$P4RKL3 FILTH CLOUD NiN3

queerness of the inbetween

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

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There is an innate responsibility that I feel to imbue my surroundings with magic. Thoughtfully covering surfaces with a stream of consciousness, I close my eyes and draw from memory the things I have a tender connection to. Couching my subversion to contemporary society in vibrant colors and intricate constructions, I express to others what defines my queer identity—something that is ever-evolving. Continually reanalyzing myself in relation to the objects I create allows me to question if they are protective imaginings of my identity, tools to navigate contemporary society, or the actualization of the state of equilibrium itself?

As my identity evolves, different versions of myself join me as I am inserted into spaces where I lack feelings of belonging and comfort. Together with these former selves, I use my creative practice to build objects and spaces that maintain a sense of equilibrium, a manifestation of homeostasis that negates societal expectations. I position myself and my practice in the inbetween, the grey area where I float between a range of binaries both societally and materially.
Remembering the smell of a particular place, the soft touch of another, the repetition of mending a broken relationship, or the painful things that have led to the present—these are the bricks I need to lay the foundation for the self-made protective place I call $P4RKLE FiLTH CLOUD NiN3. Shrouded in the protective reimagining of identity, I explore my environment searching for street treasures and imagery in plain sight. I am a hunter and gatherer of the unresolved and forgotten. Decoding my surroundings, findings and lived experiences, I reassemble them to develop a new visual language, a space for solace reflecting the queerness of the inbetween.

Through metal and printmaking, I layer, pair, and repeat elements while reworking forms and images that pull from painful places and feelings reminiscent of familiarity and safety. Automatic and blind contour drawing informs the shape and surfaces of much of the work. Pulling imagery from the action figures in my studio space, favorite cartoons, plants in the local greenhouse, or flowers blooming on my walk home, I build a database to inform my drawings. Some drawings occur quickly on-site, direct interpretations of what is in front of me, and others are from memory.

The use of blind contour drawing adds another layer of visual language, as new forms emerge from the irregular overlap of lines. Specific connections and elements are pulled from the drawing itself. I resolve the connecting elements by taking rubbings of the surface or another blind contour of the surface. Realizing that the work exists in a state of questioning, as it teeters between a completed state as a drawing but not as a three-dimensional object, I seek the answers of resolution within the work.
The need to repair and reconstruct objects reflects my need to mend myself and my relationship to identity. I cut apart what could exist as a completed object into an array of awkward or lost parts and then find a way to put them back together again. Often, I introduce recycled pieces or failed makings of another work—every component has a place in my practice and eventually finds a home. My bench and scrap buckets are full of potential parts and pieces that can fill the blanks of the work I feel the need to mend and repair.

The effort to rearrange and resolve is imperative to the process and resolution of the objects. As I question why things are the way they are and analyze why the work needs further evolution, I address my need to mend and repair. What others may see as complete or whole, I do not and feel there is work to be done to extend, connect, restore, and distress. I tend to these urges with care and restraint, seeking to add parts and pieces that actualize my relationship to self.

Seeking to bring $P4RKLE FiLTH CLOUD NiN3 to fruition and manifest the purity of the protective place, I work across both metalwork and printmaking, blurring these two practices. I push for the convergence of print and metal and reflect on the relationship between them and how together they may create harmonious tensions. The constant evolution of the metalwork
in tandem with the printed image relies heavily on the outcome of the integration of intuitive processes and a self-made systematic framework that relies on a series of rules and a queer mathematical approach to problem-solving and balance.

Through rules and an unorthodox mathematical approach, I consider my tension with contemporary society and what those responses are nonverbally manifested into an object. I approach the printed image with the same methods of making sculptural objects.
My need to bring the 2D into my work began with books I made when I lived in larger cities, collecting street treasures and repurposing them into my own narrative to tell a story.

Each page is unique, with photos, found treasures, drawings, and sketches for otherworldly pieces. I sought a way to embody the ephemerality of my handmade books into a different medium. Printmaking was the answer and created an image with aesthetic qualities that couldn't be achieved any other way. The techniques allow me to digitally scan the books and incorporate handmade elements in a digital plane.
Through Intaglio and Silkscreen, I create work that challenges the binary relationship of the singular print vs the edition by using alternative techniques such as wiping ink with a damp cloth, printing on top of fresh ink, wiping the ink and printing on top again, split fountains, and pulling ghost prints. Often, I found myself flooding a screen with multiple colors instead of washing out to change inks, allowing them to mix and create a color field unique to that specific pull.

Using iterative processes and chance operations, every element and surface of the work is considered. Like the layering of print processes, paint is applied and reveals layers on complex metal objects and jewelry using unique experimental methods unfettered by the worry of risk-taking. Dunking pieces in water and applying layers of paint followed by wiping and gouging out recessed areas, just to repeat the process in a different order. The systematic framework implemented when constructing in metal is just as active when applying surface finishes, as these are the steps to actualize the feelings of $P4RKL3 FILTH CLOUD NiN3 and the search for sustained oppositions. As I work
through my process's experimental happenings and unknown outcomes, I repair my relationship with the work and its new identity.

Heavily influenced by the connections and surface treatments found in contemporary ceramicists' work, such as Nick Weddell, Matt Mitros, and Jose Sierra, I sought to devise methods and materials applicable to metal surfaces, both ferrous and non-ferrous. Using materials such as fuel line, epoxy putty, and nylon cord, I found alternatives to traditional metalworking and jewelry connections that feel thoughtful and direct.

Inspired by the gloop glaze and bubbly textures of Nick Weddell and Matt Mitros, I developed my own surface finishes unique to my protective reality. Through the layering of stickers, glitter, and paint, I sand back the surface to reveal one like that of marbled paper. Selectively adorning surfaces with this texture allows a dynamic connection between metalwork and prints.

Not only did I find a resolution to link and finish the work, but I introduced a series of complex binaries to the materiality of the objects: metal vs. alternative, color vs. patina, structured vs. organic, object vs. jewelry, 3D vs. 2D. Simple but complex binaries that exist in the same space, creating harmonious tensions that sustain a sense of equilibrium. In tandem with the efforts to defy the binary as a Trans individual, I make a narrative with these binaries, forcing them to compete and complement each other. They rest in the inbetween.

_They are the queerness of the inbetween._

That which is adorned with maximalist magic and complimentary chaos will continuously evolve and feed the growth of the inbetween. I ask what does the environment of
the inbetween look like? Is the constant evolution of the work what maintains this state of equilibrium I strive to create? Is this a place that preserves many reactions and emotions in a single space?

Not only do the sustained oppositions in my work address the conceptual underpinnings of my research, but they also work to create a façade between myself and the observer. As I develop a new dialogue with the final state of the work, I create a buffer between how both myself and the work are perceived together and individually by society. I question how the façade functions within the work as a protective recreative imagining of the fragmented narratives I use to define myself and the various sub-personalities that assist my optimal functioning in contemporary society.
Covering every surface from object to display creates the foundation for conceptual mapping. The various elements, although competing, develop a sense of neon maximalist hypnrsia. Allowing for a calm amongst the chaos to bring the viewer into the fold of $P4RKL3 FLTH CLOUD NiN3$.

When working to layout the conceptual mapping of the installation and how both the materiality and technique function, I ask myself:

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\text{what} + \text{what} = \text{homeostasis}
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This calculated assessment of visual elements in print and metal examines how I interact with my responses to external forces and personal narratives and how the two forces interact with each other. By taking digital scans and photos of the metal objects, editing them, and burning them into silkscreen screens, I brought the shapes and lines of the metalwork into the printed image. I then hand-painted on the transparencies, cut them apart, and paired them with elements of other work, creating a new image that referenced a 3D object, but was just a digital mashing of two pieces in a 2D plane.

Manipulating the printed image and overlaying the same image over varying backgrounds allowed for monotype-like prints and unique one-offs. In the metal objects, I use an invented method of intuitive drawing and carving into hard wax and then use electroforming to permanently create the drawings as 3D form to build from. Using similar direct drawing processes, I created the copper plate matrices for intaglio prints. Once completed with the edition, I use it as parts to finish another piece or a standalone completed object.
Installation in the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art featuring metalwork and prints
May 20 – 24, 2022
Photo by Artist
In traditional jewelry, the back of a piece is just as important as the front. The brooch or pendant is held intimately to the body by the wearer. There is an opportunity to tell two different stories on a single piece or a single unifying theme. Keeping my jewelry-making roots in mind, I approached the intaglio matrix in the same fashion, considering the front and back of the plate when etching.

Spending time using processes such as sugar lifting, touché, aquatint, spit-bite, and drypoint, I implemented the same automatic drawing techniques used when creating 3D elements. When submerging the plate in acid to etch the surface, I strategically placed tape or left it bare to allow the process of open bite to occur. I was left with a plate with two vastly different personalities: one with an intricate, whimsical drawing and the other with the aftermath of acid openly eating away the surface of the metal.

Following my iterative nature of working, I printed
both the front and back of the plate. I was left with two prints using the exact plate shape, but the visual content was starkly contrasting. I also applied ink thickly to the plate and printed it until there was no ink left. This allowed me to obtain a range of prints that told a different story of the print and created variation amongst the repetitions.

As a metalsmith, the matrix of the intaglio print is precious to me, as I spent time creating complex hand-sawn plates. I questioned how I could elevate the matrix as a completed object or how to bring the surface of the metalwork into a silkscreen print.

Through digital rendering, physical manipulation, ripping and tearing, cutting and taping, I pushed harder for the convergence of the multiple visual elements in 2D and 3D. Together, they allow the viewer to draw connections between the two, more than just a visual and conceptual likeness existing in the same space.

The evolution and analysis of self are evident in the work, as each cohesive piece has a unique voice of its own. They nest
within the atmosphere of $P4RKL3 FilTH CLOUD NiN3 as they respond to lived experiences and fragmented narratives I created to define my identity as a Trans Non-Binary individual. The more I work and push for the convergence of print and metal, the more I understand the function of the sustained oppositions within the three-dimensional objects, printed images, and the collaboration of the two. Finding meaning within them addresses the urges that push me to fix and repair what viewers may see as complete.

The process of installing the work speaks to the importance of responding to my surroundings. The installation is met with a specific arrangement of prints unique to this
exhibition, as the same arrangement will not happen again. While installing, I genuinely exist in the grey area and embody my practice of $P4RKL3 FiLTH CLOUD NiN3, achieving a sense of flow and strategically adorning the space with the prints.

I use masking tape and repurpose the trimmings of the paper to add breaks and a sense of repair in the layering. The varying thickness of tape adds a pause between complex panels of prints and a calming strip to break up the visual intensity of the work together. The harsh lines of the recycled trimmings and tape bleed into fields of other prints, a way to extend a line past the expectation of a barrier between one visual plane and another. The edges of the tape are left ripped imply the continuation of a line.

The display panels that support the metal objects are treated with similar care to the prints, as they are covered in blind contour drawings, automatically drawn on the spot. Carving the surface of freshly laid gypsum and sanding it back to create a smooth
surface for the work to exist upon. Every surface in the exhibition is thoughtfully considered, down to the single pink cinderblock.

The work is an act of resolution and documentation of the specificities of my identity and protective space in response to the micro-aggressions of reality. This exhibition is the purest form of myself that exists, and here is where I put it all on the table. There will never be a specific answer or definition of this place, and the constant shifting of planes and identities within the work serves as a particular validation of how I feel and how I see myself. With this work, I have developed a visual language that allows me to articulate my queer identity in social spaces, but this is just the beginning. $P4RKLE$ $FILTH$ $CLOUD$ $NiN3$ is a place of worship and peace, chaotic order, a place of re-evaluation.

It is my place.

A place in which I can function and feel safe.

A place in which others can witness my truth.

A place that exists despite doubt and questioning.

A place that serves as an incubator for my growth.

A place where I call home.

A place where I am me.
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Bibliography


