

“STRANGE, SHE THOUGHT, PAUSING ON THE LANDING...”

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ABSTRACT

“Strange, she thought, pausing on the landing...” is a collection of interdisciplinary artworks I produced from September 2019 to April 2021, incorporating drawing, photography and installation. In my research, I used my knowledge of image making to restructure and empower how I navigate the physical world. The result is a new archive of images that describe the world as I experience it. This supporting paper articulates my approach to studio production.

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“Strange, she thought, pausing on the landing...”, is a collection of interdisciplinary artworks I created in pursuit of understanding my body’s own rhythm and how far it could reach. For the sake of institutional clarity, I will identify myself as physically disabled. A lack of representation only adds to the trauma of being different. Conservative intellectuals would like me to assimilate. I should do all I can to help the world understand—I am like you. However, to explain my experiences or existence is never my goal.

A year ago, when someone asked me, “what is your creative work about?” I would reply, “Oh-I-don’t-know... I just kind of twirl around!” Now, I have grown to understand that all theory is based on someone else’s experience and gathered by someone else’s body. The disembodied objective voice never exists.¹ In my studio practice, I use my knowledge of image-making to restructure and empower how I perceive the physical world. This supporting document examines my belief in blending creative procedures by moving from one media category to another with equal authority as the ultimate tool for self-representation.

I was not born an artist. I became interested in visual art in high school. Art making for me is first about having a skill that I want to gain for the sake of excitement. When producing a new work of art my inspired cycle of emotions is curious, impressed and jealous or wanting to partake. The photograph is a hyper-realistic copy of the exterior world. Unlike the direct signs and symbols of language, the art of photography is in assembling visualizations of social practices.² Each new artwork of mine is about a series of inspired events that appear to me on an average day. Throughout my production, I felt the needed to take on an Albert Camus-style revolt by saying “yes” to my own desires and “no” to the circumstances at hand.³

As Historian Griselda Pollock in “Feminist Art Histories and Marxism” Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art described:

“We can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which though hierarchical, establish and create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women. Though patriarchy is hierarchical and men of different classes and ethnic groups have different places in the patriarchy, they are also united in

the shared relationship of dominance over their women, so they are dependent on each other to maintain that domination...⁴”

At the turn of the nineteenth century, medical doctors adopted the term ‘normal’ to denote a healthy organ or organism as in its ‘normal state’ when functioning correctly and an ‘abnormal state’ when not. Under this basic definition, I exist in an abnormal state; my brain does not function in a typical manner. Born premature, my brain formed different pathways to survive. This disadvantage is historically made worse by socio-political legislation surrounding ablist segregation. This development of industry accelerated the need for physical and mental efficiency among society members.⁵ My being is a miracle and a problem. I exist between two worlds. I have earned developmental milestones through years of practicing basic movements in a mirror with the hope that one day my left side reflects my right side perfectly.

Yet, Philosopher Vilém Flusser argues that the structure of our hands demands that the gesture of making strive for wholeness (“perfection”) but also forbids ever reaching it.⁶ However, in the world of aesthetics, whether perfection is reached is dependent on individual values. Advancing my asymmetrical body within media requires me to embrace myself as an unreliable character.

More than once, a peer has described my online presence, which consisted of mostly montage, abstracted, and self-representing media, as “authentic.” I understand the personal performance of authenticity as something conjured during an intuitive state of mind, a phenomenon where one relaxes into implementing their own idea in an intuitive moment. Akin to a scent impression, I say intuition is knowledge so repressed you can feel it in your body with this understanding, I align myself with the contemporary practice of ‘Autotheory.’

As a genre of artistic production, Autotheory merges first-person non fiction narratives with external theory and philosophy. The labour behind this kind of representation seeks to help the dismantlement of hegemonic discourse. In 2021, The MIT Press published “Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism” by Lauren Fournier. Fournier states,

“the turn signals the tenuousness of illusory separations between art and life, theory and

practice, work and the self—divisions long blurred by feminist artists and scholars. Autotheory challenges dominant approaches to philosophizing and theorizing while enabling new ways for artists and writers to reflect on their lives.⁷ ”

Society has presented me with many procedural instructions that were made with me in mind. I rely on my memory catalogue of observations then trust my intuition. I cannot help but feel like my authenticity is simply a lack of viability. Nevertheless, thinking positively, I use my ability to portray genuine emotion to my advantage when creating meaning through abstract media.

Flusser organizes media into three main categories: traditional images, technical images and text. Traditional images have little mediation between the author and the surface. Media like drawing and painting need the imagination of the author or viewer to create meaning. “It means to try to look at the world with fresh eyes, without the prejudicial spectacles of objectification and abstraction that come with our tradition.”⁸ ” In contrast, technical images are made with great mediation between the author and the surface. The medium of photography translates the four-dimensional world onto a two dimensional surface.⁹ Therefore, photographs communicate tangible experience. In the same breath, text is writing using a machine where particular keys stand in for specific criteria. Text media follows the rules of language and communication theory to secure narratives.¹⁰

The phrase, “Strange, she thought, pausing on the landing...”, is appropriated from Virginia Woolf’s 1925 fictional novel “Mrs. Dalloway.” In the novel, Woolf’s prose takes on a responsive writing style that describes cultural and individual change following the First World War. Woolf, like other modernist writers experimenting with the representation of consciousness, wanted to capture the abnormal nature of random associations. Another concern for Woolf was how to create a mood through descriptions of half-buried memories and subjective interpretations.¹¹ With a montage sensibility, Woolf’s cinematic prose creates an imaginative world conceived in flashbacks and inner monologues. This style was rebellious for the time. Unlike her peers, Woolf wrote in an abstract manner. Interwoven, historical and mental notations

create a dynamic yet ordinary story.¹²

The February spent writing “Mrs. Dalloway” Woolf took to her diary to confess: “I have made up my mind. I am going to be unpopular.”¹³ I relate to this feeling. My thesis is my curated associations that show my personality as I navigate what it means to make a work of art. My ability to move between drawing, photography and text comes from my inclination to secure my aesthetic desires before coming to a comfortable understanding. The rebel is the maker of a new enclosed universe.¹⁴ I the rebel have questioned my surrounding and fought for a different conclusion. A reality that gives my body purpose beyond efficiency.

As philosopher André Breton described, by traversing unconscious and previously neglected associations individuals can manipulate what restrain them in order to create a superior reality¹⁵. By montaging different techniques and moments in time together. I am able to capture the exterior world in a way that sparks my imagination. Throughout this collection of artworks, I approached the spectral boundaries of technical image making with a playful attitude. Orange peels are captured through a flatbed scanner and a lampshade reduced to its wire frame. The technique of solarization inverts reality. Each artwork becomes a performance of my walking daydreams. What is significant about my image making process was my willingness to create lyrical story from my surroundings. In this way, my thesis becomes an alternative media archive that stands in for my rebellious spirit; something that documents my investigation into personal power. Each artwork no bigger than what can fit under my arm is an iteration of my ability to express a meaningful perspective in a stylized manner .

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way we interact with fine art. Our inability to interact physically has further strengthened the changing structures of archives from the physical to online databases. The shift towards technology has created an accessible entry point for people to document their experiences with the aptitude of an institution. This change in authorship has further highlighted museums, galleries, libraries and other public collections as imperial systems of power meant to uphold hegemonic ideologies. Therefore these sites are not passive storage houses full of old stuff, but rather places where power is solidified.¹⁶ By moving my thesis

presentation online I was able to expand my work and create a more inclusive environment. With this in mind I decided to include audio voice memos recording my prose like thoughts alongside figure didactics. Additionally, within my figure didactics, I have chosen to included descriptions of how I made each image. Archives are sites of memory production. It is important to me to be transparent about how I made each work. The power of the subjective voice is in the body. The gate keeping technique of only lead to further oppression.

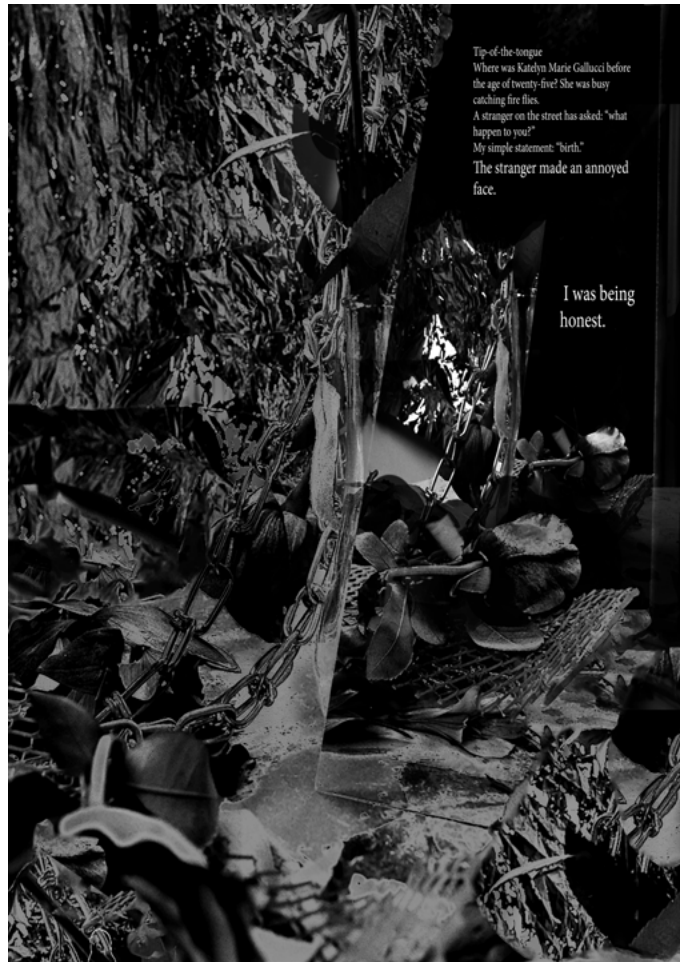


Figure 1.
Photo, Still-life Roses, Chain, Poem
2021
9 inches by 12 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: I began with a scanned black and white 6cm by 6cm negative of a rose still life. The negative documents a still life setup at my studio where I compulsively added mylar, mesh and change as addition props. What was supposed to be a simple photograph of roses now chaotically layered. After much play in digital post-production, the final image includes text I wrote in a separate studio session. The text states: "*Tip-of-the-tongue, where was Katelyn Marie Gallucci before the age of twenty-five? She was busy catching fireflies. A stranger on the street asked: 'what happened to you?' I replied: 'birth.'* The stranger made an annoyed face. I was being honest honest."

CC: Lisa Steele as my role model?
Cite, "Birthday Suit: with scars and defects"
1974.

A twelve-minute recorded video captured
Steele, alone in her apartment, performing
a poised but vulnerable monologue for her
camera.

For a description, Steel wrote, "On the
occasion of my 27th birthday, I decided
to do a tape that chronicled my passage
through time. I have always been clumsy,
tripping, dropping, falling with alarming
regularity. This tape accepts the extent of the
consequences.¹"

Viewing this artwork early in my art
education was formative. Steele highlighted

1 Steele, Lisa. "Vtape." *Birthday Suit - with
Scars and Defects*, Vtape, www.vtape.org/video?vi=3967.

Figure. 2
Text Experiment – "not lost"
2021
5 inches by 7 inches
PDF

Description: Image, abstract line art and text prose. My call back to Canadian experimental media history.

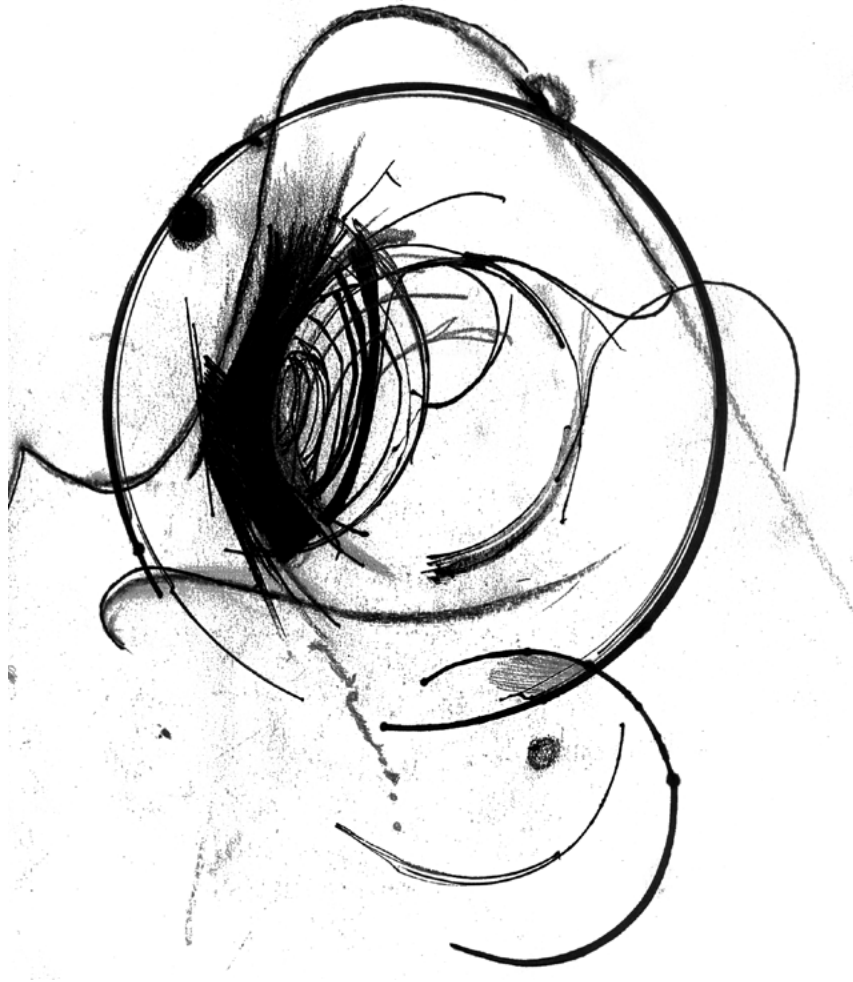


Figure. 3
Cup-drawing
2019
9 inches by 12 inches
Digital Museum Rag C-print

Description: abstract drawing: brush marker, graphite and charcoal scanned on a flatbed scanner. I made this after work by tracing the things on my desk a water glass then a roll of tape. At this moment I was not trying to make anything special, but was simply riffing off of a traced line with freedom. What was once my water glass is now my stencil.



Figure. 4
Cup Shadow Against Balcony Wall
2019
6 inches by 6 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: Image, scanned black and white 6cm by 6cm negative featuring solarization from development. A balcony facing north-west is an even further privilege.



Figure. 5
Contact Print, Rose & Cups
 2019
 16 inches by 20 inches
 Metallic Digital C-print
 Silver Gelatin Fibre Archival Print
 Description:

This abstract photograph began as an experiment. First, I turned my after-work-drawings into paper negatives. I then included other test prints I had work on previously; my rose still life, some glassware negatives and metal mesh in contact prints. Using a wet to wet printing process, I laid my scraps of paper face down. Working in the darkroom with alternative processes there is an element of chance. I use my paper negatives and wet-to-wet processes to create direct contact prints. This exercise involved my whole body. The photographic process translated my cerebral conversation.'

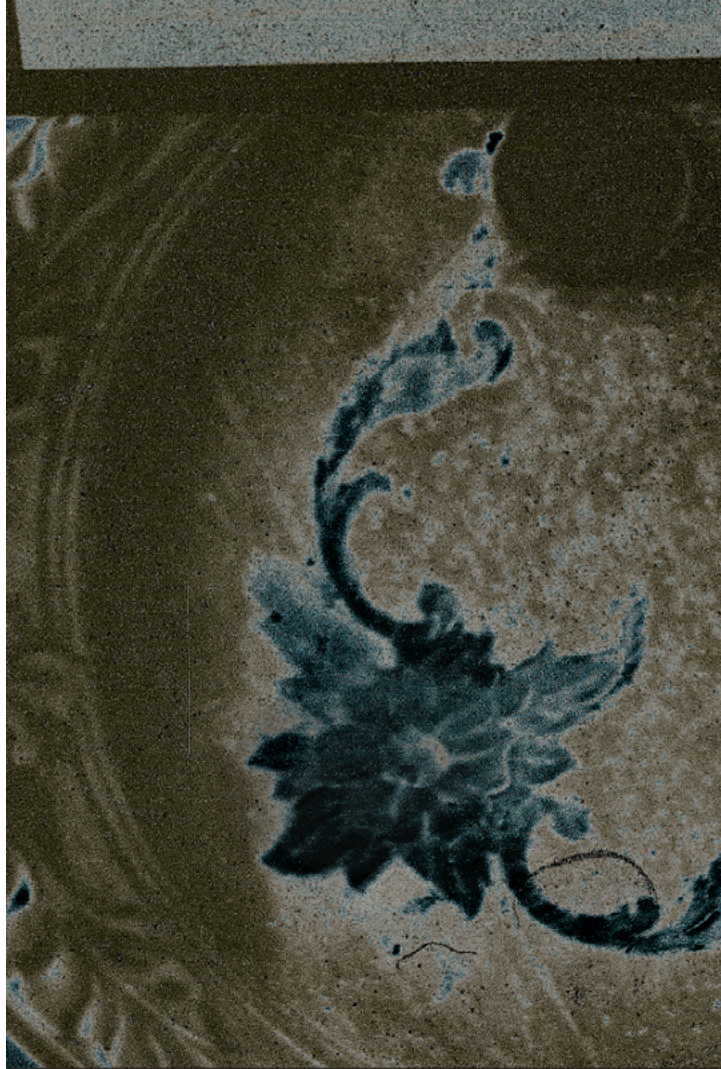


Figure. 6
Flower Detail on Kidney Shaped Coffee Table
2019
4 inches by 6 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: This image is a scanned colour 35 mm negative where I selected further than the negatives edge. This snapshot documents my first-hand made piece of vintage furniture: a kidney-shaped coffee table with hand-carved flower details.



Figure. 7
Self Portrait, Robe & Skeleton Lampshade
"Me-&-my-lampshade"

2019

11 inches by 14 inches
Metallic Digital C-print

Description: This image comes with two parts. Part one, background: another experiment with my blank but interestingly chemically marked negative. I desaturated the image colour and added a grain filter. In the foreground, part two, I added a triptych of three solarized self-portraits negatives. In print, these self-portraits I arranged then hand-cut. I drew on graphite lines to keep an attitude of play. I bought this vintage floor-length, silk Calvin Klein robe, and it might as well as be a costume. This wire frame of a lampshade foreshadowed new wall decor.



Figure. 8
Self-portrait, "2011 revised by hand 2020"
2020
9 inches by 12 inches
Digital Museum Rag C-print

Description: Image of my likeness. I revised this drawing by hand again years later and then scanned my sketchbook page. The original 2011 sketch exclusive feature an abstract figure with flowers for the eyes. In 2020, I added various lines.

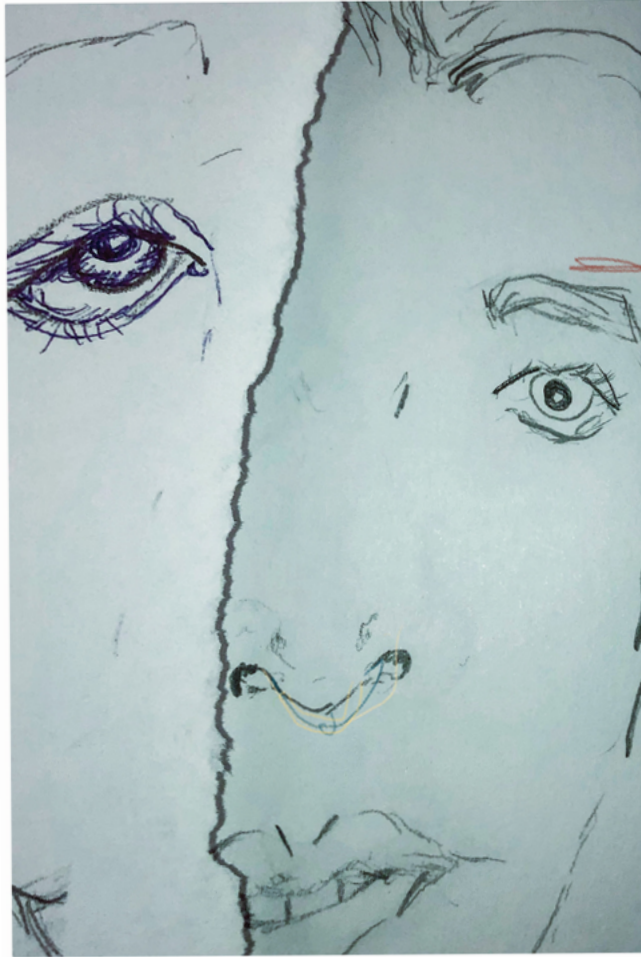


Figure. 9
Self-Portrait '2011 revisited through photography 2020'
2020
5 inches by 7 inches
Digital Museum Rag C-print

Description: I took this photo with my smartphone. I remember this drawing phase. I would be disappointed by a line but pleased with most of what I had done, so I tore the page to remove what I didn't like. This sorting gesture created montaged spreads in my sketchbook. Years later, when I returned to this sketch in a moment of reminiscing, I took a photograph. In post-production, I used the software "Markup" on my phone to adjust the image to look more like myself, adding my nose ring and the scar I now have above my eyebrow.



Figure. 10
Calm Down Water Glass
2019
5 inches by 7 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: Scanned colour 35mm negative. The border purposefully sloppy.



Figure 11
Balcony View
2019
6 inches by 6 inches
Digital Museum Rag C-print

Description: Image scanned black and white 6cm by 6cm negative.

Have you ever looked over a balcony and thought: ‘I am outside, aboveground, and I am trusted not to venture off the ledge without thinking of others. ?’

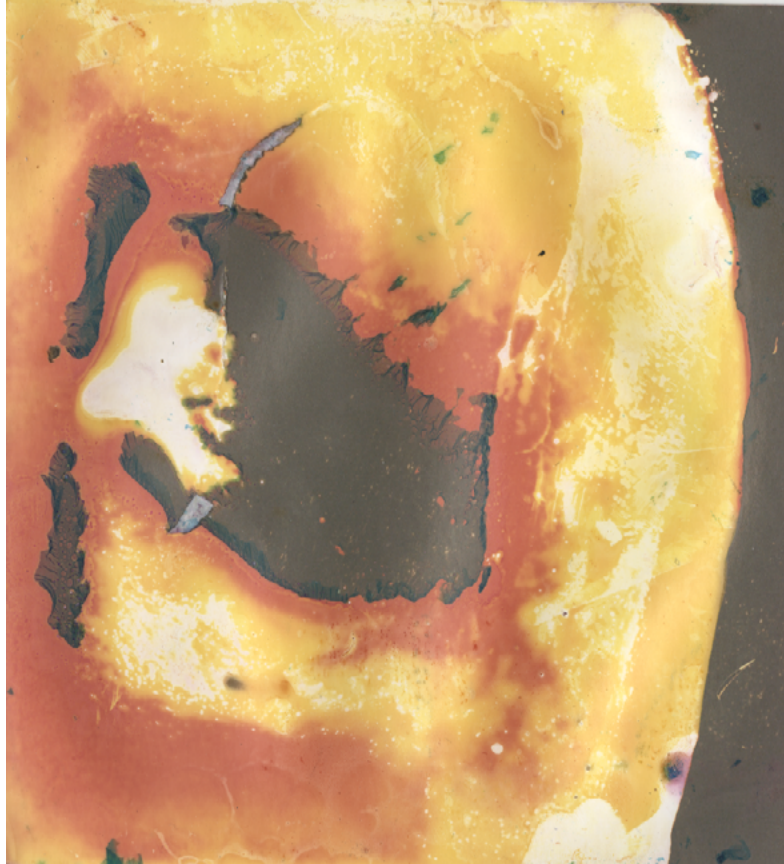


Figure. 12
SOAKED
2019
5 inches by 5 inches
Digital Metallic C-Print

Description: Image a water damaged Kodak “Endura” print scanned on flatbed.

Disappointed with the outcome of my prints, I soaked the prints in a small amount of water, knowing the inks would bleed. I sorted keeps, dried, and digitally scanned the results. In a different experiment, the original was scrapped for parts.



Figure. 13
Folded Back Rug Orange Peel Back
2020
5 inches by 7 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: Image background: an abstract digital montage beginning with including a tightly cropped 35mm scanned colour negative that documented my living room rug folded back on itself, featuring sun-flare caused by an adjacent mirror. The foreground is a scanned orange peel. In post-production I decided combine my background layer with an image another image of my floor. In a moment, I snapped a photo with my smartphone; the light denim colour is my pant leg. I then applied many effects and digital brush strokes to achieve this final image.

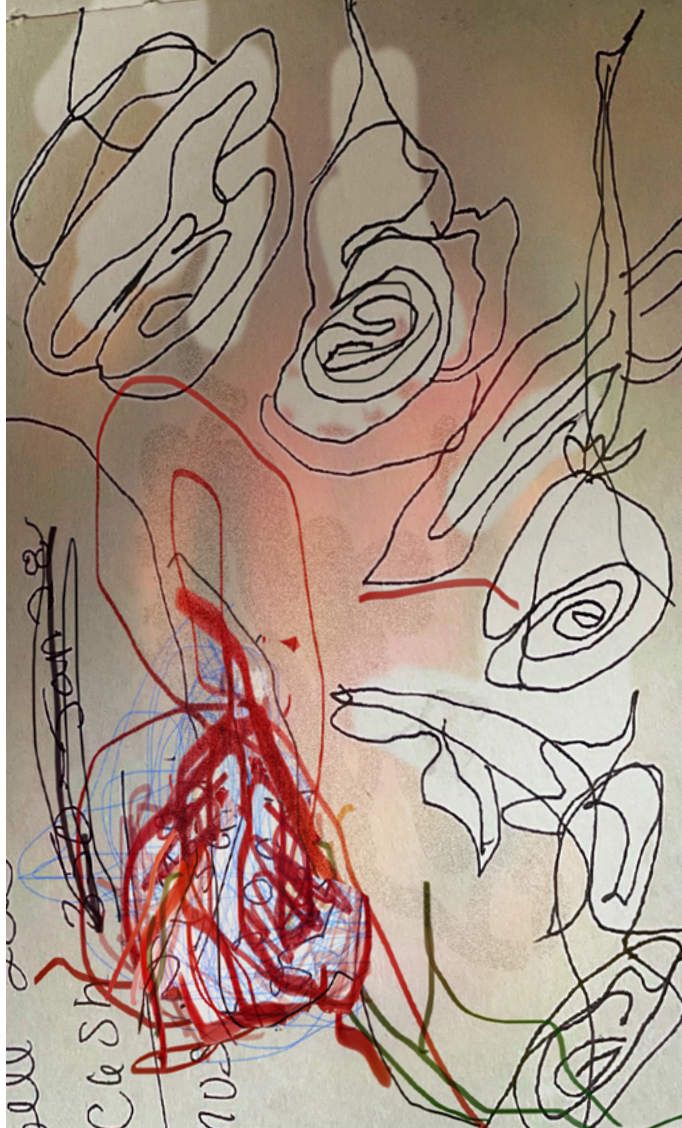


Figure. 14
Notebook Rose
2021
5 inches by 7 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: I took this image with my smartphone. In post-production I used the software “Markup” on my phone to adjust the image, adding additional lines and effects to conceal personal banking details.



Figure. 15
Free Time or Will
2019
8 inches by 8 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: The image background is a 35mm colour negative of the window in the stairwell of my apartment building. In post-production, I digitally inverted the photograph and layered the image's foreground, found image from Life Magazine: oranges and grenades as a centrepiece captured on a flatbed scanner.



Figure. 16
Rose Chain, 01
2019
11 inches by 14 inches
Silver Gelatin Archival Print

Description: This photograph is an experiment in analogue printing. In this studio session, I explored my roll of 6 cm by 6 cm of negatives featuring my rose still life. The negative for this photograph features my developing process, the markings of solarization, marked by cross-contamination from my printing process. I then sanded the print. The traditions of analogue photography prefer little indication of authorship when making successful prints. Today there is no need for new analogue photographs to replicate the world with understandable precision. My body is present.

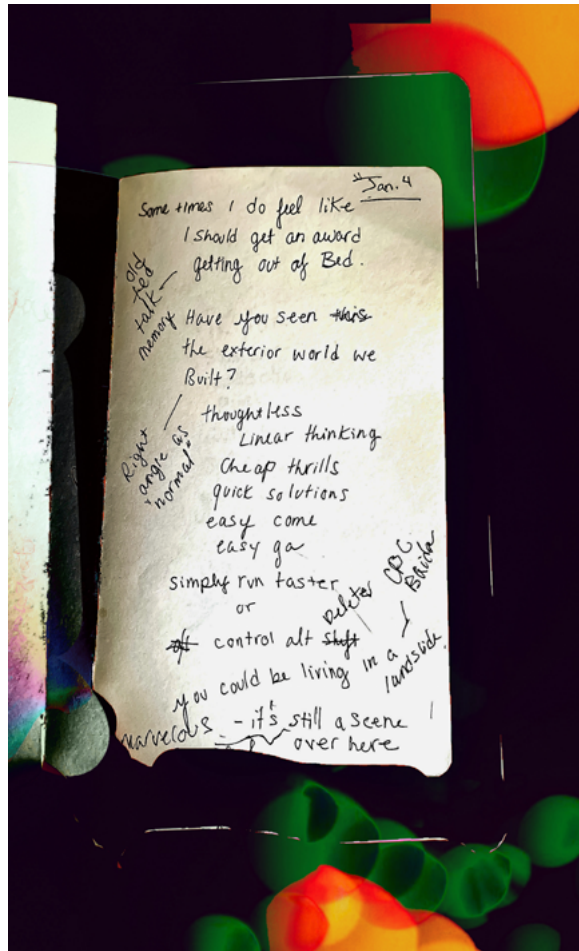


Figure. 17
Notebook Poem
 2021
 5 inches by 7 inches
 Digital Metallic C-print

Description: I took this image with my smartphone as a way of further archiving my notebook poem. I composed the image's print file on my phone using image editing software. I manoeuvred design presets to exaggerate the digital pixels. I wrote this poem or thought experiment while reflecting on a "Ted Talk" I listen to many years ago. The speaker was offered an award from their town. She mentions that simply being disabled is not award-winning. I think about this a lot.

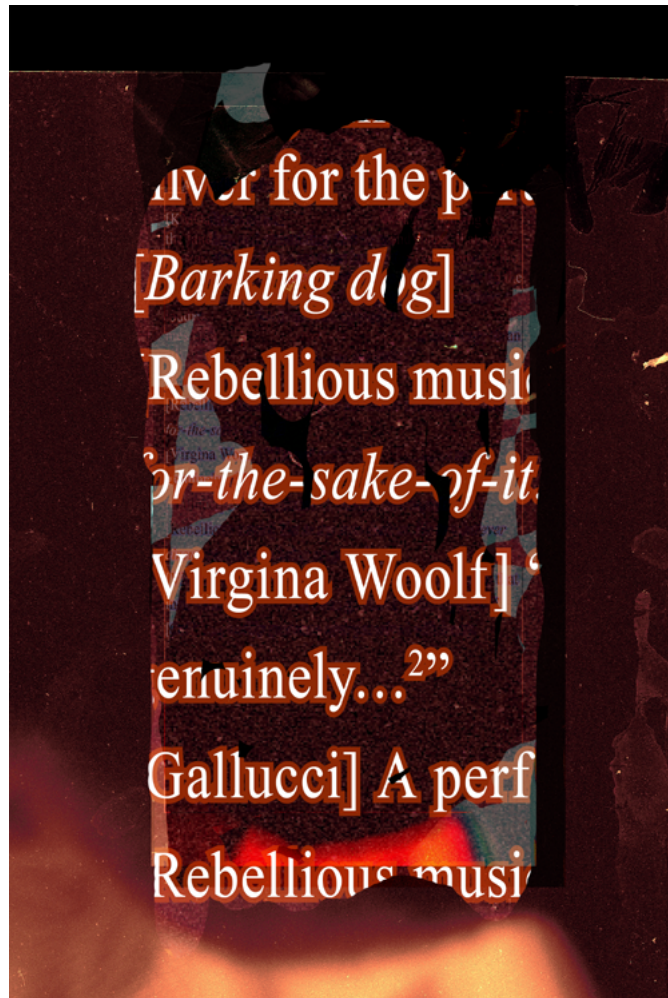


Figure. 18
Prose Abstracted
 2020
 8 inches by 10 inches
 Digital Museum Rag

Description: The image's background is a blank 6cm by 6 cm colour negative. The negative was interesting because of the chemical marking formed through my development process. In the foreground is an abstract from a writing experiment I made in a previous studio session.

"even I need subtitles."



Figure. 19
Self Portrait, "APT.309"
2020
8 inches by 10 inches
Digital Metallic C-print

Description: This photograph is a scanned 6cm by 6cm negative. The image is a self-portrait taken in my first studio apartment.



Figure. 20
Self-portrait, "different kind-of-stage"
2019
8 inches by 10 inches
Digital Museum Rag C-print

Description: I took this image with my smartphone as a screen shot from a video. I then used the 'Markup' software on my phone to magnify my head and my hands. This self-portrait is a thought process enacted.



Figure. 21
Self-portrait, “clapping video”
2019
Thirty second video
720p

Description: The durational video was captured by my smartphone when I set up my phone and recorded myself clapping. In post production, a different studio session, I experimented with sound, adding a song I wrote and sang. The song is two lines: *“Look at my roots for me...Look at my roots.”*

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