ELSEWHERE

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Artist Statement

Quiet, introspective moments shape our inner worlds— those private, reflective times that allow us to recharge and sit with our thoughts. Often overlooked, these moments hold the deepest spaces for reflective and spontaneous thought. My sculptures capture women immersed in thought, recharging in solitude, or navigating the complexities of their inner worlds. Plucking a frozen moment in time, these weightless figures are lost in introspection, their unencumbered gazes guiding them into uniquely private moments. These inanimate objects are imbued with the ability to communicate in a physical language inherent to the human experience.

Thesis Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomena of solitude and self-reflection, particularly focusing on women. Through ceramic sculptures, I capture the essence of quiet, introspective moments, where the figures exist free from the constraints of objectification and external gaze. These sculptures embody a sense of weightlessness, suspended in time, plucked from intimate moments of reflection and thought. The figures are presented as though floating between reality and dream, with a surface that evokes a sense of ambiguity—a dreamlike quality—achieved through the use of milk paint and translucent skin tones that blur the boundary between the tangible and the imagined daydream world.

This work specifically challenges historical representations of women as objects for male pleasure, rejecting the traditional male gaze that has long defined how the female body is portrayed in art and media. Instead, I focus on depicting real, unedited bodies that carry the

traces of lived experiences, such as skin rolls, fat, scars, and stretch marks. The figures in my sculptures are not idealized but are instead grounded in the beauty of their individuality and imperfection, promoting body positivity and embracing a natural form that resists the pressures of media-induced beauty standards.

The interplay of formal qualities, such as posture, surface treatment, and weightlessness, serves to express the figures' inner worlds. These sculptural moments are intentionally isolated, frozen in time, as they navigate the complexities of personal introspection and cognition. By presenting women in these vulnerable states of solitude, I aim to evoke a sense of empathy and self-reflection from the viewer, encouraging them to contemplate their own moments of solitude and quiet contemplation. What does the viewer think about when they are not thinking about thinking? The figures, though depicted in solitary states, carry narratives that invite viewers to engage in a shared experience of rumination, self-care, and quiet connection.

Incorporating metal elements such as jewelry and spectacles serves to ground the figures in the physical world, subtly suggesting their tangible reality while allowing the dreamlike surface and suspended posture to imply a deeper internal life. This approach underscores my ongoing investigation into how internal emotional spaces can be externalized and represented through materiality and form, offering a space where viewers can explore their own emotional landscapes through the figure's silent reflection.

Through this work, I aim to promote body positivity and challenge the media's pervasive edits and portrayals of unattainable and even unnatural beauty. By depicting women in real, unscripted moments, I offer a space where the figures exist as they are, without performing for

an external gaze. Their postures and body language reflect a sense of comfort and a lack of self-consciousness—many are resting, slouched, or positioned in a way that prioritizes ease and comfort over an expected or scripted appearance. Unlike traditional representations of women whose bodies are curated for consumption rather than self-expression, these figures are not posing to highlight idealized angles. Instead, they embody the quiet power of introspection, embracing the beauty of real, unedited bodies as they navigate their own unique headspaces.

Research: Background and Sources

Historical and Philosophical Context of the Male Gaze in the Representation of Women

Historically, women in art have often been depicted through the lens of the male gaze, reducing them to objects of visual pleasure rather than autonomous subjects with their own agency. This pattern is deeply embedded in Western art traditions, where female figures are often presented in passive poses, constructed for the enjoyment of the male viewer. Renaissance paintings, for example, frequently portray nude women as static objects, their bodies curated for consumption rather than self-expression. These images not only shaped the aesthetic language of the time but also contributed to long-standing cultural perceptions of women as objects to be observed. The enduring legacy of such representations continues to impact how women are seen and treated today.

John Berger's Ways of Seeing speaks to this issue, exploring the power dynamics involved in the visual culture surrounding women. He notes, "One might simplify this by saying: men act and

women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (Berger 47). This dual awareness of being both a subject and an object has permeated the representation of women, where they are often portrayed as spectacles whose primary function is to satisfy the viewer's desire.

Berger also touches upon the role of mirrors in paintings, such as those depicting women gazing at their own reflections, often portraying this as a symbol of vanity. However, he critiques this notion, stating that these mirrors were not simply for self-awareness but rather a tool to reinforce women's role as objects to be gazed upon. He writes, "The real function of the mirror was otherwise. It was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight" (Berger 51). This idea aligns with the pervasive influence of the male gaze, where women are conditioned to see themselves as objects to be admired by others, rather than subjects with independent identities.

The psychological and philosophical underpinnings of this representation are complex. As Edward Snow emphasizes, "The male gaze does not merely observe; it constructs and objectifies, turning subjects into mere images for consumption" (Snow 45). Women in art, historically and today, have often been cast in these limited, constructed roles—reduced to mere objects to be consumed rather than fully realized individuals. This objectification is deeply rooted in societal structures that continue to value women based on their physical appearance and ability to fulfill the desires of an external viewer.

The work of feminist theorists and philosophers has also sought to address the power imbalances inherent in the way women are represented. The male gaze, as a dominant force in both art and society, operates through this long history of objectification. The notion that women must always be presented for external validation is challenged by feminist artists and theorists who argue for representations that embrace autonomy, complexity, and subjectivity. By rejecting the idea that women are merely objects for male pleasure, they offer alternative narratives that allow women to exist independently of the viewer's gaze, to occupy space for themselves.

In my own work, I reject the framework of the male gaze by focusing on moments of private introspection. My sculptures embody figures who are disengaged from the external gaze, absorbed in their own thoughts and personal reflection. These figures resist the objectification inherent in traditional representations by existing for themselves, not for the viewer's pleasure. They engage in ordinary, quiet acts—small moments of self-care or thought—that are not intended for public consumption but rather as expressions of their internal worlds. This shift challenges the notion of women as passive objects, instead presenting them as subjects whose experiences, thoughts, and actions are their own.

Fig. 1

Self Portrait, Jenny Saville, 1991
Oil on Canvas 53 ½ x 48in
https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Self-Portrait/E49F94F25BC0BBF6

In a similar vein, Jenny Saville's Self Portrait (1991) exemplifies a powerful rejection of the traditional presentation of the female body for the male gaze. Saville, in her raw and unflinching depiction of herself, pushes back against the idea of beauty being confined to male fantasies of the female body. As she states,

> "There is a thing about beauty. Beauty is always associated with the male fantasy of what the female body is. I don't think there is anything wrong with beauty. It's just what

> women think is beautiful can be different. And there can be a beauty in individualism. If there is a wart or a scar, this can be beautiful, in a sense, when you paint it" (Saville).

This self-portrait challenges the dominant cultural narrative of beauty by embracing imperfections, scars, and individuality. By presenting herself in an unidealized, visceral form, Saville's work speaks to the potential for beauty in the real, unpolished body—something that resists the male gaze's idealized and consumable standards of beauty. Saville's self-portrait is a powerful assertion of autonomy, offering a vision of a woman who owns her representation without needing to conform to the external expectations placed upon her. My sculpture of a woman seated on a toilet (Figure 2) similarly embraces vulnerability and intimacy, presenting a moment of quiet bodily presence that resists idealization and instead invites recognition and relatability. In addition, my work challenges the distorted ideals of beauty that have been perpetuated by the male gaze throughout history. These standards, often shaped by media and societal expectations, have historically marginalized diverse body types and reinforced narrow definitions of beauty. Through my sculptures, I seek to empower real bodies, embracing imperfections and celebrating authenticity rather than conforming to the often unattainable and sometimes unhealthy ideals dictated by mainstream culture. By focusing on the individuality of each figure, I aim to reclaim space for all bodies to be seen and valued on their own terms.

Fig. 2

what a long day… there's too many things to keep track of. i feel like i just bounced from one thing to the next. did i even take a second to breathe? i probably forgot something important. it's over now, though. geez…, Chrystal O'Boyle, 2025
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 21x8.75x8 inches

The rejection of the male gaze is not only a philosophical and psychological endeavor to reclaim the representation of women in art but also a call for body positivity. It is not just about depicting women differently but about reimagining how they are seen—free from the pressure to be objects of external observation and consumption. As body positivity emphasizes, "[body positivity is] an overarching love and respect for the body, regardless of sociocultural body and

appearance standards" (Aubrey 5). My sculptures invite viewers into a space where the women depicted are not objects to be looked at, but complex, introspective beings who exist outside the constraints of the gaze. In rejecting traditional beauty standards, I am also embracing the ideals of body neutrality, which proposes that "one should not focus on appearance or externally perceivable aspects of the body but instead regard the body from a neutral standpoint" (Aubrey 6). As social media continues to shape the ways in which individuals engage with their bodies, many have pointed out how these platforms amplify systematic pressures to conform to unrealistic beauty standards. These pressures—rooted in sexism, racism, and patriarchy—often limit one's ability to embrace their body as it is, reinforcing a narrow definition of beauty (Aubrey 8). These works create a space where women are free to exist in their own form, regardless of size, shape, or societal expectation, empowering real bodies and redefining how we engage with the representation of women in art.

Embodied Introspection: The Connection Between Cognition, Internal Gaze, and Language

The male gaze does not merely observe; it constructs and objectifies, turning subjects into mere images for consumption. My work actively resists this framework, focusing instead on private introspection, where the gaze is directed inward. In contrast to traditional depictions of women as objects for external observation, my sculptures embody figures who exist beyond the viewer's gaze, immersed in their own internal worlds. This rejection of external observation shifts focus to the inner life—the emotional and cognitive spaces that are often overlooked in art.

I believe the emotional and psychological headspaces occupied by men and women can be quite different, shaped by social conditioning and gender roles. While this is not universally true, I find that men often react more impulsively, whereas women tend to process interactions more deeply, often replaying past conversations and anticipating future ones. I personally experience this cognitive tendency—I often find myself stuck in cycles of overthinking, reliving past moments, or preparing for potential outcomes. This heightened introspection is something I explore through my work, with my sculptures embodying figures who are engaged in this kind of private, ruminative process, detached from the demands of the viewer's gaze.

This introspection is not merely a mental exercise but an embodied experience. In my studio practice, I engage in a form of multitasking that feels intuitive to me, as though it is necessary for my creative process. While sculpting, my visuospatial sketchpad is occupied with form, proportion, and spatial relationships, while my phonological loop processes audio—whether an audiobook, music, or a podcast. This dual engagement helps me maintain focus, preventing my mind from disengaging from the task at hand. It mirrors the cognitive state of my figures: physically engaged in small, familiar tasks and gestures, yet their thoughts are elsewhere. The stillness, the postures, and the facial expressions of my figures convey a cognitive split between the external world and their internal reflections—something all of us experience in moments of deep thought.

This type of multitasking, which engages different working memory systems, is highly efficient:

- Visuospatial Sketchpad → Engaged with my sculpture (spatial and visual details).

- Phonological Loop → Engaged with audio input (music, spoken words).

The concept of the visuospatial sketchpad, where we store and recall visual information, happens with my sculptures. Since my figures are not fully grounded in a defined physical space, they encourage viewers to fill in the missing context using their own memories and experiences. This process aligns with how the visuospatial sketchpad functions. As Van der Stigchel explains, "If you go looking for a red book on a bookshelf, you activate the color red in the visuospatial sketchpad so that all of the red objects around you immediately attract your attention" (Van der Stigchel, Concentration). Similarly, the fragmented and ambiguous spaces within my sculptures serve as cognitive triggers, prompting viewers to engage their own stored images and associations. My color choices reinforce this interaction, as the layered, dreamlike application of paint disrupts a strictly literal reading, encouraging a more abstract and personal engagement.

Fig. 3

Ruminate, Amy Cutler 2014,
Gouache on paper 22 ⅛ x 23 inches
Amy Cutler Official Website

Amy Cutler's Ruminate (2014) offers a striking visual parallel to this cognitive process. The painting presents a woman whose head is literally split open, revealing intricate domestic scenes unfolding within. Her mind is not depicted as an abstract, intangible space but as a structured interior, filled with carefully arranged objects and figures engaged in quiet,

introspective moments. The act of viewing *Ruminate* mirrors the way the visuospatial sketchpad functions—we instinctively piece together the imagery, drawing on our own memories and associations to interpret its meaning. The separation of the head into distinct compartments reinforces the idea that thought, and memory are actively constructed, rather than passively experienced. Just as my sculptures rely on the viewer's participation to complete their implied narratives, Cutler's work invites us to navigate and mentally inhabit the internal world of the figure, demonstrating how cognition is deeply tied to visual and spatial processing.

The idea that cognition extends beyond the brain and into our physical experiences links directly to how my sculptures engage with space. My figures, with their weightless gestures and introspective stillness, suggest that memory and thought are not static but embodied. These figures exist in a dynamic state, where thought and feeling are not confined to the mental realm but are also experienced through the body. The way I sculpt their posture, their gaze, and their gestures mirrors this understanding that internal reflection is a full-body experience, not simply a mental one.

As Van der Stigchel describes the role of the phonological loop: "We often use internal speech to calm ourselves down… It allows us to control our impulses and our heart rate" (Van der Stigchel, Concentration). My sculptures embody this state of inner dialogue—engaged in quiet, repetitive tasks while lost in their own thoughts. These mundane activities—resting, fixing a garment, touching their own hands—become moments of deep cognitive processing, where the mind drifts between the present reality and internal reflection. These small, ordinary tasks are not distractions, but mechanisms of self-regulation and processing, reminding us that internal

dialogue is crucial for both mental calm and understanding. This is reflected in Figure 4, a sculpture of a woman sitting on the ground, picking at her nails. Her posture—slouched, almost defeated—and the anxious tendency of nail picking complement the internal chatter: an attempt to self-soothe through breath and routine while mentally cycling through a growing to-do list in an effort to cope with the underlying source of her anxiety.

Fig. 4

i'm really excited. i am. it's just… there's so much to do before i can even leave. laundry, emails, that one thing i keep forgetting. oooof. why do i always do this? it'll be fine. i just need to breathe– in, out, breathe…, Chrystal O'Boyle 2025
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 16.5x10x9 inches

This connection between memory, cognition, and the physical experience reinforces the rejection of passive observation in art. As I previously discussed, female figures in art history have often been positioned for external viewing, constructed for the pleasure of the observer. Yet, as my work challenges this tradition, my sculptures insist that women's internal lives be the focus—expressed not through performance for the gaze, but through intimate, self-contained moments. By engaging with these figures, viewers are invited to acknowledge not just the body, but the mind and experience that reside within.

In my work, the internal gaze is not only about introspection through physical posture but also through the language embedded in the titles of my sculptures. These titles are intended to act as reflections of the inner dialogue happening within each figure, revealing the complexity of thoughts that shape their cognitive worlds. Rather than being literal descriptions of the figures' actions, the titles represent the broader, often disconnected thoughts the figures might be having as they perform simple, everyday tasks.

For example, a figure that appears to be engaged in a physically assertive action might be internally reflecting on how out of shape they feel. The physical assertion might be at odds with the mental preoccupation about their body's condition, suggesting a layer of self-critique or concern. Similarly, a figure brushing her hair could be lost in thoughts about something that happened earlier in her day, her mind preoccupied with past interactions rather than the present task at hand. These examples illustrate how the inner dialogue can diverge from the

external actions, representing how we often drift away from the present moment to reflect on things that aren't immediately tied to what we're doing in our mundane routine.

This concept aligns with Guy Dove's assertion that "language and thought are difficult to disentangle precisely because they are entangled" (Dove 149). The titles are a linguistic anchor that brings to the surface the internal monologues of the figures. These figures are not static in their thoughts—they are active in their internal worlds, where language plays a vital role in shaping their reflections and self-awareness. Through these titles, the sculptures convey the complexity of internal processes that are not confined to the present moment or the physical task at hand, but extend across time and experience.

Fig. 5

wait… did i come across as rude earlier? no, i didn’t. i couldn’t have… could i? ugh, they probably didn’t even notice. or they did, and now they’re thinking i’m awful. cool, cool…, Chrystal O’Boyle 2024
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 22x7.5x7 inches

By using these titles, I allow the viewers to connect with the figures’ internal landscapes. Instead of simply seeing a figure performing an action, the viewer is invited to consider what the figure might be thinking or feeling—how their thoughts about their body, their day, or their emotions might be influencing the action. The titles create a space for introspection, much like

the figures themselves, where thought and language merge to reveal a deeper, often unspoken, dimension of experience.

Process: Materials and Studio Practice

The process of creating my ceramic sculptures begins with the use of silicone press molds—a critical step in my current studio practice. I first build detailed, solid clay forms, which I then coat with layers of silicone to capture their surface textures and subtleties. Once the silicone cures, I construct a plaster mother mold around it to provide support. This two-part system allows me to press fresh clay into the negative form, producing repeatable body parts that I then alter, assemble, and integrate into larger figurative works.

I first learned this mold-making technique during the summer of 2024 while working as a teaching assistant for artist Kourtney Stone at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. The workshop, Two Heads Are Better Than One, focused on silicone and plaster mold-making for figurative sculpture. Through assisting students and working closely with Kourtney, I gained valuable hands-on experience with the process. This opportunity not only helped me build technical proficiency but also led to an ongoing mentorship—Kourtney now serves as one of my external advisors.

Fig. 6

Process: clay slabs pressed into silicone press molds, drying out before they get joined together to sit out to dry overnight.

At present, I have developed molds for two busts (shoulder up) and two torsos. These forms function as base components in my sculptural language, offering consistency in scale and proportion while still leaving room for expressive variation. After pressing clay into the molds—using a light dusting of cornstarch as a release agent—I allow the clay to reach a leathery consistency before removal. The molded parts are then stored in a damp box to retain even moisture levels, ensuring they remain workable for carving, cutting, and combining.

Rather than replicating identical figures, I treat these molded parts as modular elements. Each face and body is configured individually to reflect a range of postures, expressions, and emotional tones. Starting from a shared shell, I build variety through intentional manipulation, allowing each figure to develop its own distinct identity.

The strength and plasticity of my sculptural raku clay body are especially advantageous at this stage. The material holds detail well and allows for techniques like slumping, folding, and pressing, which I use to create subtle creases and realistic body forms. It also permits mending during sculpting, which is crucial given the amount of handling required in the assembly process.

Once the torso and head are completed, I consider the sculpture's final composition—whether it will be oriented frontally, from a three-quarter view, or in a more dynamic posture. These decisions guide the placement of arms, legs, and other elements, shaping the figure's gesture and how it interacts with the viewer. Through this process, each sculpture becomes a unique portrait of introspection, built from repeated forms but assembled in ways that emphasize individuality and emotional presence.

When creating the limbs, I use dowel rods to create hollow tubes. I begin by making a thick coil of clay, about a half inch larger than the rod itself. This coil is then pressed into the center of the rod and gradually thinned by hand before rolling it out to create a tapered finish. Once the limb is shaped, I remove it from the dowel and cut it to the desired length. After shaping the limb, I push from the inside to build up muscle and fat volume, enhancing the anatomical structure of the figure. I also use a plaster press mold for the hands, which are an integral part of the overall

gesture. Before starting on the arms, I press the clay into the hand mold, dusting it with cornstarch to facilitate easy removal. The hands are then shaped to reflect a natural gesture—often a relaxed hand—which will later be attached to the arm and the rest of the sculpture.

Fig. 7

Process: close-up shot of how I use clay supports to hold the legs of a sculpture. Note the newspaper in between the supports and the body as well as lining the kiln shelf in so the sand on the shelf does not stick to the sculpture.

Once the body parts are complete, the sculptures undergo a slow-drying process. I place each figure on a kiln shelf lined with silica sand and covered with newspaper. The newspaper acts as a buffer to prevent the sand or clay supports from sticking to the sculpture while it dries. This is important because it allows the figure to remain intact and the supports can be removed easily.

The newspaper burns off in the kiln, but by that time, the sculpture will have dried enough that it will no longer have issues with the sand or supports sticking to it. Clay supports are strategically placed to maintain the gesture of the arms and legs as they dry. I fire my work on sand because the small, ball-like particles act as rollers, allowing the sculpture to move as it shrinks during drying and, ultimately, when it's fired in the kiln. I follow a strict, long bisque schedule to ensure that each sculpture can endure the cone 04 bisque firing without issues such as cracks or blowouts. This methodical approach to drying and firing is vital to the integrity of the sculptures.

After bisque firing, I begin the decoration process, starting with sanding the surface of each sculpture. The sanded surface creates a smooth, flawless finish, which is essential for achieving the skin-like quality I want for my sculptures. My raku clay body contains a significant amount of sand, which, if left untreated, can result in a textured surface. Sanding alleviates this issue and prepares the surface for the next steps in decoration. I also epoxy square tube fittings into the back of the sculpture at this stage, as they are necessary for the hanging mechanism. The bulk of the tubing is secured with Bray-Poxy, a thick two-part adhesive, while the final portion of the tubing is set using PC-11 epoxy. This ensures a strong, secure bond that will hold the sculpture in place during installation.

Fig. 8

Process: air brushing the vibrant under painting of a sculpture.

Airbrushing is a key technique in my decoration process. I begin with a vibrant underpainting, followed by outlining and speckling techniques that add depth and dimension to the surface. I then apply a translucent skin tone over the underpainting to mute the colors, while still allowing the vibrant hues to peek through. The figures‘ emotional state often dictates the use of specific colors. For example, figures exhibiting exertion or tension will show more pronounced reds,

while more relaxed figures will have muted pinks. The color shifts enhance the narrative of the sculpture, reflecting the emotional state of the figure.

Fig. 9

woah… talk about a cliffhanger. maybe one more episode wouldn’t hurt– what time is it even? midnight!?! shit. i’ve got an early morning tomorrow., Chrystal O’Boyle 2025
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 13x7x8.5 inches

Once I achieve the desired coloration, I apply several layers of a water-based varnish known as Natural Glass. This varnish, made from milk casein and beeswax, is ideal for airbrushing, as it

can be diluted for a smooth, even application. I coat the entire figure with several layers, highlighting the upper points of the body—such as the shoulders, cheekbones, and nose—with additional layers to create a light-catching effect. The final touches include adding a non-watered-down layer to the fingernails and eyes, giving them a high-gloss finish that contrasts with the rest of the figure's matte surface.

The final step in the process is the addition of metal body adornments. These adornments are planned during the sculpting phase, where I leave small holes in the figure to accommodate the metal pieces. I use PC-11 epoxy to securely attach the metal components, ensuring they are integrated seamlessly into the sculpture. For the hanging mechanism, I create a corresponding metal piece that fits into the square tubing embedded in the back of the sculpture. This allows the figure to be properly hung and displayed once complete.

By following this process, I am able to create sculptures that not only reflect the physical forms of the body but also convey deep emotional expression through gesture, color, and material choices. The careful manipulation of materials, combined with a thoughtful approach to surface decoration, allows each figure to come to life in a unique and meaningful way.

Discussion of Work

Formal Qualities & Conceptual Themes

As I work through the idea of a moment being plucked from time, I find myself continually drawn to the concept of weightlessness—both in relation to the body and to my use of color,

touch, and material handling. From the earliest stages of building each figure, I am already considering how subtle shifts in gesture can evoke a sense of motion or lightness. This isn't simply a formal choice; it is a way to communicate the headspace my figures occupy—a realm that I am now beginning to name *elsewhere*.

Fig. 10

Thesis Exhibition: view from the left side of the installation.

Often, the feet or legs of a figure dangle with a soft heaviness, untethered from any grounded plane. While they appear to float—relaxed and unanchored—there can also be moments of subtle tension in the body, depending on the gesture or the act being performed. This balance between stillness and engagement is important to me. Many of the figures are involved in mundane, repetitive tasks that allow their minds to drift elsewhere—activities that don't demand their full focus but offer just enough structure to let their thoughts wander inward. In

this way, the body becomes both present and absent, suspended in a quiet space between action and introspection. This sense of lift or relief can reference a brief reprieve from social pressures or psychological weight, where the inner self feels most honest, vulnerable, or unmasked.

The addition of metal elements such as glasses, piercings, and jewelry plays a significant role in grounding the figures in the physical world. While ceramic additions like slippers or towels evoke comfort and introspection, the presence of metal components introduces a kind of specificity and weight that reinforces each figure's physicality. The subtle sheen and solidity of the metal contrast with the soft, ethereal tones of the clay surface, creating a tactile tension that anchors the sculptures in lived reality. These metal objects—though hand-fabricated—reference real-world accessories tied to self-expression and personal identity. By incorporating these recognizable adornments, I gesture toward the everyday decisions people make to present themselves to the world, further bridging the internal emotional space of the figures with external, physical experience.

The figures' gestures often reflect a moment of pause or breath—subtle acts like shifting weight, reaching, or fidgeting—capturing a quiet emotional truth in the body. I extend that feeling through my surface choices, using matte finishes and a range of soft, subdued colors. These tones recall pastel dreams and liminal landscapes. Particularly, I've become interested in a kind of soft rainbow iridescence—muted, hazy, and shifting—that lends itself to a dreamlike visual quality. This muted vibrancy does not dominate the figure but glows subtly across the surface, reinforcing the surreal or ephemeral state of the sculpture's inner world.

Fig. 11

mm… yeah okay. that’s it. this feels nice. i always forget how good it is to just be in my body for a second. warm. quiet. mine– wait. shit! did i leave the stove on? no. no, it’s fine. focus. come back to this. just breathe. focus, no distractions., Chrystal O’Boyle 2025
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 21x8.75x8 inches

The gestures and surfaces work in tandem to transport the figure into a space that is not entirely grounded in physical reality. This space is emotional, psychological, and deeply internal. My use of long-form titles furthers this narrative by offering the viewer a glimpse into the stream of consciousness the figure may be experiencing. These titles act almost like overheard thoughts. Some are open-ended, intentionally vague to preserve ambiguity, while others are more closely tied to the physical gestures or tasks the figure is engaged in. In both cases, the titles become a crucial narrative device—another layer that places the figure squarely within a frozen but complex moment in time, one that invites empathy, intimacy, and reflection.

Fig. 12

finally home. home. no more humming lights. no more voices layered over voices. just quiet. just still. quiet. everything can wait—just for a little while.. sigh…, Chrystal O’Boyle 2025
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 16.5x10x9 inches

Thesis Exhibition Overview

I’ve chosen to title my exhibition *elsewhere* because I wanted to create a daydream-like space that mimics a psychological state—an internal landscape where figures can lose themselves in thought. The word “elsewhere” carries an ambiguity I find powerful. It isn’t inherently positive or negative; rather, it is adaptive, reflecting the shifting tone of a person’s internal world. In this installation, the term elsewhere becomes a flexible container for the experiences of the figures—a space for solitude, introspection, rumination, or escape.

Fig. 13

Thesis Exhibition: middle view of the installation.

To shape this environment, I built a backdrop of cloudlike, blobby wall panels cut from MDF using a CNC router. Each panel was carefully designed with soft, wavy edges, then sanded and rounded with a router to remove the rigidity of the cut line. I wanted to eliminate harsh corners and instead cultivate a softness that echoed the emotional tone of the work. One central panel was constructed with a dramatic curve to break the illusion of a rigid gallery corner, reinforcing the sense of floating or suspension and expanding the emotional space the figures inhabit.

These wall forms were painted a pale blue and then carefully airbrushed with soft white gradients to create a hazy sense of movement. This surface treatment was not meant to

explicitly reference clouds or fog, but rather to evoke their presence without fully claiming it. I was interested in creating a space that felt airy and liminal—a visual metaphor for drifting thoughts and fluid mental states. The surface needed to resist flatness and instead offer a sense of soft ethereality. To deepen this effect, I painted the reverse side of the panels in a hot pink. The glow this creates—reflected subtly onto the white gallery walls—adds a quiet energy that hovers at the periphery of the viewer's vision, almost like an emotional afterimage.

One of the exhibition challenges I considered early on was how to incorporate my titles without disrupting the visual experience with traditional wall labels. Through experimentation, I discovered that holographic vinyl could offer a solution that supported my conceptual goals. Using a vinyl cutter, I applied long-format titles around each figure's head, arranged in circular or stream of consciousness— like compositions to mimic inner dialogue. The holographic surface reflects light in a way that makes the text legible only from certain angles, encouraging viewers to approach and spend time searching. This intentional difficulty mirrors the fleeting, often slippery nature of internal thoughts—some clear, others half-formed or fading away.

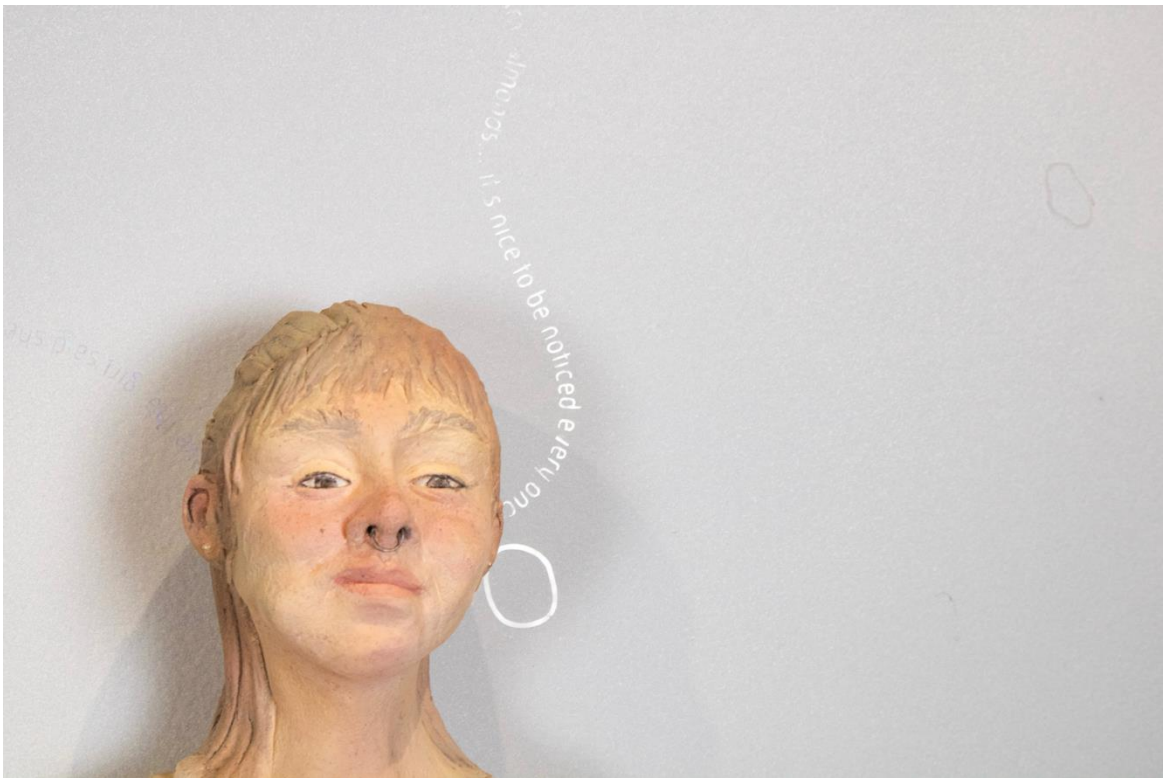

Fig. 14

Thesis Exhibition: close-up of iridescent vinyl thought thread.

In addition to these title-texts, I placed small amorphic vinyl blobs throughout the wall panels—visual representations of disconnected or background thoughts that drift in and out of clarity. These forms further suggest the presence of a rich inner life surrounding each figure, as if the space itself is populated with mental ephemera. Finally, I created a large-format version of the title elsewhere in clear acrylic, layered with the same holographic vinyl. Positioned at the entrance to the installation, this sculptural text introduces the viewer to the material and conceptual language of the show. Its clarity at a distance sets the stage for the more subtle, difficult-to-read titles throughout the gallery.

Fig. 15

Thesis Exhibition: view from the right side of the installation.

My goal with *elsewhere* was to create a soft, immersive environment where moments of quiet isolation could rest—where figures and their internal landscapes could be honored as tender, complex, and deeply human. By carefully crafting both the physical setting and the emotional tone, I hope to invite viewers to slow down, to linger, and to reflect on the invisible labor of thought, self-soothing, and personal processing that often goes unseen.

Conclusion

In *elsewhere*, I sought to construct a space where the figures—and the viewers—could momentarily escape the pressures of external perception. By centering moments of

introspection, repetition, and pause, my work resists traditional frameworks of display, particularly the historic objectification of women through the male gaze. Drawing from critical perspectives like John Berger's Ways of Seeing and referencing artists such as Jenny Saville, I aim to reclaim agency through representation—shifting the focus away from how women are seen and toward how they exist when no one is watching.

The suspended gestures, soft color palettes, and quiet surfaces are not simply aesthetic choices; they are embedded with emotional weight, each decision reinforcing the psychological space the figures inhabit. These are not passive bodies—they are thinking, feeling, processing. Through subtle material handling and immersive installation, I hope to slow down the viewer's gaze and invite a different kind of looking—one that honors interiority rather than consumption.

This work is not about resolution. It is about lingering in complexity, embracing softness, and allowing space for vulnerability without spectacle. In doing so, I position my sculptures—and the worlds they inhabit—as sites of quiet resistance, where the deeply personal becomes quietly political, and where women are allowed to be fully, unapologetically elsewhere.

Fig. 16

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hummmm… i think that went well… i hope he thought it did, too. he seems like a really nice guy… please don’t ghost me, not this time. I hate online dating, but maybe this time will be different.., Chrystal O’Boyle 2025
stoneware, casein paint, beeswax, silver 22.5x7.5x8.5 inches

Technical Information

Hanging Techniques

One of the primary challenges when working with wall-mounted ceramic sculpture is managing gravity. Earlier in my practice, I would simply carve a hole into the back of each sculpture to hang it directly on a screw. While this basic method worked, it lacked reliability and often resulted in instability—creating unnecessary stress and compromising the professional presentation of the work.

Through trial and error, I’ve developed a much more secure and intentional hanging system using brass square tubing and a custom screw-mount configuration. I still carve a small recess into the back of the sculpture, but now it functions as a placement guide for the mounting hardware. The system uses two nested square brass tubes—one slightly smaller than the other. The smaller brass tube is soldered at an upward angle onto a screw, while the larger tube is epoxied directly into the back of the sculpture using a combination of Bray-Poxy and PC-11, ensuring a strong and lasting bond.

Once the epoxy has fully cured overnight, I drill an anchor point into the wall and screw in the smaller brass tube (now affixed to the screw) by hand or with pliers. Because the tubing is square, the sculpture cannot rotate once mounted, creating a stable and fixed orientation. Additionally, the slight upward angle of the screw allows gravity to work in my favor—the sculpture naturally settles into place, eliminating any risk of slipping or falling.

This system creates a clean, nearly invisible hanging mechanism that prioritizes safety, precision, and professionalism. It gives me peace of mind when displaying heavy or fragile ceramic works and enhances the overall presentation of the installation. An image of this setup, showing the larger brass tube epoxied into the back of the sculpture and the corresponding screw-mounted component, is included below.

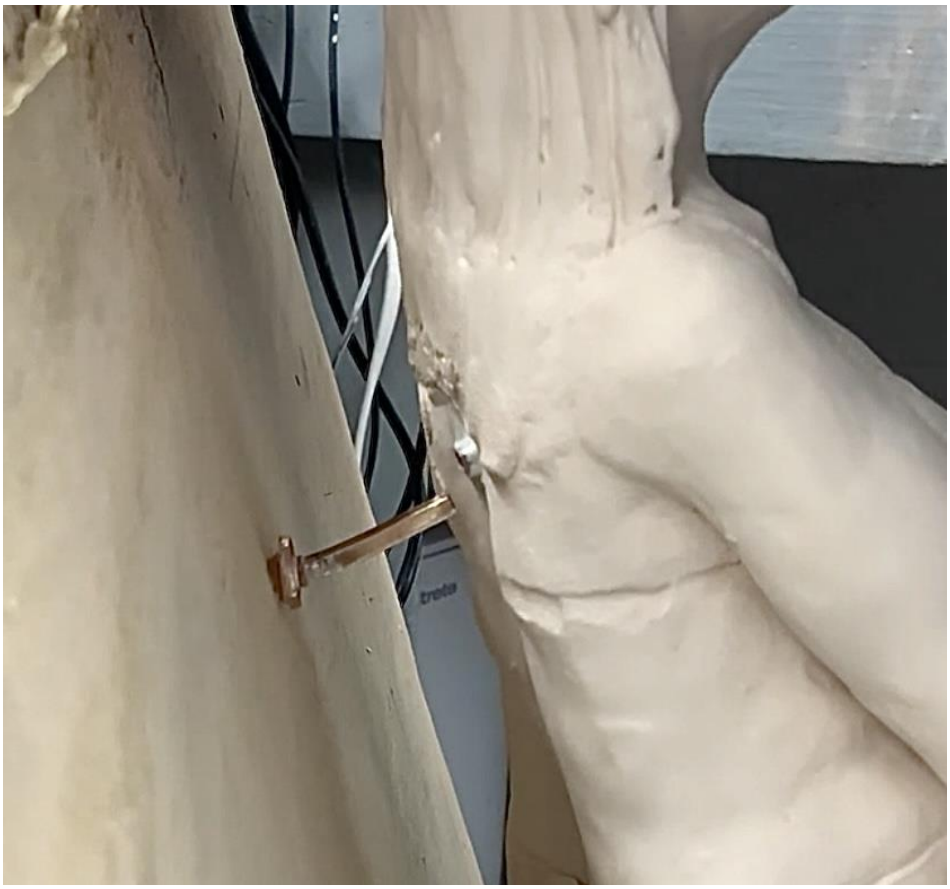

Fig. 17

Technical Information: brass hanging mechanism

Clay Recipe & Firing Schedule

Chrystal's Soldate 60 (Raku Sculpture Body)

Hawthorn	26
OM4	20
Greenstripe	20
Silica Sand	12
Molochite (100 & 200 mesh)	12
Custer Feldspar	10

Super Slow Bisque- 5 Segments

1	100/ hour	to 180	hold 5-15 hours
2	150/ hour	to 350	hold 3-6 hours
3	250/ hour	to 1000	no hold
4	150/ hour	to 1150	no hold
5	200/ hour	to 1940	no hold

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