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Thesis

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The Body in Question

Disillusion only begins to scrape the surface of the ways in which we regard our relationships with others of a sentient nature. Our values of life are blatantly torn from their inherent jouissance by a repulsive irreverence. By isolating ourselves, we disregard those around us and lose focus. Our human and non-human connections, as well as the value of life of other species, passionately inform my work. I encourage others to consider the source of our commodities. They derive from the experiences of other beings who we may not even know are behind the curtain. I depict ambiguous representations of life through sculpture, sound, video, and mixed media.

The primary challenges that inspire me are how we accentuate the irrefragable prevalence of speciesism, and help people empathize with others in order to contribute to a more compassionate society. By stripping away layers of meticulous thought, I arrive at conclusions one can only encounter through a moment of intermission. I am not afraid of suffering; it is an issue that encompasses all forms of life. The suffering for which I choose to speak is that of non-human animals, because their duress does not always communicate in a discernable, or human, dialect.

A beauty exists in the contrast between distress and healing. Without one, we can not know the other. Abundantly influenced by my fieldwork as a Reiki energy healer, I encounter physical and emotional distress every single day. Humans and non-human animals endure an

array of traumas. This experience informs my work in the fine arts. I channel the transmission of empathy, understanding, and activism; I shed light upon the destructive, and often ignored, ways in which we treat our empathic consciousness. It is only when we associate with the acknowledgement of suffering that we may begin feeling more compassionately than we have ever thought possible.

Is there a correlation between the body and our worth? Does the intangible radiate into a higher perception of our conscious value, or eliminate it? An unturned stone bares mass although it is weightless in relation to its overturned counterpart. The consumption of animals equates a vote, for a slew of chain reactions, rooted in a mother evil. One would be correct to assume that a bite of flesh would not exhume lives from slaughters past. What is in question but the notion of the body, the animal within, and without, as well as the phenomenology of perception. Our external bodies do not represent an ending in the realm of how we respond to other entities, and the space through which we are mutually perceived (O'Neill 13-17). I argue that our internal body, or furthermore, our subconscious perception of the world, affects the ways through which we perceive the tangible. In addition, the "perception" at hand is not only boundless in regard to our tangible body's relationship with the world, but is simply the beginning.

The ways in which we associate with, and respond to, other sentient forms of consciousness, that are housed in the third dimensional body, are all completely relevant to our means of acknowledgement, as well as our conscious will and ability to seek out commonalities that transcend specific types of beings and are expansive in their familiarity. By using mirrored film within my structure, I implicate myself and its participants. We become immersed in the world of a distorted sense of self. Are we the animal? Do we have the capacity for remorse? Are we desensitized by an underexposed and overprocessed

industry? Disoriented by the environment, I include a glowing red light pulsing in subtle deviations from the main blue light. By using this projection, tested with my body in the space, there is a juxtaposition of implications, being myself along with other beings who then enter the space. The light projection is the representative of a terrible beauty. Warm, cold, romantic, inviting, warm, and curious. It embodies a sense of life. It pulses red against the glowing blue light that engulfs us in the reflective, distorted room. Blue light triggers anxiety, pain sensors, and headaches. It is the epitome of all things one would expect to feel as an animal in a place of woeful uncertainty. The red light does the opposite. It relaxes and calms the eyes, the mind, the spirit. It is a glimmer of hope in a hopeless place. There is life in the darkness. There is beauty beyond the terror. There is a pulse beyond the uncertainty. '

In the realm of contemporary art, there have been several artists who touch upon the various ideas of the animal, the body, ethics, and our role in either viewing the art or participating in experiential phenomena. Such artists of influence for my thesis piece include: Susan Hiller, the curiously ethereal, Gillian Jagger and Sue Coe, the ethical, Josh Kline, the politically daunting, Yayoi Kusama, the brightly immersive, Jason Briggs, the bodily ambiguous, Rikrit Tiravanija, the humanely connected, and Berlinde De Bruyckere, the terrifyingly beautiful. My work is an ode to this consulted archive of inspiration. It reinforces my development, challenges my perception, and prompts the search for a deeper truth. By understanding the processes of successful artists, there opens the fountain from which awe-inspired creations flow like rainfall. There lies a synchronicity in the state of the world. Through fine art we gain a means of exploration. We are able to channel issues and ideas that impact humanity, nature, and the earthly responsibility binding us to our expression of ethics. I have chosen my cards from the deck. I have chosen to expose the jaw that must be unclenched from the ethereal body that we all share. To harm another being is to harm

ourselves, the planetary ecosystem, the health of all involved. This is due to the fact that we are all connected. In the space that I have created, we catch a glimpse of a hidden world. An immersion that unifies through empathic understanding of beings who cannot speak for themselves in a language understood by traditional dialect. The fine arts allow us to communicate in languages other than verbal, grammatical, or textual. By obliterating the decree of pragmatism, we enter the peculiar, industrialized, uncanny enclosure that exists behind charmingly fabricated normalcy. Extinguishing societally enforced pleasantries of the animal industry, we uncloak the apotheosis of who we are.

After walking through a floor-length 7.5' PVC, clear, stripped curtain, we enter a room where industrial aluminum in juxtaposition with light, sound, and video become the focus. Throughout the construction process, I encountered the challenge of being technically precise with measurements and craftsmanship. In previous work, such as welding and painting, I primarily used more organic or expressive methods of mark making and construction. From the beginning of my thesis, formal processes have been carefully calculated down to every last inch of material. This brings about a sense of the systematic, factory type of environment from where a glimmer of life emanates. My aluminum structure is 12' x 7.5' x 8' and derived from 8' x 4' industrial aluminum sheeting. Its frame is strengthened with 0.75" x 0.75" x 8' wooden support beams that I cut using a table saw from original wooden pieces at 8' x 4' x 0.75" and secured with self-tapping screws used to connect each wall.

How might we feel entering uncharted waters, listening to the noise of a vibrating space with images of ourselves, and others like us, bouncing around an interior that is more of a horror house than a fun house? How might one react upon entering a space that engulfs? Are we disheartened, afraid, curious, or intrigued? The innards of the structure are

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