you reflecting? Wondering? Realizing? Or simply aware of being watched. Were you holding the sense that these would be desperately studied sooner than any of us could anticipate?

There's also the things you made. A vault of music I haven't been ready to listen to. What was that for, for you? I think like any form of creation it can be a way to distill a moment, or alchemize a feeling; serving as documentation and a process of generating an experience that is in some way needed.



A lot of experiences plow through us, and it could be easy to mistake our vulnerability with a complete lack of agency, but I have a feeling that the distinction defines our survival.

I don't know if understanding is important to acceptance, but the things we make help us to understand each other, allowing us to share an experience long after your body is gone (mine's still right here). If nothing else, the fact that you were creating at all helps me believe that you still felt connected to your agency: you were still willing to be alive.

Recently, I almost let myself believe that all the beautiful things had already been made. It's easy to feel that way, seeing ideas that had just begun forming in my mind, fully realized and capitalized upon by someone else. Surely, I should do something with more direct impact, that offers security. But with no close connection to some wiser lineage to lead me through this absurd darkness, I've fallen heavy back on the tools I know best.

I partially started writing this to have some record of this first phase of my first real loss (first love), after immediately realizing that I didn't know what to do or how to mourn, let alone meaningfully support others. I figured my work was to investigate the ways that death is addressed within different belief systems, and audit my own process as a kind of case study that might start to build a practical framework for living with the inevitable counterpart of life.

It's been nearly two weeks now. So far, I'm beginning to suspect is that understanding itself is a futile quest, imagined naively, in typical human fashion, as a path around suffering. It's painfully humbling, given how much of our collective energy has been employed in the pursuit of satisfying answers, under the flawed impression that understanding is our highest function. I'm shifting my focus now: to honouring the unknowables as they are, through play and prayer and awe. Right now, it feels like a more promising path.  
(Ask me again in a week)

# Escapism in Contemporary Art

by C. S. Elliot

When the world isn't bringing us the joy we aspire for, or when misfortune and lack of opportunities plague our days, we could wish to escape to a happy place. To nature, to games, to imaginary worlds that are always changing. To mindless hobbies, or hobbies that take your mind from the rest of the world. The wish to escape the unpleasant or tedious aspects of life is the heart of escapism, and the arts, whether painting, drawing, writing, sculpting or any number of others. Both are no stranger to being a conduit for creativity, prompting collaboration between the two experiences.

One of the most common forms of escapism is taking part in the arts. Art brings about the worlds we perceive, or even create, in our minds. When we imagine stories, art can help realize them. Whether those stories are our interpretations of the real world, or a wholly fictional story based on scattered concepts from all across our experiences. The lives we live can inspire the creation of boundless cities within our mind. We can find our dream sceneries, watch magic shape a fantastical land, or dream up hypothetical technology which will revolutionize civilization. Creativity is bountiful when escapism is at play, and that gives way for the making of art.

Art can be the greatest enabler to share these ideas, these perspectives and interpretations. And so, art thrives on those who wish to share their experiences and mindsets. This world is full of reasons to make up our own worlds. People who embrace escapism may find it enjoyable, they may want to share the conceptual thinking that made their days as pleasant as they were. Their minds have constructed this imaginary world for their ideas to run wild, and this phenomena has and will inspire many artists.

An imaginary world in one's mind is called a paracosm. Paracosms can be the life-blood of an artist. A fictional artist depends on the ability to escape and create an enthralling world for their pieces to depict. This also enables our dreams to be shared as though they were reality. For many, escapism in this way is the greatest high, such as a storyteller, as well as those who read into the story. Art can gather ideas and concepts, sharing them as one hopes. This is the symbiotic relationship between art and escapism.

In the modern day, people constantly have more and more reasons to try escaping. Where vacations are far too expensive, and the media of other creators isn't hitting the spot, many are drawn to the idea of having their own mental escapes realized. Art becomes the enabler for the mind to explore infinity while staying grounded to a medium of choice. For minds which can think a thousand thoughts, art can hold together what one sees and arranges in their mind, so it can be referenced later. This enables storytellers, visual designers and creators, and many more. Art enables the very best aspects of escapism. This is why both beautiful aspects of mind and culture need to be valued.

## The Unfortunate Pitfalls of Contemporary Art

by Carson Bowering

An artist uses the darkness to find the light,  
They sit in a coffin of silk.  
Their mistakes are their greatest weapon,  
They piece together broken bits.

Through a window they stare and see the entire world,  
Within themselves they look for truth -  
And into the wind they set it free.

They risk all hope of normalcy,  
And must trust themselves dearly.  
But often they'll look up and see,  
They're the only one in the room.

Their reflection is the only thing to keep them company,  
And they wished they hadn't thought so hard-  
Because now the answers are gone.

Art alone is never heard.  
The mirror must be smashed.  
Art for the self is selfish.

But sometimes,  
You have nothing to talk about other than yourself.

Those pieces you've created,  
Your pieces of identity, cast into stone.  
They have set you in place,  
And you can no longer grow.

Is expression worth the cost?  
Is reality lost as we create our own?  
Where is the truth?

I dropped my glasses,  
And I can no longer see.

I just want to be real,  
I want a slice of life.  
Plop it down unto a plate, quickly,  
Before I fall back into dreams.

What we create can be great,  
And art can fulfill the soul.  
But to fall into ourselves,  
Humanity is lost.

# I make you uncomfortable

by Chloë Clune

Blood drawn by sword on display

Crimson marks on cotton never spoken of

Butterflies fall when drenched in red

It's all in your head

Do I make you uncomfortable?



Perish the thought of living the life you were given

Live your pain without making a noise so he'll want you in bed

Spears dig into your sides

Let them twist the blade

I make you uncomfortable.

Glowing pixels of a man in pools of crimson death

I bathe in scarlet life

Repopulate our earth silently

Compliance is sexy

I make you uncomfortable.

Clean your jeans before they are seen

His gashes show strength

It's that time of the month

Should I have removed my uterus when I was ten?

I make you uncomfortable.

Remember when you were too young to bleed

Be like that again  
Play pretend like you did with your dolls  
Like a twenty-year-old who never hit puberty  
I make you uncomfortable.

Man's blood means bravery  
Your blood means filth  
Show him your skin  
There's beauty in pain, but not yours  
I make you uncomfortable.

Desensitized to paintings of death  
Not an eye is bat at drawings of violence  
I sculpt a tampon, sent to the office  
My sculpture is locked away  
I make you uncomfortable.

I'm told my class time will be spent covering the windows with paper and tape  
My peers are warned of the disturbing thing I have made  
War in the lobby  
My body in the closet—

I make you uncomfortable.

My body makes you uncomfortable.

I will continue to make you uncomfortable,  
Make you uncomfortable until I am comfortable.



## How terrifying can it be?

by Claudia Lagacé-Séguin

Darkness surrounds, nothing but the moon and the stars illuminate the sky. Occasional hoots from an owl echo throughout the dead silence. The owl searches for its next meal, flapping silently through the forest, inches from its prey. Am I asleep? I feel branches cracking under my feet, sinking into the squishy mud covering the ground. My eyes see nothing but the vast selection of silhouettes in the distance. Trees surround me, leaves rustle along with the hoots, feeling even emptier. I hear “boom, boom, boom” as my heart beats against my chest, physically feeling my pulse, breathing intensifies, something inside tells me to run, get out of here, escape. The thought is quickly interrupted; there’s a warmth behind me that wasn’t there a second ago. Did the air get warmer? No that’s not it, am I imagining it? No that’s not it either; I’m not alone anymore. Something is breathing down my neck, sinking in the mud with me. I slowly lift one foot from the mud, then the next, no sudden movements. With no second thought, my legs leave me behind: run, run, run. My eyes, not blinking even for a second, feel dry and itchy, just keep going. I know I’m being chased, I’m not imagining it, I don’t hear anything behind me, just my feet hitting the ground, crushing anything in their path. I can’t stop, I’m not safe, it’ll catch me; whatever it is, it’ll get me. My lungs hurt, each breath is another knife going through; I have to stop. My eyes are closing, oh shit, I feel myself lose my footing, how stupid. So this is how I die. I lay on the wet muddy ground, staring up into the stars. As my gaze lowers, a white shadow appears above me, staring down at me. I want to move, I do, but I can’t, my body won’t move, my mind is running through every possible situation, but my body won’t move. As my mind becomes unruly, the shadow comes down on me fast, all I can do is watch. I jolt, my eyes open. “Oh, my canvas,” as my eyes open, I’m faced with a white canvas, how terrifying. I guess I fell

asleep, it's still quiet, the lights are off in the studio, moonlight shines through the windows, I squint as my eyes meet the light. A second goes by, I hear a faint hoot in the background. This feels familiar.

## Show Me an Angel and I'll-

by Courtney Buder

Show Me an Angel and I'll-

I know nothing of the nature of art. I know only what moves me, and that when I create it is another way of asking to be seen. Look at me, I shout- listen to me, to my pen scratching into the paper, and often nobody answers at all. I think often of people who were never seen and never heard.

Courbet painted only what he saw, which is a conundrum for a human being. Our affection causes us to see tangible beauty in the everyday just as the contempt of others causes them to see the same subject as disgusting, loathsome, unworthy. Courbet did not soften the stone breakers or the women or the waves into ideals with transformative brushstrokes; he simply chose to see them, and their loveliness was made with his decision. Walking through the sunny rooms of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, I am often left overwhelmed with gratitude for the decisions made by contemporary artists and curators; gratitude for what they choose to see.

History is forged in large part by artists. We can only know the past as intimately as those who lived it and decided to make a record of things as they saw them. Courbet has not necessarily gifted us with truth or fact, but with the promise that there is something worth witnessing in all of our lives, and with a reminder that it is up to us to ensure that the things we find worthy of seeing will be remembered the way that we experienced them. Creating with this intent was controversial not so long ago. In many ways and places it still is. I worry that we take our liberties for granted too often.

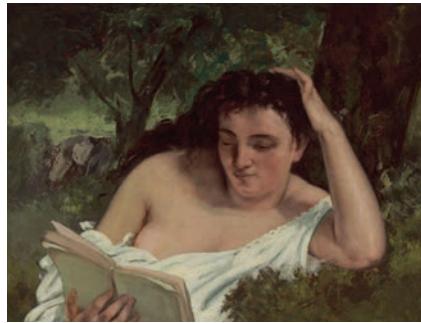
*Mountains of Wonder and Tangles of Truth: Kathy Hooper, a Retrospective* is on view at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery until July 9th, 2024. This exhibit has booked a permanent residence in my heart. Visitors step not only into a room completely filled with artwork, but into Hooper's mind, so that we might briefly look out through her eyes and see the many things she decided were worth looking at. *Portrait of John in Mexico* (1996) pulled me in with a gravity that reminded me of seeing *The Origin of the World* (1866) for the first time. I knew that Hooper loved John before I managed to look away from the warm, glowing ribbons of colour with which she portrayed his face to read the words, "my most beloved human." I knew because she painted what she saw. My gratitude to the curator, Amy Ash for seeing this work and allowing me to see it in turn is unending.

The abundance and breadth of the work on view is stunning, from Hooper's writing, drawings and paintings to her sculptures, carvings and embroidery; her subject matter reflects every facet of her life, sometimes with humour and gorgeous affection for her loved ones and the world around her, sometimes with expressive reflection on things she lived through, such as the violence of apartheid. The life she is living as an artist, an activist, a wife and a mother is clearly and deliberately vibrant.

On a green desk in the centre of the room alongside several books, just underneath a selection of smaller works, visitors find a stack of colouring sheets featuring Hooper's line drawings of angelic creatures with stylised wings. As I look at them, Courbet's famous words come to mind. Though we know how he felt about angels, I am unable to imagine anyone spending time in this room without wanting to smile.

Show *me* an angel and I will be grateful to have gotten to know you.

– Courtney Buder



Gustave Courbet. *A Young Woman Reading*, 1866/1868. Oil on canvas, 60 x 72.9 cm. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

## BIPOC Photography as Environmental Protest in Ji-Me Yoon's *Long Time So Long* & Duane Isaac's *Snake Series*

by Dolores Gosselin

The art of photography is one that is rooted in colonial history and ethnographic motivations. With that in mind, many contemporary BIPOC artists have reappropriated this vessel to create artworks of their own, inevitably commenting on the dark and racist history of photography. Two contemporary artists working in Canada that have used photography are Ji-Me Yoon and Duane Isaac, in their respective series *Long Time So Long* (2022) and *Snake Series* (2023). By looking at one specific photograph from each series, I will argue that the use of photography, natural element, queerness undertones, and opacity in both artists' work function as a way to comment on the colonial and settler colonial treatment of Canadian land and indigenous people as well as their survival in spite of that violent treatment.

In Duan Isaac's third *Snake Series* photograph, a shirtless subject is presented wearing a mask showing a fruit tree in bloom, surrounded by snakes. The mask hides the subject's face, but their traditional tattoo visible on their bare chest hints to the viewer that the subject is indigenous. Preventing the viewer to see the subject's face does not erase its identity, as the tattoo shows a clear connection to indigenous culture and history. In this case, the mask created by the artist in the context of contemporary indigenous photography also serves as a reminder of indigenous traditional masks. Isaac's desire to "challenge traditional notions of portraiture" and incorporating "environmental angst" in their work culminate in this photograph.<sup>1</sup> By showing a blooming tree among snakes, I believe that the artist uses this work to comment on the treatment of both indigenous people and their

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Skelly, *Indigenous Contemporary Photography* Lecture, Concordia University, February 22, 2024.

land by British and French settlers in Canada while challenging the “nostalgic celebration of ‘vanishing races’”<sup>2</sup> that has been perpetuated by photo-colonialism. As the mask shows us, indigenous people are an integral part of Canada, despite the colonial effort to cast them as a part of the Canada’s past and erase them from the Canadian present.

Ji-Me Yoon’s work more directly comments on this settler colonial treatment of the Canadian land and its inhabitants, choosing to shoot her *Long Time So Long* series along the Iona Island pipeline in British Columbia. The photograph *ChronoChrome 2* shows the artist, her back to the camera, wearing a mask mirroring landscape as if the viewer could see through it, and wearing “a costume made of space-age fabric appliquéd onto unbleached cotton”<sup>3</sup> covering most of her body. This lack of accessibility the artist and subject grants the viewer forces us to notice the choice of landscape as important to the meaning of the work. The mirroring effect of the mask completing the landscape furthers the effect of opacity created by the wearing of the mask itself, combining the land and the subject as one. While not indigenous herself, Yoon’s comment on the settler colonial treatment of Canadian lands and its peoples is obvious. By merging land and subject, she positions herself in a landscape while letting it speak for itself and its people, showcasing the violent changes it has endured at the hands of settler colonials.

A queerness can also be read in both photographs. Isaac mentions that “an ‘Indigiqueer’ perspective shapes my artistic practice by exploring the intersectionality of identity, culture, and sexuality.”<sup>4</sup> This queerness can be understood in the sensuality present

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<sup>2</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Returning Fire, Pointing the Canon: Aboriginal Photography as Resistance,” in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, ed. Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011): 79.

<sup>3</sup> Julia Skelly *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Julia Skelly, *Ibid.*

in the photograph due to the exposed body of the subject. Ji-Me Yoon, on the other hand, chooses to don a costume that fully covers her body and renders her genderless to the viewer. These two opposite ways to – by exposing and covering the subject’s body – creates a queer undertone in both works that further informs the viewer of a voluntary contrast with a heteronormativity so crucial to colonial beliefs. This departure from such beliefs accentuates the importance of a non colonial understanding of the Canadian land and people that is represented in both artworks.

By choosing to use queer identity, natural elements, and opacity in their respective series of photographs, Li-Me Yoon and Duane Isaac manage to reclaim photography as a tool to comment on settler colonial violence made towards indigenous lands and BIPOC. The reclaiming of this artistic tool is not only important for Canadian BIPOC artists, but also a way for these artists to reclaim their space in Canada’s past, present, and future.

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**Figure 1.** Duane Isaac, from the *Snake Series*, 2023, photography.



**Figure 2.** Ji-Me Yoon. *ChronoChrome 2 (Long Time So Long)*, 2022, inkjet print, 182.9 x 121.9 cm (72 x 48 inches)

Roxanne

by Ella Misurka-Feal



At what age did you learn not to do something because someone told you it was inappropriate? Roxanne, a wild animal, is blissfully unaware of and looks at you, questioningly. "What are you looking at?" she asks. You look at her and maybe you sexualize her. She didn't ask for you to do that.

Roxanne is a sculpture of a nude human body, on all fours wearing a fox mask and tail. Roxanne started with a base of chicken wire which was then covered in plaster. The surface was treated with acrylic paint and gel medium. Afterwards, it was decorated with scrap fabric and Mia Murphy's hair. Ella Misurka-Feal used her love of foxes as inspiration for the subject and mixed it with a feeling of unsettling weirdness . Roxanne depicts non consensual sexualisation and primal innocence. It is not this creature's intention to be a sexual figure. The stance is natural and unaware. She is not trying to be sexual. That being said, the stance, gaze and form seem inappropriate. It is reminiscent of a cat in heat, sticking its butt in the air. A cat does this to show she's physically ready to mate. That being said, this action is not seductive but rather holds purpose. Roxanne represents the innocence of our sexuality before we are aware of the power it holds. It depicts the phase of innocence before one is conditioned to act in a specific way. To Ella, a fox is a symbol of playfulness, intelligence and sly mischief.

## Art-Life Balance

by Emi Goto

Hard work is an inescapable part of any good life. If you can't bear it and keep fighting when everything is telling you to stop, you'll be doomed to a mediocre life – unless you receive extra support from family or the government, in which case your success will be undeserved.

This sentiment has been in the back of my mind for my entire life. I remember being in Grade 2 or 3, dripping tears all over my homework at the dinner table and sobbing, “I don’t want to do this anymore!” to which my Japanese mother retorted, “Noemi, you’re going to have to do things you don’t want to do. Sometimes I have to do things I don’t want to do, and I do it anyway! That’s life!” She often said such things with a finality that would compliment someone slamming a textbook shut. I heard that statement from her all the time, and though technically true, I never wanted to believe it. I was good at drawing from a young age and my art classes never gave me as much grief as math or French (though as I grew older, they absolutely did). In Grade 8 I was accepted into a well-regarded arts high school in my city, and I was overjoyed that I’d be able to immerse myself in visual art among other aspiring artists. It meant the beginning of my escape from standard,

high-paying-job-acquiring education into a pursuit of my dreams. My mother encouraged me to continue playing guitar into high school, because when my life became saturated with visual art I would need another creative outlet to turn to (she was very right about this).

By Grade 12, following the worst of the pandemic and an ADHD diagnosis, I had thrown myself entirely into the idea of becoming an artist. I planned exhibitions in my sketchbook, drafted speeches and statements about the meaning and intention behind my work in my head. I mulled endlessly over the things I wanted to see in the world and how I was going to make them, staying up all night to work on paintings no one had asked me to do. I thought of art and artmaking as an essential method of communication, as something to shout at the people I felt couldn't understand me. I was angry, and miserable, and this became fuel for my ability to say something, as I believed an artist must. As my emotional and physical health worsened, I almost couldn't graduate because I started failing English.

It wasn't until I took a year off after my high school graduation when I started to accept the idea of doing absolutely nothing with my artistic talents. I realised how unhappy I'd been while committing everything I had to my idea of a purpose, and

how that impacted my life and relationships. I saw how wasteful it would be to abandon my well-being for something that couldn't guarantee financial independence nor fulfillment. I became distraught when it finally set in that having ADHD meant I would always have less energy than everyone else, that I would always struggle with managing work, and that no prescription stimulant or organizational method could undo the fact that everything was simply more difficult for me than it should've been.

It should be remarkable to all of us that the effects of stress are detrimental to the body, how constant burnout makes us sicker and sicker in ways we don't always see before it's too late. Yet it seems like in order to be worth something as an artist, you have to sacrifice comfort, or at least find some enjoyment in discomfort. When a need to eat or sleep felt like a burden, I was full of ideas and aspirations. But when I prioritized adequate nutrition and full nights of rest, I engaged with art almost passively, languidly. This bothered me, and I questioned if I even had the choice to maintain my health while creating work I'm passionate about. I often hear of my fellow students working late into the night and sleeping on campus to meet our deadlines, and it made me wonder at first if I really struggle because of a disorder, or if everyone else is just more willing to wring themselves out.

Now as I learn to manage my time in university, it's become clearer to me that much of my success is unrelated to how little sleep I get. My best paintings are nice because I cared deeply about them and took my time on them. When I'm doing poorly at something it's never because I'm not overextending myself, but rather because I simply have a very long way to go. I started this essay thinking I should try to write the best thing I've written so far, but it quickly dawned on me that I have no idea what that even means. It's quite likely that this is in fact a very bad essay, and I'll be embarrassed to read it in less than a month. And that doesn't bother me all that much.

## A Return to Art Before Insecurity

by Grace Horlings

Critique day. Your palms are glistening with sweat. Your eyes are like paper weights, dense with lack of sleep. A late night in the studio and a few cups of coffee to make up for it brings out the best complexion to match your internal anxieties. On the wall your piece hangs off quilter though you swear you measured it correctly this time. Under the harsh gallery lighting it looks sloppy and overlined. Beside it hangs something exquisite. It has a thoughtful title and an interesting colour composition. Your title only popped into your head moments ago. A simple one-word title that has a somewhat believable motive. That motive was something you also need to scrounge together in the next ten minutes. You look around and realize why the ugly duckling had such a poor self-image if he was only ever hanging out with swans. Then all at once before you can say “concept” that horrible maniacal self-doubt creeps in. It materializes in an instantaneous simple thought: “Am I bad at art?” Now that this idea has reared its ugly head it doesn’t plan on leaving. Now you must wait for the bombardment of questions from your peers that you’ll pretend to answer with purpose, though you’re sure they can see right through your feigned nuance. This will be followed by that inevitable B- on your transcript.

Is it really your fault? I mean what psycho dictator decided creativity deserved a letter grade? Is it possible to find them and ban them from every art gallery on this side of the galaxy? Maybe you’re just being hard on yourself. Maybe you just need a new medium. Too impatient for oils. Not fast enough for acrylic. Charcoal is too messy, but ink leaves no room for mistakes. Woodworking is too much math. Screen printing is too much chemistry. Digital is the future, but do you really want to trade that for classical skills? Maybe then it’s the subject. Bodies have fingers and toes, so you can forget it. Animals don’t sit still. Landscapes are too bumpy, and buildings are too straight. What you need is to let your creativity do the talking. The issue is it only works part time and when a deadline is coming up it might as well be on vacation. You would love to let your freak flag fly and make phallic sculptures about the torment of life and death. But sometimes it just doesn’t feel like your heart is in it.

You remember your high school art teacher telling you that making art should make you feel like a kid again. When you watch a child finger paint it’s like breathing to them. They don’t choose a meaning, a colour palette, or an angle of light. They just do it. This is of course easier

said than done. Sometimes it feels like your finger painting of a duck is up against ten other better finger painting of a duck on the big fridge of higher education. All you want is that pat on the back and gold star. Though that's not the purpose of art, it maybe, just maybe, could silence that corner of your brain riddled with insecurity. Just once you want to finger paint. To feel it in your heart and hold it. Then without a second thought pour it out onto the canvas. Sometimes this magic happens. It's what keeps you coming back to the torturous relationship that is being an artist.

You remember the first time you saw a photo of *The Two Fridas* by Frida Kahlo. You had never seen anything like it. The bright fabrics and beating hearts. The way it looked like the entire scene was happening on a blue empty plane. Her ability to make every element so intricate and purposeful even at such a large scale. You couldn't image being able to relive your hardships for the sake of art.

You remember the first time you saw a photo of Tracy Emin's *My Bed*. You had never seen anything like it. It showed the honesty of what it means to struggle in silence and the way that it takes shape in our material surroundings. Finding the meaning in things that are unexpected, making them seem beautiful. Letting the world see your struggles through your stained sheets and empty liquor bottles. You couldn't imagine putting your whole life on display for the sake of art.

You remember the first time you saw a photo of Marina Abramovic and Ulay's *Rest Energy*. It was an image you couldn't shake. So much so that you reused it in your work and hung it above your bed. The two figures look so calm and unphased by their chosen roles of victim and perpetrator in their performance of mutually assured destruction. Without trust and focus the perfect triangle they create with their bodies would collapse in tragedy. You couldn't imagine putting your life at risk for the sake of art.

Then for some miraculous reason you do. You relive what you thought you couldn't, you put it all out there and maybe it's not your physical life at risk but sometimes you can see your spirit flickering. Then your finger painting. You're not worried about the deadline or the grade or the crushing feeling of failure. The medium is just right. It all comes together just as you envisioned it. Your meaning makes your title. You're six years old up to your elbows in colourful meaningful creativity.

## The Painter's Wife

by Hannah Teresa Sears

*My husband and I live a life free of dread  
While he works for dough, I make the bread  
I'll wipe down his palettes, brushes too  
As he sits down with some wine  
"Another piece sold, woo hoo"*

*Although it may seem I live a life of ease  
I feel unnoticed in my expertise  
For I have studied the arts my whole life  
Just to end up a painter's wife*

*He was destined to bask in and gleam  
In the virtues and fortunes that built his self-esteem  
The viewer immersed in the colors that make up the scene  
Praising a man whomst has a female assistant but remains unseen*

*And that was just the way things were  
A true master could never be a her  
For this world was made by man  
I'd be insane to think I could lend a hand*

*But I know who painted that skin  
Who could capture expression from within  
Behind a fraud wearing stolen talent on his chin  
Was a woman who could never win*

*As the years went on my resentment grew  
I had pleaded with him once, maybe two  
Tired of my exploitation, I became blue  
"You're hysterical, you just don't get it, do you"*

*I mindlessly painted my nights away  
For I was taking care of him during the day*

*Until the idea came to me  
Perhaps I could set my ideas free*

*One evening, my husband yearned for bed  
"I'm exhausted, I need to rest my head"  
Then I kindly looked to him and said  
"You've been working too much honey, let me paint instead"*

*From that point onwards he had taken a break  
Becoming a stranger to the canvas, even paint  
Yet to the people, his practice was very much alive  
A career on life support, a heart kept beating by his wife*

*Now more than an assistant, I still yearn to be free  
My skills made his works worth more than he'd ever seen  
This shift in technique deemed revolutionary to thee  
His methods marveled at  
Yet little did they know, their genius was a she*

*With solvent soaked hands and paint stained clothes  
I would apologize for my unfulfilled oaths  
But I became fed up with his controls  
I would no longer submit to these quelling roles*

*Without a coat, I went into the rain  
Pondering on ways I could bring him pain  
That's when I sauntered into the shed  
To acquire his precious gun  
And fire a shot into his head*

*My footprints stained our doorway with mud  
Unladylike composure, each step creating a thud  
He'd run down the hallway to meet face to face  
Eyes widen in shock, lost all beauty and grace*

*My husband and I tumbled to the ground  
Angry screams and desperate pleas were the only sound*

*Yet before I fired the gun, I caught his gaze and said  
"Don't worry, paintings are worth more when you're dead"*

## Exhibit Review: Materiality and Queer Eco Temporalities in Ghallager's *Mother, Memory, Cellophane*

by Harper Ladd

The contemporary era is defined by the unprecedented and anthropogenic problem of climate change. This crisis has shaped a cultural shift with art increasingly collapsing time to examine the origins of climate change. Contemporary concerns with the environment in relation to time have been interpreted through a queer lens, following the queer artistic tradition of engaging with temporality as a means of subverting mainstream institutions and heterosexuality. Séamus Gallagher's exhibit, *Mother, Memory, Cellophane*, stands at the crossroads between these ways of thinking. In this essay, I will examine the formal, iconographical, and contextual elements from Séamus Gallagher's exhibit, including the piece *A Lovely View Gives Way To A Haunted Site* to argue that it employs materiality as a method of discussing the intersections between temporality, eco-criticism, and queerness.

*Mother, Memory Cellophane* centres around the material of nylon, both contextually and visually, deploying it to explore the intersections between queerness, time, and the environment. The exhibit as a whole is a re-imagination of the 1939 World's Fair, which was themed *The World of Tomorrow* (Han, 2023). At this World's Fair, nylon stockings were debuted, represented by the mascot of *Miss Chemistry* (Han, 2023). A year later, as Gallagher highlights in the video portion of their exhibit, "Mother" "Memory" and "Cellophane" were voted the most beautiful English words. Throughout their exhibit, Gallagher dresses up as Miss Chemistry, reviving her as a ghostly, eco-critical, drag version of her former self who occupies this *world of tomorrow* (Han, 2023).

Due to the multifaceted history of nylon stockings, I would argue that they function as a symbol for all synthetic products of capitalism in *Mother, Memory, Cellophane*, including the gender binary, heteronormativity and the West's conception of time. Nylon stockings themselves occupy a complicated temporality. Among women, they have become less

common to wear daily, positioning them as an object of the past in non-queer contexts. Using Nylon as a central part of the drag spectacle of Miss Chemistry, Gallagher chose a temporally complicated, environmentally harmful substance in their deployment of queerness. Perhaps this was done to highlight the ironic fact that the artificial materials that caused our undoing may long outlast the human species.

With themes of gender performance comes connotations of mimicry, in turn recalling themes of survival, which have strong ecological ties (Lomas, 2012). Queer theory has recently taken on an environmental framework, exploring sociality, extinction scapes of the future, and queer speciation (Kriesel, 2018). This ecological approach to queerness has grown increasingly relevant as the worsening climate crisis threatens the survival of humankind as a whole. Nylon was one of the first synthetic, non biodegradable textiles and its debut marked a shift in the consumer market to environmentally harmful materials (Han, 2023). Queer temporalities additionally challenge and criticise temporal, institutional, and ecological conventions. As capitalism controls time in the Western world, it controls the environment and is subsequently a large perpetrator of climate change (Evans, 2017). As queer scholar Rebecca Evans argues, these conventions are challenged through a “defamiliariz[ation] of accepted understandings of time to disrupt the social norms that such understandings ground” (Evans, 2017). Like the countless pieces of plastic that now occupy landfills, Gallagher’s Miss Chemistry is rotted yet undead, a defamiliarization of time and gender.

For example, in *A Lovely View Gives Way To A Haunted Site*, Miss Chemistry sits at the end of a table, framed by rows of disembodied, stocking-covered legs. In the image, the drag character of Miss Chemistry visibly has a Keith Haring tattoo. Perhaps this was included as an intentional reference to queer iconography of the past to challenge linear temporality. In the image, Miss Chemistry’s face is unnatural and unsettling. She appears almost collaged together and her bright red lipstick contributes to an air of inhumanity. When contrasted with

the fleshy, warm-toned skin on the rest of Gallagher's body, the pale face appears almost mask-like. Gallagher turns their own form into an inhuman, plastic parody, engaging with gender as a kind of artificial production and using the material of nylon to symbolise the way this kind of production resists the passage of time

Another way in which Gallagher collapses time, challenging the capitalist institutions that uphold it, is through the actual material of the art pieces. All of the hanging art prints of the exhibit are made of lenticular print, a plastic substance that allows for two images to be superimposed over one another. For each piece, two images can be revealed by moving around the work. The first one of *A Lovely View Gives Way To A Haunted Site* is discussed above, that of Miss Chemistry sitting at a table framed with a row of disembodied, nylon-covered legs. The second image of the piece is text that reads "A Lovely View Gives Way to a Haunted Site". This ominous phrase could be understood as a reference to the environmental degradation caused by climate change. Due to the lenticular print, the text is constantly superimposed over the image with varying levels of clarity depending on where the viewer is standing. Both images can never be seen as a whole on their own. Because of the material of the piece, the anthropogenic text constantly looms over the image of Miss Chemistry and the symbolic nylon stockings, a climate disaster superimposed over its origins. As the character of Miss Chemistry occupies a temporal duality, so does the lenticular element of this piece.

Queerness has a history of subverting and critiquing power structures and institutions. It is only natural then, to employ queer methods to challenge capitalistic temporalities and their roles in climate degradation. With discussions of material and the medium itself, Gallagher intentionally collapses time as both a means of expressing ecological grief and criticising the institutions that gave rise to such anthropogenic conditions through expressions of queerness.

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## MY MOM ~ THE ARTIST

Jane Anne Ireland

As long as I can remember the perspective that my Mom looked at the world with has always had an artistic twist to it.

Our conversations often reflected art through the goings-on of life from finding balance, adding or choosing colour (of clothes, wall paint, for siding & trim, or smaller projects within the home, yard to crocheting & quilting). These chattering's carried on with textures that we did or didn't like, hidden surprises, along with the emotions that life invokes with what was going on in both the back and foregrounds.

My Mom, from a young age found art a healthy and productive distraction throughout her life. She has dealt with a multitude of good, bad and ugly too. The mediums of material changed a bit as she grew depending on availability and location.

As a child her creativity and imagination were encouraged both at home and school. While at home watching out for also entertaining and playing with her younger two siblings in a lower income home. Throughout my Mom's school career she really enjoyed anything art connected. At the time, the opportunities for participating in most local small-town events and fairs through school exhibits were strongly encouraging. Winning a few prizes at this local fair was the added encouragement my Mom needed to carry on.

As life continues to move on, she participated in various opportunities to take a range of art classes from sketching to oil painting. She experimented with a few different mediums over her adult life finding her own style or technique. She met a variety of people over the years in classes, at shows, galleries and some customers along the way.

I have a few childhood memories of her sketching from the kitchen table to on location across Canada, depending on where we lived. My earliest memory was at an old mill on the western edge of our hometown in southwestern Ontario then seemingly abandoned but now a beautifully renovated event center. There was always a sample or favourite finished and framed piece on the wall somewhere in our home.

I have no doubt, that my Mom's favourite media was in the magic released within each brush stroke bringing to life an empty white canvas with colour that told a story. She drew her inspiration from a variety of many sources, pictures, tv shows, travel, everyday life. Lots of times her paintings where a combination of multiple inspiring moments. I have the similar memories of

her painting as sketching, either on-location or at home. My two favourite memories – first happened in June or July of 1981 while spending the day a Prince Edward Island beach. While she painted on the top of that oxidize red cliff – we watched the tide go out, then I began my days adventure of meeting the other kids, digging for clams where there were sand bubbles, chasing and catching side-ways walking crabs, jumping over and poking the gooey mess that dead jellyfish are when beached during low tide, filling my hungry tummy with a yummy picnic lunch and of course swimming in the Atlantic ocean throughout the day. That night and the next day or so wasn't so much fun. My Mom and I learned a valuable lesson. Sunburns are worse and seem to happen faster when swimming in salt water. My Mom sometimes burned but as a redhead they were part of my summers. Sunscreen wasn't an option in 1981. I had a good one with blisters that seemed to heal quickly. My other favourite memory seems to be more repetitive. The memories of my Mom set up with a tidbit of inspiration in her art/painting space working on her next piece. I never liked the smells of the paints, brush cleaners, urethanes etc. There was always a certain amount of peace, wellbeing and light that seemed to radiate when she painted. It did matter what time of the day, night or what location.

My Mom's artwork was all the Naturalistic or Representational style. There were a variety of animals, scenes, landscapes, still-life and portraits. She had sold some of her paintings, gave some away to family and friends, and donated a few too. She named each one then wrote the information on the back of each piece. She also signed each piece. At the beginning she took a picture of each painting as well.

As my artist Mom's life rolled on, there were times she was more actively painting than at others. My Mom is now in her early 70s and doesn't paint any more. She has chosen to stop for many reasons but holds onto her thoughts, views and knowledge that she attained over the years.

I will always be grateful for the lessons learned through watching her and her painting. The lessons of – primary colours and the colour wheel; the air in or on your home should mean something – met the artist, something close to your heart or life, not just a print or one of many that cost a lot of money; always finish what you start, even if it isn't looking good right now; sometimes we need to walk away for a bit taking a breather but always go back and finish; change can be good; patience isn't always easy; and sunburns aren't any fun alone.

## Neurodivergence in Wonderland

by Jessie Briand

I think often about Alice in Wonderland. To be so unsatisfied and frustrated with the world we live in that you want to escape to a nonsensical world of magic and whimsy. Somewhere to escape from the pressures of modern society and expectations, especially for neurodivergents. To be free. The world we live in is made for neurotypicals, so it feels backwards and upside down for neurodivergents. But in wonderland everything is already backwards and upside down, so at least neurodivergents can find solace in the fact that nothing is *supposed* to make sense. We can be our true selves without worry of judgement or consequence. Our quirks would be celebrated and embraced, and we might find refuge among like-minded souls. A world of puzzles we would love to solve, where one does not need a reason to sing or dance. Where we can let our minds roam endlessly and not be snapped at to return to reality. In wonderland we would be endlessly entertained, without the stress of time. There would be no concern about time blindness in a world where time doesn't exist. I imagine wonderland to be a place where neurodivergent souls can find refuge from the storm.

### « In Wonderland's Embrace »

In Wonderland's embrace, we find a special place,  
Where minds diverge and colors interlace.  
Society may stick to rigid norms,  
But here, we're free from judgment storms.

Through rabbit holes of thought, we take a stroll,  
In Wonderland, where time has lost control.  
At the Mad Hatter's party, chaos fills the air,  
Yet in our quirks, we find a bond to share.

Through Wonderland we roam, with minds that never rest,  
Embracing every quirk, for we are truly blessed.  
In Wonderland's expanse, where strange is just the norm,  
Neurodivergent souls find refuge from the storm.

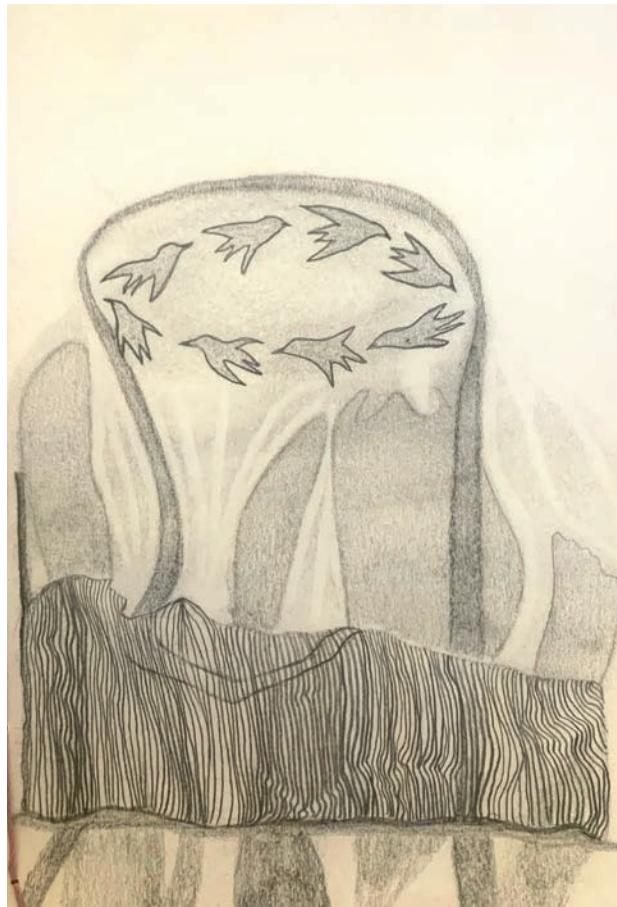
# LineWeight



By Kate Armstrong

You know it's your own  
flesh under those feathers.  
A piece of your own  
identity that is detached  
and can fly away. Not free,  
but merely unleashed. Out  
of reach - like all dreaming.

It's not inhuman. It just  
doesn't have a name.



The lines of your body keep it contained  
and it's heavy.

You know it weighs more than words.

Although words are heavy too.



A shapeshifter. Throughout space and time. Throughout bodies, and making homes in souls. Every body. Neurodivergence is a spectrum for a reason. I know this.

When thinking about the past, I am fortunate enough to see clear images of people who went through life blurry, without a prescription.

Autism diagnoses are accessible for women more than they used to be. But the truth is, 80% of autistic women are diagnosed after 18.

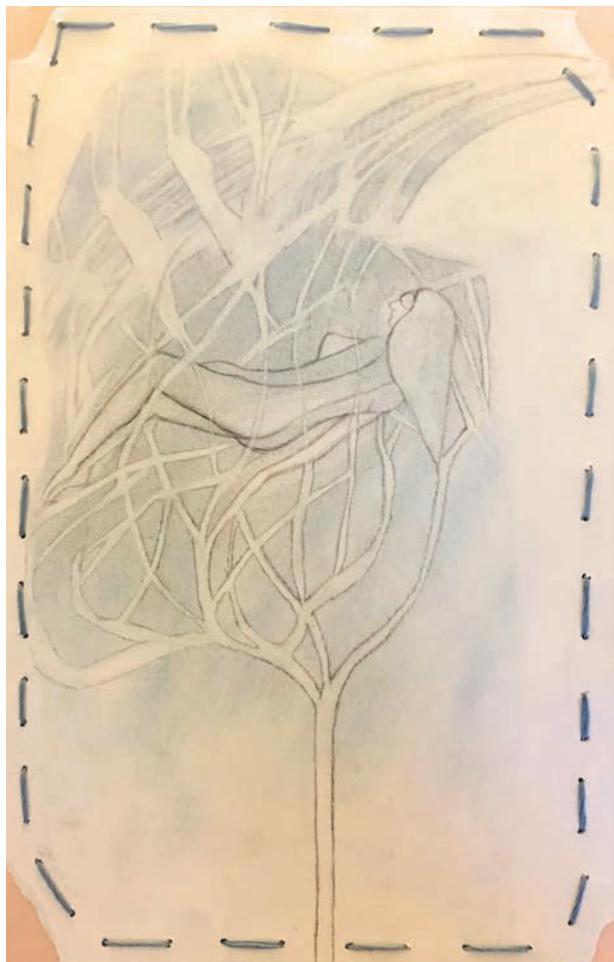
People without diagnoses:  
Does this free them?

Or does this keep them in  
captivity of the unknown?

Feelings of difference  
Shame  
Stress  
Other disorders  
and Such.

Not having a diagnosis, I  
relate more with the second  
one.





If I was born as a small boy  
would the adults call my shyness  
an anxiety? Could they notice  
my climb through social  
landscapes and see how my map  
is in a foreign language?  
Stumbling through forests and  
getting cut by those talking  
trees. Afraid by the change of  
weather. A new wallpaper in my  
home. An amalgamation of  
words. A bouquet of flowers  
growing from one stem.  
Multifaceted.

A part of me doesn't want this  
bird named.

For the secret hideaways  
untamed birds know of.

It is possible to read through the lines of the past and future

And find yourself

Deeply resonating with similar people

Organizing your scattered thoughts about this diagnosis.

Through the lines of text you read

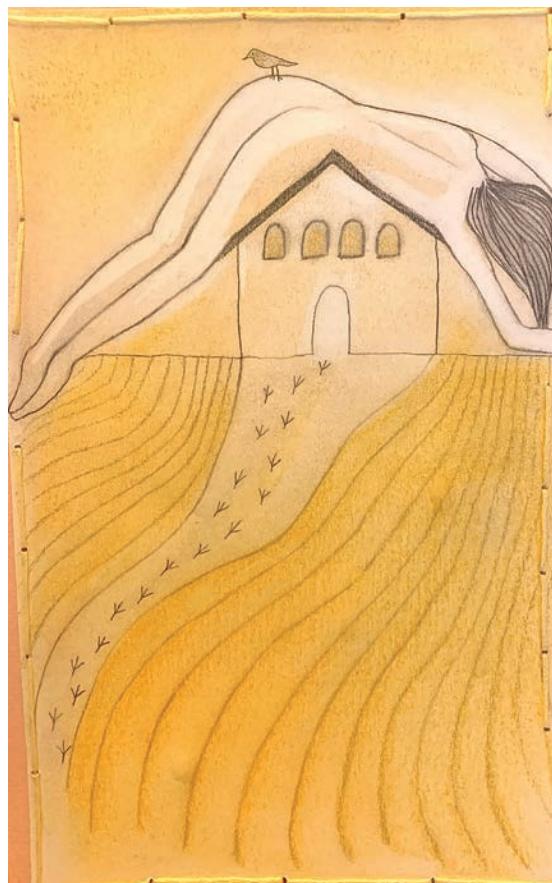
In a biography on Deborah Berger, An autistic artist that grew up in the unaccepting 50s. She is now known as an “outsider artist.”

She was only let in until after she died at 49, and they took her artworks out of garbage bags and surrounded them with white walls.

If she lived and created solely for herself, nobody can really speculate what she meant to convey to an audience she had never intended to have. Her art captures snippets of the world she lived in, and offers the viewer a chance to see it too - a world made, stitch by stitch, in colour.

Could she have come inside if she wanted to?

It is not fair.



At times I see myself  
clearer

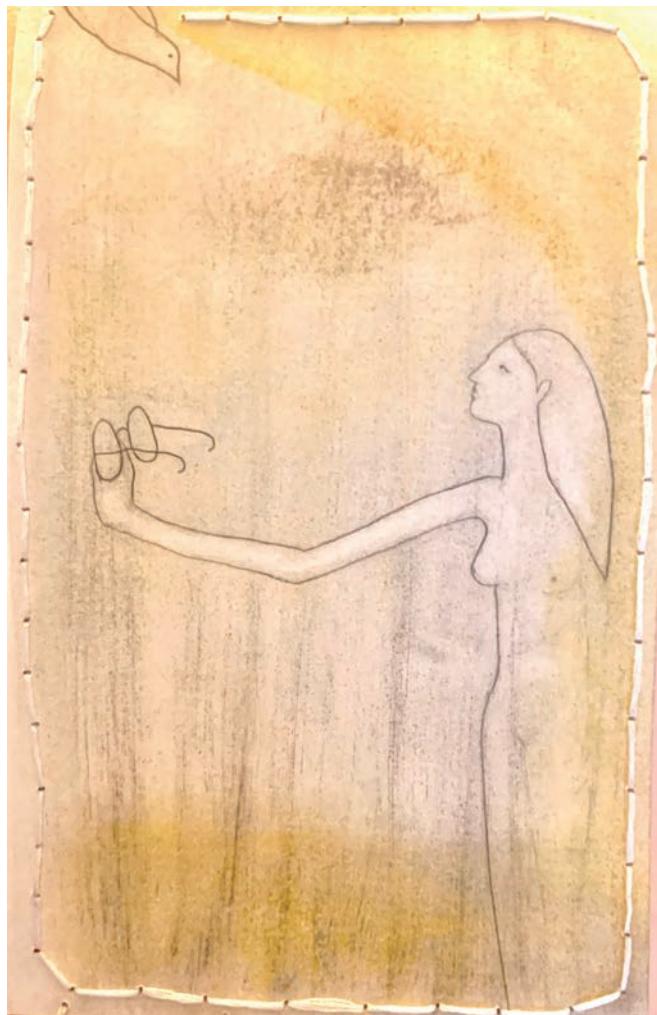
It's with help and support

It's with validation that a  
word will not change how I  
already see the world.

What comes with this word  
are familiar patterns,  
colours, and shapes that  
help me love parts of  
myself I thought were  
broken.

Nothing changes how I  
make memories with my  
boyfriend while he holds  
his hands over my ears as  
the drying machine squeaks  
too loudly

And how his lime green  
bedroom is like a museum  
completely untouched, but  
for me it holds a permanent  
collection of the drawings I  
make him.



Our patterns are the same.

I am building a home  
in myself.

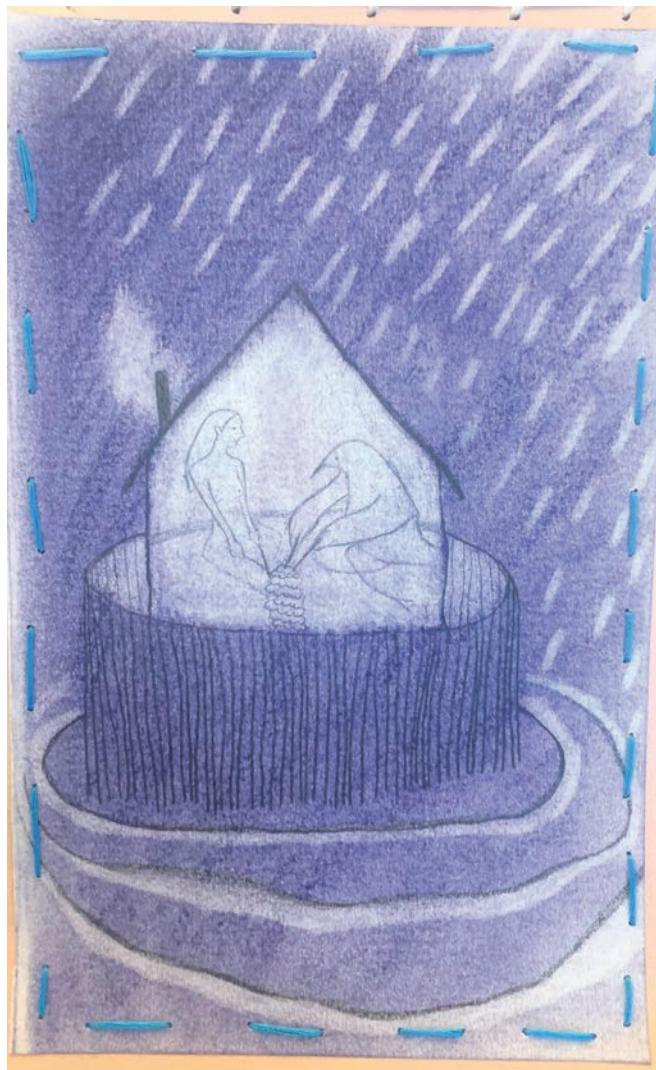
As we all do.

I can build birdhouses  
for no birds in  
particular

I am lucky enough to  
be inside now.

I can take flight

Even if I don't know  
why I can fly.



# A VISION OF POSTNORMAL GENDER IDENTITY AND NEURONORMATIVITY: A FORMAL ANALYSIS OF STIMMING IN DIALOGUE WITH BUTLER'S PERFORMATIVE ACTS AND GENDER CONSTITUTION

by Kristen L Russell

In *STIMMING* (2020), Susanna Dye establishes the semiotic power of stimming by producing a dictionary of seven catalogued close-up performances of these repetitive sensory stimulations. I contend this series fleshes out a definition of neuroqueer embodiment beyond the ritual performance of neuronormativity or gender.<sup>1</sup> This essay is indebted to Judith Butler's 1988 *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* which pulls from theater to define gender as a "stylized repetition of acts" – a ritual performance.<sup>2</sup> In the shadow of Butler's gendered performance is the neuronormative script and theatrical direction its actors implicitly follow.<sup>3</sup> Through a formal and comparative analysis of *STIMMING* with Dr Foster's *Marlene Dandy* (2009) and Elizabeth Sweeny's *Endurance Tests* (2019-2020), this essay addresses the questions Butler neglected to ask: how do neurodivergent people – who are left to improvise without a script – perform gender? What is gender without neuro-normativity?

In *Marlene Dandy*, Foster plays an androgynous burlesque dancer, inviting spectators backstage after her show to engage them in a disjointed 1-1 conversation.<sup>4</sup> In a dramatization of the fetishizing male gaze, Foster satirizes a flirtatious conversation by communicating almost exclusively through rehearsed giggles, winks, smiles, alluring dances and a teasing game of

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1. Though the comprehensive definition of neuroqueer is beyond the scope of this essay, Walker defines key practices of neuroqueering as: "1. Being both neurodivergent and queer, with some degree of conscious awareness and/or active exploration around these two aspects of one's being entwined and interact (or are, perhaps, mutually constitutive and inseparable). 2. Embodying and expressing one's neurodivergence in ways that also queer one's performance of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and/or other aspects of one's identity 3. Engaging in practices intended to undo and subvert one's own cultural conditioning and heteronormative performance, with the aim of reclaiming one's capacity to give more full expression to one's uniquely weird potentials and inclinations"

Nick Walker, "Neuroqueer: An Introduction," In NEUROQUEER HERESIES: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilites (Fort Worth: Autonomous Press, 2021), 158.

2. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519, Accessed December 11, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?seq=1&cid=pdf->.

3. Butler contends that: "Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives." Butler, 526.

4. Annette Pauline Foster, *Autistic [Neuro]Queer Pioneers; Using participatory autism research, performance, and visual art to articulate the experiences of late diagnosed autistic women (cis- and trans-) and non-binary people*. (University of Kent, 2021), 111-112.

peek-a-boo with her burlesque plumed wings. The levity of this artificial flirtatious exchange is jarringly interspliced with unflinching eye-contact and slow, enveloping movements as Foster cups the viewer's head within her plumed wings and monologues about transcendent beings, identity and gender. This sudden juxtaposition of superficiality and transcendence at once offers a critique of heteronormativity's fetishistic objectification of women and the internalised rules of neuro-normative social structures including eye-contact, small talk, stillness and rehearsed body language.<sup>5</sup>

*STIMMING* immerses you in the pools of neuroqueer embodiment that seep from the cracks of *Marlene Dandy*. Dye's movement is not a calculated execution of social codes to make herself legible in the eyes of heteronormativity and neuro-normativity. Rather, the semiosis of *STIMMING* opens a comprehensive dialogue with Dye's bodymind and environment.<sup>6</sup> In *HYPER-STIMULATED || HYPO-STIMULATED*, Dye's flapping hands have an ebb and flow and a melody as their whole body gyrates in tune with the arm movement. In *HYPER-VISIBLE || HYPO-VISIBLE*, Dye's rocking gradually oscillates between a springy bounce from their bottom to their shins and a liberating full swing that lifts them onto their knees, grazing their forehead against the floor and reaching the tip of their coccyx.

Dye recognizes that neurodivergent people's heightened connection with external stimuli is valued within the artistic field as a rich "dialogue between parts of the body and its

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5. Dr Foster not only explores neuroqueering practices in her own performance art, but in her dissertation *Autistic /Neuro/Queer Pioneers* in which she utilizes neuroqueer performance to deconstruct the gendered bias of the pathology paradigm and build a more comprehensive understanding of neurodivergence in its place. Within her dissertation, Foster reflexively interprets Marlene Dandy as a neuroqueer performance. Foster, 103-110.

6. In *Neuroqueer Heresies*, Nick Walker introduces the term bodymind and expands on the reductive quality of the pathology paradigm. Just as gender is falsely reduced to a natural biproduct of our biological sex characteristics, neurodiversity is reduced to brain chemistry neglecting the interconnectedness of brains, minds and bodies that all shape each other and coalesce in the bodymind: "bodies that think and perceive" Nick Walker, "Defining Neurodiversity," In *NEUROQUEER HERESIES; Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilites* (Fort Worth: Autonomous Press, 2021), 54-55.

surroundings” and utilizes it as a key aesthetic in *STIMMING*.<sup>7</sup> A heightened soundscape accompanies the performances cementing Dye’s connectivity to their external space and bodymind. *HYPER-ACTIVE || HYPO-ACTIVE* exemplifies Dye’s robust layering of sound. Faintly in the background, the viewer hears birds chirping and trees swaying. Dye’s low humming breath matches the soft stroking of their fingertips and palm. The auditory stim of metallic clanging conveys, through its soft jingle, the textured grooves of fingerprints. By highlighting the semiosis of stimming, Dye restores value to this stigmatized “neurodivergent way of being in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

Elizabeth Sweeny’s *Endurance Tests* inversely invokes the distorted space that confines neuroqueer individuals. As the viewer looks down on a wooden table and empty notebook, Sweeny begins writing ‘30 more minutes left to endure’ at the top of the page with both hands in opposite directions, then repeats this gesture until she reaches ‘1 more minute left to endure’. An ode to a coping strategy for her undiagnosed ADHD in high school, the repeated gesture is timed and consistent taking one minute to complete, thereby acting as means to count down each minute of the performance.<sup>9</sup> In forcing the viewer to follow the minimal repetitive movement with no other sensory stimuli, Sweeny makes tangible the pulsating need for an embodied connection with external stimuli and the distorted space that restricts it.<sup>10</sup> Despite offering a similar isolated view of repetitive gestures, *STIMMING* engrosses the audience in a sensorial

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7. Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay, *Body Space Image: Notes Toward Improvisation and Performance*. (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2014), 63.

8. Susanna Dye, “STIMMING AS A NEURODIVERGENT PERFORMANCE PRACTICE”

9. “Endurance Tests (2019-2020),” Elizabeth Sweeny, accessed December 10, 2022. <http://www.elizabethsweeny.ca/art#/endurance-tests-2019-2020/>.

10. Sweeny, pulling from her background in Disability Studies, offers through performance a microcosm of neurodivergent people’s need to endure a neuronormative space which, in a cyclical manner, exacerbates their pathologized neurocognitive differences and demeans them as incapable  
Amanda Cachia. “along DisableD lines Claiming spatial agency through installation art” In *Disability, Space, Architecture: A Reader*, ed. Jos Boys (London: Routledge, 2017), 242.

excess, viscerally invoking a hypersensitive experience of external stimuli. For example, In *FUNCTIONAL || HYPO-FUNCTIONAL* the sound of rustling abrasive foot skin is augmented, and its texture is echoed in the gritty pop of cranking and tapping allowing the viewer to feel this stim rather than just witness it. By offering a close-up view of Dye's mouth in *HYPER-CONSCIOUS || HYPO-CONSCIOUS* the viewer is absorbed in the sucking, licking, and biting with sticky smacking sounds echoing and reverberating as if coming from the viewer's own body.

For Dye to construct a neuroqueer space, they must distance themselves not only from the ritualized conditioning in *Marlene Dandy* and the distorted neuronormative space in *Endurance Tests*, but – what Foucault would call – the “stylistics of existence.”<sup>11</sup> As Butler explains, the stylistic existence of gender is not only enforced by the current heteronormative framework but molded by its living history that “conditions and limits possibilities.”<sup>12</sup> Stimming’s own living history emerges from the scientific literature on autism: the pathologized condition was understood as a set of problematic behaviours such as outbursts like stimming caused by having an extreme male brain.<sup>13</sup> Contrastingly, Dye foregrounds the nurturing and grounding nature of stimming – such as carefully and intently twisting and running their fingers through their hair in *HYPER-COMPLEX || HYPO-COMPLEX* and calmly massaging a squishy ball in *HYPER-RESPONSIVE || HYPO-RESPONSIVE*. This subversion of gender norms allows Dye to rewrite stimming’s living history and employs stimming as a semiotic tool to convey neuroqueer embodiment.

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11. Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” 521.

12. Judith Butler, 521.

13. Foster, 105.

In all, the success of *STIMMING* to define the neuroqueer experience beyond hierarchical binaries is a testament to the performer's creativity in constructing their own liminal space.

Namely, Dye constructs a studio space – an external journal or sketch pad – where in the safety of artistic investigation, we are free to explore postnormal possibilities of stimming outside of our current societal structure. It is through this neuroqueering that we might uncover a world beyond the stage of performance.

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#### Appendix A: Reference Images



Figure 1: HYPER-ACTIVE || HYPO-ACTIVE, Susanna Dye, in STIMMING (2020)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ni8d8LYrkws&list=PL00z2YHS01Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&t=147s>.

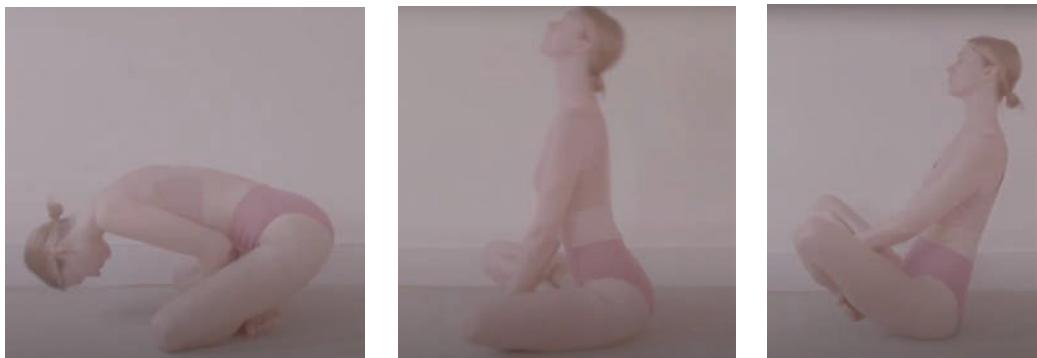


Figure 2: HYPER-VISIBILITY || HYPO-VISIBILITY, Susanna Dye, in STIMMING (2020)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0y-GB7WP5M&list=PL00z2YHS01Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=2>.

#### Appendix A: Reference Images



Figure 3: HYPER-RESPONSIVE || HYPO-RESPONSIVE (Left) and HYPER-CONSCIOUS || HYPO-CONSCIOUS (Right) Susanna Dye, in STIMMING (2020)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1MoY6wZGqI&list=PL00z2YHS01Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=3>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DtrVoValeI&list=PL00z2YHS01Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=4>.



Figure 4: HYPER-STIMULATED || HYPO-STIMULATED, Susanna Dye, in STIMMING (2020)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd8mFSnOcNE&list=PL00z2YHS01Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=5>.

#### Appendix A: Reference Images

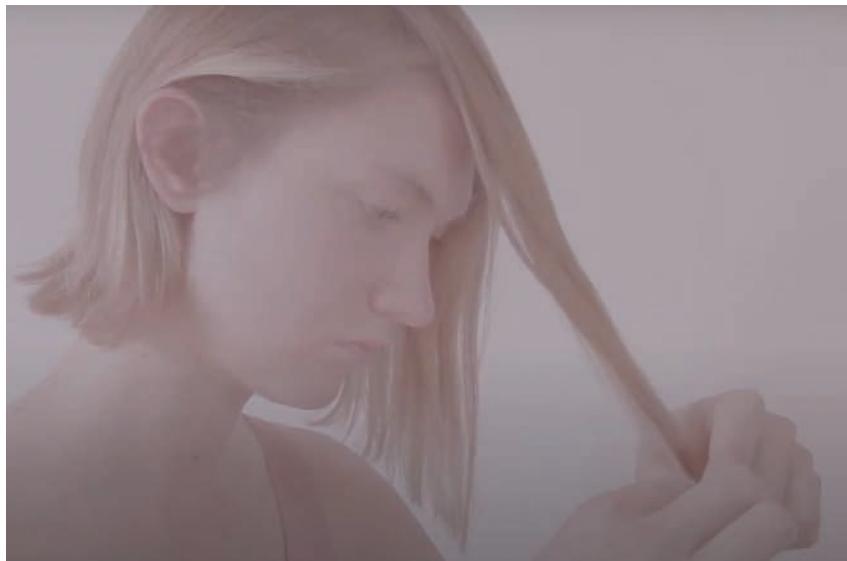


Figure 5: HYPER-COMPLEX || HYPO-COMPLEX, Susanna Dye, in STIMMING (2020)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0noWQ5Ni90&list=PL00z2YHSo1Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=6>.



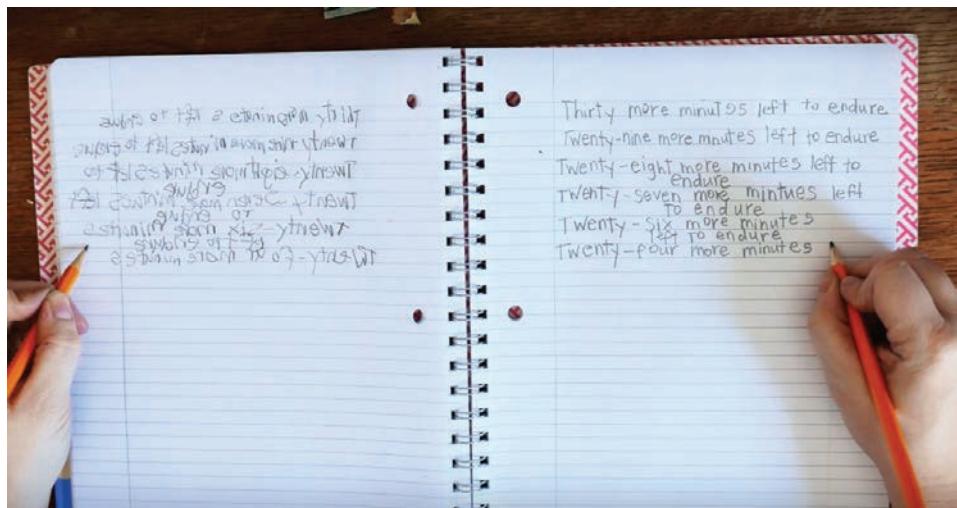
Figure 6: HYPER-FUNCTIONAL || HYPO-FUNCTIONAL, Susanna Dye, in STIMMING (2020)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srE7clKod\\_c&list=PL00z2YHSo1Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=7](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srE7clKod_c&list=PL00z2YHSo1Ft9lPxFbQaPrrBWPvmqAQzR&index=7).

## Appendix A: Reference Images



Figure 7 (left):Marlene Dandy one to one, Annette Foster, in *Transgressions* (Greenroom, Manchester, 2009)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8Sr w\\_4ybMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8Sr w_4ybMQ).

Figure 8 (bottom): Enduring Distorted Space, Elizabeth Sweeny, 2019.  
<https://www.tsgeexhibition.com/elizabeth-sweeney>.



## An Artist's Path

by Lily Galbraith

Creativity and innocence flows through  
the veins of nearly every child.

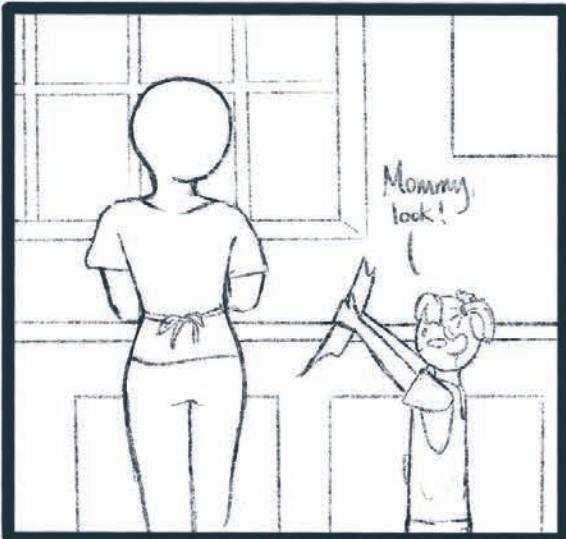
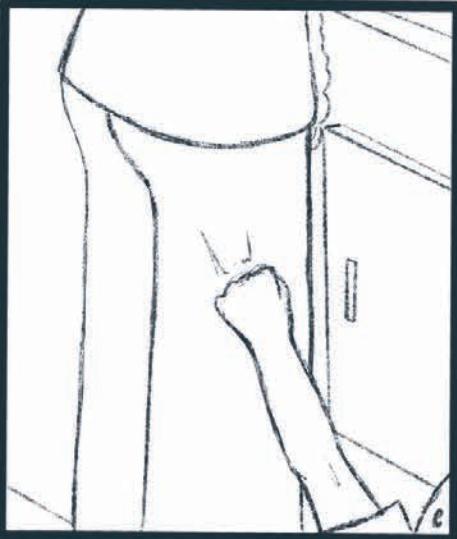


Crayons litter the  
floor of  
childhood homes.

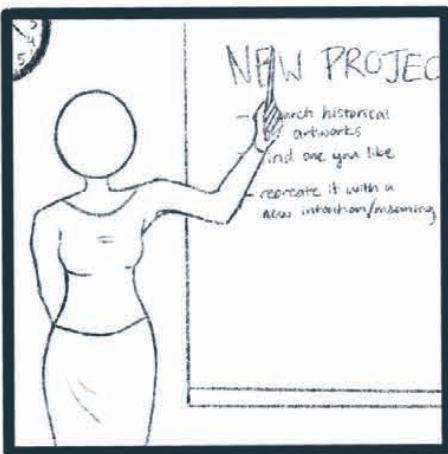
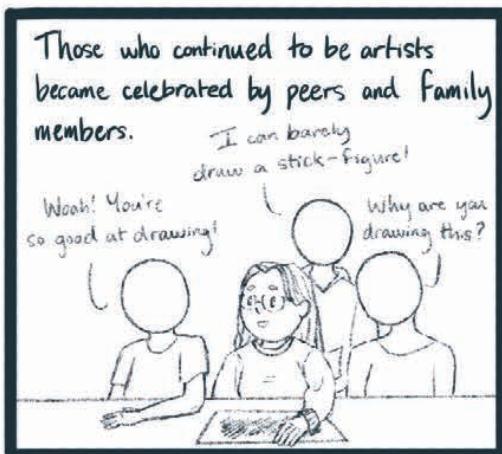
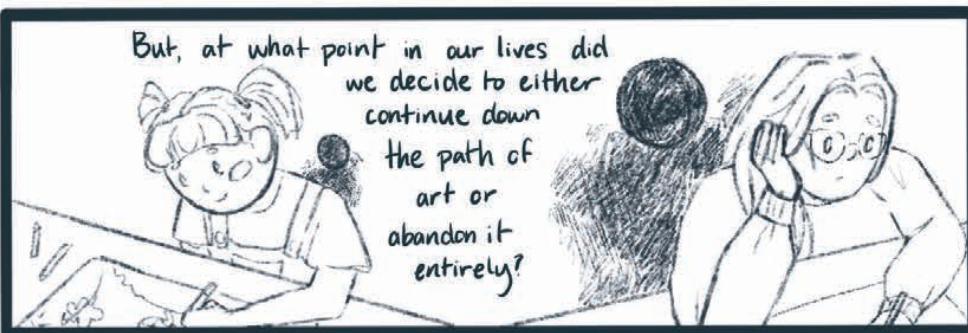
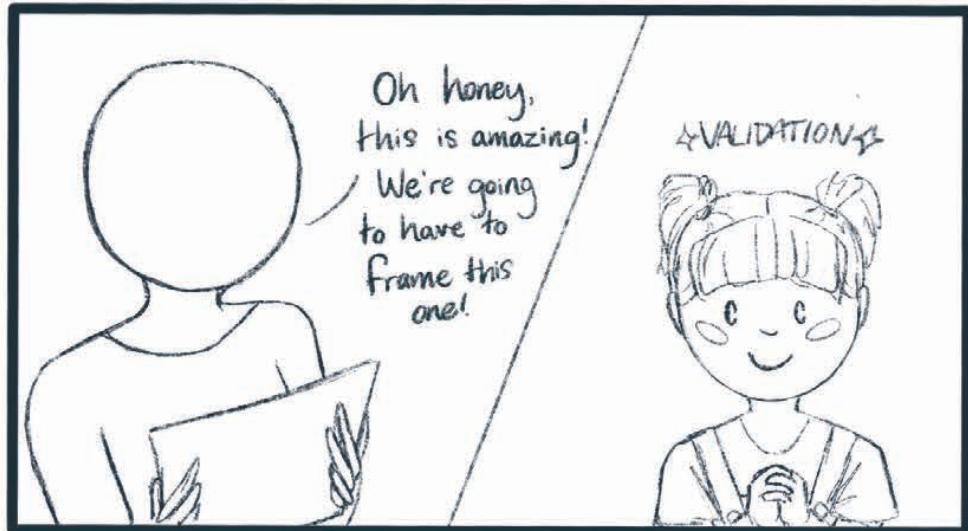
Drawings decorate  
the walls.

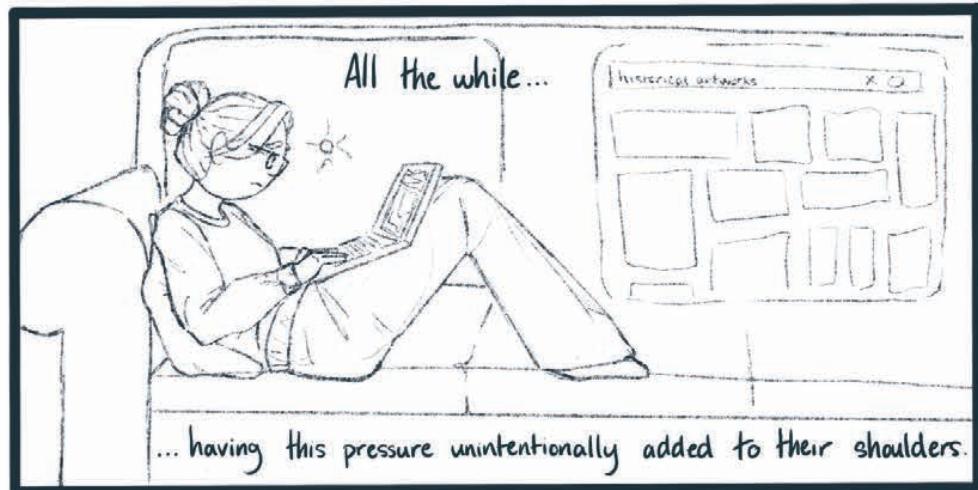


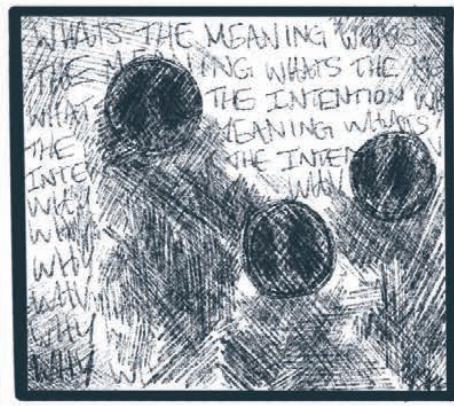
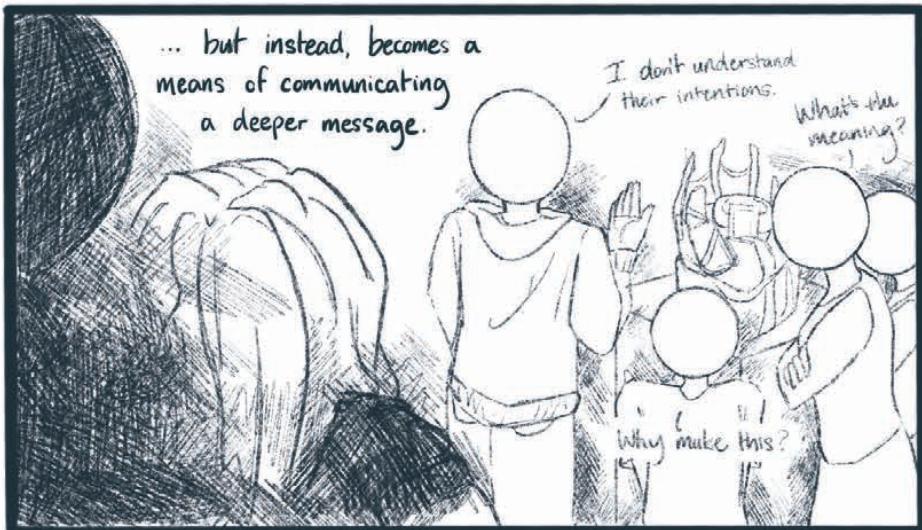
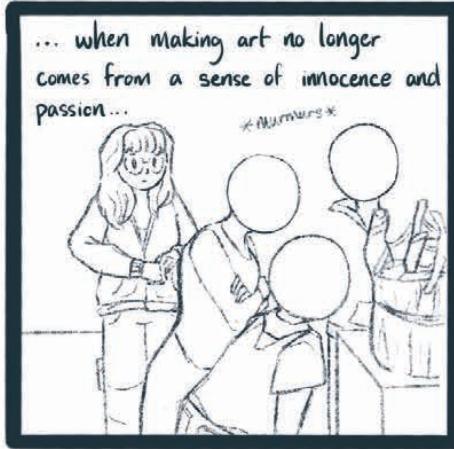
Colour dances its way  
through the lives of everyone.



Mommy,  
look!









If art is everything, why is it we only care about the things  
that 'say something'?



Lily J

## AMOR PROP(I)O.

by Litzy Escobar

# AMOR PROP(I)O.

How do I love ? Let me  
love to the depth and breadth  
My soul can reach, feeling  
of being  
I love every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love freely, as for right;  
I love purely, as from praise.  
I love the passion  
In my  
love I  
lost love  
Smiles, tears, of all my life;  
I shall love better

¿Cómo amo yo? Déjame amar hasta donde mi alma pueda alcanzar, sensación de ser		
Amo la necesidad más tranquila de cada día, al sol y a la luz de las velas.	Amo libremente, como por derecho; Amo puramente, como por alabanza.	Amo la pasión en mi amor
perdí el amor sonrisas, lágrimas, de toda mi vida;		Amaré mejor

-1.e

# I have an issue with what's happened with YouTube in the past couple years.

by Mab Silnestra

## *I have an issue with what's happened on YouTube in the past couple years.*

I used to log on and see skits, animations, what have you. Each made by independent creators and put on the worldwide web for the fun of it.

It used to be about passion, now it feels that it's largely about profit.

I used to log on and see passionate projects, interesting skits, friends having fun.

Now it's just scroll after scroll of highly saturated thumbnails, clickbait, and copycat creators.

In fact, the stuff I went on there for has mostly gone extinct altogether.

Sketch comedy used to be the soup du jour of YouTube, now it's the soup du hier.

You could go and watch video after video of things that may not be the best, but that had a quality to them that has largely been missing from most creators' stuff now.

That quality.

And it's not some sort of camera, production or audio quality.

In fact, the videos I hold closest to my heart.

The ones that have stuck with me this long on my creative journey.

They're the ones that were made with concept being the main thing in mind.

Not the resolution or the microphone not clipping, the idea.

It's what sparked the want to create within me.

Part of it lingers within the mantra that YouTube used to use all the time.

## *Where anyone can create anything.*

Now it feels like that saying goes unsaid.

That smaller creators have such a tremendous hurdle to leap if they want to even stand a slight chance at what could be achieved back in 2009-2013, just by making what you'd want to make.

That was a beautiful thing.

Sometimes I don't want to see the 4k, surround sound, 1 million dollar budget shows on youtube where ten guys compete for an island.

All I want to watch is the one-off video gameplays where the creator shows us an interesting thing they've built in Minecraft.

All I want to watch is an improvised skit two friends filmed and badly edited because they thought it was funny, and that was enough to warrant making it.

All I want to watch is a video someone made because they wanted to make it.

***Anyone creating anything.***

The beauty of a video that could've been made by you, or your friend down the street, or someone you'll never ever meet, is astounding.

I feel as if that's fallen by the wayside, and in its place, stands profit, fame, spectacle, etc.

I think that's a shame.

And what saddens me even more about it, is that the numbers seem to show that that's what the average viewer values most too.

If you doubt that, I've done some research:

Matthew Beem, a copycat channel of MrBeast has

***5.47M subscribers***

Meanwhile, if we add the subscriber counts of Brian David Gilbert, Wizards With Guns, Man Carrying Thing, Joel Haver, Sadworld, Value Select, Meat & Bones, Jazz Emu, Neil Cicerega, AlmostFridayTV, Likeafoxstudios, Julian Smith and Jack & Dean, you get

***8.121M subscribers***

Only about a 2.5 million difference, which would give the illusion that the sketch comedy would be ahead, until you take into consideration the fact that I had to add 13 semi-successful to successful sketch comedy channels to get that number.

Not to mention, some of these channels shouldn't really be counted in this.

Julian Smith, Jack & Dean and Neil Cicerega all amassed their following in the 2000s and early 2010s, with the rest being much smaller than those three.

The only modern channels in that lineup that are comparable to Julian Smith's total 1.8 million would be Brian David Gilbert, at 1.1 million; Joel Haver, at 1.96 million; or Jazz Emu, at 444k.

So if I just count the ones who have started their process around when MrBeast started gaining popularity, around 2016 and on, you'd get:

***5.436M subscribers.***

The fact that most people seem to value spectacle and production over concept and that quality,

That quality.

The fact people seem to value production and high energy over the idea and the passion behind it, makes me sad.

I feel as though the business side of it all is sucking out the overall public's valuing of art, little by little

Making them feel as though the best content they can consume is high production, when the perfect video for them might have been pushed aside because it has an uninteresting thumbnail.

Or a small following.

Or a style of video that goes unrespected.

If someone can make low effort, high energy content with bright colors and beaten methods and get the best profit out of it, it's very discouraging for burgeoning creators on the site who are trying to pursue their passions independently.

Take this how you will, I just simply wanted to share my grievances.

I hope I haven't sounded elitist or pretentious throughout this, I just felt like writing about what's been on my mind the past couple years as I scroll.

Scroll past highly saturated thumbnails.

And high view counts that somehow seems like it rises faster than the abrasive editing the video has..

But as the time passes with each passing day.

With each passing scroll.

I always seem to find myself thinking.

*Thinking about how I used to log on and see anything made by anyone.*

*About how I don't anymore.*

*I just see some things made by a team of uncredited people, that gets credited to someone richer than they are.*

*About how I used to be able to see creative pursuits and amazing creations.*

*And now I don't.*

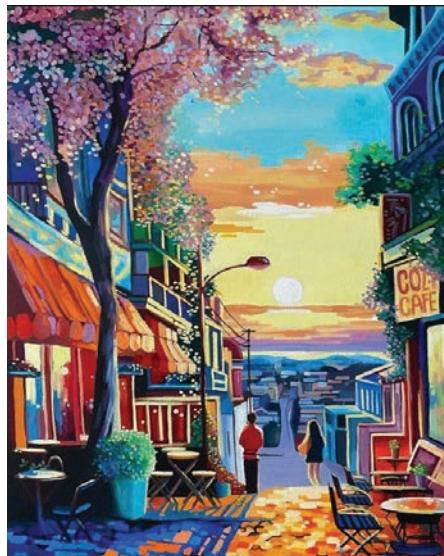
*I have to dig and carve out whatever I might want to see from the schlop of blinding colors.*

*I used to see passion.*

*Now I don't.*

## The Moment of Art

by Mackenzie McBride



The first thing he said to me was “Hello”.

Every single day, I see him working at a cute, little café just beyond my university. I always catch him watching from afar, but he always seems too busy or too nervous to talk to me. I catch myself wondering if he goes to my school? Or what his name is? I have so many questions. Maybe, just maybe one of these days, I'll get some answers to all my questions.

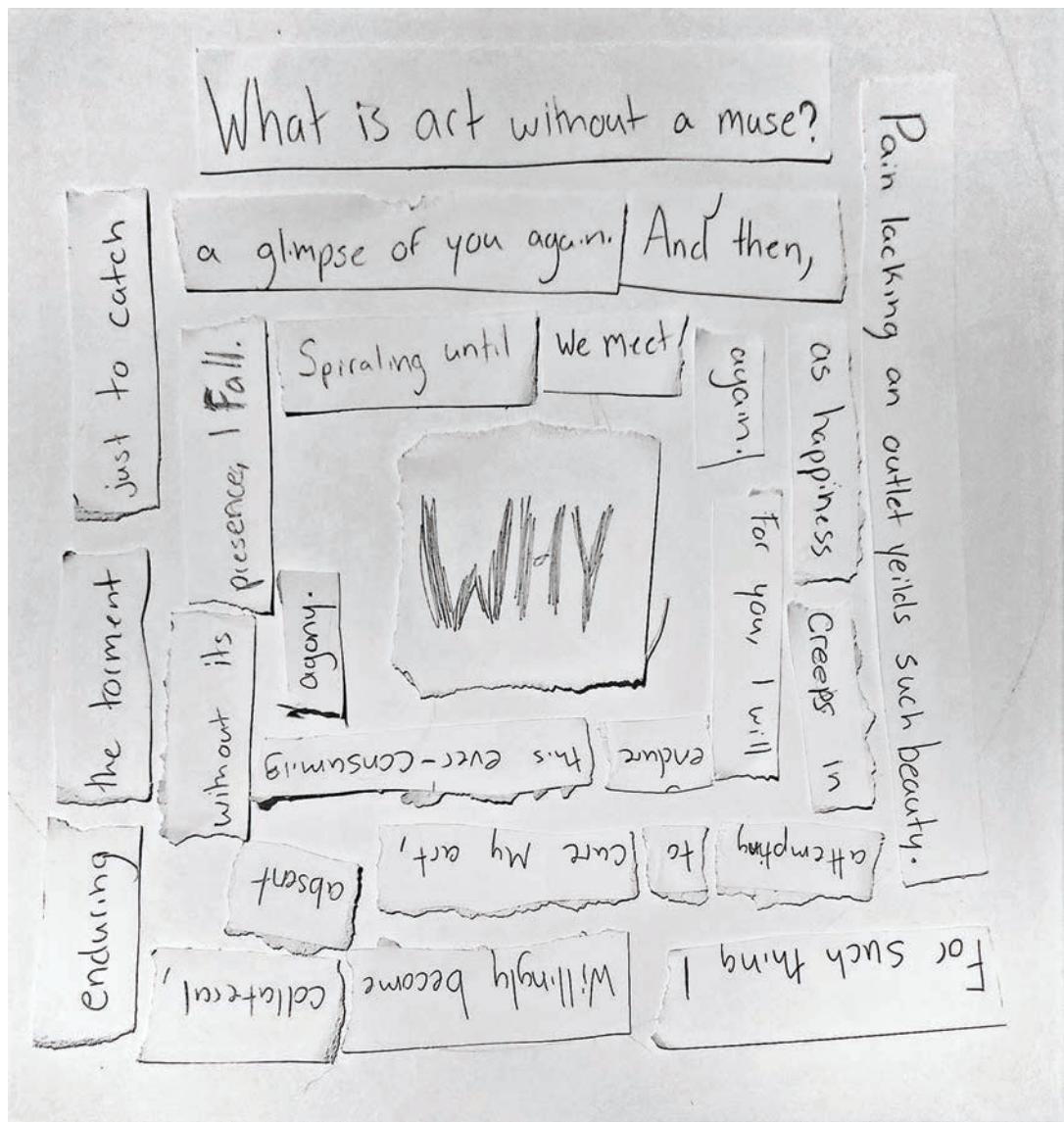
Today class ended early, and I set off for the café. My intention was to relax but deep inside, I knew it was also to feed my secret desire. I saw him as soon as I stepped through the door. He was watering some plants hanging in the windows. They made me think of home and gave me comfort for the loneliness I felt being so far away. He heard the gentle bell that hung above the door and glanced in my direction. His face seemed to light up instantly and I could see how happy he was. Smiling, he said “Hello”. He has the most soothing voice. Soft and gentle. The scent of coffee being brewed and the warmth inside the café made the tension in my muscles fall away. It was all so calming. That was the day, I got all my answers.

Art that appeals to me is the type that plays on the senses. I just don't want to look at a painting, I want to experience it. The sun shining on my face, the small breeze or the rain falling on my hair. Every piece deserves to be more than just paint on canvas. Not just a pretty picture but one holding meaning for the artist and the viewer.

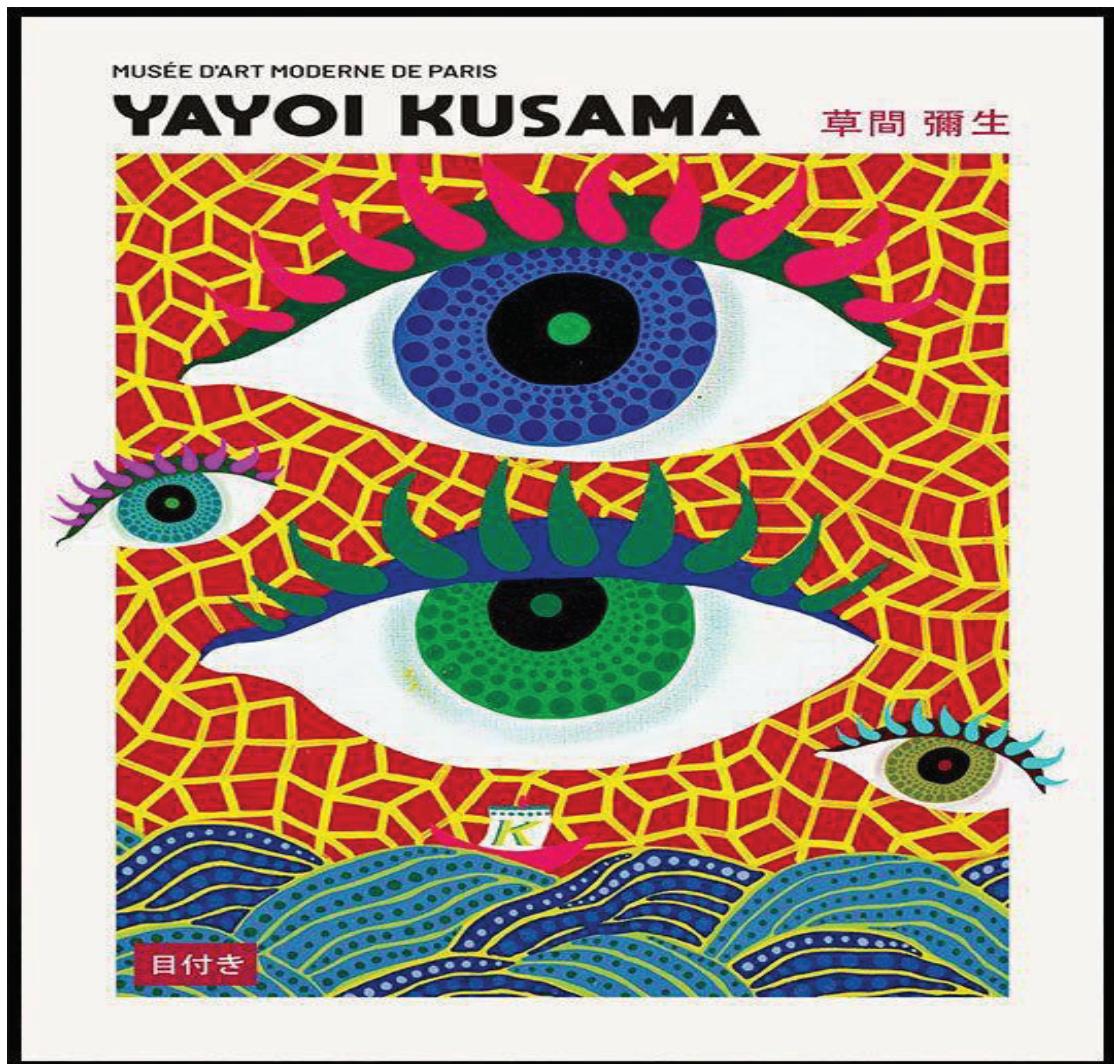
Contemporary art tends to do just that. It is an expression of the what the artist is passionate about. The term 'a picture has a thousand words' comes to mind. Societies diverse issues of today or even perhaps issues the artist is dealing with, are depicted in their art. Art has become a way to reach out to the world with self-expression. A way for the artist to show their feelings and encourage others to do the same. It creates an outlet for all the pain and anxiety that society has created for itself.

When I look at paintings, I always daydream and wonder what the meaning is of that moment in time. What memory or experience are we looking at for these people in the painting and the artist themselves? The name of the painting I used as my example, is 'First Date' by Grace Grent. My description above is where the painting took me. How I felt looking into it.

Spiraling  
by M.B.



Yayoi Kusama: The Enigmatic World of Polka Dots and Infinity  
by Maryam Afandiyeva



Yayoi Kusama is a Japanese contemporary artist whose work has captivated audiences worldwide with its mesmerizing polka dot patterns, immersive installations, and surrealistic artistry. Born on March 22, 1929, in Matsumoto, Japan, Kusama's artistic journey has been marked by a lifelong exploration of themes such as infinity, obsession, and the interconnectedness of the self with the universe. With a career spanning over seven decades, Kusama has left an indelible mark on the art world, inspiring generations of artists and enthusiasts alike.



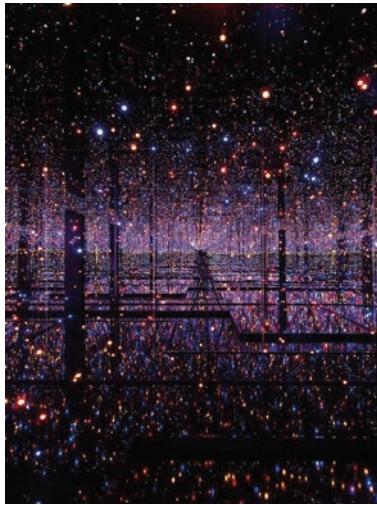
Kusama's fascination with art began at an early age when she started experiencing hallucinations filled with dots, flowers, and other repeating patterns. These hallucinations, which she described as both terrifying and mesmerizing, would later become central motifs in her artistic practice. In 1957, Kusama moved to the United States, where she quickly became associated with the avant-garde art scene in New York city.

One of Kusama's most iconic artistic motifs is the polka dot. Kusama sees polka dots as tiny dots representing the smallest building blocks of the universes. She believes these dots symbolize how everything in the world is connected, just like

how each dot is part of a larger pattern. Through her use of repetitive patterns and bold colors, Kusama creates immersive environments that envelop viewers in a kaleidoscopic world of polka dots, lines and reflections.



**Polka dots**



**Infinity Mirrored Room**

Kusama's polka dot installations, such as "Infinity Mirrored Room" and "The Obliteration Room", invite audiences to step into a realm of infinite space and possibility. In these installations, mirrored walls create the illusion of endless repetition, while thousands of dots cover every surface, blurring the boundaries between the self and the surrounding environment. Visitors are encouraged to interact with the artwork, becoming active participants in the process of creation and transformation.

Beyond her polka dot installations, Kusama works with various art forms like painting, sculpture, performance art, even literature. Kusama's paintings are known for their bright colors and abstract shapes, while her sculptures vary from playful, large flowers to more unsettling, phallic forms. In her performances, Kusama uses her own body as a canvas, covering herself in dots and engaging in repetitive gestures that echo the rhythm of her hallucinations.

One of Kusama's most celebrated series is "The infinity Net Paintings", in which she covers large canvases with intricate, repetitive patterns of tiny dots. These paintings, which Kusama began creating in the late 1950s, reflect her obsession with infinity and the cosmos, as well as her lifelong struggle with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Through her art, Kusama transforms her personal struggles into universal themes of obsession, control, and release. The act of covering surfaces with polka dots serves as a form of psychological escape for Kusama. By immersing herself in the repetitive process of doting, she enters a meditative state where she can temporarily escape the chaos of her inner world. In this sense, polka dots become a therapy tool for her, allowing her to find peace in her mind.



**The Infinity Net Painting/ 1950**

Kusama's art is deeply informed by her own experiences of trauma, mental illness, and social ostracism. As mentioned before, throughout her life she has struggled with hallucinations and anxiety. While Kusama's art reflects themes often linked to schizophrenia- like obsession, repetition- it is crucial to understand that this doesn't mean she has schizophrenia. Moreover, focusing on her mental health overlooks the rich variety of her work, which spans sculpture, painting,

performance art, and installation. In the 1970s, Kusama voluntarily admitted herself to a psychiatric hospital in Tokyo, where she has lived ever since. Despite the challenges she has faced, Kusama continues to create art with a passion and purpose. In 2017, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, hosted a landmark exhibition titled “ Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors”, which attracted record-breaking crowds and became a status as one of the most influential artist of our time. Beyond her artistic achievements, Kusama’s legacy extends to her role as a trailblazer for women in the art world. As a Japanese woman working in a male- dominated field, Kusama faced numerous obstacles throughout her career. To Sum up, when Kusama incorporates polka dots into her art, she invites viewers to immerse themselves in a world of endless repetition and pattern. Through her use of polka dots, she seeks to convey themes of infinity, connectivity, and the idea that everything is interconnected. By engaging with her art, Kusama encourages audiences to understand the concept of the infinity and their place in the universe. She invites audiences to experience a sense of wonder.

**Poem that explain her life as a short scenario:**

In colors bold, in dots that dance,

Yayoi Kusama takes her stance.

Her art, a mirror to the mind,

Where vibrant hues and patterns bind.

Infinity mirrors, rooms of light,

Reflecting visions, infinite sight.

Through polka dots and swirling schemes,

She captures dreams, and silent screams.

Obsession weaves through every stroke,

A way to cope, a tethered yoke.

Repetitive, her art's refrain,

A quest for order in the brain.

Yet in her work, a deeper call,

Beyond the dots, beyond the thrall.

Anxiety and depression's grip,

Her art, a vessel for the ship.

Against the stigma, bold she stands,

Her brush a weapon, in her hands.

In Japan's culture, shadows loom,

Yet Kusama breaks through mental gloom.

Through her art, she sparks the talk,

Of minds that wander, minds that balk.

A bridge between the seen and unseen,

In vibrant hues, a world serene.

So let us gaze upon her art,  
And feel the beat of every heart.  
For in her lines and colors bright,  
We find the strength to face the night.

In Kusama's world, we see the light,  
Where mental health takes flight.  
A poet of the mind, she'll be,  
Yayoi Kusama, wild and free.

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## Stain On Glass

by Maverick Dumali

Mortality is so fragile,  
Time moves for everyone,

A sense of peace is temporary,  
No satisfaction can be satisfied.

The cost of truth will end your youth,  
Suffering loves when you paint a canvas.

You print it as a ritual but the lightbulbs will stop and colors fade,  
Being uncomfortable in the body while letting it sit,

You wish to show a color and people see differently.  
You build it, and it falls. You fail, you pass, you reach, you forget.

You bleed, but as beautiful as a rose, the red makes it well,  
Suffer when confronting the new.

The gift of a mind is sensitive and horrific. Move forward for the sake of it,  
The suffering is worthwhile for we have the privilege to feel.

As an instrument receives volume, it is only expressed through emotion.  
Meaning has no purpose without lacking or wanting more.  
Consume, and absorb, until you won't.

Move forward for the sake of it.

## Escape to Ivan

by Max Taylor

I crack open my salted over eyelids. The bed is crusted and reeks of sweat. It creaks as I swing my legs over and stiffly come to the edge. I see myself in the mirror. Purple. Blue. Strokes of thick oils and an ear on either side. The mirror across the room stares back at me, as I am frozen in the rectangle four feet away.

I step onto the dusty floor boards and scream in pain. The doctor said the meds would work this time, but the doctors always say that and never listen. Why would they listen to someone made of violet and phthalo?

- *Ivan*

Fuck. No. My back hurts - I left them right here. Where are they? Wait - ah yes here they are. I need to ask the doctor for more.

I open the bread bag on the counter and pick the spores of mold off the crust, and put it in the toaster. My fingernails are made of candy corn. I remember Halloween of 1993. Ivan and I - *POP!* I jump. My back hurts.

I carry the toast to the easel and peel the crusts off on the way. My brushes beckon to me, their delicate sable hairs twirl in a pirouette as they spin and fly into sienna. They dance through the air and jeté onto my canvas. With a strike, the glow of the sun slashes across my forehead, my hair alive with the heat of fire. My back hurts again, and I fall further into the dreamscape of my ballet.

The sun is setting onto my face, or rising. My back hurts. Why do I run out so fast? I need to ask the doctor for more. I hate going to the doctor, they never listen. They always say I have enough, but what do they know? My back hurts. I remember when Ivan used to hold me. Fuck, my back hurts.

The mirror stares back at me and the strokes of vermillion gush like an open wound. I pick up my brush and spread the gore from one corner of my frame to the other. I stare into my gaze and work anxiously, throwing on colour and streaking it along. *Ivan*. No, go away. I need to paint the blood off of the frame. *Ivan*. No not now. Not today. *Ivan*. I don't want to hear you! Go away, I can't bear to hear your name. *Ivan!* Why are you screaming! The mirror is screaming and the blood is pouring and the paint is thick against my palm. *IVAN*. NO, I can't do this, not now, not ever. I miss you too much. *IVAN*. Why did you have to go? *IVAN*. Why did you leave me here? *IVAN*. Ivan, your hair as soft as silk and as dark as the night, Ivan, as strong as an oak but you couldn't win the war between right and wrong. They forced your heart to burst, and now I will never know peace. You haunt me in my dreams and you haunt me in the day and I stumble from the pain, as if a boulder is upon my shoulders and I am not strong enough to carry it up the cliff face. My back hurts from the weight and I need my meds and I need my meds and I need-i-need-i-need-i-need my jesus fucking christ where are my meds! Two, four, ten, thirteen tablets into my trembling palms, I throw them back into my open mouth and clutch the sides of my canvas as my vision goes soft. "Ivan..." I whisper, knowing that the veil is growing thin and he can hear my cracking voice.

"...I'm coming."

# I Have A Loaded Gun

by Mercy Trinh

*Written in response to Laurie Simmons' 'Loaded Gun'*

There's a loaded gun in my desk  
It's white and crisply folded four times  
Cradling its bullets encased in ink

I once heard that any paper can only be folded seven times  
Its size doesn't matter;  
Any more is impossible

In grade school, we would spend our gym class folding  
Our prepubescent bodies into shapes supposed resemble letters  
Arrange ourselves into a blind order  
Aiming to spell out words under the direction of our teacher

I'm 21 now.  
There's no one left to tell me how to move  
I miss the illusion of free will  
Now, the only instruction comes from words on pages  
They are too easy to ignore  
A text from my mom, a self-help book about habits, the Bible,  
The instructions etched onto the loaded gun in my desk

Really, letters have no meaning  
Humans ascribe soundings and ideas and convoluted metaphors to make sense  
Of our waiting.  
I thought the days of bending to fit in  
To letters were over  
Instead, entire lives are crammed into the gaps of words  
Struggling to mold to their ideals  
As if squiggles and lines on a page  
Have any real power  
That's an M, not a drill sergeant  
That's a G, O, and D; not a death sentence

It's hard to ignore the loaded gun in my desk because I am Canadian  
We don't do that here  
It's not who I am  
Also, I don't have a gun license  
So I couldn't, even if it was

Who I am

I am stuck 3 meters away  
It's just out of my reach  
My right foot is behind my ear and my left hand is holding it tightly  
I folded myself 8 times  
And now I am stuck

If I could open the drawer of my desk and stares at its contents;  
A glasses case, a push pop from my little brother for Christmas, three replacement mini light  
bulbs for the twinkle lights behind my bed,

and the loaded gun

Neatly tucked next to the glass cleaner.

If I could unfold myself I would pick up the gun and open up its casing protecting the bullets  
I remember how they look  
Dark and smooth, only slightly smudged from when I closed them up too quickly  
Shoving it deep into the abyss of my coat  
My throat's dry. Can pockets swallow?

If I was still in grade school, I would call my teacher over and ask her to pick up the gun and  
shoot me  
It's the right thing to do  
The bullets would rip the knots and folds in my body apart

At least, that's what the doctor promised  
"And if not, there are other bullets we can try!"  
That is, provided I'm not blown apart  
She didn't say that part: they never do

I crawl to the edge of my bed and reach into my desk drawer  
My fingers recognize the gun easily  
They do not shudder at its touch  
Its smooth, white exterior could be non-threatening  
But I know it's meant for me  
I unfold it, still wary of appearances

The bullets sit as I had left them

I suppose I need gunpowder for it to work  
Thankfully the pharmacy is only a few blocks away

## On my path, we intertwine

by Mileva Roumer

The words are tearing my throat, they come in abundance.  
It became silent in my heart turns into agony in my mind  
How can I tell you about my land ?  
Of my native language which timidly seeks a charitable soul,  
to reveal the rhythms that I keep deeply hidden within me.  
Like the roll of a drum, like a troubadour who yearns

I have to take you through the pages that represent my artifacts.  
It speaks for me.  
It dries my tears.  
Who stifles this inner cry?

To sing the glory of the birds,  
to make the sea dance on the waves of my skin  
How to make you feel this infinite cord?

womb of the earth, you root us  
I would like to have you translate every corner of your thoughts,  
every curve of your scars.  
For years in the languages that conquered yours

You would look in the forest for a tree to kiss  
For anything to remember your imprint,  
for a head to stick against yours.

In a second you will be able to let this breath of life grow.  
Let invade this parcel that desires to be heard.  
Your voice like mine does not want to be stifled.  
Your memories like mine won't want to go away.  
So I'm not talking to you about my throat which is tightening, about my eyes which are trying to anchor.

I'm talking to you about you.  
You become the subject who experiences our universal language, creative vision, cosmic dance.  
Nature stretches within us, it knows no borders  
You cross the lines of my consciousness, which you revisit and extend with your own gaze.

- open the frame, don't let me suffocate, let me transcend the borders, let me meet myself outside of me , let's explore together, what is our meaning !

On my path we intertwine, I become formless, I flow like water and we dance through all the elements, to the sound of life, to the memories of colors, to the meaning of being alive. My art talks for me. She carries my voice beyond my "self", now you know, now we feel.

## Black Digital Avatars as Cultural Objects

by Nile Marucci-Campbell

*Soliloquy* (2021) by Martine Syms and *Build or Destroy* (2021) by Rashaad Newsome both wield digital avatars to offer a new way to explore the Black body and mind outside of corporeality. These artists use avatars, coalescing real people, sound, and popular culture to navigate issues of representation. Avatars' changing contexts, ranging galleries and meta technologies, represents their simultaneous accessibility and malleability. Digital avatars traverse time and space while consuming and regurgitating culture to formulate new media and embodiment, becoming Afrofuturist objects.

The *Kita's World* series replicates BET's 1990s virtual host from *Cita's World*, examining Hip-Hop and R&B music videos. *Soliloquy* is one iteration where Kita shares the identity as a host, characterized by her short dark hair, red tube top, black skirt, and her witty commentary. A life-like rendering with nuances of Black expression is exhibited via gestures of her head and hands. All of these aspects are taken directly from *Cita's World* "Summertime," although Syms has fragmented moments in her reimagination. In *Kita's World*, the movements of the musicians indicate semblances of Blackness. Arthur Jaffa's concept of "Black Visual Intonation" explores how movement punctures a realm of being that exists beyond the visual limits of what is seen.<sup>1</sup> Although sound is absent from the music videos, the musician's movement transmits the structure of the music. They move towards the cameras using their bodies to occupy the parameters of the music videos and *Kita's World*. Music videos can offer representations of Black life whether it be through exuberance or pain.<sup>2</sup> Their movement mobilizes Kita's, where she moves according to the dialogue that surrounds her. Her speech is an important aspect that helps fill in the artwork's racial margins, such as her gag about Black people not liking the heat,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tina M. Campt, "Verse Three: The Visual Frequency of Black Life," *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge: The MIT Press), 81.

<sup>2</sup> Tina M. Campt, "Prelude to a Black Gaze," *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge: The MIT Press), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Martine Syms, "Soliloquy," from *Kita's World*, (Chicago: Video Data Bank, 2021), online video, 0:0:06-0:0:09.

which is used to transition into discussing the music video *Summertime* by DJ Jazzy Jeff and Will Smith. Her quip is a precise quote from *Cita's World* which is important in understanding how Syms' artwork repurposes old media to generate new conversations. In the case of Cita as a "stereotypical" representation of a Black woman, it poses the question, is her loudness reduced to something negative? Would a more "settled down" version of her alleviate stereotypes, or would it in fact be forcing Blackness to be palatable?

Racial erasure can be replicated through avatars. One method of cyber-racism is *cybertypes* which refer to the ways in which racialized digital avatars are commodified.<sup>4</sup> Avatars can produce real-life prejudices and mobilize marginal identities' erasure and representations as a whole.<sup>5</sup> Would reducing Cita contribute to the latter? Syms takes specific moments of *Cita's World* into *Kita's World*, as a Black woman herself, highlighting their necessities as features of the avatar's being. Digital avatars contain potential to be dangerous, but they also present the power to disseminate culture and authenticity however it may present itself. Syms' decision to compress features of *Cita's World*, underlines what she saw as the central axis for *Kita's World*. Across time Kita (and Cita) remains physically the same, with newer technology offering better rendering, representing how the avatar can immortalize iterations of Black bodies in renewed contexts. By proxy, the real bodies taken from Black life and entertainment culture disseminate to create new media and expression through both the avatar and medium of video as catalysts. Cita, by becoming Kita, transforms from a piece of entertainment media into a discursive and critical artwork intended to foreground relationships of Blackness and digitality.

Newsome's title of their artwork, *Build or Destroy*, is evident in the visual output of the work. The video is composed of animation, dance, sound, and the fiery ruins of a metropolis. A

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<sup>4</sup> Nakamura, "Cybertyping and the Work of Race in the Age of Digital Reproduction," 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 4.

central component is the dancing femme-presenting digital avatar manufactured by the appearance of a human form with a fiery orb for a head. The body is adorned in silver and gold bangles as well as black knee-high boots. They move around in the digital replication of an urban environment undergoing demolition. The seemingly fraught environment echoes the necessity for destruction, hence the avatar who continues to dance in the foreground. The visuals are mediated by an upbeat techno song, that is soon overlaid with a spoken word dialogue reiterating the necessity of a recalibration of the world. The combinations of dance and destruction orchestrate an Afrofuturist agenda, implying how the Black Queer body is negated in Western spaces, and that the built environment becomes emblematic of issues such as colonization and slavery. The body takes the role of a “construction worker” by destroying and building, with the latter being constituted by movement. Furthermore, the dancing avatar’s movement as synchronized with the demolition reiterates an idea that Black Queer expression has the power to alter and demobilize. By moving and expanding their presence, they alter the environment.

Approximately halfway through the video it pans into one of the rhinestones on the avatar’s thighs, revealing real dancing bodies. The same way *Soliloquy* is produced from entertainment culture as a form of education and resistance, so is *Build or Destroy* as reiterated by the dancing humans on the avatar’s rhinestones. The human dancers are the basis of inspiration for the avatar’s movement, hence the avatar using iconography of ballroom dancing and voguing, in tandem with the incorporation of humanly impossible bodily movements such as contorting. This emphasizes the avatar as an inhuman being. Although the infrastructural demolition in relation to the dancing body may appear as contradicting, there is a clear consonance between them. Newsome’s avatar can be understood as reshaping the viewers of *Build or Destroy* into witnesses from spectators.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Campt, “Verse One: The Intimacy of Strangers,” 39.

The digital avatars within *Soliloquy* and *Build or Destroy* have movements characterized by branches of Black expression through gesture. In *Soliloquy*, Kita is informed by Black Hip-Hop culture whereas in *Build or Destroy* the avatar is informed by Black Queer dancing. Their forms as avatars establish how they can serve as new ways to explore, transmit, and circulate Blackness while also being entirely malleable.

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This is normal. This is my life.

by Nix

This is normal. This is my life.

Year 2015.

You are my normal. I just finished high school.

In this moment you are my entire being.

My way of thinking, focus and idea.

It's good, it makes sure that I understand what is going on and how to overcome it.

It makes me a good human being.

I offer to obtain a job.

"It's not time yet. That's not helpful."

I stay home.

Caring for you makes me stronger, faster, better in your eyes, but...

I'm still not doing it the right way... I just have to be better.

My first attempt.

Failed.

You will never know.

This, is my normal... This, is my life...

Year 2018.

The same route, walk, step, bus.

Every thing is the same now.

The way I dress, the way you speak, the way you live.

Everything is predetermined.

I do the same thing, no matter what day, month, year.

It's all pre planned now.

Nothing is different. Everything is the same.

You are supposed to teach me things.

I follow your direction, so why are you hurting me?

I'm gonna go back to school soon, I'll help animals.

My thighs hurt. I'm tired.

My second attempt.

Failed.

It was too painful... I'll try harder next time.

This... is my normal... This... is my... ~~your~~? life.

Year 2020.

"You can't keep up with dishes, how can you think you can care for other's animals yet you can't help your own family."

I withdraw from school.

I "should have planned better."

Third First time, I don't hide my attempt.

You start checking again, searching ~~my~~ your room.

Of course...

"Coward."

1 year, I'll have everything i need.

I'll become a baker.

I'll be better.

I promise.

We... start fighting, it hurts, as it normally does.

I fought back.

I hurt you...

I'm sorry...

My skin isn't my own, but this is normal... right?

This is normal... Right? This is your ~~my~~ life.

Year 2021

I'm about to finish.

I've got honours, I love this.

I have a plan, it's been approved and I'll be in a paid program for end of term.

I'll finally be helpful.

'll finally be good to you.

I've met someone.

You hate xim.

My skin isn't my own.

You call xim names.

So... I silently change mine.

I will now finish school from home.

This isn't normal. This is your life.

Year 2022.

You love your masks, the way they tighten like a noose, ever there, ever pressing, never falling off this little stool.

"It's too dangerous to leave the house, think of [REDACTED] when you go outside! Why would you hurt your family like this.. I thought you knew better."

Back to school... I want this.. This thought is mine... right?

You allowed me to obtain a job, but it's not good enough.

Healthcare. I've always wanted to be here.

I'll be going back to school soon. "it's a great opportunity, and it's free."

You set it up. I'm in class in the next coming months...

I met her.

She showed me I was amazing.

For the first time...

I was,

good.

...What did I do?

You've destroyed my plans, my your room.

My Home.

I do everything for you. I am you. Don't you see me?

I notice your words more, are they supposed to hurt?

My hands, legs, everything is tied...

I can't move.

I messed up again, I did something wrong again.

I walked on my own before... Right?

Everything is crashing.

We start fighting every day.

You show me how xe's gonna hurt me.

You decide my actions, xe showed me how to have thoughts of my own.

This is the worst I've ever been.

Silently, I obtain a passport.

Silently, I obtain a ring.

Silently, I plan.

This, ~~will~~ isn't be normal. This, ~~should~~ is be your ~~my~~ life.

Year 2023.

My throat hurts.

My money is gone.

She helps me regain myself.

She helps me figure things out.

She helps me realize I have so much more to offer.

Xe follows behind. Watching. Xe's life is falling apart.

I made a mistake.

I start coughing.

Choking, gasping, pulling at the air to enter my lungs.

Harder and harder to breathe, to function.

I never realised how suffocating you are.

I didn't realise because you are breathing all of the same air...

The same air, the same steps, everything was the same between us.

There was never a differing thought, motion, nothing.

"These changes will allow you to have the freedom that you've always had, I ~~had freedom?~~ don't worry [REDACTED]. Your life, it's going the way I knew it would. I found a way where you will learn how to help your family like you should be."

Harder and harder to move. Why can't i move?

I pack my bag.

This will be my fourth time.

My last attempt.

My computer hard drive, usb sticks, my journals, my passport, laptop, phone, charger, underwear.

I'm coughing up phlem.

I know this is going to be my last fight with you.

My lungs are full.

My bag is heavy on my shoulders when i go to work.

I go to school.

She... wasn't there today.

I wish she was here.

I want to talk with her.

I wanted to say goodbye.

Class ended.

People file out.

I close the door, place my phone on the table with your number on the screen.

...

I cry.

...

I pick up my bag.

I wipe my tears.

I push my chair in, I'm ready.

She opens the door.

I sob into her shoulder, I call you.

Your furious...

I'm sick.

"Well, you either go to a hotel, or find a spot on the ground as you will not be sleeping here tonight."

She drags me to her car, she takes to her home,

My home.

I found it.

This is my normal. This is my life.

## Art and graffiti during the Arab Spring

by Nour Beydoun

On December 17, 2010, a series of protests erupted in Tunisia, which then led to protests in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and other countries in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. These protests, uprisings and revolutions were incited by working-class citizens due to their discontent with the corruption imposed by the government leaders of the Arab world (Onion et al. 2020). As we have seen repeatedly in history, one medium of protest is art and music. Artists took to the streets and drew graffiti on blank walls, many of which are still preserved and proudly displayed.

A theme in Arab postmodern art includes the artists' use of satire and mockery through creating caricatures of government officials with phrases and quotes. Graffiti is a commonly known political tool used against fascism. The same can be said about rap music and poetry, which became a popular way of protest and expression particularly in Tunisia, Libya and Yemen.

Art is used as a unique way to convey messages, often exceeding language boundaries, and can be accessible to people of all classes. It is also an important mode of expression in countries that have enforced heavy censorship. One of the most well-known street artists from the Egyptian revolution is Ganzeer. He painted a mural of a military tank aimed at a bread boy on a bicycle in Cairo in 2011. Later, other artists added paintings of protestors between the tank and the bread boy to the mural (BBC World Service, 2021). Many of the artworks share similar

themes, expressing the desire for freedom, peace and liberation while criticizing the authoritarian military presence.



*Tank vs. Bread-Biker* by Ganzeer

The next stencil graffiti artwork, done by El Zeft in Cairo, shows a gun shooting out birds, a compelling example of symbolism for rejecting violence and striving for peace.



*Peace Machine* by El Zeft

This following mural includes three known political figures in Egypt at that time. There is a combined portrait of Hosni Mubarak, president and military officer from 1981 to 2011, and Muhammad Tantawi, minister of defense from 2011 to 2012 with politician and Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohamed Badie behind them. This street art piece is significant because it specifically implies that artists have an impactful role in contributing to their respective revolutions. The artist drew himself painting and being attacked by the military and police. The poem to the bottom writes:

“Oh! Regime you are afraid of the brush and the pen, you oppress and step on those who have been abused. If you were doing right, you would not be afraid of what has been drawn. You are only able to wage war against the walls, play the strong man against lines and colors. But inside you are a coward, you’ll never build up what has been destroyed” (Naguib, 2016).



*Illi Kalif Ma Matsh* by Omar Fathy aka Picasso

Many musicians emerged from the Arab spring, including El Général, Emel Mathlouthi, Ramy Essam and Maryam Saleh. El Général is a young man from Tunisia who is known for starting the trend of musical activism during the Arab spring. His rap songs became an anthem and inspired musicians in other Arab countries to also use music as a tool of protest during the revolutions (Salti, 2016). This is the chorus of his most famous song *Rais Lebled* (President of the country).

“Mr. President, your people are dead.

So many people are eating from the garbage.

There, you see, what’s happening in the country!

Miseries are everywhere and people haven’t found anywhere to sleep.

I speak here in name of the people who were wronged and crushed beneath the feet” (El Général, 2011).

He spoke to and for the youth in a time of employment recession, and criticized the government for their wrongdoings against the people that led to mass poverty and death (Salti, 2016).

To this day, as it has always been historically, art is used as a means of resistance and protest. As a Lebanese-Palestinian living in Canada, the education system is extremely Western-centric; many people around me may not have the opportunity to be taught about these important historic topics of modern-day Arab society including the Arab Spring. There are still many changes to be made in the Middle East, but our communities are coming together and continuing to advocate and resist. I aspire to continue utilizing my power and skills as an artist to make my own protest art against oppressive systems of power, in hopes of spreading awareness and facilitating change.

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## I Hate it Here: Word Vomit

by Olivia Jaszcuzur

I moved to Halifax to get away from On-terrible (Ontario). I had dreams of the ocean, meeting new friends to replace the ones I left behind, and searching for starfish to pick up from the ocean floor. During the first week of living here me and my roommate were pointing out all the starfish in the water; they were all so pretty, each one shining on their own, blue, green, orange, yellow. A fisherman saw us and gave us each a dried starfish and I cried out of joy; the universe had treated me so well and every good thing brought me to tears. I later found out that gifting someone a starfish was good luck, I see this as the starting point of living on my own in a new city and a kick start to my first year of art school.

So to put it simply, I just hate it here. Back in my hometown I finally felt like I had a purpose and a family, a community that I could say that I was a part of. Moving here I was longing to fill the void that still currently exists in me. The void of leaving the only thing I have ever known: home. I really put myself out there. I am constantly surrounded by people, but yet I still feel alone. Honestly... I like the people here but I never saw potential in a healthy friendship with anyone I met. So I fell into this loop of waking up, saying hi to my roommate, going to class, calling my mom, calling my boyfriend, getting coffee with my roommate, cooking for myself, doing homework, making a tea, thinking about how much I hate my room, checking if there was any food on the floor incase the mice came to pay a visit, going to sleep, and repeating it all again the next day.

I remember my mom always getting mad at me about little things around the house that I just brushed off because it never seemed to faze me; the clutter on the bathroom countertop, the dirty dishes I hoarded in my room, the mountains of clothes I left all over the house and the mess that I never cleaned up after me. Guess what, I hate all of those things now just like my mother does. All I can see when I go into my apartment is the applesauce splatter on the floor, the tea mugs from 5 days ago, the laundry I can't bring myself to do, and the bathtub that is dysfunctional because my landlords decided it was an awesome idea to paint over a cast iron tub; I don't even see the forks because they all grow legs and walk away.

The other day I was crying to my boyfriend and he said one day I'll look back at this experience and remember all the things I did love despite all the isolation I feel. I decided to change my perspective on my life here slightly. I hate the dirty dishes left on the countertop, but I love watching the birds just outside the window in the kitchen. I hate walking to my depressing campus but I love feeling the ocean breeze on my face while admiring the deep blue indigo that seems to go on forever. I hate being alone in this city but every time I get to call one of my best friends or see them in person I am reminded of how much I am loved. Within all of these things that I despise are the things that I love but never notice because feelings of despair conquer all. Soon enough I will be back home in Ontario where the squirrels, robins and black bears live, and I'll leave behind the starfish, crabs, seals and whales. They are my friends for the time-being but they'll never be my family.

Being in a different province I took on a whole new meaning of what 'home' means. Home always meant to me where my bed was but now I associate a new perspective with it. Home is where my family is. Home is where my favorite cafes are. Home is where I can recall all my favorite memories. I was listening to a podcast a few months ago and I remember hearing a phrase: happiness is only real when shared. That is something that I can hear myself saying on repeat in my head. I came to realize that if I do have all the things I dream of like having the perfect room, the perfect vintage sweater collection, live in the perfect city, go to the best school, and whatever else that I have convinced myself that I need to be happy, I still won't be happy because despite all that perfection, I won't have anyone to fill the perfect room, I won't have a place to wear my sweaters, I won't have my family to experience the city and the friends to support me through my degree.

I am so thankful for the experience that I am currently living in and I don't regret coming here even through all the pain it's brought me. Without this chapter in my life I would have never realized that home is where the people I love are, and for that I am forever thankful. My time in Halifax is coming to an end in a few months so my plan is to absorb as much ocean breeze, starfish hunting, summer night bike rides as I can with my roommate, and hopefully I will have a collection of memories that I will cherish in my heart.

## Deterioration with Isolation: A Critical Essay on "Inside" by Bo Burnham

by Patrick Johnson

The Descent into despair is greater when no one can pull you back. The fight against one's own mental struggles is a near perpetual and strenuous battle, which can become even more difficult when one is isolated and without support. Additionally, this was recently prevalent in people during the time of the pandemic. The film "Inside" by (comedian, musician, actor and director) Bo Burnham displays this concept perfectly with it being created from 2020-2021.

During the time of the pandemic, there was a shared fear and panic because of the unknown and the world's fate. But one of the most difficult things people endured was the forced isolation and separation from society, community, and the entrapment in one's home. Houses became a place people resented instead of a sanctuary and a place of relief. All these elements lead to widespread depression, anxiety, and emotional/mental exacerbation. The film "Inside" functions as an embodiment of these shared struggles. The film follows Bo Burnham trapped inside his room during the pandemic attempting to make a comedy special, with the comedy often being introspective and implied or clear themes of depression, anguish, and misery. The descent of Bo Burnham is well illustrated and indicated by the progressively worsening state of the room he is in during the film. It starts in a well-managed and organized state. But as the film progresses and Bo's dread intensifies, the room is shown to be cluttered and in disarray, representing the declining state of his mental/emotional well-being. Furthermore, this observation can also be attributed to his complexion. With his clothing and the lack of Maintenance in his hygiene, such as him not showering, doing laundry, and the cutting of his hair/beard. When one is suffering or dealing with immense issues in their life, things such as maintaining one's living space or oneself can seem insignificant or be completely disregarded.

Furthermore, the subject matter of the films' music/comedy throughout the project are presented as humorous with undertones of sorrow and dismay. With the humor present in the film/songs often being a clear way to cope with these feelings and an attempt to diminish their effect on him. As the film progresses though, and his condition exacerbates, the subject matter of the songs/scenes become filled with more sorrow misery and sorrow. These themes are also no longer being alluded to towards the end but being displayed in a more apparent and introspective manner. This can be seen in songs such as "Goodbye" and "All Eyes On Me" with him even stating the immense degree of despair he is going through and the struggle he is having with his mental health and life directly. Presented

with scenes such as him turning 30 all alone and being deeply upset with him getting older, and his emotional breakdown when discussing how the project he's been working on has taken a year of work so far and still isn't complete. In addition, it is discussed/presented that being trapped inside due to the pandemic is having a substantial impact on him and is contributing to the worsening of these overwhelming feelings.

Due to a lack of genuine human interactions and connections with others, it results in not only immense emotional struggles, Bo became more attached to the special he is working on. Becoming dependent on it because it has become a way of life for him to work on it. Working on the comedy special allowed him to be occupied and distracted from the misery/chaos of the world and himself. This further corroborates the concept of the importance/need for external assistance and support for one's emotional/mental conflicts, making it easier to cope and manage with said conflicts. This dependence for something to assist him cope, leads to him no longer wanting to complete the special. Upon completion of the special there will be nothing left to help him manage his struggles, since there is no-one, he can turn to for support. While Bo has always been introverted with anxiety issues, having the ability to communicate and interact with people in person being taken away makes those feelings worse. This results in him feeling like there is no salvation or help he can reach out for. Like being on a plane about to crash and being worried but taking solace in the fact you can make it with a parachute, only to realize the parachutes have been taken away.

"Inside" by Bo Burnham is a contemporary film that acts as a window to the fear, depression, hopelessness and the struggles a person can experience. Not only during the isolative period of the pandemic, but in all day life with how the detriment a declining mental health and isolation can have on someone. It goes through means in which someone can cope with these issues and distract themselves, but how the difficulties can consume a person if not managed. Also, how creativity/art can be used to help in the confrontation of such issues, and how some become dependent on it to express and deal with such problems. It is always easier to be saved if there are other things helping to save you.

#### Sources

Bo Burnham, Inside (Los Angeles, California 2020-2021)

## The "Other Than" Rational: Maja Klaassens at Joys

### *The view is total sea*

by Paula McLean

In the film *Stalker*, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, there is a sequence during which the title character is dreaming. The viewers see a long take of a series of objects submerged under water. The scene is sepia-toned and it's as if the camera movements are creating a vertical tapestry of objects. Unlike many filmmakers who use the camera lens to substitute for the subjective point of view, Tarkovsky gave prominence to the object world, rendering what was mute "eloquent" and articulate.

When I entered Maja Klaassen's solo exhibition, *The view is total sea*, at Joys, there was an instant feeling that I had entered a world of articulate objects, or objects in the midst of becoming articulate. If Tarkovsky was an artist who aimed his camera at objects and sustained its view of them in order to reveal the materiality of time, Klaassens is an artist who creates a grammar and syntax for objects in order for them to not only speak to human viewers, but to converse with each other.

In Simon Mussell's 2013 essay, "Mimesis Reconsidered: Adorno and Tarkovsky contra Habermas", the author discusses Adorno's theory of mimesis, first elucidating the three categories, archaic, magical, and industrial, then proceeding to apply the concept to Tarkovsky's method of filmmaking. For Adorno, mimesis, although often considered to be pre-rational when applied to animals and insects that imitate their environment in order to evade predators, is an important component to visual art and communication. According to Adorno, it is important that there is a preponderance or priority to the object, or in other words, in order for the subject to know itself, it must give itself over to the object. Therefore, mimesis, in art especially, is an assimilation between subject and the art object. While there is domineering, instrumentalization that occurs during the creation process, the art object itself resists easy categorization and harbours with itself an embryo of the archaic pre-rational element and appears to possess its own logic in order to communicate to viewers<sup>1</sup>. Klaassens's artworks felt both pre-rational, yet logical and deliberate, trying to communicate a message to viewers that, rather than straightforward, was poetic and fragmented.

<sup>1</sup> Mussell, Simon. "'Mimesis Reconsidered: Adorno and Tarkovsky contra Habermas'" p. 2

The primacy of the object is something that stood out to me while viewing Klaassens's exhibition. Each detail, the use of material, and the delicacy of each work seemed to allow viewers to glean a story that was being told but not altogether understood, as if the objects were speaking in their own language with each other. Although working in a wide variety of media, including sculpture, video, and painting, Klaassens's artworks, to me, referenced moments in time where action is suspended or frozen. The painting, for example, depicted a sea of individually painted blades of grass. In the centre of the field of grass, there is a noticeable patch where the grass has been flattened, as if someone had just gotten up and left seconds before. Another sculpture titled, *The Sea, the Sea* (2023), presented a steel kitchen faucet mounted onto the wall while a water droplet made from clear epoxy resin was about to drip out. In both works, there was reference to the human (the patch of flattened grass most likely being left by a person, and the faucet that is found in many homes today), however the scenes being shown or represented felt to me like they occurred just prior or just after a human's nearby presence. These scenes depicted the minute, often overlooked, things that happen while our backs are turned, silently and anonymously carrying on without the human being's watchful gaze.

Other works in the show also employed delicate materiality and subtlety to reinforce the ways in which these poetic objects seem to slip past the knowledge and rational comprehension of the viewers. A small work titled, *Night Light* (2023), appeared to beckon viewers into the space. A small shell hung on the outside of the exterior gallery wall, emitting a soft glow from behind. The light that was cast could easily go unnoticed, and it wasn't until I had cupped my hands close to the piece that I had seen the light. Rose thorns also adorned the top areas of the gallery space near the ceiling, which were also easy to miss. One almost needed to be told what to look for before entering. Two works which both consisted of a transparent glass-like material layered over a photographic image were the wall hanging work and a floor work. Both pieces felt like slivers or fractions of a larger whole that viewers were not privy to, with the floor piece being a long, narrow sculpture fitted with a bed of rocks facing upward towards the viewers. The fact that both works had a transparent barrier over the main image or object pointed to the idea that it was not fully meant for human comprehension.

Despite the works in the exhibition being subtle “phrases”, or articulations that seemed to only be communicated with each other, taken in as a collective, they felt as if they were all clues to some greater meaning or message. In Mussell’s essay, when discussing audience reception to Tarkovsky’s films, he cites Maya Turovskaya who notes: “the more the form of the film prevails over the exigencies of plot and narrative structure, the greater the effort required [of the audience]”<sup>2</sup>. The works in the exhibition suggest a “solution” or “message”, yet each time one attempts to discern a concrete meaning, new details or thoughts emerge, taking the interpretive process down a completely different path. However, during the very exercise of meaning-making, a mimetic impulse is brought forward, an impulse that embraces mystery, unknowability, possibility, and poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Mussell, Simon. p. 18

## For my students, as we enter the gallery

by Petryna Venuta

*“About suffering they were never wrong”*  
W. H. Auden, *Musée Des Beaux-Arts*

There may be one room that moves you.  
Carries your breath to pulled clouds of winter wool.

The garden court at the National Art Gallery where the warm threads of a choir’s song dips and lifts once tricked me into heartbreak. And at the Musée de L’Orangerie, the lily’s walls kicked my feet out so that they plunged into the sky as though it were the sea. I couldn’t collect all the tears when I resurfaced from a pool of them.

Find that room for you. And be.

And when you find the piece that you will write about today, don’t rely on the object label.

Read it after you’ve pondered.

They may tell you what to think  
but we are practising how.

Here, for instance. *Street Child*.

I see a white boy, about nine, lighting a cigarette, sitting against a greying eggshell building on a smooth grey street. Unbuttoned shirt, torn pants, exposed knee. Does it look staged? Perhaps he was paid a meal to sit. What else? His feet and face are streaked with dirt, but his knee is impeccably clean. His hair is shorn. Perhaps this is the mark of poverty? Checking for lice? Perhaps those round-bellied boys with shoe buckles have long, well-washed hair? Child model aside, is the subject of the piece...

poverty?

Economic necessity?

Capitalism?

The boy is not grasping for food. He is preparing to smoke a cigarette that he has fashioned from discarded cigars. From the fat of the wealthy, he has created a tiny bite for himself. Luckily, he has found numerous (6, including the one he is holding) unlit matches. There is no telling if the burnt ones were his.

His feet are dirtier than his hands.

But the label says Pelez has obvious “sympathy for the classes suffering in our midst” and “was not attempting to induce pity through oversentimentality”.

To me, though, this objectification of poverty,  
the avoided gaze,  
the ingestion of smoke rather  
than sustenance, the empty offering  
but copious pillaging of identity and narrative  
of the boy  
for personal gain on the part of the artist  
propagates  
or at least maintains  
the strict lines between the classes.

There is no sympathy as alluded to in the label.

It's true that we do not pity the boy,  
but we also aren't moved to help for he seems in control of his own destiny,  
having foraged and been industrial on his own.  
He is not 'begging'.  
And yet, the artist has profited from his subject.  
The artist is begging for alms,  
for praise,  
for knowing when and where and how to look.  
Look around.  
The other paintings in this room tell of sickness and decay,  
of natural beauty and wealth. The height of pain and the hollow of pleasure.

The label reminds us to think of *The Little Match Girl*,  
but I feel

he is a proud Dickensian character.  
One with reserves and internal power, but who nevertheless requires a Miss Havisham or  
Magwitch for a leg up or a bootstrap to pull.

For me, this is Momento Mori.  
Burn up like a match in all our hunger and the clothes we have torn against the edge of our thirst.  
For remember, in the decay of the heavy-headed peony and the drips on the tin plate that catches  
the last splash from the unzippedper doe, we too must die.

But here is a boy, in full tenderness and fleeting smoke. A mirage. A mystery.

Go and find your room.

I will meet you at the entrance to the gift shop when it's time.

## Art Therapy

by Precarious Minstrel

When I try to create,  
My work, I generally hate.  
Often with school, my assignments are late,  
Because of this, I feel great weight.  
Upon my shoulders I've placed a burden  
Pressuring myself because others were done.  
I've been interested in the arts since an early age,  
From painting and drawing to performing on stage.  
Now anxiety filled brushstrokes cover my page,  
As the time's running out, it fills me with rage  
Aimed at myself, why can't I go faster?  
After years of practice, I'm never the master.  
I wish a great mentor would mould me like plaster,  
*But maybe I should just give up.*

...

Although for now  
There's enough tears to drown  
In, try to think about how  
If I took myself out  
Back then, I wouldn't be here today  
Still feeling less-than, lost in the grey.  
I know it's been hard,  
The light seems so far,  
My body's been scarred,  
Repeatedly broken into shards.  
I have to push through,  
I've got so much more to do.  
Plus, I have a semi-colon tattoo,  
*But suicide is heavily appealing.*

...

I'm glad I made it to today  
Through spite or the Great Plan, either way  
I need to learn to believe others' praise,  
Take pride in my work, allow people to gaze  
Upon my pieces, pieces of me.  
Painful creations for others to see.  
Believe my professors when they tell me I'm worthy,  
Stop hiding away, feeling ashamed and dirty.  
Start to accept that process that irks,  
I need longer than others, but that's just how my brain works.  
If I succeeded my attempt, I would have robbed  
Myself of so many opportunities, through college and jobs.  
And not to mention my loved ones would sob,  
*Creation keeps me alive.*

# Anyone Can Create A Venus Figure Forgery from Home That Can Pass Authentication

by Rachel Rabson

## Thesis:

Anyone can create their own forgery of a Venus Figure at home that can pass authentication testing.

## Abstract:

As many have said, “imitation is the highest form of flattery”, but it can also be a lucrative way to make money. Early in January of last year, Thomas Hoving, former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art estimated that 40% of artworks for sale at any point were fake. In the past, as the world of art expanded and the price tag on pieces increased, forgeries became increasingly common. To combat this, art sellers and collectors began testing pieces to authenticate them, including analysis of paint strokes, signs of visible aging, signatures and provenance research. In spite of this effort, fake artworks continue to survive in the market. Modern technologies have advanced the authentication process and made it difficult for forgeries to pass testing. This experiment of creating *Venus Fausse* (Fake Venus) proved that capturing the essence of a Venus figure is possible, although creating the figure in order to pass authentication testing is difficult.

## Introduction:

In 1864, amateur archaeologist Marquis Paul de Vibraye discovered a figure in Laugerie-Basse, France. The figure, 8 centimeters in height, was carved from ivory. When the figure was discovered, it was missing its head and became one of the earliest discoveries of paleolithic mobiliary art. The figure was later named *Venus Impudique* (Immodest venus). This was the first of many Venus Figures to be discovered across Europe. As of 2024, there have been over 200

confirmed figures discovered. Before each figure is given its Venus title, they undergo tests to verify authenticity and whether criteria is met. The methods used to authenticate artifacts include, radiocarbon dating, thermoluminescence dating, x-ray fluorescence analysis, microscopic examination, stylistic analysis and material analysis. Using radiocarbon and thermoluminescence dating it was found that the Venus Figures were created during 40,000BC-10,000BC. Similarly, x-ray fluorescence information of the elements and their relative concentrations in the figures can be determined from dirt samples taken from the area where they were recovered. Style and material analysis has shown the Venus figures range from 2.5 cm to 25 cm in size. Material analysis determined that most figures are made from mammoth tusks, while some are made from teeth, antler, ceramic, rock, bones and soapstone. Though materials can vary, each Venus figure has a similar artistic style. The figurines have exaggerated breasts, hips, thighs and vulvas while other features such as their arms, legs and faces are either minimized or absent. The figures are tapered at the top and bottom, typically missing hands and feet.

Technologies like radiocarbon dating provide a method of absolute dating. Radiocarbon dating detects the amount of Carbon 14 in organic materials. However, due to its short half-life, dating samples from 40,000 years ago is proven to be difficult, samples that are older are unable to be dated as Carbon 14 is not detectable past 60,000 years. Thermoluminescence dating is a method that is primarily used on dating ceramics and measures radiation levels gathered during the time since the sample was last fired or exposed to sunlight. These methods make it difficult for forgeries made in the past decade to pass as a piece from history. Additionally, X-ray fluorescence analysis measures the concentration of elements present in a sample; the unique concentrations of elements present in a sample allow for a sample to be matched to a specific

environment. Other tests include microscopic analysis, analysis cracks, chips, marks, and paint strokes. Microscopic analysis employed with the current knowledge of human movement, how feelings influence our writing, how movements can be determined as strained or natural make it hard to imitate and replicate art. Understanding the science of the authentication process of artifacts is important to successfully pass your own Venus figure as an authentic ancient art piece. In this experiment, I will attempt to make an “authentic” Venus figure, *Venus Fausse*.

#### **Materials:**

- High density foam
- Exacto knife
- Table Saw
- Sand paper
- Paper
- Pencil

#### **Procedure:**

- Create Venus Figure design following identification criteria
- Sketch design on foam
- Use table saw to cut out figure
- Use an exacto knife to shape the figure
- Smooth out figure with sandpaper
- Carving finer details with exacto knife

**Results:**



Image 1: *Venus Fausse* Front view

Image 2: *Venus Fausse* side view A



Image 3: *Venus Fausse* back view

Image 4: *Venus Fausse* side view B

**Discussion:**

Based on the results of the experiment, it is simple enough to design a new Venus figure; the hard part is the carving process. Initially, *Venus Fausse* was going to be carved from a dog bone. However, no one wanted the bone to be cut on their machines and it was too hard to carve by hand. The use of hard foam for *Venus Fausse* makes it easy to recognize its inauthenticity. In the future, instead of hard foam, mammoth tusk, bone or teeth could be used to make the figurine appear more authentic. This would theoretically pass *Venus Fausse* through radiocarbon dating and x-ray fluorescence analysis as well as take care of making the figure appear aged. These materials are surprisingly easy to acquire for the public, which does raise concerns of authenticity. However, using trusted sites and sellers can eliminate this. Considering how hard it

was to carve a dog bone, it raises the question if it is possible for those materials to be carved in a way that won't potentially interfere with microscopic analysis of a *Venus Fausse*.

**Conclusion:**

The results of this experiment didn't turn out as hoped. However, with modifications to the experiment, it is still theoretically possible for someone with advanced carving skills, tools and the internet to make a forgery of a Venus figure that could pass authentication.

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## *Study for Artist and Model* (2003): Kent Monkman takes the power back

by Rose Bissonnette

Kent Monkman is known to engage with already existing Western European and American art. As a two-spirited Cree artist, Monkman re-appropriates colonially motivated works by changing the narrative in different painted scenes. With his work *Study for Artist and Model* (2003), Monkman offers a different and more accurate understanding of the Indigenous colonial experience by inserting himself, or rather his alter ego Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, into the theme of photo-colonialism. Therefore, this painting is queering settler-colonial art history. This essay will argue that this painting re-establishes and switches the power dynamic between the white man and the queer Indigenous person.

Monkman's work can be argued to be a disapproval of photo-colonialism. With the inclusion of the broken camera at the feet of the nude white cowboy, Monkman critiques this horrific practice of inaccurately photographing Indigenous people in a staged setting to portray them as a "vanishing race". Photographers such as Edward S. Curtis or Thomas Moore made their career by staging Indigenous people in erroneous setting and clothing to produce inaccurate before and after shots of residential school victims and to de-modernize them, and therefore legitimize the colonial agenda.<sup>1</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, a Métis-Canadian scholar and researcher in First Nations' and Women's studies, brings up this idea of the "vanishing race" in her commentary on photo-colonialism, which she describes as follows: "[...] the use of photography to collect evidence for and construct a colonial narrative. [...] Regardless of rigorous critiques of the inaccuracy and artificiality of photo-colonialism, its authority continues to have power."<sup>2</sup> Racette acknowledges that photo-colonialism is a reprehensible practice and I think it is fair to assume that Monkman is doing the same in his work. Taking the *mise-en-scène* of the painting into consideration, it could be interpreted as a photo-colonialist photographer being served a taste of his own medicine. Indeed, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle is shown painting a portrait of the cowboy who is completely stripped from his agency and pride, one may argue. Firstly, the white man does not seem to be able to move from his position because he is tied to the tree behind him. Secondly, his jeans are at his ankles which is completely exposing his erect genitalia. Lastly, the white man is wounded by multiple arrows. All these elements put him in a very vulnerable and compromising state while also making a comparison between literal and sexual vulnerability. His face

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Skelly, *Settler-Colonial Art History*. Lecture, PowerPoint, December 5, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Shelly Farrell Racette, "Haunted: First Nations Children in Residential School Photography," *Depicting Canada's Children*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), 79.

compliments his uncomfortable and exposed state with a scared and suffering expression. Although, it could be argued that this face is one of sexual satisfaction which could connect to his clear sexual arousal. This invites the viewer to question what happened before this moment, were the cowboy and Miss Chief Eagle Testickle involved in a sexual relationship prior to that painted moment? A possible explanation could be that Miss Chief was the model in the beginning, being photographed by the white man, and while their relationship was driven into a more sexual direction, she took advantage of this moment to take power back on the situation and broke his camera, injured him and made him become her model. Therefore, Monkman reversed this power dynamic to put the usually discriminated party, the Indigenous, in power as a critical response to the experiences they had to suffer through and continue to experience while and after being photographed by settler-colonialists.

This can also be considered a commentary on the well-known cowboy and “Indians” child game that was still very popular in America in the late twentieth century. Obviously, this game holds a very heavy racist theme that is present in many art forms such as films and paintings like Frederic Remington’s *A Dash for the Timber* (1889). In this game and in Remington’s work, the Indigenous is always the bad guy and is expected to lose but in *Study for Artist and Model*, Monkman switches the narrative and offers the power to Miss Chief, as a representative of Indigenous populations. Miss Chief commands and inspires power with what is called a high-power pose, as she is standing in a wide stance enhanced by her shoulders positioned backwards which exposes her chest. The wind shown with the flowing movement of her hair and headdress puts emphasis on this powerful position and, in combination with the brightly coloured and peaceful background, can bring an inspiring feel to the pose. The fact that she is also holding a bow and arrow while painting the injured man erases all possibilities for denial of her involvement in the wounds of the white man, which continues to put her persona in a clear position of power. She fully embraces and seems glad to accept this responsibility.

In a 2019 interview for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Monkman offered an explanation behind the creation of Miss Chief Eagle Testickle in which he describes her as: “a very empowered point of view of Indigenous sexuality pre-contact. We had our own traditions of gender and

sexuality that didn't fit the male-female binary.<sup>3</sup> It is then obvious that only by including a queer persona in his work, Monkman has queered this part of colonial history. Another way Monkman seems to be queering this rendition is by using a certain combination of colours on the right part of the work, which recalls the trans flag: the blue of the distant mountains behind Miss Chief pairs itself with the white feathers of her headdress and her pink attire. By doing so, Monkman is making a statement on Miss Chief's queerness and because he is exposing her in this powerful stance, he not only grants power to an Indigenous person, but also a queer person.

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<sup>3</sup> Kent Monkman, "Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, Kent Monkman's Alter Ego," By Will Fenstermaker. *The Met*, December 23, 2019, <https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2019/12/kent-monkman-miss-chief-eagle-testickle>.

## The Sun

by Rowan Gibbon

Today, I will go on a great adventure. I will explore the woods and the fields and the graves of those who have come before me and feel rocks below my feet. I shall sleep in a hammock and drink from clean, cool streams. The sun has told me I will.

“So what will I do now?” I looked up at the sky. The sun has been speaking to me since the loss of my daughter, and who am I to not listen? I’ll take any guidance the universe gives me.

At first, I thought it was my daughter herself, that somehow she had found her way back to me. She worried about how I’d be after her death, she’d joked that I’d become a witch, and when she first passed, I was convinced I would somehow find a form of witchery just to bring her back to me. Lord knows that I have the will to, I couldn’t imagine a world without my beautiful girl.

But I knew my girl’s voice. Her voice was strong and rigid, filled with the firm belief that she could do anything she put her mind to. Even when we had to move to the city and she spent her days in a grey hospital bed, she wouldn’t even let out a quiver. The sun’s voice was quiet and trembling, as it hadn’t guided a soul for years.

A soft, all-too-familiar voice rang through the sky and through my open window, breaking me out of my train of thought. “I told you. You will go on an adventure.”

“Well, that’s not very descriptive, now is it?” I hated how vague omnipresent beings were. When you get too much to focus on, it’s hard to direct a woman on one of your smallest planets to do strange tasks, but still, “go on an adventure”??? I feel like you could get clearer than that.

“Walk through the hills and the forests. Explore all my planet has to offer. She’s beautiful, you know that.” I did know that, I suppose.

And so I began. I took my backpack and filled it with a dented water bottle and apples and muffins and a few packets of Goldfish. I grabbed my tent and a rolled up sleeping bag from the 90s, the last time I’d been properly camping. You didn’t really feel

the urge to reconnect with nature with a camping trip when you lived in the thick of nature itself. I hid my phone in the very bottom of my backpack. Then, I began walking.

“So why am I going on this noble adventure?”

“For you.”

“For me? I’ve been on plenty of adventures. I know these woods. I could walk these paths blind.”

“How long has it been since you went on an adventure, Sara?”

My cheeks flushed. “Twelve years.”

“A lot of new roots and holes have come in since then. I suggest you don’t walk it blind, you’d fall.”

As stubborn as I am, I couldn’t argue with that.

So I walked and I walked and I walked. I set up my tent and I took it down so much that it felt like muscle memory to put it up.

Throughout the long slogs of steeper hills, I’d think about my daughter. She would’ve been so excited to see that the sun was awake, that we were being invited to this noble cause to explore nature. Her zest and her excitement for all of these things were unmatched. I’d sit and I’d chew mindlessly on some blackberries that I found and think about them mashed up in her little hands all those years ago.

“When will it stop?” I asked one day.

“When will what stop?” The voice was getting steadier as the days went on.

“The adventure. If this is some sort of appreciating nature thing, I get it, okay? I live in the middle of nowhere. I taught my daughter how to live outside for months. I grow my own food. Why make *me* go on this adventure?”

“Do you miss it?”

“Miss what?” I can’t believe I was ever saying this, but the sun was driving me insane.

“Your house. Do you miss it?”

“No. My daughter still lives there. She haunts those halls.”

“So why stop?”

“Well I- I feel done. It’s fall. I started in the summer. I’m too old for this. I was too old to take care of *her*, even.” I hated admitting that. I had never had my own children. Late one night, I received a call from a student I used to teach, back when I taught in highschools. She begged me to take her sweet baby girl in, saying she knew that I would give her girl the best life she could live. I couldn’t turn her down, she was such a bright student.

And so my 71 year old body took in a very energetic baby girl. I taught her literature and math, she was so bright. If only she was able to make it. But she didn’t. The doctors said that she had cancer, and it was fast growing. They said she’d die in two months, at the latest.

“You feel done? I know those words.”

I turned upwards, exhausted. “What?” But then it clicked. I was done. I’d given a beautiful girl an amazing life. I’d *lived*. “Well I suppose I’m done. My adventure is over.”

“Your daughter told me that once. You were asleep, I was hiding behind the moon. She just asked me to take you on one final adventure, to take care of you. She’s loved my planet her whole life, how could I ignore her wishes?”

“So I’m done.”

“You’re done.”

“Will anyone find me?” I fretted, thinking of a cliche funeral in the city.

“Just the earthworms and the dirt.

“Perfect.” I felt the cool moss beneath me, and the warmth of the sun above me, and took one final breath.



Artwork chosen: *Mother Nature Calls for You, Will You Call Back?* (2022)

## Exhibition Review of *Indigenous Voices of Today; Knowledge, Trauma, Resilience* at the McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal by Samantha Moffatt-Sanz

The *Indigenous Voices of Today; Knowledge, Trauma, Resilience* is a permanent exhibition at the McCord Stewart Museum in Tiohtià:ke, Montreal. This exhibition utilizes objects, stories in text and video, and artworks to showcase the unrecognized knowledge of Indigenous peoples in Canada while highlighting some of the deep wounds they carry and their resilience.<sup>1</sup> This exhibition utilizes these objects of the past alongside these stories that highlight Indigenous knowledge and philosophies to showcase not only the struggles these communities have experienced due to assimilation but their resilience, hopes and plans for a better future for all Indigenous peoples.<sup>2</sup> The combination of these different mediums provides an interesting point of view. The traditional museum display of artifacts and objects is evident, but the labels alongside these objects incorporate the traditional language of the cultures and peoples these objects have come from. The writings throughout this exhibit tell the story of knowledge, trauma, and resilience through the eyes of Indigenous peoples.

Huron-Wendat curator Elisabeth Kaine, and Innu Jean St-Onge, utilized their histories and relationships to create this powerful and moving exhibition. When you first enter, you are greeted by a written testimony, in English and French, followed by immersive art depicting nature. This piece of text, like all wall texts in this exhibit, has a title in an Indigenous language each one different, with a subheading stating the language. Throughout the exhibit, viewers engage with these languages in the forms of wall texts, labels, and large sayings on the walls.

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<sup>1</sup> “Indigenous Voices of Today - Permanent Exhibition at the McCord Stewart Museum,” Musee McCord, October 26, 2022, <https://www.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/exhibitions/indigenous-voices-of-today/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Indigenous Voices of Today - Permanent Exhibition at the McCord Stewart Museum,” Musee McCord, October 26, 2022, <https://www.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/exhibitions/indigenous-voices-of-today/>.

This exhibition spans three rooms, which all relate to a period in the history of Indigenous people's lives in Canada. At the entrance to each room, written on the wall is the title of the room in an Indigenous language, followed by French and English translations. These three sections are, *Us a long time ago*, *Our shattered universe*, and *Taking our rightful place*. In the first room, there are explanations of the Indigenous worldview, the spirits of their ancestors, how nomadic people lived, the importance of animals and children, maps of the Indigenous nations in Canada, and some truly beautiful objects used during these times such as snowshoes, kayak covers, children's rattles, moccasins, tattoo needles and so much more. In the second room, there are testimonies about the suffering endured, the loss of children through residential schools, suicide, and the foster care system, the strict laws imposed on traditional ceremonies, the fights to reclaim stolen lands, and accompanying all these horrible truths are some works of beautiful craftsmanship. This room features a stunning red regalia dress that is intricately embroidered and beaded, a reproduction of a medicine bag with beautiful eagle imagery, a dog blanket and harness and many more objects. The third room features more testimonies, but this time directed towards healing, and working together, alongside these there is a large sculpture work done by a contemporary Indigenous artist, this work is accompanied by the historical influence of the silver brooch, a wampum belt on display and the continuation of the immersive video piece from the start of the exhibition close the exhibit. These three rooms and the works and testimonies within them solidify the ideas of Indigenous knowledge, trauma, and resilience.

An artwork that stood out from this exhibit is the work *Trade Ornament*, created by Heron-Wendat artist Ludovic Boney in 2021. This massive sculpture is made with polished aluminum, maple, and ratchet tie-down straps. It features a large aluminum circle with a hole in the center and diamond-like shapes cut out throughout. There are pieces of maple wood lodged

in different sections of the cut-outs, with the red, yellow, and green, ratchet straps draped across and hanging down into pools on the floor. This work because it feels like a beautiful amalgamation of past and present. By looking at this work it is clear the artist was inspired by the silver medallions and brooches worn by Europeans to signify status, and the recycled materials of the work are reminiscent of Indigenous peoples utilizing European objects and materials acquired through trade in their traditional works.

In my opinion, this exhibition has immense value. If I was someone who had never studied Indigenous art history before, I would be beyond stunned by what is on display. The craftsmanship of these items, their relation to how society lives today, and despite the adversity faced by these people they created some truly important and beautiful items. This exhibition's value is not only in what is on display but also in how the story is told, the personal accounts provide so much more value and meaning than statements by governments or newspapers or history textbooks. What was most surprising about this exhibition was some of the horrible experiences shown in the second room. There is a general awareness of residential schools, the Indian Act and the strict laws imposed but the specifics surrounding the number of children taken, and how many were sold, is often not discussed, but remains an integral part of Canadian history, and this exhibition.

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“Indigenous Voices of Today - Permanent Exhibition at the McCord Stewart Museum.” Musee McCord, October 26, 2022. <https://www.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/exhibitions/indigenous-voices-of-today/>.

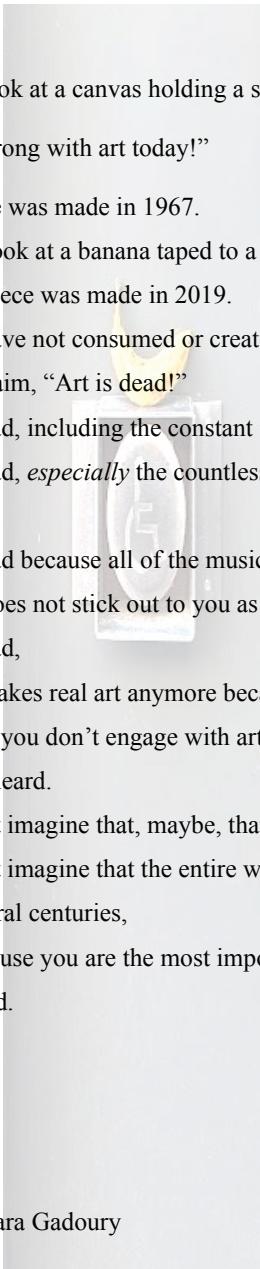
## **Artwork:**



*Trade Ornament*, 2021. Ludovic Boney, Huron-Wendat. Polished aluminum, maple, ratchet tie-down straps. Photographer: Samantha Moffatt-Sanz

# I'm pretentious and annoying!

by Sara Gadoury



People look at a canvas holding a single stripe of colour on a solid background and say, “This is what’s wrong with art today!”

The piece was made in 1967.

They’ll look at a banana taped to a wall and say, “Modern art is not real art.”

Yet the piece was made in 2019.

People have not consumed or created art in any real way since perhaps their high school art class, yet proclaim, “Art is dead!”

Art is dead, including the constant influx of contemporary works in local galleries.

Art is dead, *especially* the countless murals you pass in the city on your morning commute to work.

Art is dead because all of the music, film, and design you use to shape your identity in our visual culture does not stick out to you as “art.”

Art is dead,

no one makes real art anymore because it’s not being spoonfed to you by the algorithm.

After all, you don’t engage with art until you see something you don’t like because your voice must be heard.

You can’t imagine that, maybe, that was the intent?

You can’t imagine that the entire world of art might have evolved past being ornamental in the past several centuries,

And because you are the most important person, if you say art is dead,  
art is dead.

Image; Sara Gadoury

# “Transgressive Sites:” Intersectional Feminism and Representations of Black Women Throughout Art History

by Serafina Swandel

In the introductory chapter to her book *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, art historian Chermaine Nelson describes “the black female body as a transgressive site.”<sup>1</sup> This idea of the Black female body as something transgressive permeates all areas of culture and society including visual representations. Black women throughout the history of art have long been misrepresented or been victims of representational violence leading to real manifestations of violence and oppression in the physical world. Two examples of such representations, painted by White female artists often viewed as feminists or recuperated by feminists, are Prudence Heward’s *Dark Girl* (1935) and Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* (1979). While these representations are damaging and dangerous for Black women there are Black female artists who are reclaiming the “transgressive site” of the Black female body through their art. One such artist is Kezna Dalz whose piece *The Sleepers* (2022) is a piece which portrays queer, Black female sexuality and joy. In this essay I will investigate the way in which White female artists often depicted, and continue to depict, Black women and their sexuality in deeply reductive and representationally violent ways. This is a manifestation of multiple complex power relations that put Black women at an increased risk of violence both representationally as well as physically. Using Kimberle Crenshaw’s analytical framework of intersectionality, the three works mentioned above will be analyzed within these intersecting areas of oppression that Black women are subject to.<sup>2</sup>

As a wealthy White woman in the early Twentieth Century, Prudence Heward held a certain level of power, a power afforded to her due to both her class and race. Due to this position of power within the difficult power relations of Canadian society Heward’s depictions of young Black women demand to be critiqued as forms of representational violence. Her piece

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<sup>1</sup> Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* vol. 43, no. 6 (July 1991): doi:10.2307/1229039.

*Dark Girl* (1935) is one such representationally violent depiction. The painting shows a young Black woman sitting with her arms held across her midsection, positioned below the viewer looking up with a melancholic facial expression, she appears vulnerable. As a wealthy White woman, Heward held a complex position of power over the Black women who modeled for her. The way in which she painted this anonymous model presents her as vulnerable, but more specifically vulnerable to the gaze of the White viewers who were consuming this piece at the time.<sup>3</sup> In a colonial gesture, Heward has presented this woman as an anonymous figure positioned as a pre-modern or timeless woman; she is granted no interiority.<sup>4</sup> The subject is both eroticized and void of any agential sexuality. In comparison to Heward's only nude depicting a White woman, *Girl Under a Tree* (1931), the subject in *Dark Girl* is infantilized and devoid of agency while still being presented as nude and in turn sexually available. Heward, while still facing the oppression of being a woman in the early twentieth century, holds a certain level of power over the Black female subjects in her paintings due to the power relations present as wealthy and White in a capitalist, patriarchal, and White supremacist society.<sup>5</sup>

While Prudence Heward is known for her portraiture of strong, defiant White women she is not explicitly part of the feminist art movement due to her position in history. Instead she is recuperated by the feminist movement after her death. An artist who is firmly within the feminist art movement of the 1970s is Judy Chicago. Chicago's piece *The Dinner Party* (1979) is one of the most famous pieces of feminist art and came out of a movement which coincided with the second wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. The piece is monumental in size and consists of three long tables placed in a triangular shape set with decorative place settings. Each setting is

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Skelly, "The Importance of Intersectionality for Queer and Feminist Art Histories: Lecture Notes," (ARTH 300- Methods in Art History, Montreal: Concordia University, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Skelly, "The Importance of Intersectionality for Queer and Feminist Art Histories: Lecture Notes."

meant to coincide with various feminist icons throughout history. All the place settings, which consist of a table runner and a stylized plate, involve some form of core imagery save for two. One of those two plates devoid of any core, or vaginal, imagery is a setting for the only Black woman at the table, Sojourner Truth. Truth's plate consists of three faces that are made to look like stylized African masks. Many Black feminists have critiqued this piece for its erasure of sexuality in its depiction of Black womanhood. One such feminist, Hortense J. Spiller said of the piece, "By effacing the genitals, Chicago not only abrogates the disturbing sexuality of her subject, but might well suggest that her sexual being did not exist to be denied in the first place."<sup>6</sup> For a piece in which essentialist biology is the central focus, to deny this same core imagery to the only Black woman is undeniably denying her existence as a 'full woman' in the essentialist definition created by the piece. Sojourner Truth's femininity is made to be something different, other, to the femininity of White women.

One artist who is creating work with the aim of reclaiming representations of Black femininity and sexuality, specifically queer Black women, is contemporary artist Kezna Dalz. Kezna Dalz's piece *The Sleepers* (2022) is a bright and colourful reappropriation of Gustave Courbet's 1866 painting of the same name. The original Courbet piece is a painting of two White women in a similar position; however, the perceived queerness of the subjects is fetishized and artificial. Dalz alters this fetishized depiction of the subjects and instead presents a scene of Black, queer joy and pleasure. Their bodies are not idealized but represent the reality of women's bodies. In comparison to Judy Chicago's representation of Black femininity, the subjects are given sexuality and more importantly agency and control over that sexuality. Their nude bodies are also presented in a way that does not place them in vulnerable positions like the Black female

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<sup>6</sup> Hortense Spillers, *Black, White, and in Colour: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 157.

nudes of Prudence Heward. Where Heward's nudes are positioned below the viewer and in a way that seems to be serving the White, most likely male, gaze of the viewer, Dalz has painted the subjects in a shared moment that is not for the pleasure of the viewer in any way. This is done with details like the closed eyes and the pink hearts, all signs pointing towards not inviting the gaze of a viewer and a feeling of love. Kezna Dalz is reclaiming representations of Black women and their sexuality through bright colours and reappropriation of canonical artists' work.

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## Daring (how making a mess saved me from myself)

by Shannon Kernaghan

for KC

Yesterday I was daring.

Headed home from a party with two friends, we stop at one red light after another next to a hottie in a red convertible. We all wave, they wave back, more stops, more waving. My fingers grip the handle, shove open my door, hop into the convertible's passenger seat. "They dared you, didn't they," and I nod as we speed off, gears shifting, both of our grins visible from space.

Today I am nervous when alone in my underground parkade as bicycles parked by mine disappear weekly, remnants of cut chains taunt me, *your janky bike will be next, bitch.* Brazen thefts day and night, from the severing of catalytic converters to the loss of a master key that opens every door in my building, unlocks my anxiety.

I blame my drained courage on credit card compromises, nefarious links and identity theft, from scams and skimming to emails "pwned" in data breaches while I eat lunch, my identity stolen in cities I never visit, sneaky digital thieves attack during dreams where I'm trapped in a cave with fast-rising water that jerks me awake, bathes me in moonlight.

But I grow weary, forced to stand guard against unauthorized parties and bad actors until I sign up for an abstract art class, a distraction. "Hey, I can't draw a believable stick figure," I warn the art teacher. "Honey," they say and gently press my hand, "in this room you can't do anything wrong. All I want you to do is play with paint, have fun!" I want to weep, to hug them after such simple encouragement.

Today I make mixed media from found objects, each rusted piece  
a treasure in my palm. I dance again, carefree, less nervous as a palette  
of colour puddles from my fingertips across once-blank boards.  
On this new page I feel emboldened, free to move outside the lines  
without worry that I'll do something wrong, forced to answer  
to someone, fill out police reports and insurance forms.

Now I check less over my shoulder. I feel at peace when I see  
my messy art station, my paints and paper a comfortable disarray  
where everything waits for me, all in my time, me now controlling  
the transmission. I display my pieces on welcoming gallery walls,  
in glossy journal pages and experience a sense of pleasure, hope,  
fearlessness I haven't felt since . . . since . . . since . . .

Yesterday, when I was daring.

## Days

by Susan McLenaghan

Day 455 and counting.... This is a gray day, it reflects my mood. I feel like I am 100 feet below the frozen artic sea. I am sinking down beneath the surface, alive, but unable to breathe. How can days turn into years and still, the screen blank? Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

I met someone, a mirror of me. All around him is loss and he see's himself, dead. Yet I am connected to him somehow. His family cannot turn the page. They are stuck, all on the same paragraph of death. The living suspended in a vortex of grief.

I stay, because life without him is unimaginable and he helps let a little air into my lungs. I am under the sea now, the ice so thick, around me darkness. My little chicks looking for worms and bits of me which I cannot give. They are off taking a step into life, learning to navigate in the chaos and loss. Is this life after loss? Nothing is the same as before, it is wiped clean, but so dirty you cannot see through the muddiness of it. The water from the shower burns my dry skin, the years have taken their toll and shriveled it into papery white folds. He won't ever make a promise to me, he won't commit because he made a promise to the dead and to the children who are intertwined with the dead. I understand but then I don't. I wish for a new page. The darkness awaits, as the chemicals kick in, my brain is foggy and I forget, as I succumb, only to awake to the same page.

It's a different day, but the same day over and over. I am driving and as I round the bend, my mind shifts as I think about the possibilities and the obstacles to overcome, then a blanket of darkness overcomes me, as my car hits a brick wall and my brain splatters and fractures. The alarm sounds on my phone next to my bed, if only I could find a way out, to reset life, to the one where I feel safe. Maybe those days will never resurface, maybe I will stay submerged under the ice, trying to take a breath.

Everything must stay the same, as if to change it, is to admit that life is different somehow. What exactly happened? We both lost our person, the one that shared our children and our dreams. I want it to be different, I want new and better and forever. He lives back where he felt safe, he lives for his children. What they want he bends to and I am left on the outside, forever looking in, a place where it tears and eats into the very core of my existence. This is a living purgatory and I take another pill as the chemicals seep into my brain and the numbness takes over, it starts again.

## Creation

by Victoria Verhaeghe

Sitting through yet another class critique,  
I cannot find it in myself to raise my hand.  
I fear my peers know something I do not,  
my creation lacks complexity  
in comparison to theirs.

But as I listen to my peers,  
I realize it is not just me.  
Are any of us as gifted  
as we make ourselves out to be?

I suppose it is an art school.  
Humans are a conceited species,  
and there is no better outlet for self indulgence  
than the act of creation.

Perhaps I need to let go of my pride.  
My fear of judgment is holding me back.

To create art is to be vulnerable.  
The humiliation that comes with being seen  
is simply inevitable.

Art is created to be dissected.  
There is always something to be said.  
My fears are ultimately useless.

So I continue to create.  
I write shitty poems in my diary  
about how hard I think I have it.  
I read them a day later  
and laugh at myself.

I raise my hand during class,  
and I pretend I know what I am talking about.  
I call myself "creative".

I may not know what direction I am going,  
but it feels better to create without meaning,  
than to create nothing at all.

## The Therapeutic Power of Art for Alzheimer's Patients

by Violet Baird

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that not only affects cognitive function but also takes a toll on emotional/physical well-being and social connection. While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, various therapies aim to enhance patient quality of life. Among these therapies, art-making stands out as a very effective tool. This paper will explore how engaging in artistic activities can positively impact Alzheimer's patients by stimulating cognitive function, fostering emotional expression, and promoting social interaction.

Art offers Alzheimer's patients a unique means of stimulating cognitive function. Despite the disease's progression, certain cognitive abilities, such as spatial awareness and motor skills, can still be preserved. Engaging in art-making activities, such as painting, drawing, or sculpting, taps into these preserved skills. The process of selecting colors, shapes, and materials requires decision-making and problem-solving skills, which can help maintain cognitive function. Moreover, the act of creating art stimulates various regions of the brain, potentially slowing down cognitive decline and improving overall cognitive functioning.

Art provides Alzheimer's patients with a non-verbal outlet for expressing emotions and experiences. As the disease advances, individuals may struggle with verbal communication, leading to frustration and isolation. Art-making bypasses these limitations by allowing patients to communicate through visual expression. Whether it's through vibrant brushstrokes, intricate patterns, or symbolic imagery, art enables patients to convey their innermost feelings. This emotional expression not only enhances their sense of agency and identity but also facilitates a deeper connection with caregivers and loved ones who can interpret and appreciate their artwork.

One of the most significant challenges faced by Alzheimer's patients is social withdrawal and isolation. However, engaging in art-making activities within a group setting can diminish these effects by fostering social interaction and a sense of community. Art therapy sessions provide opportunities for patients to collaborate, share ideas, and

support one another in a non-judgmental environment. Through mutual creative endeavors, individuals with Alzheimer's can create meaningful connections with their peers, caregivers, therapists, and family members. These interactions promote feelings of belongingness and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, ultimately improving their overall quality of life.

In conclusion, art can help many people overcome isolation and replace fear with creativity. It can help foster a deep relationship with people and help patients feel normal again. By stimulating cognitive function, fostering emotional expression, and promoting social interaction, art therapy plays a vital role in enhancing the well-being of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease. As we continue to explore innovative approaches to dementia care, integrating art into treatment plans offers a holistic and personal approach that honors the unique abilities and experiences of each individual. By harnessing the power of creativity, we can enrich the lives of Alzheimer's patients and promote dignity, freedom, and joy in their journey.

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## The differences in Contemporary Art Between Canada and Vietnam

by Vy Pham

One of the most precious experiences I have had this year is the chance to approach different forms of contemporary art in this century from two distinctive countries half a world away. Canada and Vietnam. One is the country where I am currently pursuing my academic and one is my first-born country. To have better conceptions as well as to comprehend the values of contemporary art in both beloved countries, I would love to write about a few distinguishable aspects through contemporary society awareness and my own perspective on this period of art.

Canadian art began over a hundred thousand years ago and has three distinctive periods: prehistoric art, historic art and contemporary Indigenous art. Although the least-known period is prehistoric art, it has diversity in terms of style, genre, purpose, and visuals by experiencing substantial changes over time. Conversely, the historic art period is well-known afterward. During this timeline, art was adapted by Western influx and influence, especially Paris and London, because artists tended to move to European countries to learn about art. From the 19th to 20th century, the desire to identify and detach from European art when artists returned home to establish identity art national. Ultimately creating distinctions and identities for Canadian contemporary and modern art.

Vietnam has a turbulent history, which is clearly shown by witnessing significant events through war, political formation, colonization, and globalization. Its art was influenced by the combination of Eastern and Western creativity. Having gone through the Chinese domination and French colonization. In such conditions, Vietnamese artists and art successfully established their

identities after upheaval events lasting centuries by perceiving many artworks and learning their creativity, techniques and wide range of mediums. Especially, under French control, Vietnamese art trends had a tremendous impact since Ecole des Beaux-Arts de l'Indochine was established in Hanoi in 1925. These days, the foundation knowledge from Ecole is still acknowledged by modern and contemporary Vietnamese painters and implemented in art schools.

How is contemporary art approached at universities? Art universities in Canada create conditions for students to have an advanced comprehension of contemporary art by applying to a major or research program. For instance, at the University of Ottawa, there is an MA degree in Contemporary Art Theory with one-year length, aiming to get deeper aspects and conduct further research on contemporary art fields such as visual culture and visual theory. This is equivalent to mandatory requirements in previous academic performance. Most of the courses students take in this degree are solely about art history and theoretical ideas, with no relation to other industry areas.

Unlike Canadian Art Universities, art universities in Vietnam don't have a specific contemporary art major or a degree for students to delve deep into or have a full understanding of this area. However, for those majors which are related to art, students usually have to take, perhaps, a few compulsory courses relating to contemporary art. In this case, take RMIT Vietnam University as an example, they have a course named "Introduction to Contemporary Vietnamese Fine Art" with the main goal of achieving an overview of Vietnamese art history, how it affects the change and development in cultural, economic and technology in this new globalized art market or brings challenges to artists. It is a course that basically provides essential knowledge of contemporary art practices, which will raise students' concerns and practical applicability in economics.

From the prior establishment of art that our predecessor learned and developed a thousand years ago, the two countries fundamentally differ from their initial origins. Therefore, as time goes on, the difference becomes more apparent from the idea of the work to the content that the author brings.

Vietnam carries a harmonious combination of oriental and Western art styles. Growing up in Vietnam, even if my acquaintance with art was not wide enough, most contemporary artists' artworks express the soul of the countryside where they grew up, or rural people associated with traditional practices and costumes or honour the beauty and courage of the soldiers during the war period. Moreover, motifs have been also an extraordinary source of material for making art since ancient times and up to now. Nowadays, they still hold a great cultural heritage value in Vietnam; for instance, the sophisticated geometric patterns of the bronze-casting in the Dong Son drum (or Heger Type I drum) have created uniqueness in Vietnamese art. Additionally, abstract works with a wide range of practice mediums have also become popular, depicting the inherent beauty around them and partly the nuances of art of the last century.



*Ngoc Lu drum, 3rd–2nd century B.C.E., bronze, discovered in 1893 in Ha Nam Province, southeast of Hanoi, Vietnam (Vietnam National Museum of History, Hanoi)*  
(<https://smarthistory.org/dong-son-drums/>)

Since Canada has rich historical art, the country owns many precious works in interdisciplinary genres of creation, using not only traditional mediums but also attempting to expand them in diverse directions. A special medium that is also familiar to artists and audiences in Canada is sculpture and ceramic works. Sculpture and ceramics articulate human form, figurative works or patterns, etc., and are rarely seen in Vietnam's galleries. When I started my academics in Canada, I visited several galleries in the city. They always show their encouragement to artists to exhibit their works and contribute a space for international artists. Canadian artworks are plentiful in colour and have no limitations. Artists are often inspired by culture, nature, people, texture and feelings to deliver profound meanings to their audiences.



*Karoo Ashevak, Figure, 1974, os de baleine et pierre noire ?, 41 x 44,2 x 10,5 cm. Don du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord canadien, 1989 (Don de John et Judy McGrath, 1984). © Public Trustee for Nunavut, Estate of Karoo Ashevak. Photo : MBAC (<https://www.gallery.ca/whats-on/exhibitions-and-galleries/indigenous-and-canadian-art>)*

I can hardly say which country's art I prefer most, nor can I deny my love for both of them. Art is not only about the perception of superficial images that it possesses but also deeper historical narratives associated with the people living there, its development, and the transformation process that creates the unique beauty of art throughout a lifetime. There are no standards for art. Considering two different countries, the distinctions bring balance when placed on the scale because their diversity always has equal value.

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## Museum of you

by William Ghostkeeper

Well that's not very funny, it was just a stupid pun, what other funny moments are here okayyy just mostly an empty long hallway, what what's that. What? That that's me! Why does this museum have a video of me working, wait where is everyone from my tour group , I ... I did have a tour group right? "Hello!" " Is anyone here!?" "Security!" "Help!" and if they were going to pick a video of me they should've used a more interesting one like... or like the time that I... well of course the time that I OH MY GOD! This video can't be me, why did I just fall to the ground? Am I okay? Wait, that was today? I know because the calendar in the background is checked off for today, we have a big meeting coming up soon , that I've been so stressed about, I mean I have to worry about so much there's the numbers, plus the logistics and oh my , I need to calm down I'm getting overly stressed again after all I came to this museum for... wait why did I come here? And how did I get here? Where am I?

Wait, I remember that first video now, I was talking to a coworker that I had a crush on and telling them a joke , "what do you call a fish wearing a Bow tie?" Although I forgot the punchline So why are my memory's here? In this museum I think I need to explore this more. Room of misdeeds, well I'll stay away from there, oh life's biggest pleasures , I'm sure that's fun, great another long hallway , what kind of museum is this btw it's so minimalist yet strangely alien. And this technology is amazing being able to play videos in such high quality it's like i'm right there. Wait, it's a video of me again! Idk how this is one of life's biggest pleasures though i'm just at my desk working. Oh that's when i submitted that 3 week long report to my boss, i gave up a lot for that report... a ... lot, well sure that was a good moment but how was that one of life's biggest pleasures? Let me check out another one of.. My memories? I guess it's kinda weird to think about but let's see this one. Oh it's when i got promoted to assistant manager, well that was a big pleasure i think. Anything, not... work related? No not that one, definitely not that one oh there's one. Well that was... kinda sad its just me watching a show... alone... okay i gotta get out of this depressing museum where is the exit? It must be the door with the exit sign above it, okay well it's definitely not the exit "PLEASE SOMEONE HELP! HELP! WHAT'S GOING ON!" Wait where I am now? cause of death? What?! I I'm not dead.. I'm alive I'm not dead I'm not dead I'M NOT DEAD I DIDN'T DIE TO A HEART ATTACK LET ME OUT! ... please...please...

Well I've been sitting here for a while i guess I should get up and Sofishticated! That was the punchline! Well since i'm dead I guess i'll see my biggest misdeeds, what horrible terrible things have I done in my life? Well this certainly wasn't what I expected it's the time me and my friends all snuck out of school and went to the mall, that was fun just hanging out with my friends, I miss them... oh it's my first date.. I sure loved her... all the... all the good memories are of when I was young. Surely there's some when I was older, maybe I should go check the funny moments again. Hold on it's the time I didn't ask out my crush when I was young, and the time I decided to work instead of go on that vacation with my friends, I mean I'm sure they had fun but I got a lot done, the grind never stops as they say. Oh its the time I... I the time the that I couldn't make it home it time... I can't do this anymore this museum is barely a museum now the videos are just changing at will and I don't even remember how I got to this exhibit, time spent. I spent a third of my life sleeping 5% in school all this seems pretty standard I never had kids, well I guess I didn't get much of a chance given the circumstance of what happened, is this what heaven is? Just torture for not spending my life right? I spent another third of my life at work that seems like more then i remember, do I have any control of what's happening anymore? Have I ever had control of my life? I'm sorry I didn't come home I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry, its too late now to do anything about it I'm sorry I decided to stay and work that night I should've spent more time with you and focusing on your needs maybe if I left work for that one day you would still be here... I guess that's why I threw myself into work, it's simple I don't have to think about my tragedies or any problems, because we've always had problems and it's easier to ignore them than to face them I suppose. I'm sorry I wasn't there for I'm sorry I wasn't better... I just wish I had more time I'M SORRY I wish I can do more I wish I had more time

Heuuuh OMG was it all a dream? I'm back in the comfort of my room. What time is it, 9:30?! How did I sleep so long? I'm so late, oh and there's my boss calling of course, he's probably so mad at me, but for some reason I.. I didn't answer it.. I just let it ring...



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