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_Emergence_

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Artist Statement

The female body as the subject of my work appears distorted to the viewer by the ephemeral qualities of oxidation on metal and creating barriers between myself and objects in my video performances. I imprint my body onto a sheet of steel with coconut oil and use a torch and vinegar solution to rust the bare steel. What emerges is the silhouette of a woman’s body surrounded by the corrosion of the metal creating textures and vibrant colors. I find that the changing quality from the oxidation of metal allows the work to take on its own life. It helps me let go of my worries about how the work is going to look forever and lets the ephemeral process be seen. I see my metal and video work in connection with each other by the concept of reversing the gaze of the viewer through obscuring the image.

I create performative sculptures that dismantle societal standards and dissect the relationships I have with my body into something more honest. I bring the beauty of a woman’s body to the context of my work, yet distort the image the viewer is perceiving as a means of protection. In society, people are obscuring their own image of themselves to serve the public social norm. The public image we project for others to see is often untrue to ourselves. My work reveals this disconnect. There is a loss in our own identity due to these unconscious norms that are embedded into our system.

This is a problem I find many people my age struggle with. We are afraid to be vulnerable and are too self-conscious. We want to cover our flaws and vulnerabilities because we may feel ashamed. Creating artworks of my obscured body has provided me with more security in myself. I have discovered through this work that deep down I am self-conscious, but by putting up this barrier between myself as a performer and the audience I gain more comfort in the process of being seen.

Both processes in creating my metal and performances works have been self-gratifying in the realization of who I truly am. I am a technically trained dancer and have been a perfectionist in everything I do. I was worried about having flaws in myself and my work, but as years have gone by, I have learned that having more freedom and letting go of my self-consciousness is the most rewarding experience. My work is meant to reach out to others that struggle with their body image and bring people together to have a conversation about the struggles of vulnerability.
Abstract

Vulnerability, resilience, and empathy are emotional states that are displayed in the action of creating my work as well as the outcome of the sculptures throughout time. My work is ephemeral, as it changes, the material’s vulnerability is revealed. In my metal, cyanotype, and video performances there is a focus on everyday actions, the ‘gaze’, as well as movements and gestures related to dance. By researching performance and dance history, I make connections on how specific events influence performances and how personal emotions eventually factor into the art form.

As part of my practice, I imprint my body onto a sheet of steel with coconut oil and use a torch and vinegar solution to rust the bare steel. The female body emerges and appears distorted to the viewer by the ephemeral qualities of oxidation on metal. People don’t often associate metal to be vulnerable or rust to be beautiful. However, in my metal works, rusting steel is a beautiful medium to visualize emergence and growth. Through the process of making and watching my work change throughout time, I find the personal connection of watching my pieces grow and change while my mind and body are going through a similar process.

I Gaze Upon Myself, Video Performance, 2020
Motivation

Have you ever experienced the challenges of overcoming self-consciousness or considered how society views yourself? My thesis is motivated by wanting to learn more about myself and unraveling the public image people unconsciously have in their mind. These are questions and feelings I have experienced throughout my life and want to bring awareness to how people feel truly vulnerable when looked at, yet there is also desire to be gazed upon. Being an only child has always been a challenge with being over-loved, protected, and at times lonely. I was viewed as a shy person and was not very socially interactive. This has made me seem like an outsider in my younger years. Yet, as I grew up, I realized the complexity in creating connections with others physically and mentally and began to open myself up and become more vulnerable. This change in my lifestyle has made me a more open and confident person, but there is always that lingering self-consciousness about myself and body. It has taken me a while to realize the importance of loving myself and I am still learning more about myself as time goes on. Vulnerability is an experience that connects and strengthens us physically and emotionally. Making myself get out of my comfort zone and enjoy the process in creating my sculptures and videos is a cathartic experience.

Using time for more self-discovery and realizing that not everything needs to be so fast-paced provides a more meditative life experience. Nowadays our brains are hardwired to go at a fast pace because of the overload of information, social media, and technology. Sometimes we need to slow down to realize what is most important. Slowing movement and recognizing the symbolic meaning in the gestures we make everyday is something I have learned throughout my dance career. Every day movements have specific meanings to them and by slowing it down there happens to be a fascinating experience that reveals itself to the viewer. In this slowness, my gestures are abstracted, yet recognizable. In this recognition, we make connections to everyday movements.

The impact of social media and societal standards have brainwashed people to be impatient and care too much about their public self. This at times restrains us from being who we truly want to be. I find that many people in my generation have difficulties with being themselves and connecting to others physically. We are so afraid of judgment and not fitting in that it has isolated ourselves from being socially interactive. Behind a screen is where most of us are most comfortable. There are often preconceived notions people see just by looking at a person (unconscious and conscious bias). These judgments of myself being a tall, skinny, collected girl is not the reality of who I truly am. My goal is to reach out to others that are struggling with these standards and make it known it is okay to be vulnerable and yourself. We are constantly
consumed by the ideas of people looking at us and it has taken a toll on people, especially women when looking at their body image.

The ‘gaze’ has been an historical concept that will never go away. The ‘gaze’ has been a way of men overpower women and objectify them as sexual objects. The women’s thoughts, desires, and intentions are less important, and her physical body is seen to be only for pleasure. The female gaze is also a societal problem with women becoming jealous and insecure by comparing herself to another woman's appearance. My work acts as a shield from others gazing upon me. My figure is obscured, and I am unidentifiable. Even though I am nude while creating the works there is no intention of voyeurism. The act of creating my pieces are very intimate and private rituals of accepting myself for who I am. When gazed upon, I personally become concerned. I can’t help but notice when it happens and think about why it’s happening. It affects people differently. Some truly love to be gazed upon for pleasure, while others find it a compliment, but also feel uncomfortable. It depends on the circumstances of the experience, but is it a healthy way to live if you are constantly concerned about others gazing at you publicly? I question my own power over the viewer’s gaze since I am a performance artist. I am dismantling the gaze by obstructing it and seeing what the outcome of the experience is for the viewer and myself. In what ways does distorting the image of a woman create a non-judgmental space about the woman's figure? I perform with typically masculine materials, steel, and fire, to reinvent them and represent myself in my own terms.

**Historical Context of Dance and Performance**

Dancers and artists have been influenced by their culture throughout history. What happens around us sparks inspiration for what we create. Throughout history artists have used diverse approaches with the audience to create connections by using empathy. The notion of dance has been described as a “metaphor” starting in the nineteenth century. Because of the impact of Modernism, dance evolved into something more abstract and less narrative in the early twentieth century. The arts went through a critical political period during and after World War II and performance art, such as Dada, reacted to the tragedies happening. The art, poetry and performance produced by Dada artists was nonsensical and often comedic in nature. Dada artists wanted to create their own new version of what art is: anti-war and anti-bourgeois. The *Society of the spectacle* by Guy Debord (1967) articulated how the image is a spectacle, a commodity, and a weapon in our globalized, capitalist society. The political, economic, and social influences in the later twentieth century impacted artistic practices and the way artists performed changed. The Fluxus art movement started off as a group of international artists who had the same interests in music and
performance gathering together. They wanted to dismantle contemporary art. The Black Mountain College in North Carolina hosted experimental and avant-garde artists. John Cage worked with many artists at the Black Mountain College and created interdisciplinary works with artists like Merce Cunningham. He staged the first “Happening” in the United States, a multi-layered performative event that changed modern theater and performance art completely. Happenings were focused on the component of the ephemeral, as the performance was a temporary experience and not exhibited in a museum in the traditional sense. The Happening artists also wanted to merge Art and Life. The involvement of the viewer and the instance of chance made the performance different every time it is viewed. Happenings were inspired by the Futurists, who would enact and read short avant-garde plays, poetry, and manifestos. Gutai, a Japanese avant-garde group formed in 1954, approached making radical art and performances through actions and gestures. The word ‘gutai’ translates as ‘concreteness’. The art practice involved the physical action in creating their works and the reciprocal connection between matter. My work is connected to these art movements as it is based in process, the ephemeral, dance gestures, chance oxidation, and performance.

During the 1970s, body and performance art began to rise and Marina Abramovich became known for her emotional performance art. Abramovich caused her viewers to feel uncomfortable and vulnerable through the interactions they had with her. In the ’80s, Merce Cunningham made dance technique the focus in performance. He embraced technology in his work by experimenting with videos, computers, body sensors, and motion capture technology. Cunningham was also influenced by Martha Graham and modern dance. Her aesthetic to “increase the emotional activity of the dancer’s body” (Graham) made her work very emotional and internal. She exposed the humanistic side of dance where emotions were embraced by the performer and movements were the opposite of ballet where it was sharp, jagged, direct, or indirect. Martha Graham, in my view, was vulnerable in her art. She was taking a risk and doing something out of the ordinary where people thought her work was “ugly, stark, and obscure” (Terry) at that time.

Other dancers and performers that embraced dance as a fine art are Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, and Ana Halprin. In Ana Halprin’s documentary “Breath Made Visible,” she talks about how she investigates the nature of the body and allows her surroundings to change her movement. The dance is never the same and is always changing depending on her environment. She states to “let change occur.” I find this relevant to my work because of the way I engage with the material in an improvised way and the work is always changing in relation to time and space. My gestures come from an inward feeling and depending on my emotions and memories the movement/impression is created. Today’s performance art is a combination of the themes of
sociopolitical, technique, and self-expression. The world affects what artists create and the way they express their truest feelings and experiences in their work. It is something that becomes genuine and relatable to the artist and the viewer.

Vulnerability and Empathy

The functions of vulnerability, empathy, and intimacy work coherently together in performance art. Mutumba, author of the Art 21 article “Living in an Age of Empathy” states “A common notion of empathy is the capacity for understanding and sharing of others’ feelings by imagining oneself in their positions—and, by extension, feeling caring, love, and goodness for them… empathy is human solidarity.” Judith Orloff, M.D., a psychiatrist, and the author of The Empath’s Survival Guide: Life Strategies for Sensitive People, discusses how there are special brain cells that are related to compassion. They enable us to mirror emotions, share someone’s pain, fear, and joy. People who are not very empathetic may have an under-active mirror neuron system (Orloff). The heart generates electromagnetic fields, which transmit people’s emotions and thoughts. The sun and earth also factor into this theory because of the electromagnetic fields. This energy often affects people’s states of mind and energy (Orloff). There is a phenomenon known as emotional cognition where one picks up the emotions around people.

In her TED Talk, Brene Brown, a writer, professor, and researcher, discusses the importance of vulnerability. She focuses on connection and being uncomfortable through disconnection. In her research, she found that people felt shame when disconnected. What created this feeling of shame was vulnerability. People who have a sense of worthiness and belonging believed that they were worthy and had courage. Many of us are afraid of connection because we must have the courage to be imperfect. Along with connection is the feeling of authenticity. This allows us to reveal ourselves to others by letting go of who we thought we should be to be accepting of who we are. People who had courage believed that “what made them vulnerable made them beautiful (Brown).” Many people today deflect being vulnerable, which numbs the feeling of joy and gratitude. People must accept that perfection is never achievable and that we need to accept imperfection in ourselves. Being able to love someone fully without guarantee, practicing love, joy, and fear, as well as believing that we are enough are factors to being vulnerable and happy in life.

Resilience is an interesting topic I discovered in relation and in opposition to vulnerability. Resilience, the ability to recover quickly from difficulties, is an interesting concept that deals with vulnerability and invulnerability. In Brene Brown’s book, The Gifts of Imperfection, she describes resilience as the ability to overcome adversity. People who are wholehearted, mindful, and authentic can overcome stress, trauma, and
anxiety easily. These people had a sense of spirituality that enabled them to feel that they could celebrate that we are all connected by a greater power than all of us, which connects through love. To be resilient, people must have hope, practice critical awareness, and be uncomfortable.

In *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Sarah Bracke discusses popular culture as being resilient and people as being resilient to media culture. Bracke discusses that society presumes women struggle with resilience. There is the idea that “femininity required the performance of fragility and vulnerability; it trains women to be timid, uncertain, lacking confidence, and to be afraid of getting hurt.” But in a neoliberal economy, the opposite is proposed with “women overcoming this traditional logic of femininity (Bracke).” How could these societal presumptions be destroyed? In my opinion, women have to be vulnerable and resilient to expose the reality of who they are, not by creating this alternative perfect reality for society to view, but by being genuine and not falling into the fantasy life they want society to think they live. There are so many young women nowadays that mirror this fake reality for social media. My goal is to deconstruct that and practice not giving into the social norms of what I believe people should view about me.

There is vulnerability in the process of creating my metal and performance work. I am often in the nude to create these imprinted artworks, but never expose myself to the viewer. The interaction with the metal on my naked body is very uncomfortable. It is cold, hard, and shocking to the skin when first touched. The material is also vulnerable to my body and the interaction I have with it. I apply coconut oil on my body to act as a resist before pressing against the bare metal. The oil creates a barrier between the metal and the rusting solution. As the metal is exposed to the touch of my body and the liquid substance I spray, it transforms and a beautiful, distorted image of myself appears on the surface after a few days. This process is ever changing with the natural process of oxidation. The metal is just as vulnerable to me as I am to the material.
Beauty in Art?

The perception of beauty varies from person to person and each culture seems to have their own interpretation of what is beautiful and what isn’t. Is there a universal sense of beauty? Are we ashamed to find things that are disturbing to be beautiful because of our culture? Contemporary artists will often use shock as a sensation that makes us feel ashamed for looking, and yet the viewer cannot help but be attracted to it, which stirs up controversy over the work. For example, think about how the female nude has been represented throughout history. Physical ideals of women have changed, but the male gaze remains the same. The subject of femininity has been a pleasurable sight to the viewer, but femininity used in abject or uncanny art is seen as disgusting as well as to make people feel a sense of beauty in the reality of the subject. Contemporary art is now becoming less centered on ideal beauty and more focused on the idea behind the art. Beauty is seen as a corruption of the market and the artist by its aesthetics. Although I do believe that this is a relevant point with the consumerism of attractive visuals, I cannot help but think that beauty in art serves the purpose to relate to all the disturbing, yet beautiful things about being human. The conceptual idea of beauty as an underlying meaning is becoming more popular. This idea of beauty as something “real” or more relatable is being exhibited and praised in the current contemporary art scene.

Beauty is not just the ideals of what society has established. It is much more than that. The concepts of beauty and the opposition of beauty also being attractive have been seen in works such as photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and painter Marilyn Minter. Minter highlights the feminine charm of beauty in objectification, along with attracting the viewers with her technique of physical realism. She also directs attention to the messiness that also comes along with beauty by the makeup women wear and the objects they put on to feel more beautiful according to societal standards. Beauty is the reason why we are consumers. It gives us moments of awe and is seen in the reality of being human where things are sometimes messy. Beauty conceptions are also slowly changing throughout time based on societal standards. Some things in the past that were not beautiful are now seen as beautiful and vice versa. It’s interesting to think about if we didn’t have social influences that created these preconceived notions of beauty, every person would have a different outlook on what they believed is beautiful. We are tainted by judgment of others by our mind’s aesthetics and influences of society. Thinking about beauty in terms of my work comes from a place of insecurity. Being self-conscious of my body and constantly thinking about what others see rather than what I see in myself has been a struggle. Obscuring myself in my videos and artworks makes me feel protected. It's like a shield I put up so that I am not judged or gazed upon.
There is a sense of the absent body because my work typically deals with a silhouette of myself in some shape or form. The silhouettes I present in my thesis are either body imprints or cyanotype sun prints. These prints are created by the action of pressing my body against a surface or laying and creating gestures on material. Through these actions I am nude and vulnerable. Once I am done imprinting there is a magical moment of emergence of my figure. In that moment all my insecurities disappear, and I feel as though I am beautiful. Throughout time the works change and grow as the human body does. I find the growth and the deterioration of the metal to be a glorious sight to see. The change is slow, but everyday the work evolves.

Methodology

The Body

I experiment with different ways to display femininity with the poses I imprint with my body onto metal. The female body provides a feeling of intimacy with the work itself, but there is also a vulnerable side to the material and bodily interaction. Researching the history of how the female body is used in art as well as how metal is created into sculptural artworks has helped me in the development of my thesis. I dissect the relationship I have with my body by self-examining myself through the materials I imprint or alter my image with. I research the qualities of oxidation and experiment with natural processes that create the orange coloration in the rust. I investigate how metal...
undergoes changes as well as how my work is essentially ephemeral by not putting a finish on the metal. My process begins with using a heat patina on the metal by torching the surface. This creates the blue and rainbow coloration. I then use coconut oil as a resist to the liquid oxidizing solution I spray on the metal. I rub the oil over my body and press my body against the metal. Once printed, I use a liquid solution made up of vinegar, salt, and hydrogen peroxide to rust the bare metal. Rust is just one example of what I experiment with in my metal and video works. The artwork is ephemeral and changing, much like our bodies.

Another material I have been experimenting with is the creation of cyanotypes. The cyanotype solution is a mixture of 25g of ferric ammonium citrate, 100mL of water, and 10g of potassium ferricyanide that I paint onto fabric or paper. The process uses a mixture of iron compounds which when exposed to UV light and washed in water oxidize to create Prussian Blue images. The process of creating the cyanotypes is actually similar to the process I use to patina and oxidize metal. When I create my print, I quickly gather other natural material and lay out my fabric. Because the fabric is sensitive to UV rays, I must be quick in formatting objects on top and lay on the fabric in a comfortable enough position that I could hold for ten minutes. Once the time is up, I
put the fabric in a black bag and wash it with cold water and some hydrogen peroxide to speed up the oxidation. The result is a beautiful Prussian Blue shadow imprint of myself and the objects I laid on top.

In Motion, Cyanotypes, 2021

Bodily interaction is a major component to creating these works. I find the body to be considered an important material in any practice. My practice comes from a place of adornment, growth, and body acceptance. The action of being nude in a private setting and coating my body in coconut oil and then pressing myself against the bare steel is uncomfortable but gratifying in the impression of the gesture. The interaction I have with the material makes the work seem more personal. I gain an attachment to the work as though it is another part of me.

Whether it's obscuring myself or having the viewer discover something genuine in me, I take the concept of the gaze and reinvent it. In my video performance work, I obscure and warp my body to the viewer. I abstract and distort the way I am perceived yet show a sense of intimacy with the figure. Although the viewer can see a figure in my work it is abstracted and unidentifiable. I juxtapose the absent body and present this in my work. My works display a body that the viewer can see, but it is never a clear image of myself. The viewer may not know the image is of me, but they do make a connection to the image being a female figure. Questions arise: Who is the person in the work? What's their story?

The gestures I choose to imprint are improvised and meant to show the feeling of growth, expansion, and extension of oneself. I think about everyday movements in
relation to dance movements and how the two could be merged into specific poses or videos. I have discovered how slowed down videos and processes create a more vulnerable presence. Notions of intimacy and even voyeurism are witnessed in my performance and metal works. I look at social media and see how people my age alters their personalities and looks just for the public pleasure of conforming to what they believe everyone will like. The way we hide our true selves and put this mask up for social platforms needs to be recognized. We all do it, but how are we supposed to feel good about who we really are if people only see our public image. It raises concerns of mental health for many young people.

Materials and Going Against the Typical

Metal is a major component to my body imprint series. I can alter the color and quality of metal with natural processes such as fire and a water-based solution. I find the bluing process from the heat patina provides a feminine quality in the hard steel. The process of the color change is almost magical in the way the colors develop from specific heat temperatures from the torch. The oxygen from the air plays upon the hot steel and starts forming oxides. The layers of oxides are thin at first and the transparent colors that result are an interference effect. The rusting effect provides the look of a chemical corrosion happening. The way it contrasts the blue patina and is constantly changing reminds me of time and how our bodies are constantly changing. There is an odd juxtaposition with the way oxidation occurs around my form. I see a static yet changing movement with the way the metal is constantly changing. I think of myself growing as a person and finding the raw and uncontrolled side of this process as a personal release.
and encouraging more freedom, rather than being a perfectionist about what is naturally occurring. The vulnerability of the metal and my body’s pose takes form when the oxidation of the work increases. The viewer might look at the work and see the chemical process of the metal works as violent or having a tension with the forced body on the surface. They may see a dynamic image even though it is static. There is also this relation to fire and a burning sensation witnessed with the process and colors. There is a delicacy with the pose and the concept of surveillance with witnessing the specific poses with the body and the everyday movements.

Metamorphosis of a Women, 2020

I am going against the traditional uses of metal in sculpture, such as steel works like Robert Serra, and creating a genuine relationship with the material that is not the typical minimal, often male, outcome that has repeatedly been done in the past. I appreciate and am inspired by Serra’s work, but he does not involve any aspects of vulnerability, change, or presence of the indexical mark. His work is meant to be immersive, large, and never changing. We both use the same material, but in very different ways. The way the human body interacts with the work is completely different. I personally interact with the material and display the sense of obscurity and vulnerability to the viewer. Serra’s work interacts with the viewer in a forceful way. The viewer’s body is pushed and pulled by his spaces.

Richard Serra
Rather, my work is influenced by female performance artists like Yoko Ono, Marina Abramovic, Janine Antoni, and Yvonne Rainer. Many performance artists display the dark side of our unconscious and the voyeuristic urges humans have. Work such as “Cut Piece” by Yoko Ono shows us how we want to uncover and demean the female body. Her performance starts with her being clothed to being practically naked in front of an audience as the audience cuts away her clothes. The audience’s interaction shows us how we want to gaze upon women and exploit them. I am doing the opposite in my video and sculpture work. I am displaying my most vulnerable side from the start and slowly covering up my body image or letting the natural elements of the materials take charge to obliterate my figure. I take much of my inspiration from Ana Mendieta and the way she imprints her body in nature. You cannot tell that the imprint is of her body or if the body is of a female. She connects nature with womanhood. Another artist I am inspired by is Yves Klein. He directs women to use their painted blue bodies like paint brushes on canvas. You see the imprint of a woman's figure and the performance is like a choreographed dance with an instructor being the artist. He constructs his vision of body imprint from a very manly perspective. He uses the nude woman as objects and tells them what to do with their bodies to print on canvas. He is basically the painter and the women are the brushes. The women in his works are literally objectified. My goal for my thesis is to create an authentic series of work about vulnerability, obstructing the gaze, and displaying my honest self.

The “gaze” has been an historical concept that it seems will never go away. I question my own power over the viewer’s gaze since I am an artist that works with my body directly in my work. I am dismantling the gaze by obstructing it and seeing what the outcome of the experience is for the viewer and myself. In what ways does distorting the image of a woman create a non-judgmental space about the woman's figure? I perform
with typically masculine materials, steel, and fire, to reinvent them and represent myself in my own terms.

When we think of the gaze, people typically think about the “male gaze.” The male gaze is the way males objectify women for pleasure and undermine women to feel stronger. It is still a problem today as it has been in history, but some men are starting to realize the wrongs of the gaze and the concerns women have for it. Feminism has brought this topic to attention and the behavior of men has slightly changed in time. The male gaze will continue to be a problem, but women will have to stand up for themselves and support each other throughout time.

The “female gaze” is problematic but overlooked. Not many people think about women gazing upon other women, but the terms are different. Women look at other women in appreciation of beauty and intelligence. Yet being so overloaded with images of beautiful women on social media and television has brought females to become more self-conscious of themselves because of the unrealistic flawless features of these model-like women (Jones). Instead of searching through hundreds of images of perfect people, we could be appreciating the realistic side of being human. There is no way to stop comparing ourselves to flawless celebrities, but we can acknowledge that they are real people with insecurities as well. We must stop ourselves from comparing our bodies to others and start finding things we love and appreciate about ourselves.

The male and female gaze are problems within society. It especially affects younger children who are growing into their bodies and identities. In my work I erase the gaze by hiding my identity with a silhouette of myself. No one knows or can judge who I am other than a female artist. The only way a viewer can identify me is through the representation of the occurring movement.

The Fugitive Image

Having less control over my work provides a fulfilling experience where I get to watch the material evolve throughout time. For instance, once my metal work is imprinted with my body, I spray it with the rusting solution and watch the steel slowly change in coloration. The heated patina provides a cool tone to the steel with blues and purples. But with the oxidation added it transforms into something more warm, activated, and alive. As time goes on the warmth of the rust slowly overtakes most of the surface. There is a fixed image of myself once I imprint my body on the steel sheet. Yet, once activated with oxygen and the solution, the steel becomes more dynamic and ever-changing. The fugitive image of my work serves as an extension of myself. My body is imprinted, and as I grow so does my work. Having an unfixed image makes me appreciate my work more because of the stages the material goes through. The
documentation alone is such a powerful component to show the change. My work contemplates time, memory, entropy, and the beauty of life's transitory nature.

Description of Thesis Work

**Metal *Emergence* Series**

My work displayed in my thesis at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art were two large metal imprinted sheets and a performative work of a fugitive image. The two large metal works, *Fly Away* and *Expansion*, were created with the process of heat patina and oxidation. They both display a gestural abstract female figure which is of myself. The movement of the work represents expansion, growth, and the feeling of flying away. As a young woman, I have been taking time to discover myself and accept that we are changing every day. “Ephemeral art is both conceptually and materially the reflective of...”
the time we live in today and therefore multifaceted as reality itself (Anapur).” Thinking about leaving home, family, and friends and becoming more independent has made me realize the transformative qualities in myself and practice. These two works in particular display my passion for movement and the examination of my honest self.

For the metal performance, I went into the museum every night and changed the piece by my process of imprinting and oxidation. For the opening the heated patina of the metal was shown. The second night I imprinted my body on the steel and the third night I applied the rusting solution. Over the course of exhibition, the steel slowly oxidized, and the warmth of the rust showed more each day. I chose to display my process as part of my thesis because the ephemeral qualities of my work are especially important to my process and self. Being a dancer and performer means that the performance is never the same, only documentation can properly show the performance. Along with the performance, I created a metal process book that displays change. From the beginning of regular sheet metal to the rusting of the surface, the viewer was invited to handle the book and leave their imprint on the untreated surfaces of the pages. By the end of the exhibition the book looked handled and imperfect by the marks of the viewers showing. I have a closer connection to these works because of the element of growth and change. We are always evolving as humans and artists and it is important to accept that change. I’m upholding the convention of a finished artwork and going against the well-known white cube concept of archival art you should not touch with my artwork altering daily.
In the Rotunda Gallery in the SUNY New Paltz Fine Arts Building, I created an installation with a video performance, six life-size cyanotypes, and interactive shadow casting. I was thinking about similar concepts with this work: movement, growth, nature, our bodies, and the concept of change. The work is in the round with the six cyanotypes hanging from the ceiling. On two hanging pieces of fabric, videos and shadows were projected upon. The installation encouraged the viewer to move through space and interact with the installation with a motion sensor spotlight that lit as the viewer entered the space. My hope is that the viewer will be intrigued by the light turning on and try to mimic my gestures or possibly create their own.

Conclusion

A quote by the artist Bruce Nauman inspires me:

“If you can manipulate clay and end up with art, you can manipulate yourself in it as well. It has to do with using the body as a tool, an object to manipulate.”

My body is my tool for creation. Absent bodies, extended bodies, indexical marks from the body all correlate with my practice. Whether in my metal work, video performance, or cyanotypes, I connect each work with the theme of obscurity and movement. The body and materials hold a sense of vulnerability with the way I obstruct the view of myself with reversing the gaze and the way the material deteriorates over time. The mental and physical growth our bodies go through with age and the process of watching my work change is like watching it go through birth to death. Rather than trying to make my work beautiful by forcing it to be beautiful, I allow the natural happenings of the
material to emerge on the surface with little intervention. Overall, this work acts as a mirror of myself, showing the growth, strength, and fragility of my honest self.

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