

HERE NOR THERE: A QUEER RE-IMAGINATION OF BEAUTY

by

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Artist's Statement

This thesis is a personal perpetual becoming

It is not yet here, but not quite there...

It calls for a queer re-imagination of beauty

Displacing commodified beauty's luxury

and documenting queer ephemerality, calling for shift...

Envisioning possibility of queer futurism through

Augmented Reality and Movement Instillation...

...Beauty as resistance

The Emergent Phenomenon

Emergence: “the whole is more than the mere sum of its parts” (Soler-Adillon). For example, a rod of iron is hard whereas the iron atoms do not have the property of hardness—a form of manifestation, a magical theory for scientists. Another way I like to think about this is through birds’ murmuration because the birds make these magnificent shapes, but it is often humans that inflict shapes onto the murmuration. Thus, creating an emergence phenomenon, or as Fullerton states, an illusion—referring to something, but not as it first appears.

I claim that I am creating my own emergent phenomenon through altered realities of the construction and de-construction of beauty in my own life. I am, ironically, conjuring a utopic world of my own queer imagination of beauty through conjuring a utopic world of my own queer imagination of beauty as resistance, using memory as a source of performativity—illuminating the failures of American mainstream commodification of beauty and the limitations it can hold over the potentiality of my queer imagination.

Dad's Work- Beauty Memory 1

My father studied printmaking in his undergraduate education, and I have grown up with his prints hanging up around my childhood, grandparents', and close relatives' homes; to this day, his works still decorate the walls of my families' homes. When reminiscing on my memory of beauty and what I consider beautiful art, his prints are the first to manifest. When I think of his work in my memories, I remember a consistency. A consistency of a monochrome aesthetic, with a focus on technique by highlighting intricacy through detailing, often eminent in his shading techniques. As well as a consistency of subjects, most of them I remember being mammal and human subjects. I remember the mammals projecting a sense of care and longing in me, often having expressivity through their eyes and not facial expressions. There was a power I discerned to the detailing of their face, exemplifying a clear identity that his human subjects lacked. The human subjects never had faces, either blurry or strategically hidden from view—they were disassociated from a personal identity of expressivity.



Intaglio Print 1: Artwork by Steven Wasaff, Captured by Karley Wasaff, 10/18/19



Intaglio Print 2: Artwork by Steven Wasaff, Captured by Karley Wasaff, 10/18/19

Two of his Intaglio prints (*Intaglio Print 1 & 2*) have always stuck out to me because I was obsessed with him using himself and my mother as subjects in this series; the concept of the traces of lineage called out to me. I also was captivated by the multidimensionality it has and how it seems as though you're looking at a picture through a picture, which I interpret as reality looking on a utopic space looking back at reality: an original inspiration for multiplicity of viewing in the curation of my thesis performance and connecting to the emergent phenomenon.

I have always been flourished by his works, becoming more awestruck with each new work I discovered, but more confused as I began to associate his works with his own failings—disliking others hanging up his works because he doesn't think they are creative enough. I had always been baffled by his own doubt, questioning if he was looking at the same work I was witnessing, the same work I consider and still interpret as beautiful. As a young kid, I remember him discussing the process of printmaking when I asked why he did it if he did not think he was creative enough to pursue being a working visual artist, like opening a gallery, because I thought they were beautiful and could be sold. He said he loved printmaking because of how it took endless amounts of dedication to detail and how time consuming it was compared to painting—a medium he has never had much interest in. But why did I consider his works beautiful if my father didn't regard his own works as beautiful?

In looking back on these memories, it is now evident to me that his love for what he created lived in process itself and diving into the intricate and difficult technique of printmaking. Though he viewed his work as not creative, I did. I now understand why I think his works are beautiful; because of the intricate and taxing process he described to

me was visible in his product. His artistic voice shined through his work by subtly weaving the love of the intricate process of printmaking into the finalized prints. He parallels the process in the product through the detailing of shading comparing to the intricacy of the processes. Paralleling the consideration of strategic consistency of subjects and monochrome aesthetic to the consistency of steps the printmaking process entails. Paralleling his portrayals of personable mammals as his care for the process and longing for creativity he thinks he doesn't have, resembling the purity of the process he upholds. Paralleling the human subjects as his own personal problematic relationship with creativity. It is through these parallels that his creativity is evident to me—his artistic voice is clear in that he upholds the love of the printmaking process by creatively paralleling its intricacy in his product.

Continuing his love for process, he let go of printmaking after college and migrated to animation, a field that emanates in its importance of process and intricacies of development in producing motion in virtual spaces. A field in which he is now considered a master animator.

Is this why I am attracted to the choreographic process and research over performing dance? Do I love process and consider the creative process of art and dance making beautiful because I upheld and idealized my father's own artistic endeavors? If my dad upholds technique as beautiful, then why do I enjoy breaking it and view breaking technique as beautiful? Do my memoires/past shape my perspective of beauty? Does this connect to how I perceive the world?

Experiential Beauty- Beauty Memory 2



Figure 2: Experiential Beauty-Mom rock climbing



Figure 3: Experiential Beauty-Karley at Point Dume



Figure 1: Experiential Beauty-Dad rock climbing

When I was posed with a question of remembering when the first time I considered something as beautiful before knowing to call it beautiful, I am transported to a memory of when I was at Point Dume in Malibu, California: a promontory that points and juts out into the Pacific Ocean at the northern end of the Santa Monica Bay. I remember the experience of this moment as beautiful. I remember the relaxing smell of salt in my nose. The white noise of the ocean pounding against the sides of the rocks and crashing onto the shore. The exuberating massage of warm soft grains of sand exfoliating my feet and sneaking between my toes. The warmth of the sun kissing my skin. The joy of blowing bubbles, with a young long-haired red headed woman with porcelain complexion; watching the bubbles float across the air between the landscape and ocean, painting my sight of watching my parents fearlessly scale Point Dume with dream-like rainbow hues (*Figure 1,2,3*). There is no one specific part of this memory I consider

beautiful, but rather the multiplicity of the intake of senses that crafted and merged into one memory of beauty—beauty as experiential.

Is this memory a foundation for my personal evolution and commodification of beauty? Is my definition of beauty that much different than what is considered the commodified mainstream of beauty?

Acceptance as Freedom – Beauty Memory 3

In attempts to transgress her own private and public spheres, bell hooks describes beauty as “...not best expressed or contained in the enduring art object but, rather, in the moment of experience, of human interaction, the passion of remembrance that serves as a catalyst urging on the will to create. The art object is merely a mirror, giving a glimpse that is also a shadow of what was once real, present, concrete.”¹ Beauty is an experience, and hegemonic aesthetics, more often than not, turns to materialistic objects to fulfill the need for beauty and commodifies it. The need or want for materialistic beauty waivers in the need or want for affirmation, from the self and/or others. I have come to realize that this affirmation through the commodification of beauty resides in the desire of self-acceptance, and self-acceptance as freedom in which I find beauty through experientialism.

I was recently asked to reconcile a moment, if ever, that I had an experience with freedom. The first memory I was immediately immersed back into was the first time I meditated for an hour. I was in Pahoā, Hawaii for a month-long journey, a two-hundred-hour yoga teacher training program. I was surrounded by an



Figure 4: Acceptance as Freedom-Karley in Pahoā, Hawaii

¹ hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 49.

extensively vibrant and lush jungle, meditating by the cliff, listening to the waves crash into the island's side (*Figure 4*).

I was connected to nature and present within my mental and physical body, but existing in a time where the past, present, and future were one entity. I was simply *being*. A shift happened and I was overwhelmed with tears but not sad tears, tears of ease. The kind of tears that just fall from your face; I was at ease. Tears of release. I was simply being, being with myself and belonging. Release as acceptance. I was where I belonged: belonging within myself. Self-acceptance to transgress. “Freedom is a feeling. Freedom is no fear.”² Not to transgress past death or into liberation towards idealism or perfection, but shape-shifting into a new mode of being, of living, of existing. But it was beyond self-acceptance, it was self-acceptance of all of who I’d ever known or ever not know, like a communal warmth.

In reflecting on this experience, acknowledging that language fails to articulate the experience, I correlate this experience to my childhood memory of being at the beach and watching my parents scale a cliff’s edge in the sense that this was an experience of beauty. Beauty as an experience. Beauty as a release of acceptance. Beauty as transgression and utopic longing which becomes innately collective in which “the exercise of freedom is something that does not come from you or from me, but from what is between us, from the bond we make at the moment in which we exercise freedom together, a bond without there is no freedom at all.”³ My demand to write, to transcribe and document my desires, becomes collective through the queer ephemera that conjures a

² Rodis, *Nina Simone - An Historical Perspective*, 14:17-15:40.

³ Butler, “Chapter 1: Gender Politics and the Right to Appear,” 52.

bond between me, the writer, and the audience and/or reader through contestation of memory recollection of beauty as experiential. A shared spark: acceptance as freedom, freedom as beauty, beauty as freedom, freedom as acceptance—an emergent phenomenon.

Blurring Binaries - Beauty Memory 4

In tracking the question of the first time I called someone or something beautiful, I remember myself playing dress up in my fathers' boots, oversized grey t-shirt, and baseball hat in which I felt beautiful. In further recalling the memory, I realized it was a false memory. I remembered that I was not dressed up in this attire, rather it was my sister who androgynously dressed in this attire (*Figure 5*)—I was about 8 and she was about 3. She was moving in the living room space as her, meaning she did not play a male role while in my father's clothes. It was in this moment of witnessing her marvelously happy that I thought to myself, 'wow, she is beautiful.' I thought that it was beautiful that she was exploring her own desires of what she wanted to dress up as, blurring gender binary and desires. Looking back on my first *naming someone* as beautiful and now realizing that my portrayal of beauty veers from America's mainstream commodification



Figure 5: Blurring Binaries-Sister



Figure 6: Blurring Binaries-Dressing up as Snow White

of beauty—leading me to consider how I used to dress-up when I was her age.

I used to dress up as Snow White, everywhere I went; I think I wore that costume almost every day of the week and never wanted to go out without it on (*Figure 6*). I loved Snow White, and I loved being her, and I thought of myself as beautiful in dressing as her. But I was puzzled as I still recalled scurrying around in a wide range of my father's clothes. If my first memory as viewing someone as

beautiful was my sister blurring gender binaries, why was I so obsessed with amplifying the gender binary?

I rummaged through my memories of watching Disney's 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,'⁴ and why I liked her so much. I instantly recalled her relationship with the seven dwarfs, which do not go without acknowledging problems within the relations in current critical analysis of the movie that I will not discuss. Rather, acknowledging what my childhood memory held onto and idealized within Snow White and the Seven Dwarf's relationships—I loved it because she was friends with men. Women and men being friends was not common in my young upbringing and if a girl hung out with the boys, she was a tomboy. Growing up, most of my friends were boys and to this day still are, but I never considered myself a tomboy and I don't remember being categorized as one. I have always loved the commodified 'girly' things, but also loved hanging with the boys and participating in all of the adventures, climbing, and rough housing it entailed. I loved Snow White because she was still 'girly' while still being best friends with men. I was translating Disney's portrayal of Snow White to find myself in the line of the un-diverse Disney princesses of that time.

Continuing to trace this false memory of me blurring binaries in my desire to dress up, or down, that I still swore that I recalled doing, I discovered that the false memory was not so false after all; just a hodgepodge of different costumes. Though my memory of why I liked Snow White so much is still valid, I was not obsessed with exemplifying the binary. Rather, as I had originally remembered, I was drawn to challenging the gender binary in multiplicity. If I wasn't in my Snow-White costume, I

⁴ Disney, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

was running around the house in attire that was non-gender specific (*Figure 7*). I specially remember always wanting to wear my father's motorcycle helmet and hating wearing clothes (in which hating wearing clothes has yet to change). I was challenging the gender binaries by embracing a feminine and masculine energy through attire; attire often being a maker of aesthetic of identity in our society. I was shape shifting from feminine to masculine to marking femininity and masculinity at the same time, via choice of clothing. My childhood self was emitting my full-blown desire to express a non-binary identifying self that my teenage and young-adult self was so weary of embracing. I was beautiful in my confidence to identify as I pleased, it was societies commodification of beauty that halted my shapeshifting ability.



*Figure 7: Blurring
Binaries-3 attire's*

Commodified Beauty as Restriction

Specifically, in the cultural context of America, beauty is an hierarchal ideal that is, more often than not, a self-regulating system that perpetuates ‘other-ness.’

Much of western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior. In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through systemized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the space of the dehumanized inferior...⁵

I am describing ‘otherness’ as all humans who are prescribed as inferior to hegemonic systems, like but not limited to people of color, women, and/or the queer community.

One regulating and successful system in placing people as inferior is the commodified beauty ideal. In hegemonic contemporary American culture, “we are encouraged to value goods, especially luxury goods, over our well-being and safety,”⁶ which upholds and perpetuates systems of oppression on our capitalist structure. The capitalist structure surrounding such ideals of value upholds the beauty ideal described as “what is beautiful is good”⁷ phenomenon that appearance-related products bank on and “promise effortless perfection”⁸ This phenomenon leaks into the beauty ideal that people often partake in in relation to their own bodies in an endless strive for perfection of beauty, and what I will refer to as commodified beauty.

⁵ Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Ferguson et. al. (MA: MIT Press, 1990), 281.

⁶ hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 124.

⁷ Rhode, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law*, 26.

⁸ Rhode, 8.

Commodified beauty is a biased based on attractiveness, a bias that is Eurocentric ideal that places whiteness as the luxury. The bias implicates and entangles inequalities based on class, race, ethnicity, and gender and perpetuates ‘other-ness’ and privilege.

Prevailing beauty standards privilege those with white-European features and the time and money to invest in their appearance. Women face greater pressures than men to look attractive and pay greater penalties for falling short... That appearance matter comes as no surprise. What is less obvious is the extent of its influence on employment, income, self-esteem, and personal relationships. We often understate the price of our preoccupation, not just in money but also in physical and psychological well-being, and in gender, class, and racial inequalities⁹

Beauty, commodified beauty, can be a tool to suppress anyone who does not fall into the hegemonic heterosexual patriarchal white supremacist culture—what is beautiful is good. In hegemonic culture, those who are viewed as physically appealing, or beautiful, are most likely to also be viewed as smart, successful, and likeable. In contrast, less attractive individuals are less likely for promotions and getting hired, as well as more likely to earn lower salaries “...even in professions such as law where appearance has no demonstrable relationship to ability.”¹⁰ This inevitably proves why beauty, or appearance, influences judgement competence, which, in turn, affects status and perpetuates suppression.

What is deemed as beautiful is also deemed successful, and the people who deem what is beautiful are, more often than not, the hegemonic white heterosexual majority. I acknowledge that the suppression is not limited to one marginal group and is intersectional but am specifically honing in on the beauty bias in terms on gender and sexuality. In the context of the beauty ideal in American societies, “femininity is a

⁹ Rhode, 5, 7.

¹⁰ Rhode, 6.

normative white femininity.”¹¹ Meaning we value attractiveness in women based of Eurocentric ideals, or whiteness, and that value attractiveness especially in women.

Women are held to a higher standard of beauty, like youth and fitness, over men because it is a sign of health and fertility—key factors of reproductive success.

Women’s fertility is more tied to youth and physical health than is men’s. Particular significance attaches to cues about female age, health, and hormonal balance, such as firm breasts, clear skin, lustrous hair, and hourglass figures. By contrast, men’s reproductive success is linked more closely to ability to support a family. For them, relevant characteristics have historically been those that suggest access to resources, including physical dominance, such as height and muscles, as well as factors unrelated to appearance that affect the provider role.¹²

This perpetuates gender roles that are separate and unequal by holding women to sexualized standards that averts attention from competence and skill.

This beauty bias often affects how feminine and masculine expression in non-binary spaces are valued, or de-valued. The feminine is often shamed upon, for example, a male being called beautiful can often be an insult because it means he is not masculine enough—de-valuing femininity. Another example is how the ‘neutral’ in gender expression is masculine. The majority of online shops that have a neutral clothing tag or section, is all masculine-esque clothes. This places the masculine over the feminine in terms of what it means to ‘be neutral’ in gender expression and de-values feminine expression as neutral. The value of one expression over the other complicates what it means to be non-binary or gender-fluid in the straight-time gaze and today’s “...globalization of mass media and information technology has brought an increasing convergence in standards of attractiveness.”¹³

¹¹ Deliovsky, “Normative White Femininity.”

¹² Rhode, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law*, 46.

¹³ Rhode, 24.

Queer Time vs Straight Time

Queer, originally meaning strange, peculiar, or unusually different, has morphed into a positive umbrella term for gender and sexual minorities who do not identify as cisgender or heterosexual. A heterosexual identifying person, or cisgender, can also fall under the queer umbrella term, as queer can classify any person who strays from the traditional orthodox thoughts of what sexuality is: includes but is not limited to, a ‘straight’ person who supports same-sex couples and/or people who focus on female sexual pleasure. A *Queer time* world—a term I discovered from Jose Esteban Muñoz¹⁴—is anything differing from, dare I say challenging, *straight time* world, or staying strictly in the present moment: a counterhegemonic aesthetic vision. I am defining *straight time* as heterosexual/cisgender identities, traditional orthodox thought, and mainstream commodification of beauty—or the hegemonic aesthetic.

I agree with Muñoz in suggesting that there is “something queer about the utopian.”¹⁵ Queerness, or *queer time*, is utopic because it is in a state of still forming. Placing *queer time* in a place of formlessness is intrinsically utopic because to think ‘different’ is the think through the thought of desire. Do I dare say what I desire? To contemplate desire is political. To imagine another time and place within a mainstream *straight time* society, is to contemplate and critique moments of the everyday by looking back on my past, present, and future—to look back to create a future. I am defining my *queer imagination* within *queer time* but differing from Muñoz in the sense that my *queer imagination* of futurity is connecting to how beauty has formed, and unformed, in my

¹⁴ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 25.

¹⁵ Muñoz, 26.

life. Re-imagining beauty by creating a utopia world by projecting and re-veiling my desires of the *queer imagination* of beauty through re-collecting my past memories of beauty into the present—an emergent phenomenon.

Beauty as Resistance

“... to be political is to be alive—that beauty resides in moments of revolution and transformation.”¹⁶

“Beauty can be and is present in our lives irrespective of our class status. Learning to see and appreciate the presence of beauty is an act of resistance in a culture of domination that recognizes the production of a pervasive feeling of lack, both material and spiritual, as a useful colonizing strategy. Individuals who feel constant lack will consume more, will submit more readily... We need to theorize the meaning of beauty in our lives so that we can educate for critical consciousness talking through the issues: how we acquire and spend money, how we feel about beauty, what the place of beauty is in our lives when we lack material privilege and even basic resources for living, the meaning and significance of luxury, and the politics of envy. Interrogating these issues will enable feminist thinkers to share certain strategies of resistance that will illuminate the ways we can create a balanced, harmonious life where we know the joy of collective, progressive struggle, where the presence of beauty uplifts and renews the spirit.”¹⁷

“we are already within the political when we think about transience and morality.”¹⁸

“The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to intimate progress, still condemn.; us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation, and suspicion. For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”¹⁹

¹⁶ hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 53.

¹⁷ hooks, 124.

¹⁸ Butler, “Chapter 1: Gender Politics and the Right to Appear,” 48.

¹⁹ Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Ferguson et. al. (MA: MIT Press, 1990), 287.

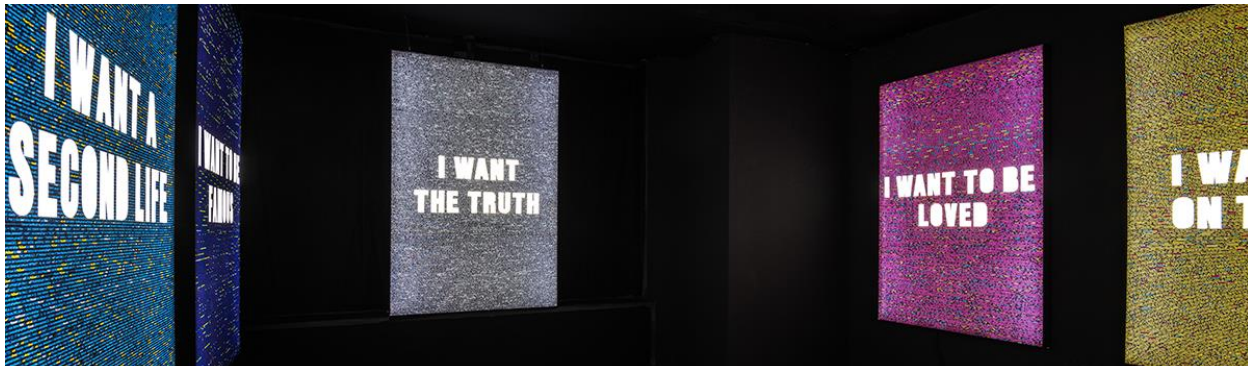


Figure 8: *I WANT* by Jonathan Rosen, Screenshot Captured by Karley Wasaff, 4/23/2019

In today's cultural climate, the convergence in standards of attractiveness is closely tied to social media and "Popular culture is the stage where we rehearse our identities."²⁰ An instillation piece I was lucky enough to see while doing this research, as well as rekindle my creative process, brought up this exact rehearsal of identities. *I WANT*, by Jonathan Rosen, is an instillation art that utilizes augmented reality and mixed-media collages that explores the phrase *I WANT* to explore people's hidden desires in and out of technology.

Augmented Realities are programs like the Pokemon Go mobile app and the Bitmoji characters on Snapchat. My original focus was geared towards creating a Virtual Reality instillation before viewing *I WANT*. His work has inspired me to utilize augmented realities to shape beauty as resistance in a similar conceptual framework of portraying performative multiplicity of identities in relation to technology versus reality.

The instillation is in a dark room with seven 48x72 glowing light boxes, each with a Signature of "I WANT" radiating in white (*Figure 8*). Each panel differentiates in ending of the sentence and background color, like 'I WANT TO BE LOVED', with tiny lines of

²⁰ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 104.

computer code creating a pink background. When looking through the screen of an iPad, the panels reveal an augmented reality of mixed-media collages from social media, apps, games, and news articles relating to the phrase of that panel (*Figure 9*). He brings attention to the once before silent-masses who desires in a post-internet world are now seen and released. He is ironically calling out the ability to manipulate one’s identity behind technology/avatars/social media—the true motives are revealed when looking through the Augmented reality.²¹

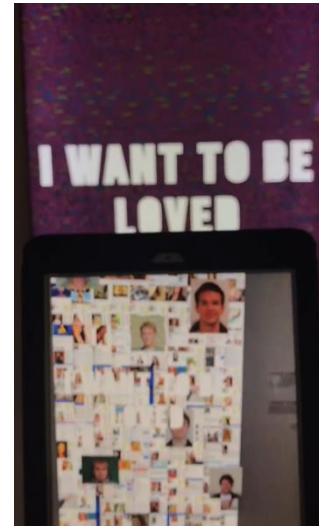


Figure 9: I WANT by Jonathan Rosen, Captured by Karley Wasaff, 3/29/19

My creative process for this thesis heavily integrates, transposes, and devices my father’s work into an Augmented Reality²² through my queer imagination to critique *straight time*; placing my own work into my queer ideal of beauty—beauty as resistance. I was recognizing my own chosen beauty aesthetics in relation to my *straight time* and how they may fall into *straight time*, and yet still exist within *queer time*. The very first tattoo I imprinted onto my skin was on the back of my neck. It is a dancer, but not the ‘typical’ ballet dancer tattoo; in a sense, this is an imprint of beauty as resistance. I took a play on straight time and queered it. My entire movement creation process revolved around this one shape and the multiplicities of the imprint in relation to my memories of beauty as resistance (*Figure 10*). *I WANT*, is inspiration for how I am utilizing Augmented Reality in my creative process in relation to beauty as resistance—Do I dare say what I desire?

²¹ Rosen, *Tech Effect: Technology X Contemporary Art*.

²² Neil, “Designing Reality.”

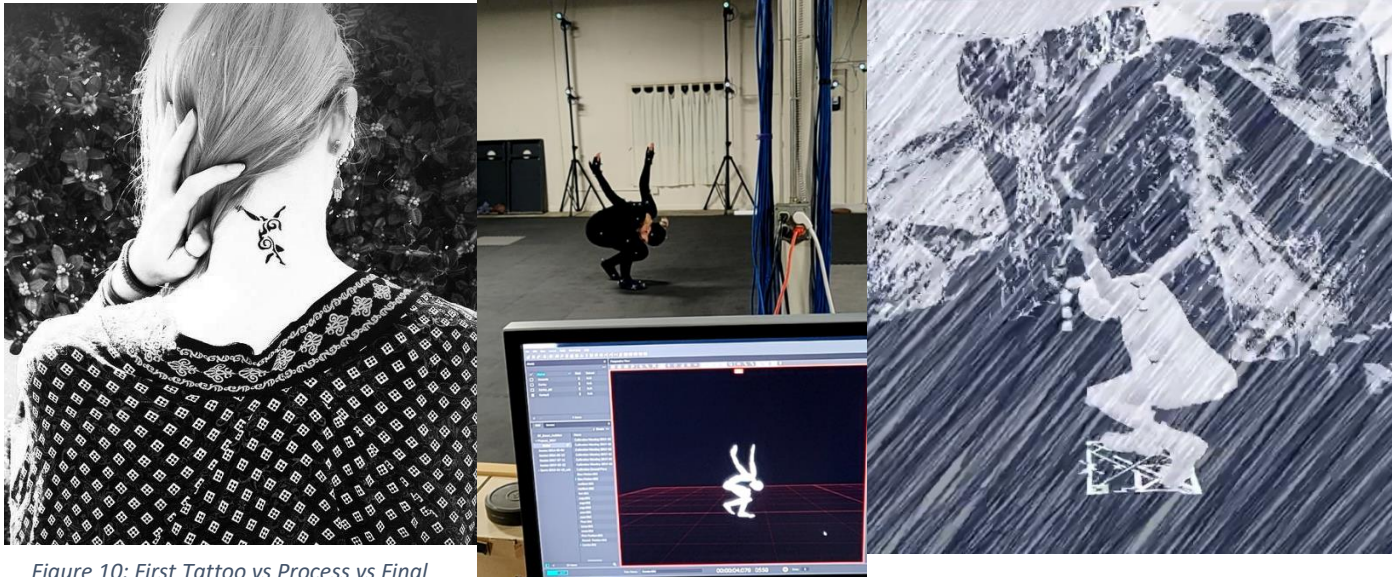


Figure 10: First Tattoo vs Process vs Final

I desire to move past commodified beauty and re-theorize the place of beauty of myself and beyond. My physical self is trapped by different than what I am perceived as on the outside. The Augmented Reality I am co-creating with my father is a peak into my desire to express myself beyond the binary. I am collapsing my personal public and private sphere to move beyond myself because “Once we embrace [a] vision of the collapse of the public and private, the convergence of the individual and the collective, we open ourselves to the possibility of communion and community.”²³

I am theorizing the place of beauty in revolutionary struggle to not surrender my passion for the beautiful, or commodified beauty, but to re-envision that passion in ways that do not fortify structures of domination but transgress beyond what I desire to change. I am returning to myself to go beyond because “...the word *transgress* appears most

²³ hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 53.

often in discussions of the sexual is the indication that the body is the fundamental boundary of self. To transgress we must return to the body.”²⁴

²⁴ hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 133.

Fluidity as Futurity

When I was a kid, I remember loving masculine and feminine games. I remember climbing trees and rocks, playing princess dress-up, playing video games, and twirling around the dance studio with fairy wings. I remember being a *tomboy* and a *girly-girl*, until one day I wasn't anymore. I never was one without the other, I just hid one side of me and flaunted the other.

I was in about middle school when I realized that I was into men and women. The first sign I remember was watching movies and fantasizing about celebrities. The most specific moment I can recall is watching "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" with my mom and us chatting about how hot we thought Brad Pitt was, but I did not find just Brad Pitt attractive. In my head I remember thinking that Angelina Jolie was significantly hotter. I was, and still am, obsessed with Angelina Jolie, but I never told my mom that. It was my secret desire.

There was this girl, that at the time was my best friend, who I accidentally fell in love with. We would 'experiment' with intimacy at night at our sleepovers. We both claimed it was experimenting to get better when we were with boys, but we were really experimenting because we found each other attractive: we hid behind the idea we both had boyfriends. I cannot speak for her, but I was still super attracted to my boyfriend and enjoyed his company as much as I enjoyed hers. This was extremely conflicting for me because I felt as though I was cheating, so I told him, and we broke up. This is when everyone in middle school found out that I was 'bi,' but I never actually said that to anyone. Then the boys stopped being interested in me and I started dating a girl (who was

not the same girl that was stated above), yet we broke up when we graduated eighth grade.

When I went into freshman year of high school, I suppressed that whole side of me. I decided I did not want to be known as the gay girl, so I started to tell everyone I was straight, and that the girl thing was just a middle school phase. I even started having my mom buy me the basic white girl clothes we could find at Goodwill and Marshall's, like Hollister and Abercrombie & Fitch. I dated only boys and I stopped playing video games, I even pushed away my guy best friends for a couple years and tried to be that quiet blonde girl. I was doing to myself what society was doing to me; a type of double consciousness. I was policing myself into *straight time*. I was pretending. I even started sitting with my legs crossed and tried to take up less space in social spaces, which is not me at all. I am that person that sits with their legs spread and arms hanging on the chair over. My energy, or aura, is even that energy that leaks out past my personal sphere. I buried the *tomboy* part of me. I buried it because I could. Because I can pass.²⁵ I can pass physically in the hetero-normative world, even if I didn't feel that way on the inside. But at the same time, I couldn't really. By the end of high school, though I was still out as 'straight' all of my best friends (except for one) and I was more fluid in how I was projecting my physicality's.

In college I came out again as bi, but no one *really* knew because I can pass. I never really talked about it, but my close friends and intimate relations knew. I did not

²⁵ Passing/blending/assimilating: Being perceived by others as a particular identity/gender or cisgender regardless how the individual in question identifies, e.g. passing as straight, passing as a cis woman, passing as a youth. This term has become controversial as "passing" can imply that one is not genuinely what they are passing as. "LGBTQ+ Definitions – Trans Student Educational Resources."

lie, but I also did not speak out about it. If I did speak it out it was usually in queer spaces in which I was often told, by other queer people, that I was only in a phase because being bi was the gateway being a ‘full-blown lesbian.’ I felt discouraged. I felt confused. Even in spaces I thought I could be accepted I wasn’t, which lead me to a wavering of accepting myself even though I still did.

It wasn’t until my senior year that I started to project past my close friends that I liked men and women and openly dated women and men. I even brought a girl home and came out to my family. I did not suppress myself in college because I was ashamed. I never really talked about my sexual orientation not because I did not feel comfortable saying I was bi or that I was not accepting myself, but because I felt like this categorization of sexuality did not encompass all that I felt, but I never knew what. I knew that I liked women and men, but I also knew that I find gender-bending highly attractive. I love androgyny; I find it sexy and beautiful, but bi sticks to the binary of male and female. If I was just bi, then technically I would not be attracted to anything beyond those binaries, like androgyny and/or trans identifying people. Or even the simplicity that I am highly attracted to personality over gender. But I did not know any other language or possibilities for me to identify as something more. Then, that is when I found ‘pansexuality.’

To me, pansexuality²⁶ is being attracted to personality and energies. Of course, physical attraction is a part of it but is not stapled or limited to a biological sex, gender, or

²⁶ Pansexual: Capable of being attracted to many/any gender(s). Sometimes the term omnisexual is used in the same manner. “Pansexual” is being used more and more frequently as more people acknowledge that gender is not binary. Sometimes, the identity fails to recognize that one cannot know individuals with every existing gender identity. “LGBTQ+ Definitions – Trans Student Educational Resources.”

gender identity. My pansexuality is about how our energies interact with each other, the connection between us, the experiential beauty, and not the commodified beauty often tied to the male/female binary. Pansexuality moves beyond gender and holds space for the ideal that gender is very fluid, placing sex at the bottom of determining factors of who I am attracted to. Someone can identify as male, female, non-binary, genderqueer, or genderfluid, and I can be physically and emotionally into any and all the above: meaning gender identity and sexual orientation is not a determining attraction factor.

For about two thirds of this thesis project, I thought that I was rummaging through my memories to bring to life why I identify as pansexual. Only to realize that this project is more than my sexuality, it's about my contestation with who I feel that I am versus how others see me; shifting my identity and sexuality into an emergent phenomenon. I

did not realize this underlying theme until I created a creative board for inspiration for my thesis (Figure 11) and



Figure 11: Thesis Imagination Board, Captured by Karley Wasaff, 5/9/19

speaking through my ideas with a dear friend of mine. I had a thought that kept trailing behind me: why did I feel so connected to non-binary identification even though this representation of gender playground does not include me because I have the privilege of passing?

This project has pushed forward a realization that I do not feel and/or identify as she/her like I thought I did. I have always been lost. I was merging the personal with the political, and the personal became way more personal than I thought it would. I quite literally was unbecoming in the process until I shifted into becoming, the cyclical process of the emergent phenomenon I had been theorizing about. That the way I feel inside is gruesomely different from how commodified hegemonic heterosexual binaries of physical beauty have placed me as femme, placing me as beyond the mere sum of my parts. As Muñoz states, “Queer theory has made one lesson explicitly clear: the set of behaviors and codes of conduct that we refer to as feminine or masculine are not slaves to the biological.”²⁷

I realized within my documentation of beauty there was tension of my own gender identity with not feeling fully connected to she/her. How I feel lost to gender binaries, even within queer communities, and it was the suppressive commodified beauty ideal telling me that that feeling was invalid. I felt fragmented.

I am fragmented,

and that’s okay

I am not only she/her no matter how ‘to the book’ my body looks as a woman, no matter if I express/present as femme, no matter how well I can pass, no matter how tied I feel to the generational trauma of women and femininity, no matter what I choose to wear, no matter if the ‘gender-neutral’ lies in the masculine and no matter how many ‘femme’ things I partake in. Presentation is separate from identity.

²⁷ Muñoz, 76.

This thesis is a documentation of my unpacking that I am valid...

I am found and not found.

I am fragmented.

I am gender fluid.²⁸

I am genderqueer.²⁹

I am they/them.



Figure 12: Karley, Captured by Joseph Frierson, 5/4/19

²⁸ Gender Fluid: A changing or “fluid” gender Identity. “LGBTQ+ Definitions – Trans Student Educational Resources.”

²⁹ Genderqueer: An identity commonly used by people who do not identify or express their gender within the gender binary. Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes, or may simply feel restricted by gender labels. Many genderqueer people are cisgender and identify with it as an aesthetic. Not everyone who identifies as genderqueer identifies as trans or nonbinary. “LGBTQ+ Definitions – Trans Student Educational Resources.”

Lost's Potentiality

Celebrity Ruby Rose expresses her gender in masc and femme ways and is often considered androgynous. She has been criticized for not being 'lesbian' enough for a particular role because of her gender fluidity: meaning because she does not identify as a woman, but as gender fluid woman and therefore 'not lesbian enough.'³⁰ I disagree with this criticism in the sense that if she feels she is a lesbian then she is and she identifies a woman, just a gender-fluid woman. She is 'lost.' She is all and nothing at the same time. In response to such criticism she states...

I'm a woman that identifies as a woman. I'm not trans. But if being gender-fluid means that I can't identify as a woman at any point, then I guess I can't be that. Maybe I need to make up another term, one that doesn't step on any toes. One where I can be fluid in my gender, but also a lesbian, because otherwise I'm not sure what I am.³¹

Though her language is bleak here, Ruby Rose continues to express and identify as she is and rightfully so. Straight time finds situations like these un-envisionable and are therefore dismissed. In this sense, Ruby Rose is lost, in the best sense, to heterosexual contracts. She is fragmented. She is transgressing beyond straight concepts, beyond heterosexual concepts that the queer community, more often than not, still partakes in. She is lost's potentiality.

To further break this down I look for the question what is a woman? In which Monique Wittig points out that a lesbian woman is lost, fragmented. That a lesbian woman is not a woman at all in straight time...

³⁰ "Ruby Rose 'not Lesbian Enough' for Batwoman | Entertainment | Heraldmailmedia.Com."

³¹ "Ruby Rose 'not Lesbian Enough' for Batwoman | Entertainment | Heraldmailmedia.Com."

...it would be incorrect to say that lesbians associate, make love, live with women, for “woman” has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. Lesbians are not women.³²

Anything against straight time undermines the heterosexual contract and is therefore, lost to hegemonic culture. Like Ruby Rose, like lesbian women, I am lost in a similar fashion. I am often lost in the subculture of the queer community because my identity and expression exist beyond the binary that queerness can easily fall into. I see potentially in being lost as an essence of fortuity—lost as a potential for a shift. Straight time is static. To be lost is to strive for shift, to accept the unknowing, to embrace a constant becoming. In this sense I still exist within straight time constructs as it is what I negotiate every day, but I don’t fit. I exist beyond straight time constructs. I exist with and beyond hegemonic queer time. I am fragmented. I am existing in the here and the not yet here, in a multiplicity, to a becoming. I have found myself by accepting being lost, a fragmentation of myself. I am lost with intention. I find potentiality of my queer imagination by accepting being lost...

We can understand queerness itself as being filled with the intention to be lost. Queerness is illegible and therefore lost in relation to the straight minds’ mapping of space. Queerness is lost in space or lost in relation to the space of heteronormativity...To accept loss is to accept the way in which one’s queerness will always render one lost to a world of heterosexual imperatives, codes, and laws....to accept loss is to accept queerness— or more accurately, to accept the loss of heteronormativity, authorization, and entitlement... to accept the way one is lost is to be also found and not found in a particularly queer fashion.³³

I find freedom in accepting being lost, freedom as acceptance. I am found and not found.

I am here and there. I am not hiding in my pass-ibility, I am veering from the hetero-path

³² Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Ferguson et. al. (MA: MIT Press, 1990), 57.

³³ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 72-3.

that is uncharted. I am challenging the straight time found in queer time by pushing back against the commodification of the gender-neutral defaulting to the masculine expression by still embracing my choice to express femme. I am blurring the binary, a potentiality, in which I view my gender fluidity is an act of futurity. I am neither here nor there—an emergent phenomenon.

Memory as Performative. Memory as Resistance.

“Memory is most certainly constructed and, more importantly, always political”—originally said by Jose Esteban Muñoz³⁴. Memory is constructed by the self, in the sense that memories often resurrect in a way that we want to remember them, the way we desire them to be. Memory is inseparable emotional, and from imagination, because of the self. I create from what I already know, or what I desire to know, which conjures from my memories because what I know is informed from what I remember something to have been. I only know from what I have known before and my imagination fills up the known and fills in the unknown. The imagination is the fossil of memory, a fossil that is not bound. Memory is the ephemeral of the imagination.

Because, no matter how “fictional” the account of these writers, or how much it was a product of invention, the act of imagination is bound up with memory...

You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. “Floods” is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory--what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our “flooding” ...

Still, like water, I remember where I was before I was
“straightened out.”³⁵

Memories are political because the performative aspect of memories often reveal political desires, they critique the barriers of the present. Collecting memories of the past and shifting them into the present is an act of utopian longing.

³⁴ Muñoz, 35.

³⁵ Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory,” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Ferguson et. al. (MA: MIT Press, 1990), 305.

...i see worldmaking here as functioning and coming into play through the performance of queer utopian memory, that is, a utopia that understands its time as reaching beyond some nostalgic past that perhaps never was or some future whose arrival is continuously belated—a utopia in the present.³⁶

I am identifying my memories of my past within my queer imagination as performative to a queer communal becoming that exists in the ephemeral.

Queer histories are not documented, are not recorded, on purpose of the oppressor; a collective displacement. The oppressor wants, and often than not demands, an erasure of queer histories. These queer histories are fragmented memories, like a cultural legacy. I am documenting as a function of a transmission of knowledge of queer history as ‘I will remember this’ as power, as self-empowerment, as resistance—a hope for ephemeral exposure. A hope can be disappointment, but that is the irony of hope. The essentialism of hope lies in the risk of disappointment if certain impasses are to be resistance via enacting a future vision from a backward glance—do I dare say what I desire?

The ephemeral of queer performativity is something I think of as a ghost, or a trace—not lost, but haunting *straight time*. I am commanding to write to save the ephemeral by committing it from memory and into word, into language. My memory is a gesture of haunting *straight time*, a gesture to emit ephemeral knowledge of *queer time*. Memory as a gesture in which Jose Muñoz reminds us that “Gestures transmit ephemeral knowledge of lost queer histories and possibilities within a phobic majoritarian public culture”³⁷ (a common analogy I often refer to is the *gaydar*).

³⁶ Muñoz, 37.

³⁷ Muñoz, 67.

My documentation is reconstituting my child self as resistance in illuminating my queer history; as well as acknowledging moments of self-erasure for survival of majoritarian heteronormative culture, or *straight time*. I am acknowledging my own loss of queerness by retracing my memories to illuminate my queer-self—I am queering evidence that partially re-lives in its documentation. In which Muñoz describes the key to queering evidence as,

The ways in which we prove queerness and read queerness, is by suturing it to the concept of ephemera. Think of ephemera as trace, the remains, the thing that are left hanging in the air like a rumor... ephemeral evidence is rarely obvious because it is needed to stand against the harsh lights of mainstream visibility and the potential tyranny of the fact... Ephemera are the remains that are often embedded in queer acts...³⁸

In this sense, memory simultaneously works within the ephemeral as a communal becoming, as honoring cultural legacy of shared experiences within *queer time*. I am retrieving and reshaping to articulate agency of my own self-body migration in attempt sustain and contribute to a collective queer memory of existence. As bell hooks states in *Art on My Mind*,

Overall, we have to think deeply about the cultural legacies that can sustain us, that can protect us against the cultural genocide that is daily destroying our past. We need to document the existence of living traditions, both past and present, that can heal our wounds and offer us a space of opportunity where our lives can be transformed... Margaret Randall reminds us in *Gathering Rage* that “Authentic power comes from a fully developed sense of self, possible only when both individual and collective memory is retrieved.”³⁹

Recognition of the commonness of human experience—in contrast to separatism imposed by systems of oppression often reinforced in hegemonic culture, or *straight*

³⁸ Muñoz, 65.

³⁹ hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 169.

time—has the potentiality to promote acceptance of him/her-self to live in peace with others. That self-acceptance weaves and communicates with the collective shared experiences, in which the power of one can be the power of all, shared by the masses. To change the way we see and what we look for, as a counterhegemonic aesthetic vision, in which I turn to a saying from Michael Foucault—as quoted by Whitney Davis—that “To be ‘gay’ isn’t to identify one-self with homosexuality but to seek to develop a mode of living... an historic occasion for reopening relational and affective virtualities.”⁴⁰

This queer act is an act of self-actualization to re-imagine memory to becoming, blurring my public and private realities by daring to say what I desire via recollection: performativity of memory commanding exposure of *queer time*. To exist in the uncomfortable, beyond denial to reveal the self, to pave the way to become. To want to know is to transgress. A becoming to transgress: a utopic longing of freedom. Acceptance as freedom—an emergent phenomenon.

⁴⁰ Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond*, 247.

Here nor There, an Ironic Emergent Phenomenon

The here and now is not enough. My queerness is a desire for a shift and a desire to resist commands acceptance now as not enough—another way of being that is neither here nor there and constantly becoming. Creating a world from my memories and desires of beauty to create a utopian world, bringing both the past and future into the present, is a *tautology*. A tautology of constructions and commodification's beauty—critiquing the present and its limitations on and through my queer imagination of recollection of the past and curation of futurity.

Utopian performativity is often fueled by the past. The past, or at least narratives of the past, enable utopian imaginings of another time and place that is not yet here but nonetheless functions as a doing for futurity, a conjuring of both future and past to critique presentness.⁴¹

I am critiquing the present by illuminating the failures of the world I exist in, through the failures of my queer imaginative utopian longing. I am considering queerness as a rejection to the present: “Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an inconsistency on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.”⁴² Queerness as a methodology of hope in which hope can be disappointing. The difference of *straight time* hope and *queer time* hope is *queer time* hope acknowledges the irony of hope: the need to risk such disappointments if certain standstills are to be resisted.

I am resisting my own straight time in relation to my memories and how straight time does or does not prevail in my life. My memories are political because the performative aspect of memories often reveal political desires, they critique the barriers of the present. Collecting memories of the past and shifting them into the present is an act

⁴¹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 106.

⁴² Muñoz, 1.

of utopian longing. I had begun to queer beauty through my queer imagination in which I am contextualizing memory as the ephemeral of the imagination. I was unpacking why I felt confined as I grew older and played into commodified beauty. I was asking myself; do I dare say what I desire? I explore my sexuality and coming out story, in which I thought this thesis was about documentation and tracing my pansexuality in relation to beauty in which in itself shifted into a tautology. I began questioning why I feel so connected to non-binary identification even though the hegemonic representation of gender playground does not include me, because I have the privilege of passing. I am neither here nor there.

I place myself as the site of tension in the performance to cause friction between *straight time* hope and *queer time* hope, scribing that I acknowledge my hope of beauty as resistance as always becoming, never static and never done. That I am trying to rid of commodified beauty and the stigmas it places on my body, but they never really dissipate because commodified beauty is prominently hegemonic. My body places my imagined utopic space into *queer time* as a critique of *straight time* through my lense of beauty as resistance. Queerness as an acceptance of multiplicity, of creating an imagined future through memories of the past to critique the present...

...the only thing we can ever know about the real reality (if it even exists) is what it is not. It is only with the collapse of our constructions of reality that we first discover that the world is not the way we imagine.⁴³

It is ironic to unveil the failures of reality through my constructed realities of the past and future, because the real world only manifests itself when our constructions fail—beauty as resistance, an emergent phenomenon.

⁴³ Paul Watzlawick, "On the Nonsense of Sense and the Sense of Nonsense."

Why Dance?

Movement, dance performance, is a liminal space that I consider myself in a perpetual becoming and unbecoming. Dance is not locked in time or space, it is lived from within and not an apostle at the cartesian altar, but an apostate of containment.”⁴⁴ It is my vehicle for taking risk: risk in making complications visible. I am curating a performance as utopian performativity through dance because of its potentiality in perpetual becoming. In which “Utopian performativity suggests another modality of doing and being that is in process, unfinished.”⁴⁵ I utilize the idea of fragmentation throughout my piece to represent multiplicity, but also to symbolize potentiality by a process of becoming that loops; and that becoming is not static which is why I motif looping. I work I draw upon for inspiration for the performance space as a utopic performativity is Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster 3*,⁴⁶ in which I interpret this work as a cyclical process of becoming.

Barney’s ‘epic’ *Cremaster* cycle, created from 1994-2002, is an exploration of the process of creation in a self-enclosed series of five feature length film. *Cremaster 3. The Order* was filmed in the Guggenheim museum, where the original exhibition was held and is only one part of the five feature length films. I am interested in his exploration of the process of creation due to how he frames and execute his intentionality of creation. The bodies are sites of tension that complicates the society we exist in. In this sense, he is igniting a new mode of being that is constantly becoming inside of an existing societal

⁴⁴ Martin, “Between Intervention and Utopia: Dance Politics,” 31.

⁴⁵ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 99.

⁴⁶ Barney, *Cremaster 3. The Order*.

construct. I find this work to parallel my desire to create my body as a site of tension through the conversion of shift, of fragmentation, of lostness, as beautiful.

I am utilizing this performative utopic space in relation to dance because I am viewing dance as a vehicle to cross my individuality to others.

...I look at the dance floor as a stage for queer performativity that is integral to everyday life... space where relations between memory and content, self and other, become inextricably intertwined... increases our tolerance for embodied practices. It may do so because it demands, in the openness and closeness of relations to others, an exchange and alteration of kinesthetic experience through which we become, in a sense, less like ourselves and more like each other... a certain queer communal logic overwhelms practices of individual identity.⁴⁷

In the sense of hope, I am curating a space that through movement my individual experiences can interwind with others to cultivate a communal becoming. Because dance involves the body, it often implicates desire. In which my desire is to complicate hegemonic culture, radicalizing my queer experiences through empathy and shared experiences of accepting lostness as futurity.

Dance lets us look at bodies for pleasure, indeed, demands that this is what we do. Tis has the potential to link bodies with desire and dancing with the visible manifestation, or elicitation of, desire... [a potential that] dancing is explicitly politically charged precisely because it is presumed to be a public staging of desire, with “desire” a key signifier of sexuality”⁴⁸

I am expressing my queer imagination through dance as desire to illuminate my own beauty desires that are innately tied to sexuality, as explained in the ‘Beauty as Commodification’ section, as a potentiality of futurity as hope to transgress. In which, the tension of my body and the limitations commodified, and hegemonic cultures of beauty and identity is simultaneously a site of hope. My moving body as tensions and a site of utopic performativity that exists in futurity by performing my desires. Through these

⁴⁷ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 66.

⁴⁸ Desmond, *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and off the Stage*, 5.

desires, they can shift into a communal perpetual becoming that lives on in the queer shared experience of accepting lostness as hope. It is through this physical documentation of my own becoming that complicates and haunts hegemonic suppressive systems because it does “...not disappear but instead linger in our memory, haunt our present, and illuminate our future.”⁴⁹ My voice commences into communal queer ephemerality and transgresses hegemonic thought. Transgression as acceptance—an emergent phenomenon.

⁴⁹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 104.

Technology

Technology, specifically within the art form of the gaming industry and the product of the game, is tedious and intricate in the consideration of who the games are created—paralleling my personal aesthetic of the process of art making just as beautiful, if not more beautiful than the product.

What often fails in the gaming industry is the overtly exemplifying of sexuality of characters within the male gaze: male, *straight time*, masculinity being exaggerated or extremely important, women commonly being frail, not a main character, and/or with little form fitting clothes. The first full-length book/study on the topic on gaming representation, sexuality, among other topics, was released in 2014 and stated that "In many ways, digital games seem to be the least progressive form of media representation, despite being one of the newest mediated forms."⁵⁰ In the gaming industry the stereotypes become cybertyped and perpetuate hegemonic thought. 'The Virtual Census' is an analysis of the gaming industry that determines what demographic groups are under- and overrepresented; in which the systematically overrepresented are males, whites, and adults.⁵¹

The failure of representation and identity in video games illuminates the problems within America's current cultural climate of the male the male gaze in correlation to patriarchal and misogynistic. This sexualization revealed itself even more as I began to

⁵⁰ Shaw, *Gaming at the Edge*, 6.

⁵¹ Consalvo et al., "The Virtual Census."

replicate the male and female figures of my father's painting, finding that many of the female preset/base characters in Unity (an animation software) were half naked and skinny with large breasts (*Figure 13*)—a comment my father seemed baffled by. It was if he hadn't noticed it, or rather had not thought about it before.



Figure 13: Unity Man & Woman, Screenshot Captured by Karley Wasaff, 12/14/19

The female characters in many games, but not all, are only relegated to specific missions or small roles, and if the female character, often referred to as the *Femme Fatale*, does appear as a playable character...

...her power is subverted--through an exposure of her underlying essential feminine weakness.... The femme fatale's power is generally social rather than physical--in other words, she deceives an enemy more of them than she shoots him... she is highly feminine in appearance, but often exercises her agency in masculine ways.⁵²

The *Femme Fatale* is sexualized enough to satisfy the hetero-male gaze, but enough strength and complexity that appears to not demean or bore women. There is potentiality in the *Femme Fatale* to transgress gender roles and norms, but often succumbs to 'feminine weakness' in which she is usually overtaken by her emotions and killed. The representation in the gaming industry is often brushed off because it is feminized in relation to the mechanics of the game which are tagged as masculine, and therefore more important.

⁵² Malkowski and Russworm, *Gaming Representation*, 20-1.

...representation might be termed the casual element (“casual” here defined as the contingent) while the mechanics became the hard-core essence of the game form. This devaluation of the significance of representation is also accompanied by gendered rhetoric, from the use of terms such as “cosmetics” and “eye-candy” to refer to a games graphical elements to more subtle erasures of the importance of gender...⁵³

My father, who is used to the gaming industry and its functionality, did not think about the sexualization of the woman because he was focused on the mechanics of how she moved over her ‘cosmetics’. In resistance to this structure, and following my queer imagination of beauty, I countered this suggestion with a decision for it to be necessary for us to create one character that is a merge of both the male and female subject in the prints. To create an androgynous character, inspired by my recollection of memories leading into my own struggle with identity—highlighting my utopian longing of fluidity, of blurring the spectrum of gender and sexuality. The androgynous character, similar to my tattoo, is a play on *straight time* in which I queer (*Figure 14*). I utilized the femme fatale default character in Unity and told my father to add penises to them: the head,



Figure 14: Androgynous Character

⁵³ Malkowski and Russworm, 48.

between the breast, the left deltoid, the right I.T. band. The character is a comment on commodified beauties implications on my physical body, in which within the utopic space, or Augmented Reality, the character is what is not seen. To make visible the not visible, a way to reveal what *straight time* strives to escape and restrict of *queer time*.

My father, DailyPint Studios, and I completed a Live Motion Capture⁵⁴ of me moving through fragments of movement I devised from my tattoo (*Figure 15*). Each

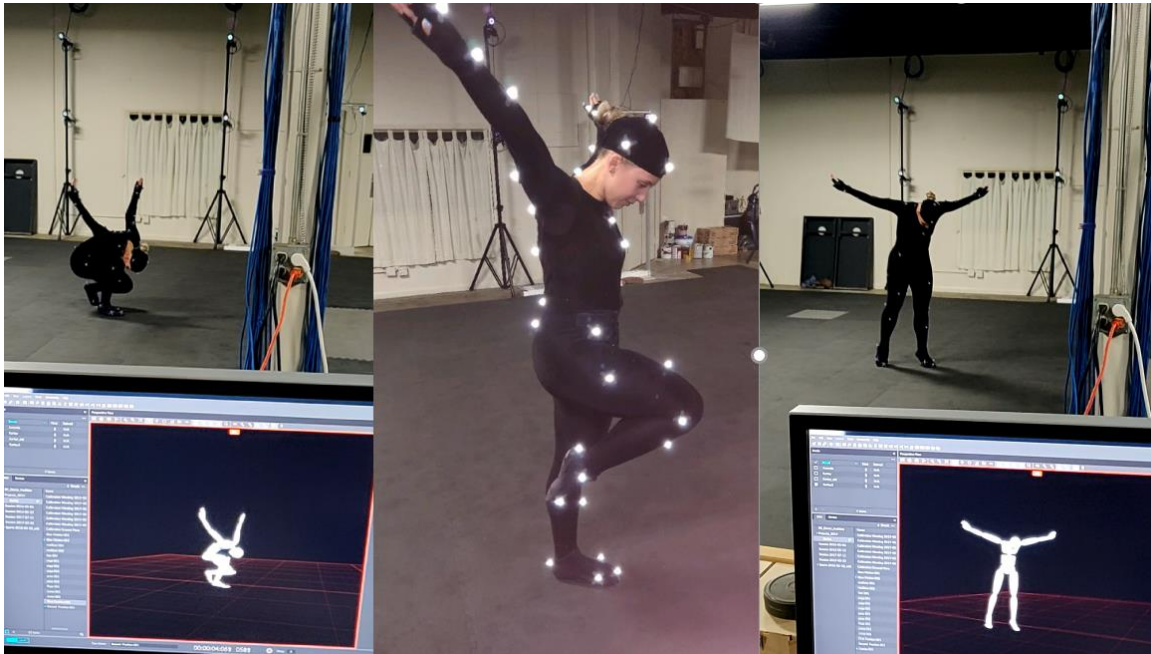


Figure 15: Live Motion Capture Stills

movement section we captured became a character, meaning there were nine sections. We then duplicated the androgynous character nine times to have the same character doing nine different tasks: I view the multiplicity of characters as a multiplicity of myself, as well as a relation to the undocumented queer communal becoming. Each

⁵⁴ Motion Capture: a technology for digitally recording specific movements of a person (such as an actor) and translating them into computer-animated images. "Definition of MOTION CAPTURE."

devised task represents a strive to unpack the past in hope of freedom, simply to start again: a perpetual becoming and multiplicity of queer ephemerality.

Video games are often a tool of escapism for the consumers. Video games, from classic PC games to new Virtual Reality games, are crafted and curated alternative worlds that the majority of consumers utilize as a way to temporarily escape from reality—similar to books and film. In the sense that it has potentiality to remove the consumer from their immediate surroundings and transport them somewhere else, taking it a step farther by allowing the consumer to participate in the transported surroundings. Interacting with the alternative worlds asks of more from the consumer, more than passively peering at a screen—instead of viewing the alternative world and imagining the self in it, it personally involves the consumer by placing the consumer inside of the world by the player participating in decision making and false social interactions. The player becomes a part of there, no longer here. The tension I identify in using technology to curate my utopian longing is to blur the lines of consumers being here, the real world, or their, the virtual world, through contestation: complexing the consumers attentivity, to a liminal space *here* and *there* and neither *here* nor *there*. The contestation places the utopic longing through technology as beauty as resistance. I am creating a world that critique the present, an act of resistance, an act of beauty.

Technology typically seems to not “matter” in day to day passing, in consideration to phones and televisions that are ‘zoned-out’ into, because it is used as a tool rather than a partner. I am inspired by installation artists that propose to oppose this notion by creating a relationship to the screen that “matter,” like Matthew Barney, Micheal Snow, and Jonathan Rosen. In order to create a screen/technology that shows

this, an artist typically engages the viewers proprioceptors, or heightens their awareness of space. For example, Snow’s installation created a way “in which its screen [technology] makes the spectator conscious of the space of the event, as opposed to its normative function as a ‘window to the world’ in order that we may lose ourselves.”⁵⁵

My curation and integration of Augmented Reality, projection, OIS/Android, sound score, and myself, is an emergent phenomenon. In which the audience members place into contestation of viewing multiplicity at once: becoming a part of the performance themselves through the interaction with technology. The multi-dimensionality, originally inspired by my father’s intaglio prints, contends the audience viewers to shift into multiplicity—where not all viewers experience the same thing—placing the audience into fragmentation. This is spectral-doubleness, and has a potentiality to reveal that the work has an “apparent paradox of media installation spectatorship: this mode of viewing is simultaneously material... and immaterial.”⁵⁶ Meaning that the viewer has a phenomenological experience of objects in real time and space simultaneously through a metaphorical projection to virtual time and space or being *here* and *there*—creating an experience that challenges the perception of the viewer in order to engage them with the screen to create an observational experience physically in space and time. Like creating a world that is captivating through the physical and technological aspect/a space that makes them feel a part of the installation—the emergence phenomenon.

⁵⁵ Mondloch, *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*, 16.

⁵⁶ Mondloch, 17.

Not the end, a Perpetual Becoming Reflection

I am unpacking and analyzing my memory, or false memoires, of beauty in my life to negotiating how commodified and non-commodified precepts of beauty has affected and shaped my individual perceptions, aesthetics, and identity. I am analyzing beauty in my life to inform what is or is not in the world I am constructing; for example, it is through this personal history of beauty that ties the urgency of incorporating my father's visual art and animation skills into the instillation: the two prints are my first recollection of visual art I thought to beautiful, animation and printmaking techniques to be the first intricate artistic processes I found beautiful. Creating a utopian world constructed from my personal epistemological review of beauty will ultimately illuminate the failures of my reality—this is my world produced through my own personal languages, actions, ideas, and perceptions of beauty that can be used to reflect and shift.

I am considering the technology/utopia to be what I consider simply beautiful based off of my memories—blurring the binaries, experiential, freedom as acceptance as beauty, father's work and intricate process, and fluidity as futurity. The utopia is more than the mere sum of its parts, it is more than hegemonic perfection of utopia, it is a critique of the present. The queerness is inscribed, an aspect that is not simply visible, but needed to be searched for—an illusion of sorts, referring to something but not what as it first appears. The use of technology capsulated me to never have a full sense of what everything would encompass at the end, placing my creative process into fragmentation and putting into play the emergent phenomenon; not knowing how the sum equals its parts. The fragmentation is whole; my *queer time* process and product, along with its multiplicity and multi-faceted metaphors of my instillation, is an emergent phenomenon.

I begin in an outside space surrounded by benches, by pouring ten gallons of white paint into a white pool. I then continue on by slowly covering specific parts of my body with the paint, slowly sinking and submerging myself in the pool of white paint: starting with my ovaries. I am choosing to have this section be durational as it represents the unpacking of my memories. My memories have unfolded commodified beauty placing whiteness, heterosexual whiteness, as the luxury, and placing my body without permission into a check box. The white paint represents the hegemonic commodified beauty that has tried to shape and cover me for so long.

The instillation segment begins when I am on my registration mark and become a part of the instillation, in which the audience the enters the space. Throughout the space there are squares pasted down on the floor and walls with X's in unique patterns that are green, white, and purple striped. The colors of the X's is the colors of the genderqueer pride flag; each X is called a registration mark and is how the phones will pick up the characters and scenery of the Augmented space. The projectors projected onto three walls and made visible what an audience member would see if they looked through their



Figure 16: A still of Projection B

phones in the same direction through the augmented reality app I distributed (*Figure 16*): the projectors acted similar to a how to guide as well as another mode of viewing, adding to multidimensionality and fragmentation. The phone utilized the cameras with a sketch-like filter to pick up parts of the scene and characters tied to each unique registration mark. The augmented reality was set up in a three-hundred- and sixty-degree format that encompassed the space (*Figure 17*) but was never seen in the full three-sixty view on purpose to support fragmentation.

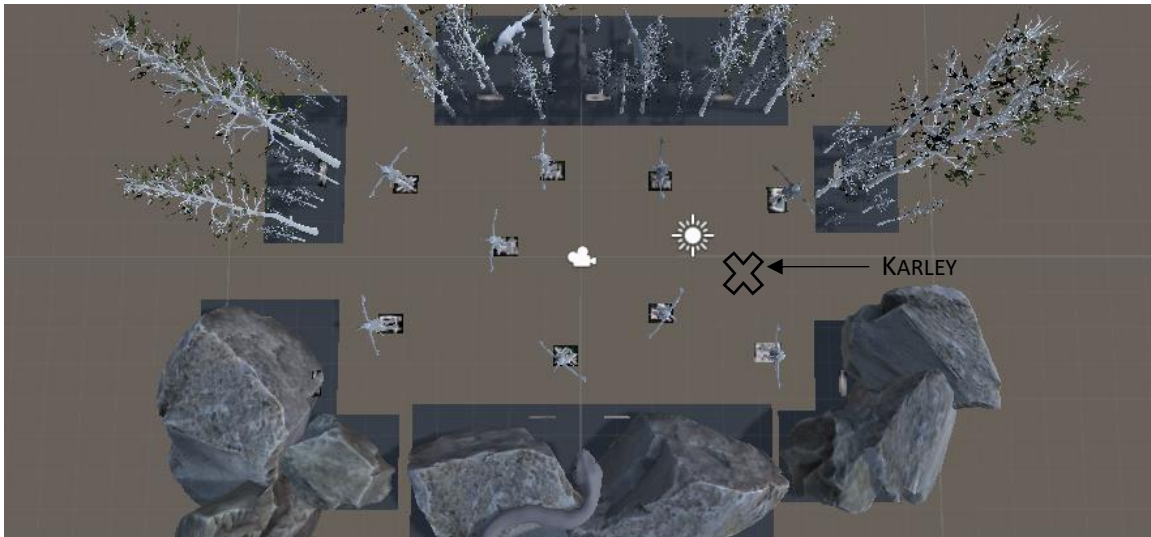


Figure 17: Augmented Reality Map

As the audience explores the space, I am deconstructing the movement of the androgynous character while simultaneously fragmenting myself via removing some of the paint from my body. I am specifically trying to remove paint from parts of my body commodified beauty has gendered, but the paint never fully wipes away. In doing so, the pain and hardship is revealed, paralleling the daunting task of trying to de-gender myself within the straight time hegemonic contract that is constantly gendering my body.

I remove the paint from places like my tattoos and markers of my *straight time* gender given feminine body. The white paint symbolized the systems of oppression, like

commodified beauty and hegemonic discourse: the limitations constructions and constrictions of sexuality, pleasures, and identity society places on me. Fragmenting myself was inspired from a queer artist, that depicted a fragmented being (*Figure 18*). The self-



Figure 18: Artwork by Althea Solis

fragmentation symbolizes the desire to step out of gender norms, or self-accept, only to revel my own skin and gender markers that constraint such desires—placing my body as a site of tension. The whipping off of the paint for me is the act of re-imagining, a call to challenge my queer imagination of futurity beyond the self, or the here and now. The deconstruction of utopic longing, because my body is not a part of this utopic world, it is a part of and participates in this reality that sets limitations on freedom—considering my body the limitations of my queer imagination.

My body is a part of and one with the utopic characters as I do not move throughout the space and stay on my registration mark. The white paint transforms my body to aesthetically match and merge with the androgynous characters seen through the projectors and IOS/Android devices. I am picking up movement from each character with an added quality of resistance. This quality is extremely difficult as I am trying to move as if a thousand tons was placed on my body, in which I never complete a full movement the androgynous characters perform. After the performance, I had rubbed most of my skin raw, my body was the sorest it had ever been; the performance placed traces of queer

ephemerality onto my physical being. In noting these traces, verbal traces followed me from queer audience members who kinesthetically empathized with me, queer community, acknowledging that the work is never done, it simply begins anew. This separates me from the characters. It is harder to move through life/reality than what the queer imagination desires, yet tying myself to them is still striving for freedom.

In a sense, I am considering myself the ‘glitch’ of the instillation; placing me as the site of tension between reality and not; the convergence of the two. The convergence of utopia and reality, my personal contestation of utilizing utopic longing to critique the present. This aspect of the performance is a compositional improv, in which I have set tasks from above to complete, but the fillers are improvisational. Compositional improv places my state of being as doing something to myself, listening to the sum of the parts to become apart of the whole, not trying to make the whole.

My body as the site tension of utopic longing, my body as not being able to break free from *straight time* implications, to highlight the labor of queer futurity. In tension with searching for a shift in reality: connecting the grotesque of resistance to the beautiful, an emergent phenomenon. I am a site of tension to represent my *straight time* upbringing, a comment on me being my own boundary to my queer imagination, in which “Heteronormative culture makes queers think that both the past and the future do not belong to them. All we are allowed to imagine is barely surviving the present.”⁵⁷

The characters are ‘cosmetically’ all the same, but each one has a different quality of movement I manipulated from my first tattoo. The movement explores a shape that I

⁵⁷ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 112.

correlate to a strive for freedom—they are striving freedom. In which I view the characters as acceptance as freedom, but they are stuck in one place on a loop—commenting on the present moment’s restrictive hegemonic thought as limiting the queer imagination. The characters represent the part of me that is not seen, my identity. They are what I feel I am on the inside—critiquing my pass-ibility within *straight time* and the restrictions it places on who I identify. The androgynous characters equally compel a representation of multiplicity of experiencing the ephemeral of *queer time* by actuating an un-seen desire to be seen in a particularly queer fashion—they are a rehearsed/planned future self that is always becoming, always in process. They are all me and I am all them. I am fragmented, and multifaceted. To be queer is to be many at once—to transgress is to be an emergent phenomenon.

I am fragmented,

and that’s okay.

I am lost,

and that’s okay.

I’ve come to prefer it.

In critiquing my past, I am becoming and unbecoming. I am accepting being lost to hegemonic heteronormative contract that has tried to shape me into something I am not.

I am documenting my queer imagination in response to queer ephemerality and the right to appear. I am bringing others into the utopian world through the setup of an instillation to transcribe the dichotomy of ephemerality of queer communal becoming and

it not showing up to all--its lostness. I am creating a utopic space with my queer imagination to personify the failure of reality-that the here and now are not enough. Utilizing utopian thought of what I think is beautiful as futurity, potential for shift. I am incorporating a multiplicity of characters to represent the multiplicity of my existence and fluidity as futurity. The utopic space lives in process, neither finished or unfinished. The augmented technology is fragmented. I am painting my body white to metaphorically represent commodified beauties attempt to shape who I am. I am un-painting myself to represent my fragmentation. I am utilizing a specific shape (the tattoo on the back of my neck) to tie together my personal aesthetics of beauty to my memories longing and consequences of freedom.

Freedom as acceptance.

Acceptance as beauty.

Beauty as lostness.

Lostness as freedom—

a utopic longing, an emergent phenomenon.



Figure 19: Steven and Karley Hugging at Bows

USB Contents

Hollins MFA Dance Mobile Tour

Saturday, July 6

7pm

Brick Patio Outside Moody & Botetourt Studio II

Program Information:

Title: here nor there

Choreographed and Performed by: Karley Wasaff

Collaborators: Steve Wasaff & Dailypint Studios

Scenic and Lighting design by: Karley Wasaff & Steve Wasaff

Intaglio prints by: Steve Wasaff

Music by: Zwischen, album by Jan Jelinek

Special note: video and screen recordings are encouraged. Tag the performance with #herenorthere @karleyfrys

Bio:

Karley Wasaff is an emerging movement artist with an urgent emphasis on queer temporalities and Womynist theology. She confronts complexities of socially imposed identity framing access, perceptions, and critical analysis in her newest works “here nor there,” ‘I’m a Womyn,’ and ‘Ambivalent | Ambiguous.’ Her choreographic explorations aim to invite the audience to confront her art through contestational lens, complicating a multiplicity of meaning based on personal experiences. With a background as a certified yoga instructor, Karley incorporates yoga theory into dance and choreography practice to explore embodiment and awareness. She strives to create an environment of kindness and respect to curate explorations of empowerment, creative voice, and human potential in and out of dance spaces. Previously to pursuing her Master of Fine Arts in Dance at Hollins University, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Performance and Choreography from the University of Southern Mississippi.

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