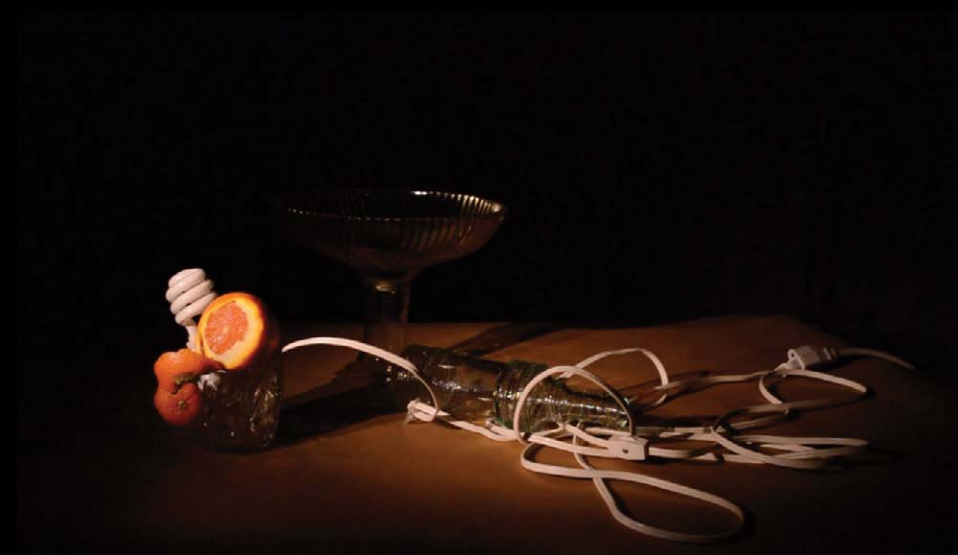
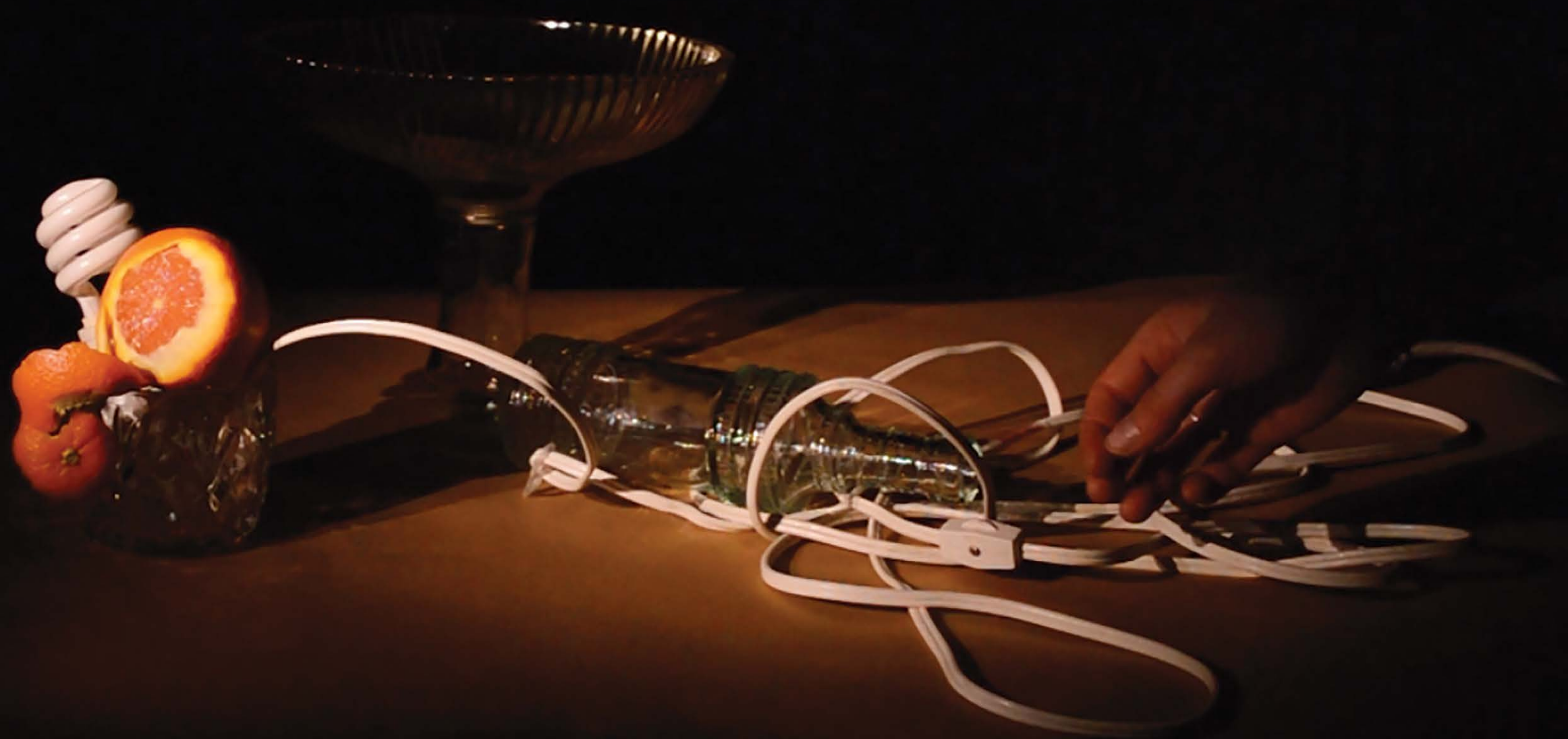


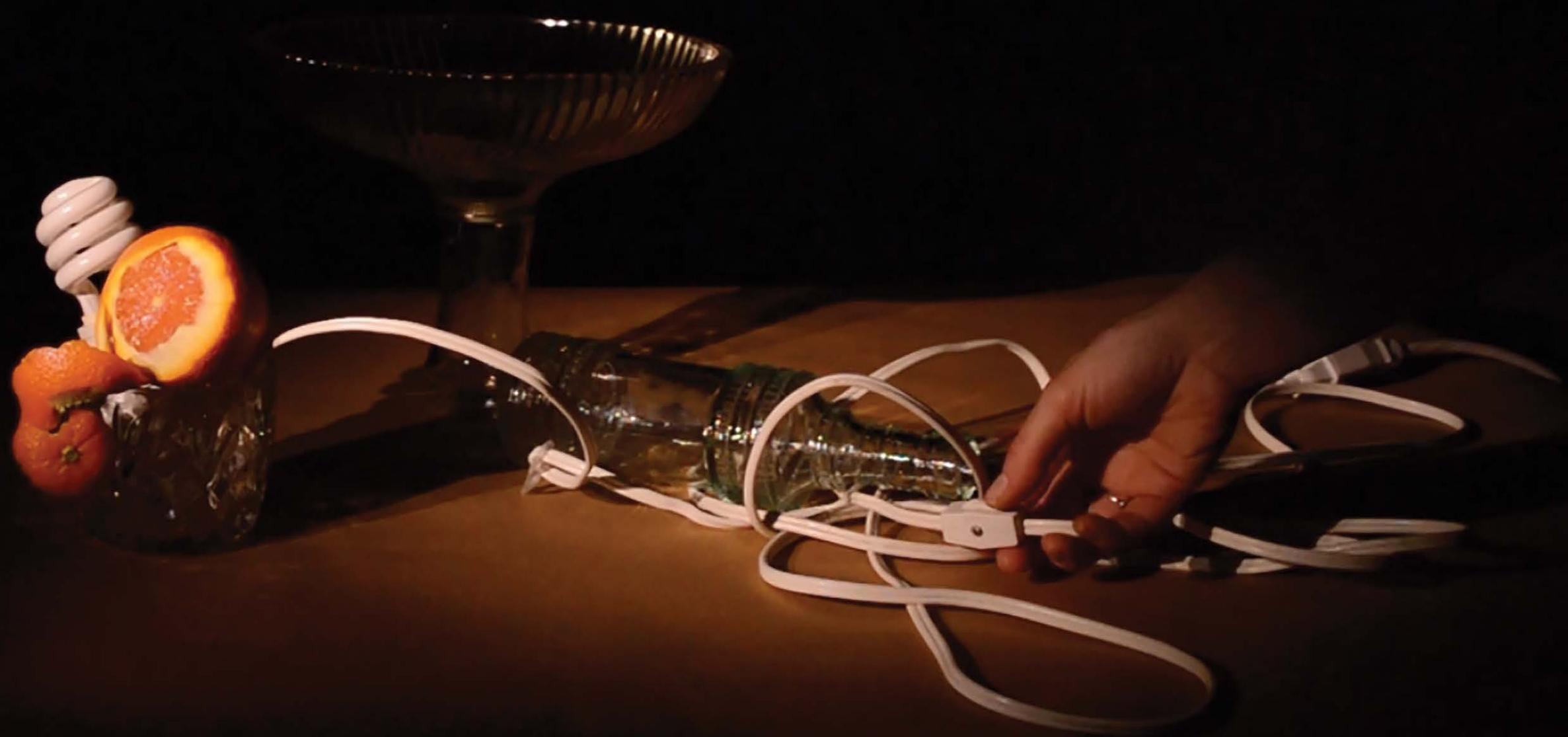


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Carson  
Evans









anachropo morphism!



cui dono lepidum novum libellum  
arida modo pumice expolitum?

*To whom do I dedicate this little book,  
just now polished by pumice stone?*

CATULLUS



# Abstract

Folks, *the Truth is hard to know*—if can be known at all.<sup>1</sup> Conventional Western wisdom tells us: stick to the facts. (I'm looking at you, Enlightenment.) We privilege the written word as an objective and reliable vehicle for communication. Useful, yes, but we over-rely. I counter with this: bodily performativity and purposeful inaccuracy that produces, paradoxically, narrative accuracy. These methods roil in our gut or tug at our heartstrings—instead of recoiling, we should embrace them.

I like to unpack “the stories we tell ourselves,”<sup>2</sup> our personal and societal mythologies, with a particular eye to how the past plays a role in these constructions. Telling things slant<sup>3</sup>—diving into the uncanny—disrupts our visual complacency with both delight and disorientation. By employing temporal and spatial anachronisms in a performative motion-based practice, I aim not to obscure truth, but to promote inquiry.

1. Riffing on the New York Times' *The Truth is Hard* campaign.

2. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

3. A nod to Emily Dickinson's “Tell all the truth but tell it slant.”



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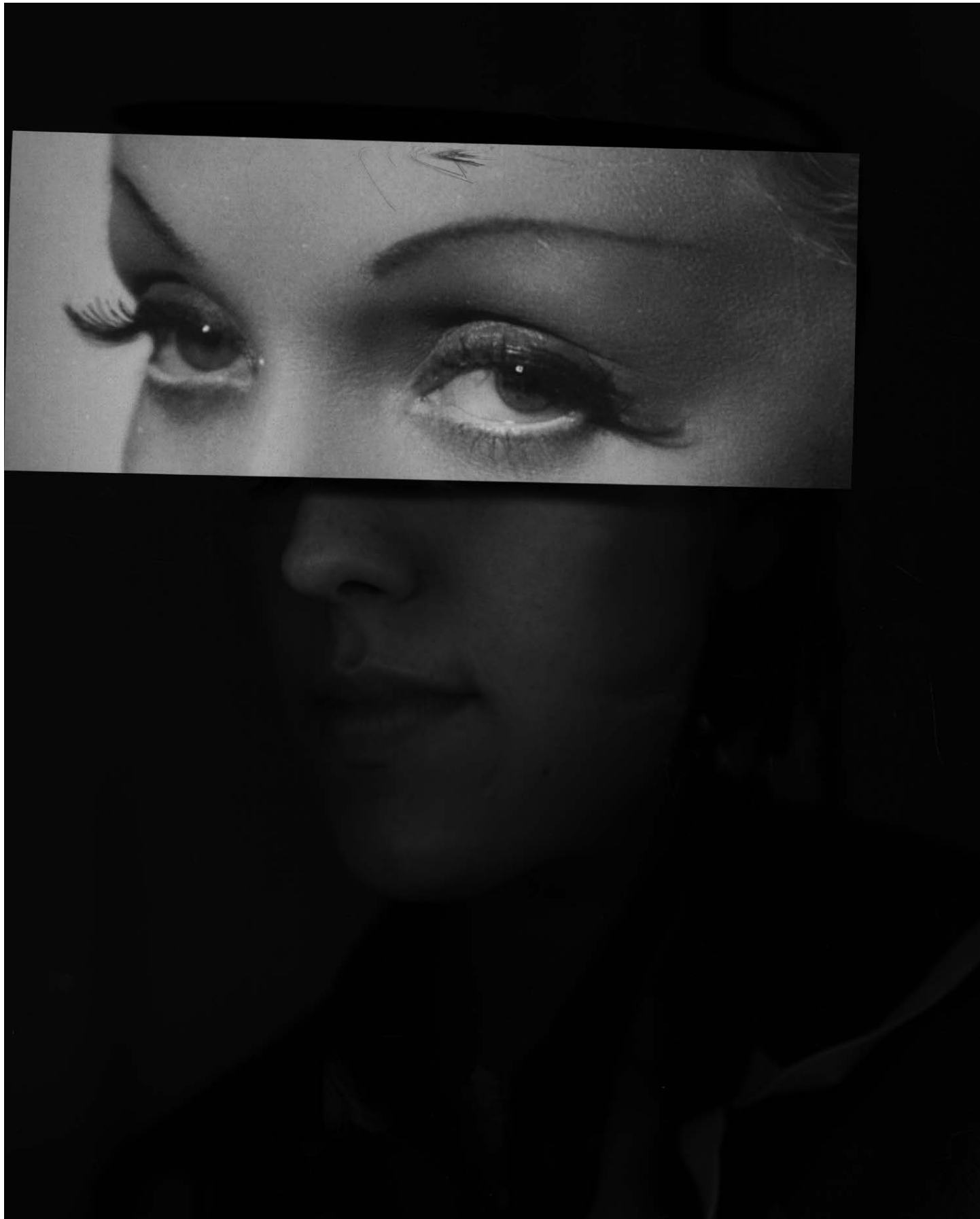




# Foreword

**a**n exercise in divination. (This is your destiny.)  
Dusted and examined: evidence! (Accuse me.)  
‡ My right index (and my left) bear what palmists call a peacock eye pattern. An amalgamation of the more common whorl and loop, its occurrence is slightly less than usual. Observe: I am special, just like everyone else. Be-peacocked fingers imply perfectionism and a good eye for detail; placed upon an index finger, it refers to public image and self expression. Or so we are told. Given my past tendencies towards such traits, for better or for worse, I'm inclined to believe it. ‡ It's an intriguing shape. Perfectionist though I am, I warm to it precisely because it is not perfect. It is a crooked, incomplete attempt at a circle which doggedly repeats its pursuit of circularity until abandoning the attempt and reverting to a loop. It was, it turns out, meant to be both, and is all the more interesting. ‡ The raised puckers that assemble into a fingerprint are more properly referred to as friction ridges. These bucklings are the result of conflict between various dermal layers, a pattern of push and pull. Friction ridges amplify the vibrations which result from the interaction between a finger and surface. From these signals sensory nerves compile our tactile understanding of the world. Micro dramas lead to macro feelings. How delicious. ‡ As referent to the original, the print is indicative but illusory. Each is a striking synecdoche: a perfect portrait without complete bodily exposure. ‡ Stamped repeatedly, the finger remains the same while its trace morphs. This becomes an exercise in proliferation, biology's continued ingenuity for uniqueness, raised to an nth power. Action creates variation, and a multiplicity of versions ensue. There is no correct or definitive form. ‡ My work is littered with my bodily imprints—I like my interpretations visceral. My body becomes a vehicle for investigation and communication. I want to run my fingers over a topic and document the resulting fricative hum. ‡

**DACTYLOSCOPY** is the forensic study of fingerprints to determine identity.



# Writings

Raised Brow

Anachropomorphism

Intellectual Spirit Guides

Crisis of the Proper

Intimacy & Distance

Techniques of the Body

Techniques of the Female Body

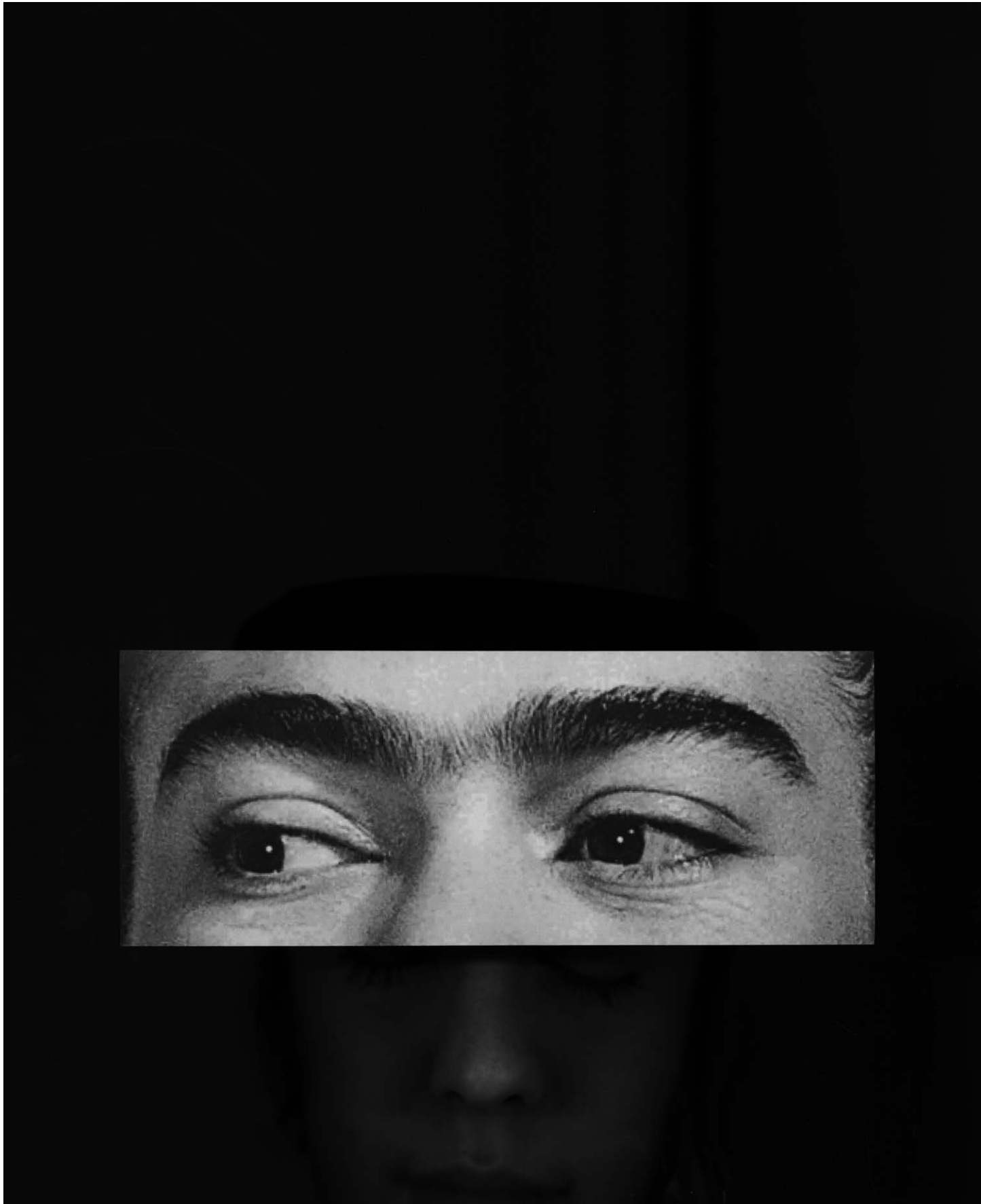
Ghost Chasing

In Costume

Smells & Bells

Crossroads

Go Forth & Oscillate



may I direct you to my brows. Their presence is not shy. † Set against the forehead's background pallor, they march boisterously across, intent on a medial reunion—if I would just let them. Lightly tended, they remain a cranial statement piece. † But herein lies the rub. For a video project last semester, I needed to appear as my great grandmother Beryl, circa 1929. Beryl's brows were the Marlene Dietrich to my Frida Kahlo. The 1920s and 30s had adopted a particularly sparse stance to the brow, devoted adherents opting for total eradication, hairs replaced with a gestural flick of eyeliner pencil. I wished to replicate the look, but with more quickly reversible steps. What was a fuzz-browed girl to do? † Drag queens, faced with a similar problem, found a solution in the humble glue stick, copiously applied. Splayed and thickly shellacked, even the toughest brows can disappear under a properly placed smear of foundation, leaving a smooth palette on which a delicate arched line may be drawn. † But on the day of shooting, time constraints foiled my attempt at a perfect drag brow. Instead I skipped straight to the concealer, applying a layer of peachy spackle that dampened but did not completely hide. Across this imperfect canvas, slightly above my natural browline, two swashes of eyeliner became Beryl's brows. † The result was improbably perfect. The new **RAISED BROW** reliably mimicked the razed brow without fully relinquishing the original's presence. In their ham-fisted error, they better represented my assumption of Beryl's character than any slavish attempt at perfect recreation could.



my work seeks to visually communicate historical and cultural conventions, especially through motion, embodiment, and gesture—a visual and physical interpretation that leverages both thought and emotion. Mine is a practice

of visual and bodily (re)enactment. † There is a reason why “serious” academic disciplines shy away from expression through artistic and bodily forms. These modes are less direct and more affective.

Visual representation in its specificity has the potential to be misleading. We cannot possibly recreate visually with accuracy or objectivity—writing leaves the burden of that error to the imagination of the reader.<sup>1</sup> And emotion is dangerous territory; in that direction madness lies, cozied up next to commercial pandering and nationalistic propaganda. Dangerous it may be, but it is not to be discounted. † Art has the power to approach the ineffable in a way that the rational verbal can lack. Our culture is also increasingly visual, and technology has expanded the possibilities and platforms for communication. Artistic examinations of our relationship to the past and how we see our present can speak to multiple modes of understanding. At its best, this method allows a balancing act between two poles: between fact and fiction, between control and chaos, between Apollo and Dionysus.<sup>2</sup> Delightful! Dialectical!

† History, the past—these are easy but imprecise terms for my area of creative interest and inspiration.<sup>3</sup> Fundamentally, I am occupied by how we perceive the world, and how the past both informs and can counteract our vision. The past exists as a palimpsest that surrounds us, a presence that is both familiar and alien. As Marx notes, “the tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living,” while at the same time, as L. P. Hartley observes, “the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”<sup>4</sup> Examining this alp, this foreign country, can both explain and debunk behaviors and norms we assume to be natural.

Reenactment can help us interrogate across the temporal divide. In my practice, reenactment is not resurrectionist nostalgia, nor costume drama, nor even a form of experimental archeology.

It is a folding of time onto itself, a reaching back as if to touch, to create a dialogue. † This, my friends, is **ANACHROPOMORPHISM**.

A portmanteau of my own invention, the word *anachronism*—existing out of date, out of harmony with the present—supercollides into *anthropomorphism*—the attribution of human personality or characteristics to something non-human—resulting in a perfect expression of my video-based artistic practice.<sup>6</sup> This practice embraces bodily (re)enactment and acknowledges, even embraces, inevitable temporal error resulting from my attempts tangle with time. Put another way, my work asks: can error and theatricality, the visceral and emotional, work for and not against authenticity and criticality in visual narratives? †

1. Obviously written information can be and often is inaccurate or subjective, but images add a layer of complexity and specificity to representation.

2. Here I thought I was making a classical reference, but it’s actually Nietzsche who made this comparison.

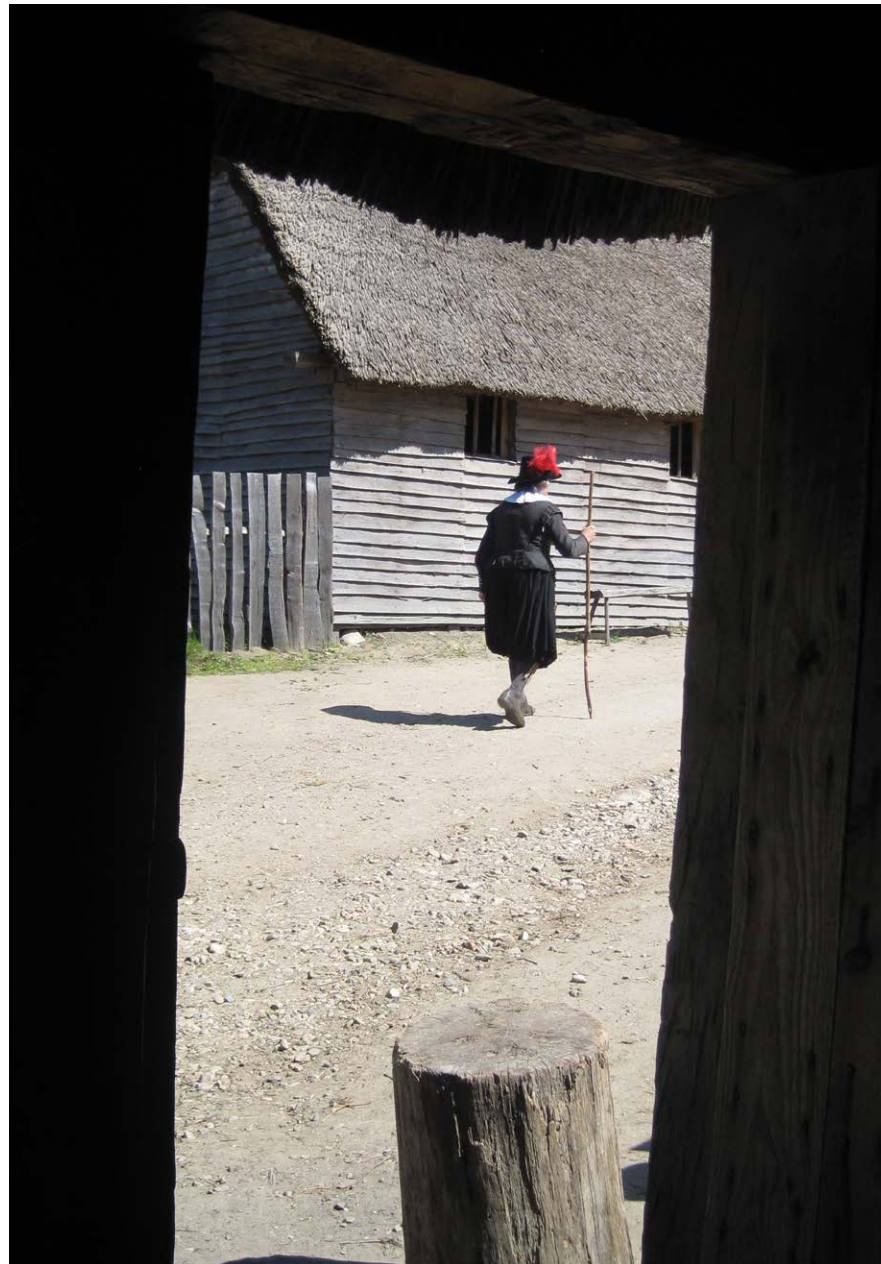
3. The past is what happened; history is how we talk about what happened. Events versus narrative.

4. Marx, quoted in Schneider 43, trans. De Leon. & The first line from L.P. Hartley’s *The Go-Between*.

5. By experimental archeology, I’m thinking about the work of British historian Lucy Worsley. And a note on the difference between reenactment and living history. Reenactment is specific—civil war battle, living history is more general—Plimoth Plantation. Don’t get me wrong—I’m a fan of both when done well.

6. Definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Plimoth Plantation in Plymouth, MA. I spent a college summer there sewing pilgrim attire.



7. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 2, 6.

8. I have an interdisciplinary degree in Humanities. For me, this combined history, art history, anthropology, and museum studies.

9. *Ibid.*, 35.

10. Marina Abramović teaches her students to unact, and polices reproduction rights to her work.

11. *Ibid.*, 38.

12. *Ibid.*, 13.

13. *Ibid.*, 17, 14.

14. Such as Judith Butler’s *sedimented acts*; Paul Connor: “All events, even the seemingly revolutionary, are composed in citational acts and embodied reperformance of precedent.” Quoted in Schneider, 43.

15. *Ibid.*, 7.

I am greatly indebted to Rebecca Schneider’s book *Performing Remains* for helping me articulate what I had been intuitively gesturing towards in my work. A professor of Theater Arts and Performance Studies at Brown, Schneider published this book after studying Civil War reenactments.

The book examines her interest in “the attempt to literally touch time through the residue of the gesture or the cross-temporality of the pose” and “the curious inadequacies of the copy, and what inadequacy gets right about our faulty steps backward, and forward, and to the side.”<sup>7</sup> I’m right there with her. † Schneider’s strong theoretical background in performance and theater, as well as gender studies, offers an incredibly rich perspective on reenactment—a topic not usually regarded with serious academic thought. (Lacking a background in these specific fields, I have taken her on as one of my **INTELLECTUAL SPIRIT GUIDES**.)<sup>8</sup> And while Schneider’s perspective leads to revealing analysis, it’s an unusual approach; reenactment does not see itself as theater or performance art, and those two fields would scorn association with the former. Academic historians fear “the error-ridden embarrassment of the live body.”<sup>9</sup> Reenactment, wishing to be taken seriously, shies away from associations with art and performance. Theater would prefer to be thought of as enactment rather than reenactment. And performance art is deeply uneasy when it comes to theatricality and reproduction.<sup>10</sup> † But Schneider makes a strong case that these realms are not so separate as their practitioners would like to think. Furthermore, she argues that there is value in slipping between these modes, questioning notions of linear time and liveness, and biases that set theatricality against authenticity, and history (“composed in document”) against memory (“composed in body”).<sup>11</sup> Schneider acknowledges that “whether it should or not, the frame of ‘art’ excuses errors and omissions—even expects them—in ways not excused as easily for ‘history.’”<sup>12</sup> However, history could learn a thing or two from the arts: “the theatrical—most commonly a marker of the inauthentic, fake, overblown, error-ridden, or non-serious” should be taken seriously, as should “ephemeral traces such as the affective, bodily sensations or (re)actions.”<sup>13</sup> When it comes to performance art’s queasiness towards reenactment, she points out that all behavior is in some way citational, and therefore a form of reenactment.<sup>14</sup> For Schneider, the line between then and now, alive and dead, theatrical and authentic, hard fact and soft fact, truth and error is not so solid. Critical reenactment, though hard to classify and riddled with theatricality and bodily and temporal error, has a unique power, and challenges these binaries. We should consider reenactment as a “mode of remaining critical” of being “never (only) present.”<sup>15</sup> † How? Why? Brecht can explain. German theater theorist, playwright, and Marxist Bertolt Brecht coined and popularized the idea of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, also known as the distancing effect, alienation effect, or defamiliarization. This technique takes language, a concept, or gesture, and causes the viewer to perceive it anew and understand representation as ideologically influenced. The defamiliarized object is familiar enough to be recognized, but the way it is represented makes it simultaneously strange. What might otherwise be taken for granted, seen as simply natural in a play that seeks to recreate the illusion of reality, is in

Brechtian theater revealed to be a sign system. Brecht also addresses how history plays a role in creating these codes. He argues against representing history in a way that “annihilate[s] distance,” and instead proposes that theater should “[challenge] the presumed ideological neutrality of any historical reflection.”<sup>16</sup> Brechtian defamiliarization and historicization both speak directly to the error, the *anachronism*, of anachropomorphism, and also the *-morphism*, the performative aspect. † Let’s have artist Miranda July reframe this concept: “I reenact things you’ve seen a million times before. Straight things, TV things, and medical things: These are the transactions that we all participate in and memorize accidentally. Then I wiggle my hand and wink and you know that everything I just said was in code, and the real truth is the sick or incredible way you feel.”<sup>17</sup> † Revelation of code and cultivation of ambiguity and emotion—this is at the heart of anachropomorphism. This is done through defamiliarization and (re)enactment. †

utilize two methodologies to defamiliarize: the uncanny and the *slant*. The latter is a reference to the start of an Emily Dickinson poem: “Tell all the truth but tell it slant—Success in Circuit lies.”<sup>18</sup> Indirectness and circuitry can lead to a useful form of disorientation, ultimately leading to reevaluation and heightened consciousness. The uncanny is its more sinister cousin, crossing into the realm of wrongness, a transgression. It is, according to scholar Nicholas Royle, “a **CRISIS OF THE PROPER**” and the “peculiar commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar.”<sup>19</sup> We intuitively know how a body, how time, how the past is supposed to behave—according to the laws of physics and cultural conventions. Subverting these expectations yields queasiness, then questioning. Crossing a line reveals where it is drawn. † The elicited emotional response is for me key. The slant is more mild and the uncanny more extreme, but either way I want my work to register in both the brain and the gut. History is often missing this element, earning its reputation as the dry, much maligned school topic. We associate nostalgia as history’s only emotion, a belittled one at that. We’ve sucked the life out of death. Delusional people shouldn’t be the only ones to have fun with history. Why not a history that is both smart and spectacular? † Speaking of spectacle, it’s time to address the place of performance and theatricality within my practice, the (re)enacting itself that leads to that piquant flavor of error heretofore described. I’ve been slipping you slivers of theatrical theory, sprinkling in mentions of performance art. But, you may recall, I work primarily in video—not comfortable territory for theater or performance art, which usually characterize themselves as live, unsullied by the mediation of a lens and non-linear editor.<sup>20</sup> Nor do I see my work as participating within those fields, although it bears close relation. Hence my use of these corollary terms, performance and theatricality. They’re slippery, carrying different connotations depending on their context. Performance is the more neutral of the two—it can be live or recorded, a laudable act or the implication of falseness. (As long as you haven’t slapped the word *art* at the end.) As someone interested

16. Qtd. in Elin Diamond “Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 32, no. 1, 1988, 87.

17. Qtd. in Schneider, 2.

18. Emily Dickinson.

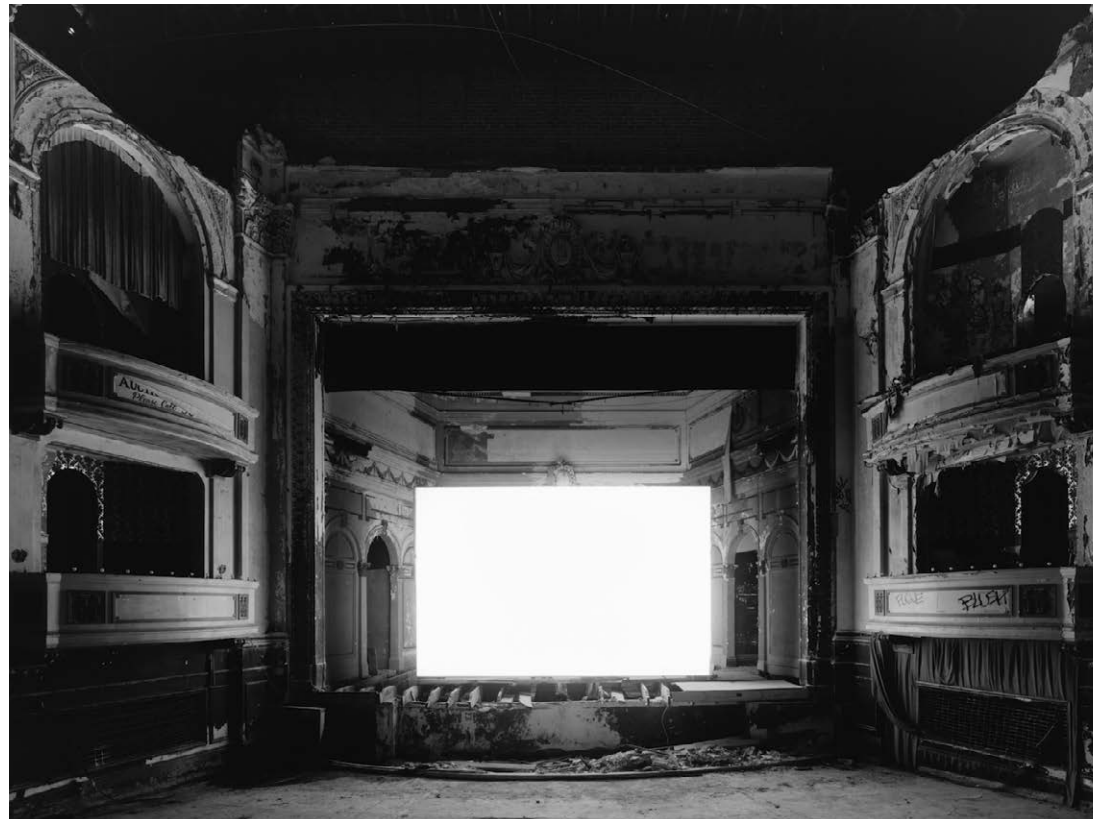
19. Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.

20. Theater and performance art generally eschew video—if used, video of a performance is seen as an inferior copy of the original experience. In my case, the video is the experience, a digitally crafted and replicable performance.



Hiroshi Sugimoto.  
*Wolf Building Rooftop, New York, 2015*

Hiroshi Sugimoto.  
*Everett Square Theater, Boston, 2015*



21. Schneider, 2.

22. That first year of my three-year MFA stint involved a great deal of stumbling.

23. In 1975 Laura Mulvey proposed the idea of the *gaze*—that mainstream cinematic spectatorship encouraged voyeurism and fetishism of female bodies. Those politics important to consider, particularly as a female performer. But it’s also rather reductive and, as “as outmoded as bell-bottomed jeans.” Linda William, ed., *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 2.

24. I prefer to describe my work as video rather than film, but in this particular instance I use them interchangeably.

Hiroshi Sugimoto.  
*La Paloma, Encinitas, 1993*



in “the cross-temporality of the pose,” performance (artistic, but sans art) is a natural avenue of expression.<sup>21</sup> It combines visual, verbal, and bodily languages, and incorporates sound and motion. It tangles with the primal parts of our brains, pinging at mirror neurons and engaging multiple senses. Tangle away, I say. † Theatricality is a more uneasy mantle, though I wear it with pride. It’s an adjective used to describe things that are not themselves theater—usually things that should not be theater. The theatrical can be defined through its opposites: not cinematic, not realistic, not serious, not subtle. (Gasp!) It’s overdone to the point of disingenuousness. (Swoooooon!) In a fine arts context, it’s practically a dirty word. Nonetheless, I would say that my approach to video is distinctly theatrical. † My videos are theatrical simply because they are like theater. I see the video space as a stage, frequently revealing it. I like cinematic lighting and depth within my shots, but I rarely move the camera, instead performing in front of it, the video frame becoming a proscenium. This is part practicality—I’m a one woman production team—but also what I want. Stages—yes!—and staginess. Exaggeration and humor are very much a part of my work, but not to the exclusion of subtlety or seriousness. It’s stylized rather than flashy, a visual allusion to the codes which underlie our behaviors and perception. For me, theatricality functions as a controlled experiment. It’s a closed system. Everything is there for a reason. And something curious and revealing happens when the elements come together. (The scientist and the director both hope.) Ultimately, folks, I want to put on a good show. Time-based media requires time and patience from its audience. Let there be delight as well as disorientation. †

**m**y foray into a performative, video-based practice was more stumble than calculated step.<sup>22</sup> An inkling of interest in motion during my first year of graduate school led me to take a video elective in my second. In that class, I knew I had found my creative calling. In retrospect, it represents a singular concatenation of my proclivities, but I certainly could not have predicted it. I’d never used a camera that wasn’t point-and-shoot, nor had I dabbled with lighting or sound equipment in my previous life. This was not the path I had envisioned for myself, but I’m glad I wound up pursuing it. † Working in video establishes a series of particular relationships—between myself and the spectator, the work, and time and space. Video performance is a medium of both **INTIMACY AND DISTANCE**. To place my body and my voice across my work is to make myself vulnerable. In pointing the camera at myself, I ask you to come close, to look.<sup>23</sup> (Perhaps we even exchange a glance.) The process of making the work itself is an intimate one, the camera and I communing together, alone in a dark room. Even for works in when I don’t appear, the platforms of viewing create a sense of intimacy. Much of my work exists online. It can held in your hand just as easily as it can be cast large on a wall. Site or size-specific works also create a sense of contemplative



conversation between viewer and video. Media theorist Vivian Sobchack outlines prevailing theoretical constructs of film spectatorship.<sup>24</sup> Scholars have described film as a picture frame (a means for subjective expression), a window (a meditation on perception), and, most recently, a mirror (a reflection of the viewer, a “confusion of perception and expression”).<sup>25</sup> Sobchack argues that these models need not be mutually exclusive: “the film experience has always been a ‘dialogical and dialectical’ engagement of two viewing subjects.”<sup>26</sup> It can be frame, window, and mirror simultaneously, a constant interplay between viewer and viewed. † Yet unlike live performance, video physically separates the performer from the audience. My body of work (and body in work) is mediated across a series of apparatuses—the camera that captures it, the editing software that manipulates it, the screen or projector that displays it. What you as the audience sees is a constructed specter. I’m in no way averse to live performance—some of the work contained within this thesis fall into that category. But video is my preferred medium because of this distancing effect. As an incorrigible introvert, I thrive on that one step of removal. As I have argued before, mediation need not equal falseness. † Working in video requires in an environment that allows for both fierce control and serendipity. Careful planning and attention to detail is requisite, from collecting gear and planning shoots, to ensuring continuity across shots. As director, camera-woman, and performer, I have to constantly monitor all steps of the production process. But for all my careful planning, when I set my camera to record all I can do is cross my fingers and hope that something magical happens.<sup>27</sup> This too forms a dialogue. † Finally, video allows me to create performances that play with time and space—a valuable attribute for someone interested in the historical perception and reenactment. Like the theater and video artist Robert Wilson, “the fragmentation and reorganization of space and time are the constant focus of [my] research.”<sup>28</sup> The camera itself flattens and reconfigures space, and with my own further manipulation of mise-en-scène, I can construct my own, slightly skewed realities. Time becomes equally malleable. In the editing process I warp and reorder, composing my own temporal rhythms.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, each video performance is actually a series of reenactments—for every shot I must do many takes. These are then cobbled together in post-production to represent something that never (quite) happened as it is memorialized. †

here’s a simple explanation for why I love performance: I love human bodies. This predilection is made manifest across my work. Gestures, poses, expressions, disembodied limbs, shadows—the human form is my favorite formal element. I prefer to compose and think through bodies, still and especially moving. A plainly primal impulse, perhaps. And one that doesn’t completely square. I live in my head, and don’t think of myself as a particularly physical person. Can the child so good at sitting still in school be the same person as the adult who dances? After all, I danced then and over-think now.

25. *Viewing Positions*, 9.

26. *Ibid.*

27. “Even if the overall design has been minutely planned, what matters is not the enclosure of the work within a harmonious figure, but the centrifugal force produced by it.” Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 116-7.

28. Franco Laera and Elisabetta di Mambo, *Robert Wilson: Space/Time* (Milano: Silvana, 2012), 5.

29. With the Edgertronic high speed camera, which I use in a few projects, the camera is also party to the warping. Shooting at an exceptionally high frame rate, it drags out motions, revealing details the unaided eye could never see.

Alfred Stieglitz  
Georgia O’Keeffe—*Hands*, 1918



Alfred Stieglitz  
Georgia O’Keeffe—*Hands and Horse Skull*, 1931

30. I’ve dealt with bouts of psychosomatic illness, triggered by stress, since grade school. Beginning as intense nausea—I was terrified of my second grade teacher—it morphed into a quieter but equally vexing plague of acid reflux amidst the tumult of college life. Bodies can make themselves very hard to ignore.

31. Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” *Economy and Society* Volume 2, no. 1 (1973), 70-88.

32. Some neuroscientists now think that we have special mirror neurons dedicated to learning through mimesis. Certain parts of the brain are activated when we watch others, regardless of whether or not we physically imitate them or simply watch.

33. Omar Lizardo, “Habitus,” January 7, 2012, [www3.nd.edu](http://www3.nd.edu).

34. Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 2.

But the cerebral, verbal side of my personality has heretofore always taken precedence, and it still has a strong presence in my work process. Frankly, I’ve been disinclined to privilege my body with the authority it ought to have. So here it is, artistic practice as therapeutic acceptance of my intuitive and fleshier side. It’s always had much to say; now I’m finally listening. † Western thought classically divides the mind from the body, and the body from the spirit. Reason from emotion and intuition, and base impulse from higher things. (The latter being a particularly Christian perspective.) In both cases the body, carnal, demanding, and unpredictable, plays the villain. Righteous are those who learn to deny it—or so we are told. The postmodern world has eased on this dichotomy slightly: we have grown skeptical of the power of reason and the promise of enlightened societal utopias. And bodies themselves are experts at demanding our attention—it’s hard to avoid a gut feeling, be it hunger or butterflies.<sup>30</sup> But anti-body biases still exist, and exist strongly. Western culture remains reluctant to place trust in bodies. † And yet the body deserves our attention; a wealth of knowledge lies within, an avenue to some truths otherwise unattainable. Not to mention that any dichotomies we may impose are, in lived experience, a much messier division. Mind, body, and spirit are deeply intertwined. Anthropological and social theory have some insights into the power of bodies. In the 1930s, Marcel Mauss proposed **TECHNIQUES OF THE BODY**, arguing that the way we move through the world, our physical movements, are socially and culturally conditioned. We might think that simple physical actions such as walking or eating are utilitarian and biologically determined, but they are actually imbued with significance, acting as social markers of class, gender, age, race, social group, etc.<sup>31</sup> † Mauss mentions the concept of *habitus*—an idea that can be traced back to Aristotle—which another Frenchman, the structuralist Pierre Bourdieu, took and ran with in the 1960s, popularizing and expanding on ideas similar to Mauss’s. It’s tricky to nutshell Bourdieu, but he agreed that we contained socially-conditioned knowledge in our minds *and* bodies. Most of this conditioning is acquired unconsciously, and likewise manifests itself intuitively in our actions.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the habitus acts as a kind of script that shapes and facilitates the decisions and movements we perform without specific thought—an elaborate system of muscle memory, if you will. But if consciously examined, it can give insight into the societal structures which underpin them. As a learned predisposition, the habitus is “heavily weighted towards the past”—it tends to reproduce existing social structures—and changing it is “necessarily disruptive, and to some extent traumatic.”<sup>33</sup> Herein lie many of our expectations of bodily behavior—to go against the grain, or to forefront these otherwise unconscious behaviors, elicits July’s *sick or incredible* feelings. † Philosopher Vilém Flusser also addresses the resonance of bodies, specifically of gesture. Gesture as symbol has profound importance in my work. Because, like Flusser, I find that gesture is a profound and curious tool for communication. Flusser defines a gesture as “a movement of the body or tool connected to the body for which there is no satisfactory causal explanation.” Gesture is symbolic and performative, and to understand a gesture, we “must know its

significance.”<sup>34</sup> They can also be empty or full—the former being trite or transactional, the latter being enigmatic and captivating. Vilém, I take issue with this division. Perhaps there is aesthetic difference—Flusser designates empty gestures as kitsch—but for me, even banal gestures feel full. † Essentially, anachropomorphism (in particular the *-pomorphism*) uses performance as a visual and embodied exploration of gesture, habitus, and techniques of the body. My work sees these as tools for communication on a visceral and intuitive level, and as such incites rational examination of the social structures that surround them. Anachropomorphism plays not only with the intersection of past and present, but also of mind and body, and of body and spirit. †

**a**s a female-identifying, female-bodied performer, I carry connotations across my form. Gender is inevitably wrapped up into my practice. Let it be said that I’m no particular expert in the discourses surrounding feminism and gender theory.<sup>35</sup> I am, however, very familiar with the experience of navigating the world in a female body. † No body is neutral. We come pre-baked with physical characteristics that get culturally interpreted, and, as previously discussed, pick up techniques of the body to boot. Some of these physical and internalized traits are more easily manipulated than others, some have more consequences than others. (Habits may be hard to break but can be broken; skin tone is not so malleable. It’s also heavily freighted.) That being said, there is a curious malleability to identity, a back and forth between presentation and reception. It’s certainly a large part of my practice—how can I manipulate my body to channel different identities or ideas? How I move through space and hold myself—the **TECHNIQUES OF THE FEMALE BODY**—is something that I think about frequently in both my work and in my life. † I spent a year before grad school working as a prep chef and have never been more aware of how my body influenced people’s view of my abilities. It was one of the most fun jobs I’ve had, but also the most overtly sexist place I’ve worked. Comments I got when I announced my intention to be a chef: You know you can’t wear your fancy hats. (Of course?) What would you do if you cut yourself? (Get a bandaid?) There’s no way you could lift 60 pounds. (Yes, I could.)<sup>36</sup> † I’m five-foot-five, and about 123 pounds. Small for a kitchen worker, but not by much. And I do like being fancy—my presentation is markedly feminine.<sup>37</sup> But working in a kitchen takes many skills and abilities beyond brute strength. Testosterone does not a chef make. Unfortunately, breasts and skirts can preclude people’s abilities to also see the brains, grit, and dexterity that accompany them. Clearly this problem extends beyond the kitchen. Women’s appearance and behavior is policed at far a more unrealistic standard than men’s. As women, we are constantly reminded to be nice, to be quiet, to be good, to be attractive. You’re naturally more emotional, more nurturing. Perform that emotional labor with a smile. Apologize, be passive, await rescue. It’s not representative; it’s downright unfair. And yet it’s hard not

35. Maybe someday I’ll get a PhD. Check back with me then.

36. When I left, the head chef did graciously apologize for his initial skepticism.

37. And yes, I have a collection of over 100 hats which I wear on the daily.



Alfred Stieglitz  
Georgia O’Keeffe—Hand  
and Breasts, 1919

38. Diamond, 87.

39. Ibid., 85.

40. Qtd. in Schneider, 6.

41. My father’s parents died before I knew them. They do, however, have a presence in my life—my childhood home was once theirs.

42. The Oregon Trail runs just outside of my mother’s hometown.

to internalize. Yes, various waves of feminism have raised awareness, and media and commercial depictions of women and their bodies are changing (a little). But these detrimental habits are deeply ingrained in our minds and bodies. † Performance is an opportunity to draw attention to and be critical of the way women’s bodies are viewed and controlled—by ourselves and others. Let’s have scholar Elin Diamond bring us back to Brecht. The playwright himself does not adopt a particularly progressive stance towards gender in his writing, but Diamond points out that his techniques—defamiliarization and historicization—are useful tools in the kit of the feminist performer. Historicization “challenges the presumed ideological neutrality of any historical reflection.”<sup>38</sup> Defamiliarization allows the spectator |“to see a sign system as a sign system” and “[understand] gender as ideology” that might otherwise seem “normal, acceptable, inescapable.”<sup>39</sup> My work is not an outright revocation of gender, but it does frequently question the gender’s contingent assumptions. This is particularly important in a practice that deals with how history interacts with the present. Adrienne Rich, poet and feminist, suggested the concept of *re-vision*. This “act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival.”<sup>40</sup> We need to be critical of how women are portrayed in both the present *and* in the past. Those inhabiting female bodies are not homogeneous today, nor were they then. †

**W**hen my maternal grandparents passed away, I was designated family archivist. (My predilection for the historical is known.) Yes please, I said. I’m closest to this side of the family; these were the only grandparents I knew, and we made yearly summer pilgrimages to their house in Western Nebraska.<sup>41</sup> As a native of Atlanta—a big southern city full of trees—Scottsbluff, Nebraska, my mother’s hometown was exotic. Here, people and trees were sparse. The difference was both exciting and alienating. † Nebraska sits in the heart of the American dreamland, that once-promised frontier.<sup>42</sup> This west still has some wild left in it; the sky presses down on you and makes you feel small. Bucolic, but also melancholic. Big Ag and big box stores have homogenized the landscape—it’s corn, cattle, and Walmart all the way down. The small towns which pepper the landscape are dissolving, Main Streets emptying time capsules from the 1950s. It still feels like a dreamland, only it turns out that dreams don’t always yield paradise. Even in its hopeful heyday that dream held something sinister; Manifest Destiny blindly crushing those who stood in its path. There are plenty of ghosts, blowing through the ghost towns and out on the prairie. † Observing from a one-generation remove, I have a profound fondness for Nebraska. Yet it remains deeply unfamiliar territory—I’ll always be an outsider there. These feelings are akin to those I felt for my grandparents. I loved them, but we lived in different worlds and there existed an unbridgeable impasse of understanding between us. (It didn’t help that both my grandmother was and I am a steadfast introvert.) When tasked

with archive project, I was certainly fueled by plain curiosity—what would I find? But it also felt like an opportunity to peer more deeply into the lives of people I could never quite know, achieving a retrospective closeness. Maybe I'm even **GHOST CHASING**.

‡ A combination of personality and a depression-era childhood, my grandparents saved everything. Every pay stub my grandfather ever received, countless issues of *Tow Times*, a box of my grandparents' courting correspondence (envelopes and all), old jar lids without the jars, ten-year-old chocolate bars lodged in freezer permafrost (they were gifts), my mother's appendix.<sup>43</sup> After an initial purge had filled a dumpster, it was my task to sift through photos, letters, and other ephemera. That which remained was split between the four children, the bulk of the collection ending up in my aunt's Saint Louis basement. I spent this previous summer (2017) I traveling to Saint Louis, Atlanta, and Nebraska, documenting materials and talking to relatives with the help of the RISD Graduate Student Project Grant. Armed with a portable scanner and video camera, I collected a massive digital archive—over 2,000 scanned documents and hours of video footage. ‡ Like any trove, this one yielded some surprises. Heretofore, I had known next to nothing about my grandmother's side of the family. My great grandmother, Beryl, died when my grandmother, Lynette, was eight, leaving her an only child to be raised by her grandparents. Little did we know that she had hundreds of photos and letters belonging to Beryl hidden away. From these fragments, a vivid portrait of a lively young woman has emerged. ‡ Perhaps it's because women tend to end up as familial memory keepers (and here we are, repeating that pattern), but it feels that the lives and voices of women are the most compelling and dominant part of this archive. My grandmother's funny and descriptive letters of 1940s dorm life, my great grandmother Louisa Martens' letters of hardship during cold winters without heat in the 1960s, photographs of Beryl horsing around with friends in the 1920s, my great Aunt Leona recalling life on the Martens family farm. Add to that the hands of my mother and my aunt helping me along the way, sorting photos and letters for me to scan, holding my sunglasses while I filmed, or occasionally slipping into my video shot. ‡ Family history is equal parts banal and mysterious. It's tricky material with which to make work. Nostalgia threatens at every turn. There's a fine line between respect and smothering reverence. Nonetheless, as an artist, I viewed my archive not just as documentation and data, but also as raw material. The penultimate section of this thesis, *Prima Fugit*, details the resulting work. The title is a triple quote, me referencing Nebraskan novelist Willa Cather, herself quoting Virgil's *Georgics*. The full quote is *optima dies...prima fugit*, which translates as *the best days flee the first*. Its classical source is an epic poem about farming and the pastoral life, written in the first century BCE. Cather uses it as an epigraph to *My Ántonia*, her 1918 novel which recalls her main character's childhood in late nineteenth-century Nebraska. What is it about big, open skies and tall waving grasses that induce a strong sense of longing? Maybe it's just easier to hear the ghosts in the quiet. ‡

43. My grandfather passed away at 89—that's a lot of pay stubs. He drove tow trucks until the day he died, a kind and crooked-backed man who regularly drove to Wyoming to rescue misbehaving semis. As for my mother's appendix, it was removed in 1962. See *Appendix of References* for more details.



My great-grandmother, Beryl, 1922.

Someone's sewing basket; my hand.



**f**rom my mother I have learned many things. Hats, cats, food, wine, Nebraska. And, of course, an affinity sewing and style. Pictured above is one of her early attempts at the craft. It earned her a 4H purple ribbon—in modeling. (*Probably a pity prize*, says my modest mother.) The seams, however, were subpar—the checks didn't match. A prize for her workpersonship eluded her. At least then. She's now a master seamstress. (And graphic designer.) You could say it's in my genes. ‡ What is it about sewing, about cloth, about clothes? It's the smell of wool when it's ironed. It's the satisfaction of an arrow-straight seam. It's the jagged slice of pinking shears, amplified by the cutting table. And its offer: identity as malleable as the cloth in your hands. ‡ For many years, I envisioned a future in costume—as a designer, historian, or curator. As it turned out, I became not a costume designer, but rather a designer **IN COSTUME**. ‡

I was raised Catholic, oh can you tell? I was raised Roman Catholic—I obey really well.”<sup>44</sup> I grew up attending mass every Sunday, wore plaid skirts and button-down shirts as a Catholic school girl, K–12. I’m named after St. Catherine of Siena, and served as an altar girl in my teens.<sup>45</sup> I know the difference between transubstantiation and consubstantiation; I know my way around confession and guilt.<sup>46</sup> † Think what you will about organized religion, Christianity at large, or the Vatican in particular—undeniably they’ve been associated with some downright objectionable stuff. It raises my hackles too. But I can’t deny that my Catholic upbringing continues to shape who I am and works itself into my practice at a fundamental—though, heaven forbid, not a fundamentalist—level. It infused me with an insatiable yen to contemplate venial transgression. I think it inculcated me with my love of anthropological theory—they too thrill in the probing of semiotics and the sacred, of ritual and performance. It gave a sense of potency to the material world—water can be holy, a candle can warm the soul as well as a room. I think it made me an artist. Catholicism is visual and sensory—that proliferation of holy imagery, of “SMELLS AND BELLS.” I’d also argue there’s an uncanny correlation between the doctrine of Catholic salvation and the steps of the creative process. There’s a grand tradition of ecstatic visions among Catholic Saints.<sup>47</sup> Think St. Teresa of Ávila, so sensuously depicted by Bernini being speared by a seraph. I don’t know about you, but that’s how I get most of my ideas: visions carried to me in a blinding burst of light.<sup>48</sup> (No angels, though.) But, Catholicism insists, you cannot rely on faith alone to gain access through those pearly gates—good works are also key. Turns out that both art and eternal redemption require a great deal of elbow grease. It’s a long path from inspiration to actual achievement. But let’s be clear—I’m a catholic artist, not a Catholic one. That important lack of capitalization frees one from particular theology or dogma.<sup>49</sup> Ritual, the sacred, guilt, and transgression—these all manifest in secular society as well. My interests are firmly ecumenical. †

disciplinarily, I’m an agnostic. This interdisciplinary stance has been a constant in my life; graphic design is a recent manifestation of this approach. It allows me to think verbally and visually, making a commitment to structure rather than a particular subject.

I am averse to sitting square in the center of a topic, and prefer to occupy a liminal position. Admittedly, it can be a murky standpoint. They say the **CROSSROADS** is where you find Lucifer, or his lesser henchman Mephistopheles. Devilish things, among other supernatural or paranormal denizens. And while I wish to keep my soul to myself, I too am drawn to this region—as a place of magic, a place of transgression, a place of invention. Where things come together is, conversely, where they come unbound. Mephistopheles and I—we’re drawn to the fraying edges. Curious, isn’t it, that at a crossroads, you find yourself at the heart of things by being very much on the liminal edge? It’s terrific and terrifying. †

44. Ed Stivender, *Raised Catholic (Can You Tell?)* (Little Rock, AK: August House, In, 1992).

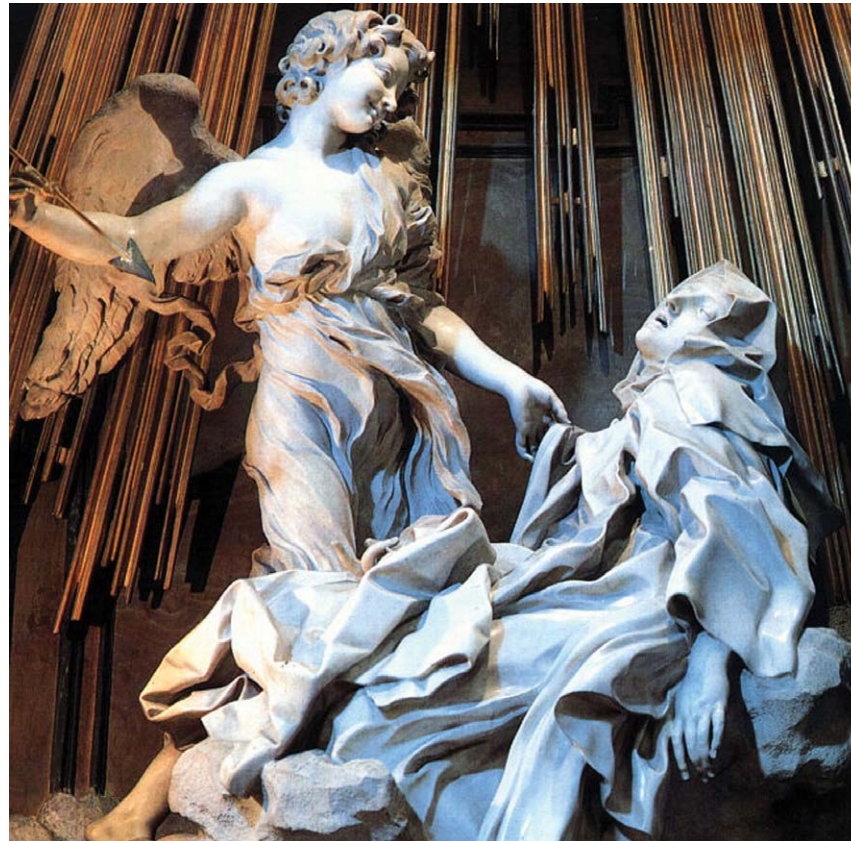
45. To clarify—Catherine is legally my first name, but I have always gone by my middle name.

46. Catholicism believes in transubstantiation—that during the communion liturgy, the bread and wine are actually transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Protestants (broadly) believe in consubstantiation—that Christ becomes present along with (as opposed to present in) the communion meal.

47. When capitalized, *Saint* specifically refers to individuals who have been canonized. Anyone who reaches heaven gets to be a lowercase *saint*.

48. “It is my conviction that a film has to be preceded by a dream, either a real dream of the sort that you wake up and remember, or a daydream. . . . I’m thinking of films that have a soul, a discernible core, that radiate their own identity. These have all been ‘dreamed up,’ of that I feel certain.” Wim Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, trans. Michael Hofmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 18.

49. Without capitalization, *catholic* simply means *all embracing*.



Gian Lorenzo Bernini  
*The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, 1647–1652.  
Divine insight—or creative inspiration?

50. Luke Turner, “Metamodernist Manifesto,” 2012, [www.metamodernism.org](http://www.metamodernism.org).

51. *Ibid.*

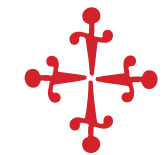
Gian Lorenzo Bernini  
*The Ecstasy of St. Teresa (detail)*



Where can you find truth? No one seems to really know. People have been trying to answer this question for centuries, and have come up with many answers. God? The individual? Reason? The sublime? Nature? In underlying human social structures? It doesn’t exist—we made it up. Various thinkers and philosophical trains have meddled with this idea. † The nineteenth and twentieth century brought around a chain of thought that challenged the existence of objective truth. God was declared dead, and knowledge was no longer an objective entity, but something shaped by institutions and other power structures. That’s postmodernism (and post-structuralism), and it held sway—until recently. We have now stuttered our way into post-postmodernism, or what folks are more elegantly calling metamodernism. This new mode hovers in a space between modernism and postmodernism, between irony and sincerity. It’s an intriguing place to be; I’ve made myself at home. I firmly believe in the both/and, and, as Luke Turner writes in his *Metamodernist Manifesto*, that “error breeds sense.”<sup>50</sup> My approach to history is both joyfully naive and knowing.

“Just as science strives for poetic elegance, artists might assume a quest for truth. . . . We should embrace the scientific-poetic synthesis and informed naivety of magical realism. . .

Thus, metamodernism shall be defined as the mercurial condition between and beyond irony and sincerity, naivety and knowingness, relativism and truth, optimism and doubt, in a pursuit of a plurality of disparate and elusive horizons. We must **GO FORTH & OSCILLATE!**”<sup>51</sup>





# Interview

with artists  
Mary Reid Kelley  
& Patrick Kelley

m

ary Reid Kelley makes wild, wonderful videos. She began making films while working on her MFA in painting at Yale. Combining a knack for word play with her distinctive visual style, Reid Kelley constructs elaborate worlds and intriguing narratives that examine how the past informs our present viewpoints. She works with her partner, Patrick Kelley. ✚

Mary Reid Kelley & Patrick Kelley  
Still from *This is Offal*, 2016.



We convened for a Skype chat. The following is a transcript of the **CONVERSATION** between myself (c), Mary (m), and Pat (p). I couldn't have asked for a better interview, my pesky nerves aside.

c Let's see. I'm all nervous now. I wasn't going to get nervous, and now there I went.

m Don't worry you're with the queen of nervousness.

c You have an MFA in painting, but you've ended up working in video and your practice involves a lot of writing. Was that always the case?

m No, it wasn't. By the time I went back to school I knew that I had an interest in language, but I didn't really have a writing practice. It was part of what prompted me to go to grad school, though I didn't know how I would solve it. Once I got to grad school in 2007, I got very interested in the history of the first World War. Yale, being a highly self-respecting institution, has a lot of memorials that are ostensibly for Yale graduates who served in the war but are really mainly there on campus for the collective glorifying of Yale.

c Like everything else...

m I didn't grow up on the East Coast, and seeing that kind of history made an impression on me. It's that older, more... "blue blood" sounds a little ridiculous, but this kind of older part of American institutions. † The more interested I got in the first World War, the more interested I became in the poetry. It was ubiquitous. There are just books and books, anthologies, individual poets—there's an enormously rich literary culture in general. So I was eventually inspired to actually write something. I don't think I would have been so encouraged if I hadn't immediately picked up on the dynamic that a lot of the people who were doing some of the most important writing at the time didn't necessarily identify as poets. They just had an experience, and writing verse was a quotidian way to express experience at the time. Now it's seen as specialized, as a highly refined mode of expression. A lot of the verse back then is referred to as "occasional verse." Like for your birthday, or "I had this experience." I really like that way of thinking about language—an everyday type of verse. That made me think: Ok, I'll write something with a rhyme scheme, something more humble. It doesn't have to be writing something like T.S. Eliot.

c Do you like writing?

m Well. Good question. Just recently I've started to enjoy it more. We've made ten films, and I started to enjoy it around the eighth film. Part of it was practice, and part of it was knowing what I'm comfortable with. I think every step that's towards a more liberated way to have writing be part of the practice, I like it more. But for a while

it was quite difficult. It was learning something totally new, with all the frustrations and thinking that you suck more than anyone else. I've gotten over that a little bit and feel more comfortable.

C What was your undergrad degree in?

M Art. I was always one of those self-identifiers as an artist. Although I didn't have any real writing practice, I did always like to read, especially something that is written relatively narratively. Some people love reading theory. I had to learn how to read that at school like we all do. But in terms of fiction or anything narrative, I felt that I could easily pick it up and read it. Turning to writing and learning how to construct a narrative, I felt like that came more easily because I was a big consumer of other people's narratives.

C When you write, do you hear the words? Do you think about the characters' performance while writing?

M I usually start to hear the character and get some grasp on the character's personality. I hear and sense where they might be coming from. Usually the first indicators of a character is: What are their blindspots? In what way are they self-deceiving? That's usually the first kind of inklings. Once I can get that grasp on them, I can start forming words. Usually I hear their speech and what I end up writing is them in monologue or some sort of dialogue.

C How would you characterize your relationship to the characters you play? Are they characters or personae?

M I guess by character we mean somebody who is purely made up, maybe based on a little history, a little self-portrait. But personae I think has a stronger stamp of self-portraiture on it.

C Yeah, there's some element of the self that gets brought out or is still there, that's not totally erased.

P We had a question from Kristen Hileman, our curator in Baltimore, about method acting, which is the farthest thing from what is going on. I feel like we hold dear the idea of just being able to make something and set it down. And not feel like we have to have some sort of identity connection to the work. That's much more freeing in a way. You can just make something and that's the thing you've made. It's not "Ah that's me, and I'm performing my public persona through my work." I don't think that's what going on.

M But I guess when I said that the idea of a flaw in the character is the first thing that bubbles up, I've done several character who are very strongly marked by a sense of vanity. In fact, I think many of them are. When a character is strongly marked by vanity, that's more likely to be a self-portrait.



Manspreading as Dionysus.  
Mary Reid Kelley with Patrick Kelley  
Still from *The Thong of Dionysus*, 2015.



Young Priapus.  
Mary Reid Kelley with Patrick Kelley  
Still from *The Thong of Dionysus*, 2015.

C For the others, is it more like your body becomes a canvas or a tool that enacts these things?

M I'm trying to think of a character that is the farthest from a portrait.

P Dionysus?

M Yeah Dionysus was interesting. We worked together because I was trying to really physically manifest masculinity in my body language as Dionysus. Leaning forward, thinking of manspreading of the subway. I would never really sit like that.

P Priapus?

M Oh yeah. Priapus was based on a former boyfriend from some time ago that I didn't like at all. But I think that self-portraiture is a little hard to avoid. These are characters who are not intended to be portraits of depth. They appear dimensionally shallow, and are also shallow themselves. We're interested in achieving a type of emotional impact with characters who are recognizably not presenting a full palette of human emotion, but a limited one.

C The characters have a certain flattening or distortion, along with the visuals?

P They're not individuals. They're not portraits of an individual, unlike characters in mainstream television or cinema. They're more archetypal. Even though Dionysus is a "real" character, he's also a god. It's already an archetype.

M I have tried. Probably the silliest thing I ever did to come up with a character from a different footing—it didn't work at all—was to cast a good friend's astrological chart from her birthdate and where she was born. You get this whole big wad of information about the characteristics this person supposedly has. Their sun sign, their moon sign, their rising sign. I tried to cast a character from that and it didn't work at all.

C Do you have a theory for why?

M I think it's fine to experiment. But a lot of getting on with making whatever you have to make is accepting whatever is coming from whatever source it is. You can't have everything that you want. You can't make something out of totally thin air. This is a badly paraphrased James Joyce quote, but essentially it's that everyone has one story and you just tell it over and over and over. He's saying there are only so many things in your life and in your brain that stimulate you to a point where you find yourself creating something out of nothing. Those touchstones are finite. † I'm glad I did that astrological experiment, even if it didn't work. When I started writing the occasional verse, that was something I didn't do before and it turns out that was important. Nothing ventured, you won't find out

what you're capable of. But once you've found a genuine source, you have to tend it and be grateful for it. And not debase it by refusing to explore it because you'd rather have a better source or a more convenient source.

C What would be your Joycean *one story*?

M The story is: Person blinded by vanity gets into trouble.

P Hijinks ensues!

M Yeah, that's more or less it. Or, vanity and its related dynamics—hubris, overreach. In the film *This is Offal* the character doesn't realize that in killing herself she's put everyone out play. She's not going to be able to go on being vain in the way she was before. She tries for a little while, and that's a source of grotesqueness. † We spent a couple years doing mythology, and ancient art forms deal very explicitly with hubris and vanity. The gods are constantly striking down humans who get too big for their britches. Unlike the way we think of an individual now—you are the sum of your choices—the ancient Greek way of looking at it was: you are the sum of your family history. Sometimes you don't get struck down because of a bad decision you made, but because of one that was made several generations back. I don't believe in fate, but I think it's an interesting artifact from the past, that type of belief.

C Speaking of the past, do you have a particular interest in the past?

M Well, lots. I will say that I don't want to go live in the past. Once in a while you meet a painter who wishes it was the 50s, or people who are holding grudges against their precedent artists. I think that's very damaging. † What we are primarily interested in are ideas. We think ideas have a specific history and almost always come from a specific time and place. Like the idea of fate being particularly relevant to the Greeks. So many things from the worlds of the Greeks and Romans we claim for our own society. We're fascinated by all these continuities between those empires and our empires and those governments and our governments. Pat recently brought up the idea of *presentism*, a provincialism of the present. We're very interested in our own time and how ideas of the past influence people living now, tracing some of the more hidden roots of ideas or forms of expression. That's why most of our work takes place in *a* past, or it's a mishmash, or several pasts. The point is usually not the past—it's how we're constantly living on a trajectory that was set in motion at some point in the past.

P Isn't it important to point out that when we say that things are set in the past, we have no loyalty to realistically setting something in the past. We've never actually set something in the past if you think about it. We're not trying to make a believable, historical period piece. It's always this very much present-day take.



Pasiphae lusting after a bull.  
Mary Reid Kelley with Patrick Kelley  
Still from *Swinburne's Pasiphae*, 2014.

As a young German  
WWI soldier.  
Mary Reid Kelley  
with Patrick Kelley  
Still from *You Make  
Me Iliad*, 2010.



Bug-eye goggles on the aviator.  
Mary Reid Kelley with Patrick Kelley  
Still from *Camel Toe*, 2008.

M It's always clearly an interpretation of the past. But there is a level of research and presentation of the image. It's playful but serious.

P It's the language that does the mashup of past and present. Going back to the trench in *You Make Me Iliad*, there's the moment when the soldier refers to the "literati's heroin(e) addiction." He's making a pun on heroin addiction and heroines in history. That's a present day vantage point that makes that function. And yet we're doing something that's set in WWI.

M A real shift for the way we put things together was going to Rome. I think there's a reason Rome serves as Freud's model for the unconscious because it's where things are cheek to jowl regardless of chronology. The Romans were very unceremonious about recycling items from the classical world into medieval buildings. The practice is called *spolia*. Dale Kinney and Richard Brilliant talk about it in a book called *Reuse Value*. It takes a while for you to start seeing it amidst the excitement of being in a place like Rome. But it was important for us to start thinking about the past not just in a neat category, but as explicitly alive in certain strains of the present.

C How did you make the transition from painting into video?

M I was doing text work for a transitional period of time—like rubbings or paintings of words. Little things that could have been dialogues or letters, but as a painting or drawing. By this time [grad school] I had also written a poem in the voice of a WWI aviator. Pat came up to visit me one weekend and brought his camera. I asked him to film me reciting it. I made a very slap-dash costume and recited it in front of a blank wall. That was pretty much it. I didn't show anyone the video for quite some time because it was embarrassing. It was about a vibrator and it was based on Snoopy because he's got a WWI persona where he's fighting the Red Baron. So I didn't show it and just kept carrying on doing other stuff.

C What made you then decide to show it?

M I showed it to one or two people whose reaction was *Well that's weird*. Thank you? But after making that it was inevitable that I would write a more involved monologue and that's what we did next. I wrote a four minute monologue. There was a little bit more thought put into it visually. Less of a one-liner.

P And character-wise, too. (That was *Queen's English*.)

M And the very short one was called *Camel Toe*, after the Sopwith Camel. I mean, it is a weird piece.

C Had you been characters before that?

M I'd done self-portraiture in painting before. I think that counts.



⌞ They were definitely characters. Different personae.

⌞ In that very well-worn path of self portraits.

⌞ How does costume play a role in this? I've noticed that many of the characters have some distortion or covering of their eyes? Was this planned or did it happen?

⌞ Both. It did just happen in the first piece. He's an aviator, so he's got these big bug-eye aviator goggles on. But as I kept writing scripts and making more films, the eyes stayed covered up. It was an instance of following a gut move, and then later examining it. It's part of the attempt to un-dimensionalize a character from an individual, basing interpersonal authority on eye contact.

⌞ Also the graphic language of cartoons. When we were doing the WWI stuff, we were looking at that as a graphic source.

⌞ It's essentially a mask form, the removal of the eyes combined with the facepaint. It's the removal of the individual actor. The costuming as well—trying to make every visible surface of the actor dimensionally collapsible. It throws you back on the text more. Think about how much time you can lose people watching—the detail of each individual is infinite. We're trying to make less infinite the detail on these characters—they're quite graspable, they're a sketch. What's extremely complicated is what they're saying. If you're looking for a source of individuality, we're forcing you to look for it in the script. Not in the expression of the face, which is really blunted.

⌞ You talked about cartoons. Are there other visual (or non-visual) influences for your work? Somewhere you said that the script for the Minotaur piece was a cross between Nicki Minaj and T.S. Eliot.

⌞ I was always—like everyone—a consumer of rap music. But when I started to read the lyrics, I was very interested in the way they use alliteration, and rhyming not just on the end of lines. Using proper nouns, brand names within the lines to create effects. And T.S. Eliot is a perennial source. Particularly the Sweeney poems.

⌞ Visually?

⌞ It depends on the piece, what we're researching and what we're looking at. There's some degree of trying to mimic something real from the era. What's become more an overarching element is that the sets remain looking like provisional theater sets. It seems counterproductive to make some accurate, convincing space. We usually want it to look raw and thrown together, even if it's all digital.



← Poetry inspiration.  
Mary Reid Kelley  
Nicki Minaj, 2015.

⌞ They are still highly detailed, though.

⌞ It's very detailed, but a different kind of detail from traveling down this perfectly receding horizon of a totally convincing real space. The detail comes from the drawings and surface textures that Mary gives me, which I scan and bring into sets.

⌞ It's difficult to generalize touchstones for all of the films visually. There are a few. The initial investment in cartoons and two-dimensionality has really stayed with us. We're constantly thinking about early Cubist painters. When it comes to the lighting in the work, we're trying to create a multi-directional light source. That's Cubism. And we always look at early cinema, the way that they deal with the camera.

⌞ Yeah, very simple—a camera pointed at the stage, rather than the camera as a character. It's this period that's so cool because cinema hadn't totally developed its own sophisticated language yet. It was still an offshoot of theater.

⌞ Ah, you took one of my questions! Your work also reminds me of German Expressionist cinema and their wacky sets.

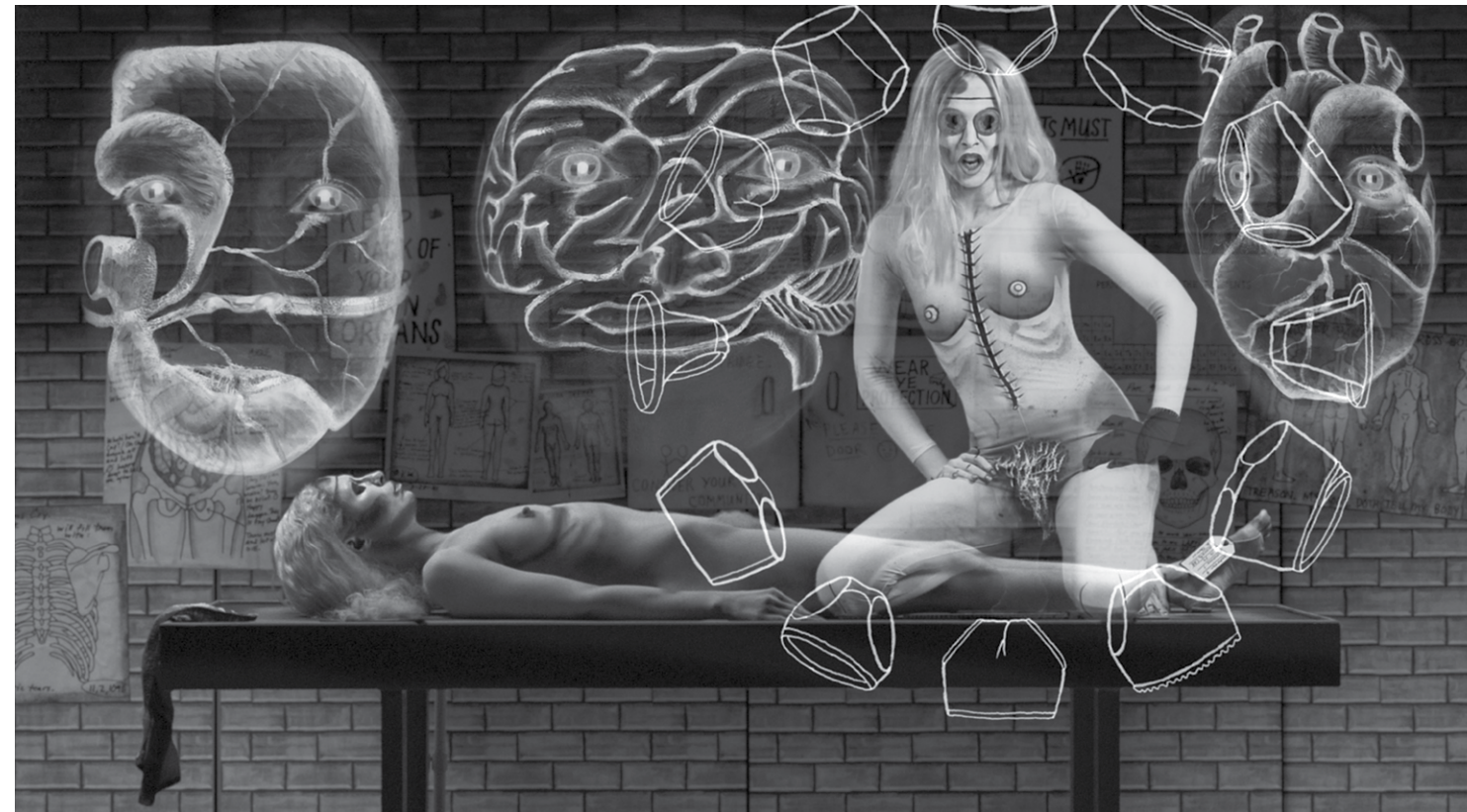
⌞ Yes, you can still see the structure, but you willingly go along with the game.

⌞ You do your work with green screen. How do you wrap your brain around that? Or is your brain built that way?

⌞ Mine's not!

⌞ We've been doing it for long enough that we don't really think about it so much anymore. And also because we're doing it so haphazardly. It's a very slow process. We do a lot of tests which give us something to look at and bring into the studio as a reference point for Mary. So even though it is green screen, we'll have some visual cues. We don't have it all figured out when we're shooting. It's a collage process.

⌞ I was curious about the role of women's bodies in your work. Their portrayal and depiction. Ah, I'm not quite sure how to phrase this... I'm a female bodied performer, and people have remarked that my work has a feminist aspect to it. It's not untrue—I think a lot about how female bodies exist (or are supposed to exist) in society. The work is feminist. But it's also a loaded term. How do you address this?



Mary Reid Kelley with Patrick Kelley  
Still from *This is Offal*, 2016.



A feminist artist.  
Mary Reid Kelley  
*A Female Is A Living Monument*, 2017.  
Lightbox.

M This has been something we've been explicitly thinking about. I identify as a feminist artist. I believe we both do. The work is undoubtedly feminist. But I think something that I've grown to resent, and possibly something that you aren't very comfortable with either, is that feminist work is often identified as being limited to observations about women. And I hate that. It's really limiting. As a piece of perversity and to push back on that, the film we just completed takes place on a submarine and there are no female characters. The submarines in the mid-40s were strictly gender segregated. As far as I know there weren't any all-female submarines. It's a purely male world. I think that independent-thinking women working in any media should have the right to comment on any situation or dynamic in the past or in the present. Feminists can make work that's not explicitly and in every way about the topic of women. Feminist work isn't necessarily going to give you a nugget about the mystery of women. The film we just made—it's kind of a joke—are there any women? Because I play all the characters. I've done a lot of male characters.

P Did you mention the comment? *Frieze* magazine posted a cover with Mary on it.

M *Frieze* tweeted a picture of me in full presidential drag as Harry Truman. Somebody commented on Twitter: "Where the eff are all the women in your magazine, *Frieze*? #timesup, #metoo." They really did use those hashtags. The point of dressing up as Harry Truman or an anonymous sailor is to critique these different facets of masculinity and war-making. How men can be both perpetrators and victims of this masculine ideology that makes them killers? That's the purpose of dressing in the elaborate presidential drag. It emanates this kind of icky and oppressive masculine authority because we design it to. People are always going to think that feminist art is going to look like a woman is there.

P It's ironic because it's really counter-productive.

M Yeah. It's hard to know how serious to take something like that. The medium of social media is dumb so people are dumb on Twitter. As a performer, if you are going to consistently use your body as tool, that does put limits on you. Some are justly there, some are going to be other people's interpretations, which you can do more to manipulate. To go back to social media, I think it kills people's aptitude for complexity. Why would you identify as a feminist if for the rest of your life you're limited to one topic? No one's going to sign up for that! That's a reality you have to push back at, especially if you're using your body. People will constantly see you as a "girl" and ask you "girl stuff." *I see your body. Tell me about your body!* Good luck dealing with it.

C Do you have any advice?

M Go towards the embarrassment. It's almost always your friend. ✚

→ Presidential drag.  
Mary Reid Kelley  
*Harry S. Truman*,  
2017. Lightbox.



# Catalogue of Works

An artist recreates history,  
not like a historian,  
but as a poet.

*Robert Wilson*



# Body/ Language

That Flexible Person  
Dear Emily  
Madonna



# That Flexible Person

Video  
0:50

I'm not that flexible person  
And yet—  
It wasn't worth the beads  
of sweat,  
Taste salty and nasty,  
Moist morsels,  
Trickling down the curve  
of your jaw, your back.  
It's tough for somebody—  
It's tough for everybody  
trying to learn.  
My mind can never remember  
how many folds!  
I'm not that flexible person.  
What should I say for you?  
You don't have to say  
anything at all.

**S**ome phrases, once uttered, cling to your consciousness. We had spent a class writing exquisite corpse poems, each person writing a line and then passing the page left, with only the most recent line of the poem visible to the next writer. This process inevitably yields nonsense, but sometimes, if fate is with you, that nonsense possesses something profound and beautiful. And lo, out of the noise emerged a lovely signal. The line *I'm not that flexible person* in particular stuck with me. It rung true—the phrase encapsulated my difficult transition into art school, as I learned to make peace with the vagaries of the creative process. I'm intuitive by nature, but I'm, also, shall we say, extremely control-inclined. I like order, I like having a plan. These traits have their values—precision, foresight—but they can also hinder. Some of the most lovely moments in life and in art arise serendipitously. My graduate experience has taught me to be more flexible, to embrace the frustrations and the unpredictability. I'm still no contortionist, but I'm certainly more limber. † The accompanying video is fairly simple—all the better to hear the text with, my dear. The poem, voiced by yours truly, unfolds in a stark grey space occupied by a chair. Suddenly, a disembodied arm emerges after the second line is spoken. Two other arms join over the course of the poem, crawling, caressing. Who is this inflexible person? The chair? The viewer? A third party? What should I say for you? You don't have to say anything at all. ‡



0:00



0:07

↑ This video is based on an exquisite corpse poem assembled in a class. I edited and envisioned it with disembodied limbs following the narration. Here you see the title slide. The legs inch themselves out, and the scene changes to reveal the chair, righted.





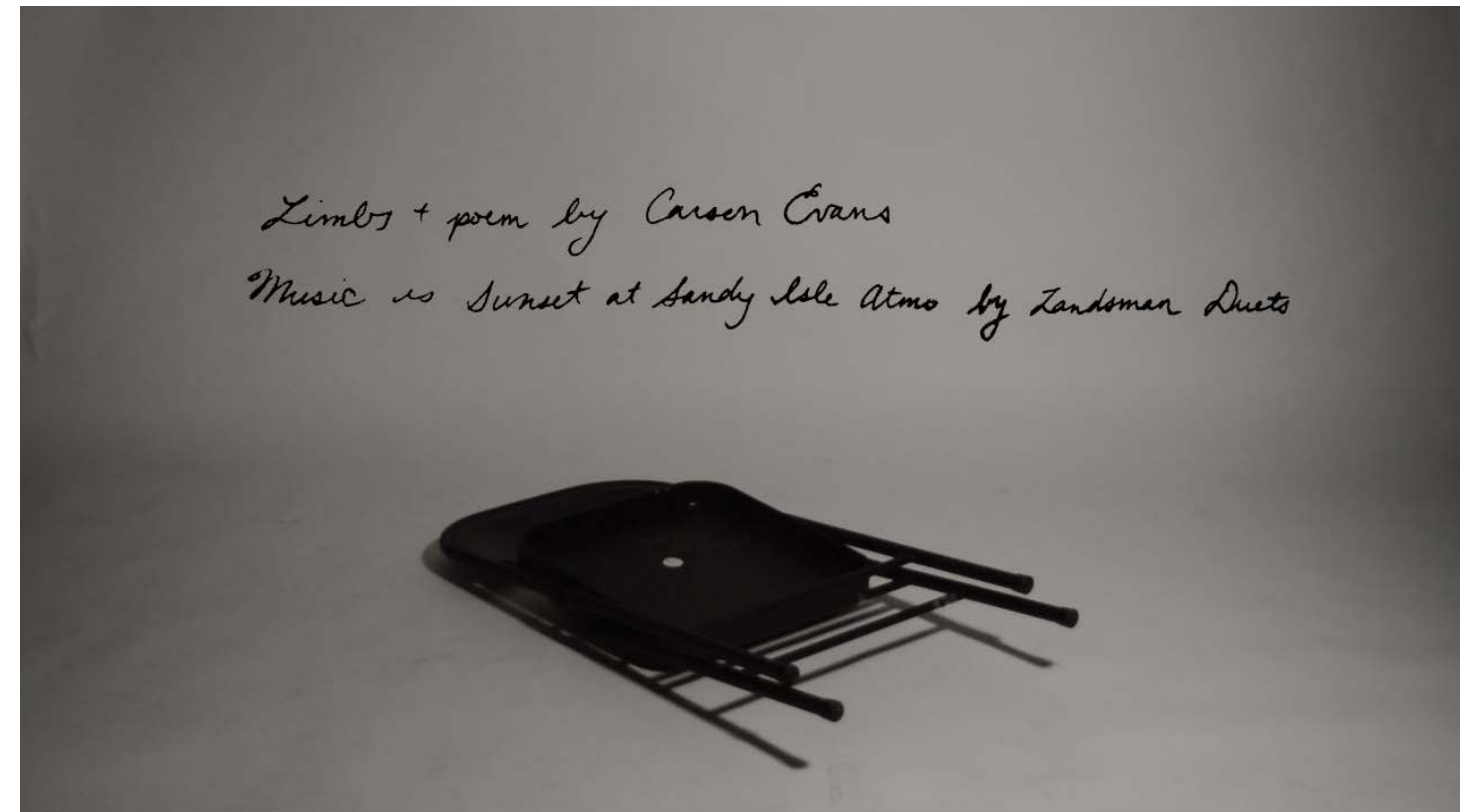
0:24



0:30



0:40



0:44

← As you hear the poem in a voice over (read by me), hands begin to emerge, uncannily, from the chair.

↑ Credits roll. The chair has been folded up.





# Dear Emily

Video  
1:32

This is my letter to the world,  
That never wrote to me,—  
The simple news that Nature told,  
With tender majesty.  
Her message is committed  
To hands I cannot see;  
For love of her, sweet countrymen,  
Judge tenderly of me!  
—  
Emily Dickinson

**h**ands emerge uncannily from behind elements of the bright plastic set, bearing lines of an Emily Dickinson poem. The surreal grace of the hands belie the difficult choreographic precision required to produce this video as a solo effort. (Like Emily, I labored alone in a garret for this production.) Earlier, more earnest attempts to build the set resulted in failure—a goofy pastiche of the antique and the natural. Dickinson’s style may be antiquated, but her words and sentiments continue to evoke and arrest. I wanted to capture the spirit of her poem without fossilizing it. By building a stage exclusively from garish plastic representations of nature and setting the poem in blasé snippets of Helvetica, the video became a juxtaposition of the contemporary and the historical, the natural and the artificial. Daniel Lanois’ electronically-skewed guitar music—*Two Worlds* from his album *Belladonna*—drifts in the background, intertwining with the sound of crickets. I wished to give voice to the poem’s playful sweetness and simultaneous deep melancholy. Over 100 years later, our relationship to nature remains fraught, arguably even more so. (My own tender judgment.) ✚



0:12

↑ An Emily Dickinson poem about nature (←) and a set of bright plastic objects—why not? Hands emerge from behind the props, bearing the lines of the poem. The bright plastic imitations of nature lend a sense of timelessness and melancholy.



0:15



0:16



0:17



0:32

↑ "Her message is committed // to hands I cannot see."  
Emily herself makes a cameo appearance in the upper right part of the video frame.



tenderly

of

me!

Judge

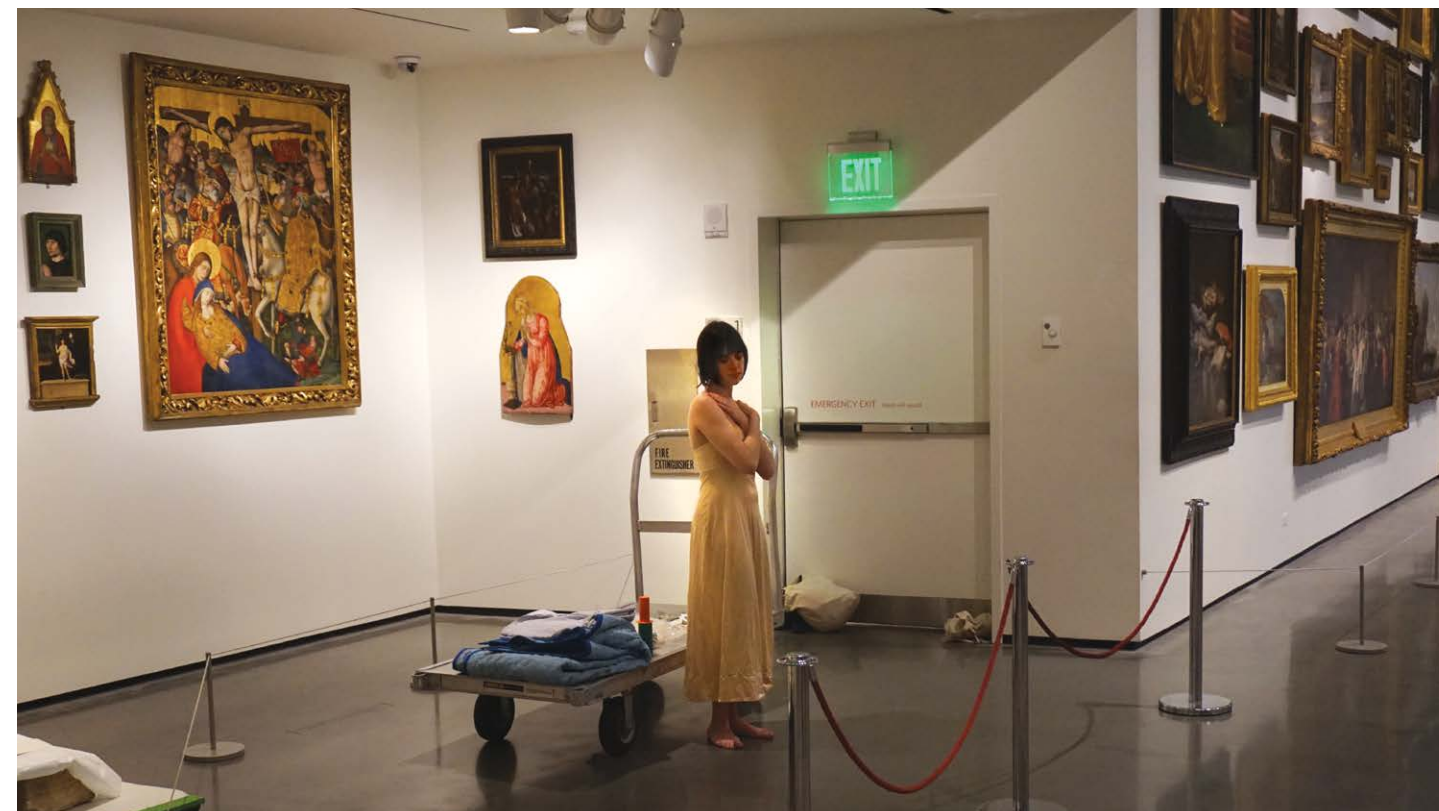


# Madonna

Live Performance  
Collaboration with Angela Lorenzo & Melissa Weiss  
10:00



during the first half of 2017, the RISD Museum underwent an extensive renovation in the galleries that housed their European Painting and Sculpture collection. Off-site storage could not accommodate this en masse exodus. The museum had to get creative. Deciding to turn their temporary exhibition gallery into open storage, the Museum shifted these works and created an informal show called *Intermission*. Paintings hung floor-to-ceiling, some sculptures remained under wraps but still in views—provisionally, yet aesthetically placed. It formed a revealing portrait of the Western canon as well as the workings of an art collecting institution. We hoped to provoke criticality about the position of the female body within these realms. (This piece was a collaborative effort, conceived and performed with my peers Angela Lorenzo and Melissa Weiss.) Into this environment we placed my living form as a Madonna statue. Stanchioned off in an alcove surrounded by Renaissance art, I held a holy pose. Dressed as art handlers, Angela and Melissa entered with packing materials. If seeing a living, blinking statue as part of the exhibit had not been disconcerting to viewers, watching Angela and Melissa wrap me for shipping likely was. Draping me first in a blue sheet—very Mary apropos—they proceeded to supplement with bubble wrap and bind with plastic sheeting. A large blue moving blanket and shipping label completed the ensemble. Inspecting their work, Angela and Melissa read aloud the poem *Q&A: Insurance*, exchanging lines. Their task done, they depart, leaving the Madonna tightly swaddled, awaiting transport. ✚



← Who—me? This painting (*Annunciate Virgin* by Mirabello Cavalori, c.1560) is part of the RISD Museum's collection. It was one of the several Madonnas that hung in the gallery alcove in which we performed. Here we see the annunciation, when the angel Gabriel tells Mary that her little virginal self will bear God's child. (Go figure.) The panel depicting Gabriel has been lost, leaving an intriguingly incomplete scene.

↑ Who—me? No, it's a statue of the Holy Madonna. She strikes a chaste and holy pose amidst the RISD Museum's *Intermission* show. Deciding to turn their temporary exhibition gallery into an open storage space during a renovation, the Museum shifted the on-view section of their European Painting and Sculpture collection into this space. Paintings hung floor-to-ceiling, some sculptures remained under wraps but still in views—provisionally, yet aesthetically placed. It formed an interesting portrait of the Western canon as well as the workings of an art collecting institution. Into this environment we placed my living form as a Madonna statue. Wrapping and packaging it for shipping, we hoped to provoke criticality about the position of the female body within these realms.

## Q&A INSURANCE

by Alicia Ostriker

*As read during the performance.*

If time is an arrow, what is its target

If a Flexible Flyer is the sled I had as a child,  
when may I become a child again

Do you need help digging the potatoes  
out of your garden of insults

Do you plan to vote in the next election

Is our country headed in the right direction  
or the wrong direction  
and what did the bulldozer tell  
the yellow helmet's ear

Which part of your body is like biting into a ripe peach  
which part shames you like a rotten banana

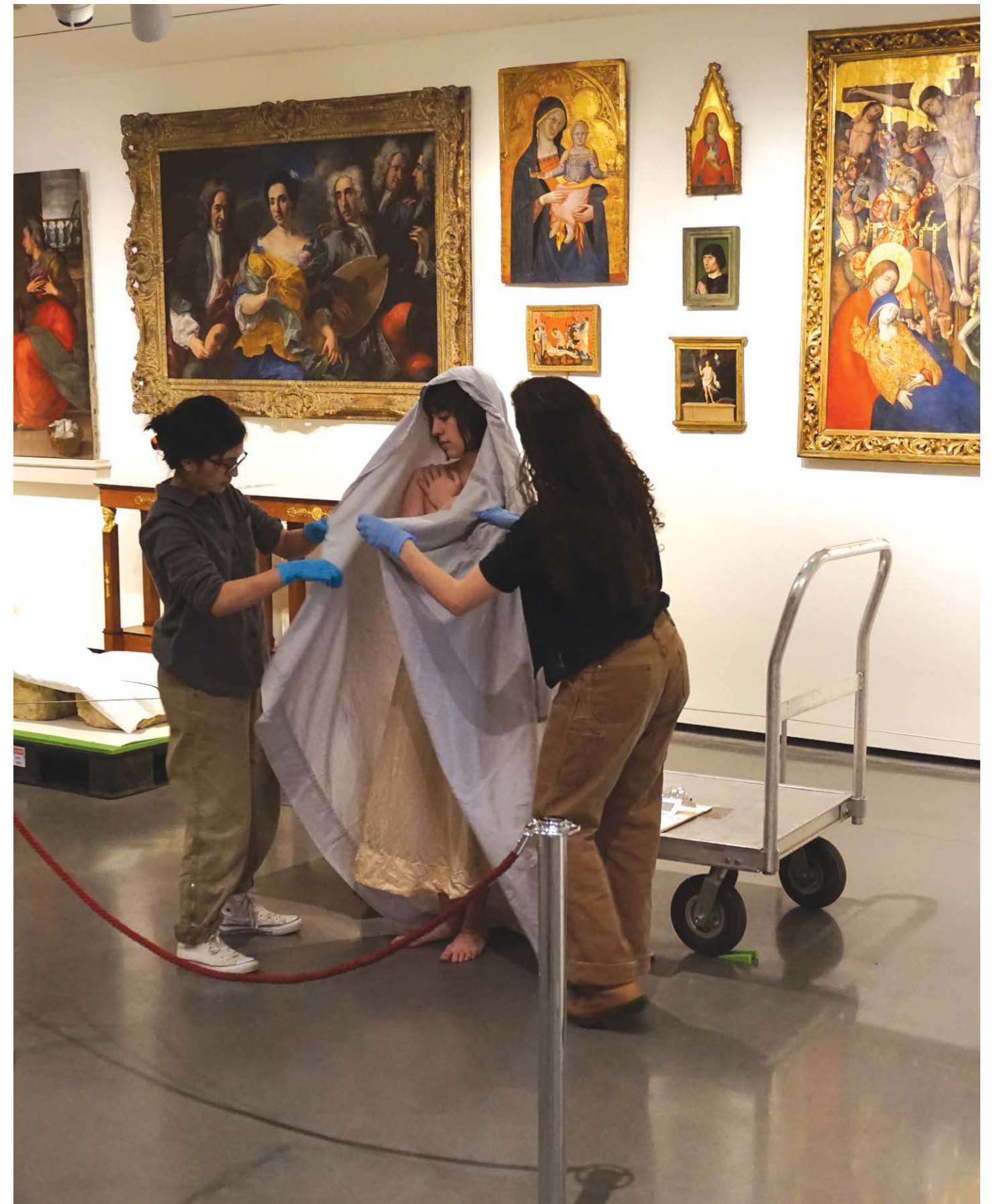
Would you like to find out how to lower  
your interest rate

When you go to heaven how old will you choose to be  
will you have cocktails on the well-watered lawn  
where Bach conducts Bach

Will you still chase after the Grateful Dead

Is your life like air leaking out of a balloon,  
or like rain falling on a pond  
dot dot dot dear pocks  
pocking the surface dot dot dot

→ Angela, left, and Melissa, right,  
enter the gallery as art handlers and  
begin to package me, as Madonna,  
for shipping. Beside us sit other  
half-packed works of art—business  
as usual. The museum graciously  
provided stanchions to add an air  
of officialdom to our piece.



Can it be like snow falling on the ocean

Can desire drown you like syrup over pancakes

When an ambulance siren wakes you at 3 a.m.  
do you feel relieved  
not to be strapped to that stretcher  
speeding toward the grim unknown  
do you then snuggle next  
to someone

Are you satisfied with your detergent

Can you name a more perfect irony  
than the new world trade center, sacred icon of  
capitalism, revered lingam of profit,  
soaring above the memorial pools  
of people killed when the first towers fell

Can you describe the scent of dried blood

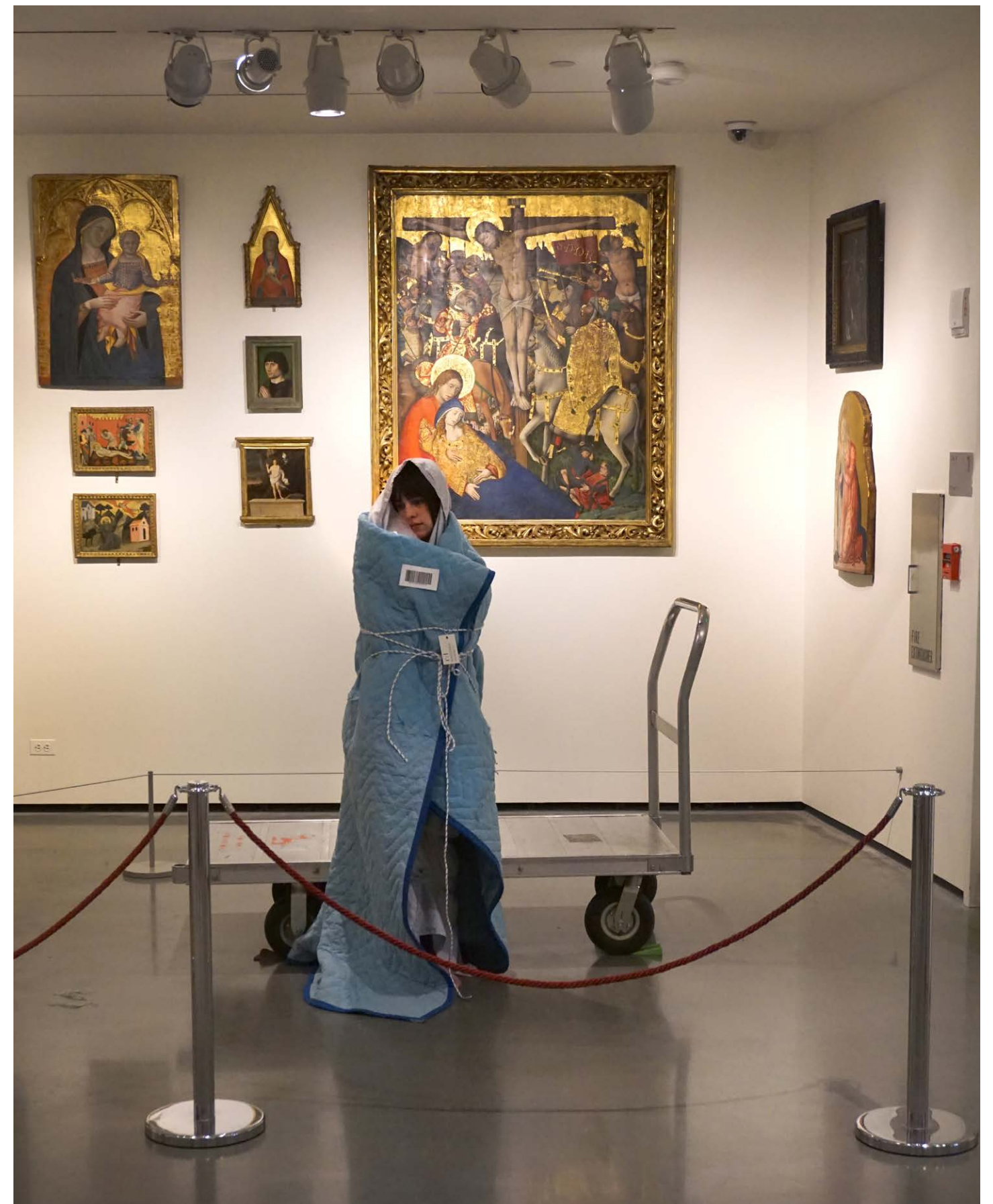
What about the smell of iron chains in your cell  
can you sing the threnody of the maggots

When I removed my mask did I frighten you  
like a drone crossing your sky

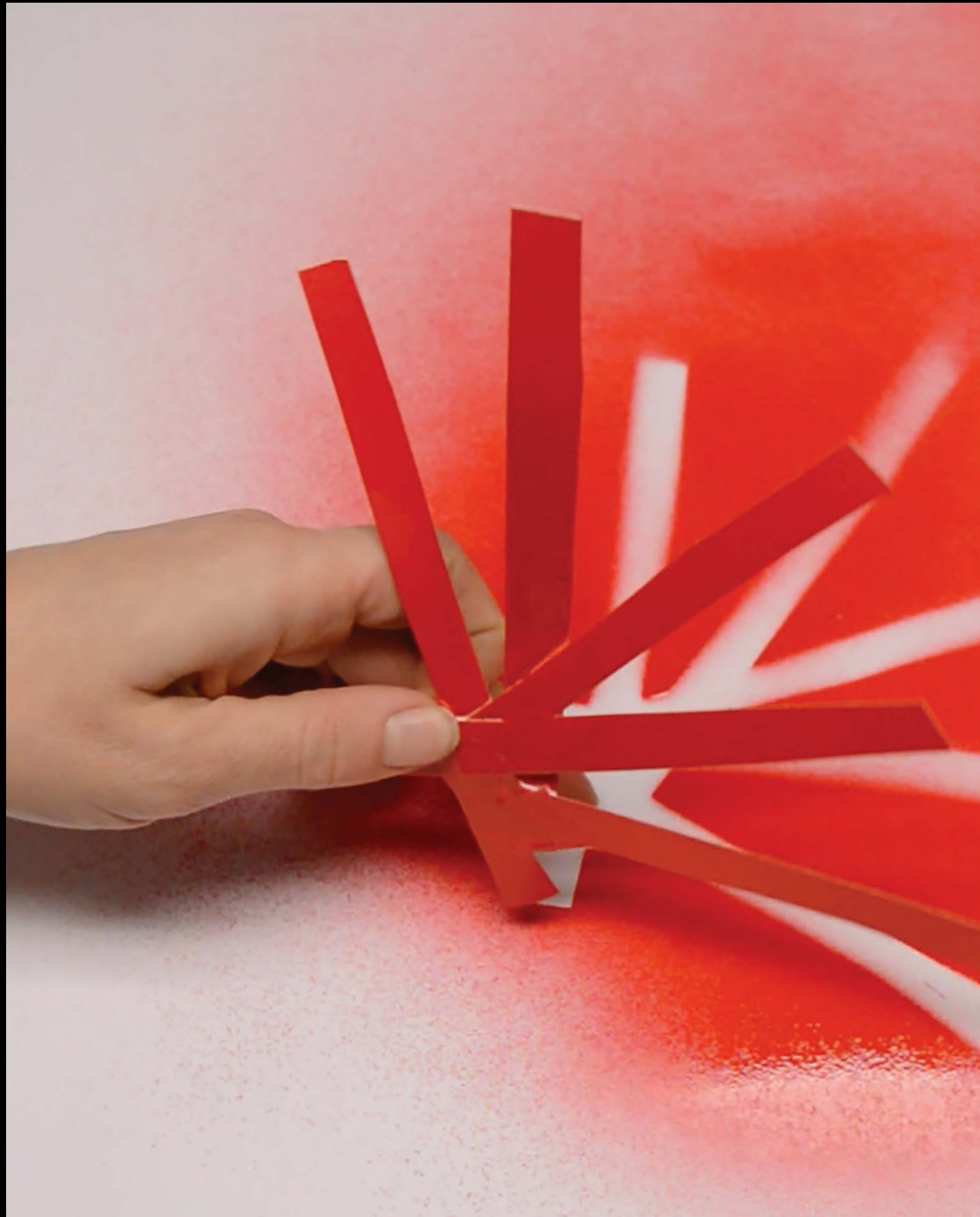
Are you satisfied with your auto insurance

When ecstasy approaches why do you resist  
What are you afraid of  
Can you please unbutton your shirt now

→ With the Madonna statue packaged and labeled for shipping, Angela and Melissa inspect their handiwork while reading *Q&A Insurance*—the adjacent poem. Alicia Ostriker's words underscored our themes, and with such nice eloquence to boot. The art handlers depart. Yes, it was very toasty in that cocoon.







# Figuratively Speaking

Bacchae

Hagiography

These Truths



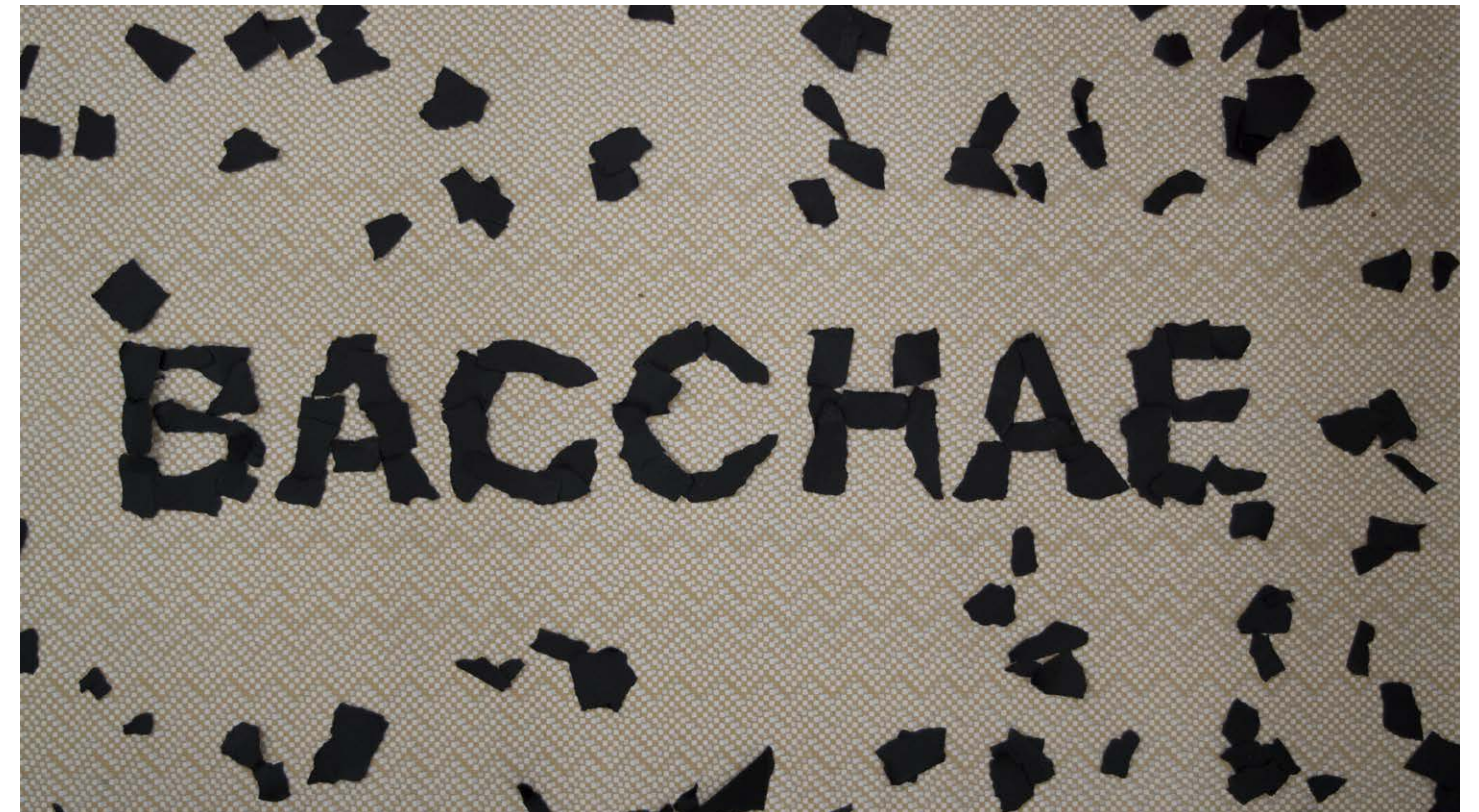
CINEMA 1  
PAPADOPOULOS

# Bacchae

Stop-motion video, looped  
0:32



**b**acchae is the product of a Wintersession animation class—the origins of my foray into motion. Inspired by William Kentridge’s stop motion work, where torn paper comes alive as rough-hewn figures, I tried my hand at the process. I choreographed 45 seconds of rambunctious movement to *Come Walk With Me*, a boisterous song by the artist M.I.A.. By projecting this video onto the ground and reconstructing my motion with torn pieces of black paper, I built the animation frame by frame, 15 frames for each second. Bacchae references the women followers of the ancient Greek god Dionysus, god of instinctiveness, lack of boundaries, and, naturally, wine. These women were also known maenads, meaning raving ones—cult ritual involved ecstatic frenzy. The unrestrained and aggressive movement of the figure, assembled from torn paper fragments and set against a mosaic-like backdrop, gives nod to this classical allusion. For me, much of stop motion’s magic lies in the way its process, though in many ways meticulous and highly controlled, results in form that exhibits uncanny and unbridled spirit. A Dionysian effect. † Formally and conceptually, this piece is simple—an early and naive effort. (The process itself, though, was certainly not simple. Stop-motion is a laborious process. Due to a miscalculation, the 45 seconds required approximately 650 frames. Each frame took at least one minute to build, often more. After kneeling on the floor for nearly eight hours the first day of animating, I ended up crushing a nerve in my knee which temporarily paralyzed my feet for about a month. Live and learn...) Nonetheless, I look back at this project fondly, a significant moment in my artistic wayfaring. ‡



0:01

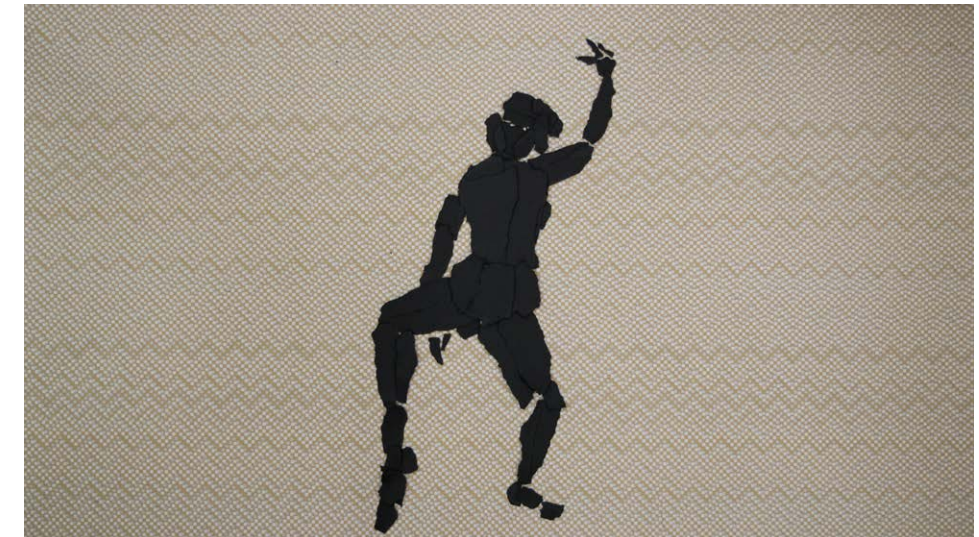
↑ Bacchae were the women followers of the classical god Dionysus, god of instinctiveness, lack of boundaries, and, naturally, wine. Their cult ritual involved ecstatic frenzy.

← Each frame was hand-produced, arranging small scraps of torn paper. Projecting a video of myself dancing frame-by-frame onto the floor, I meticulously traced my movements over nearly 650 frames. Kids, don’t try this at home—kneeling for eight hours can temporarily paralyze your feet.

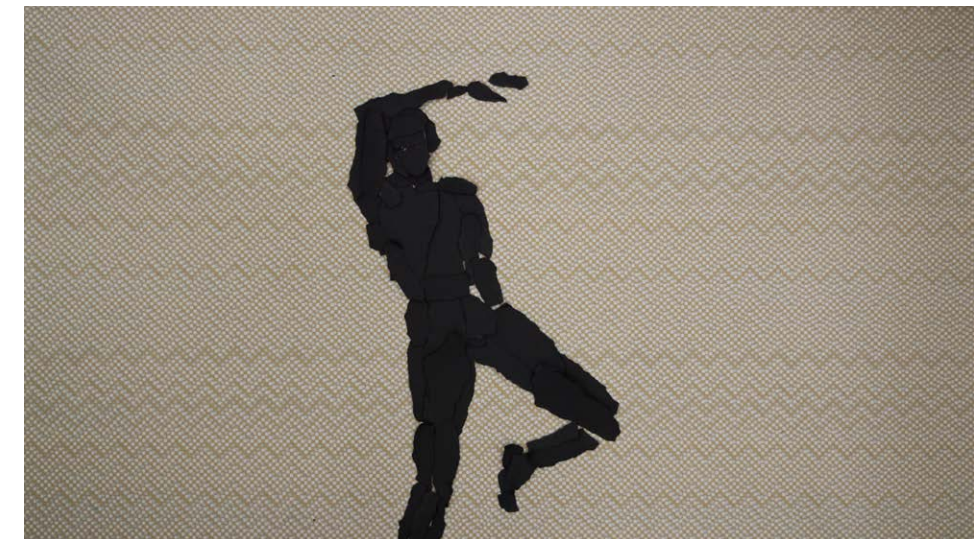


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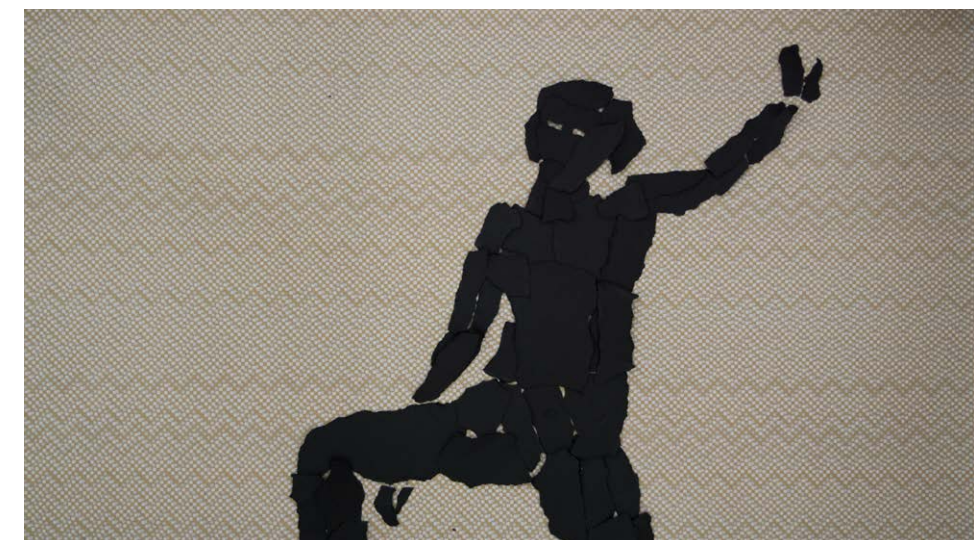
↑ → Inspired by artist William Kentridge's stop-motion work with paper, I brought this figure to life in a similarly painstaking fashion. The pieces that form her body seethe on the brink of chaos, eventually to be contained no more. They burst apart, only to reform as the title sequence and the dance begin again.



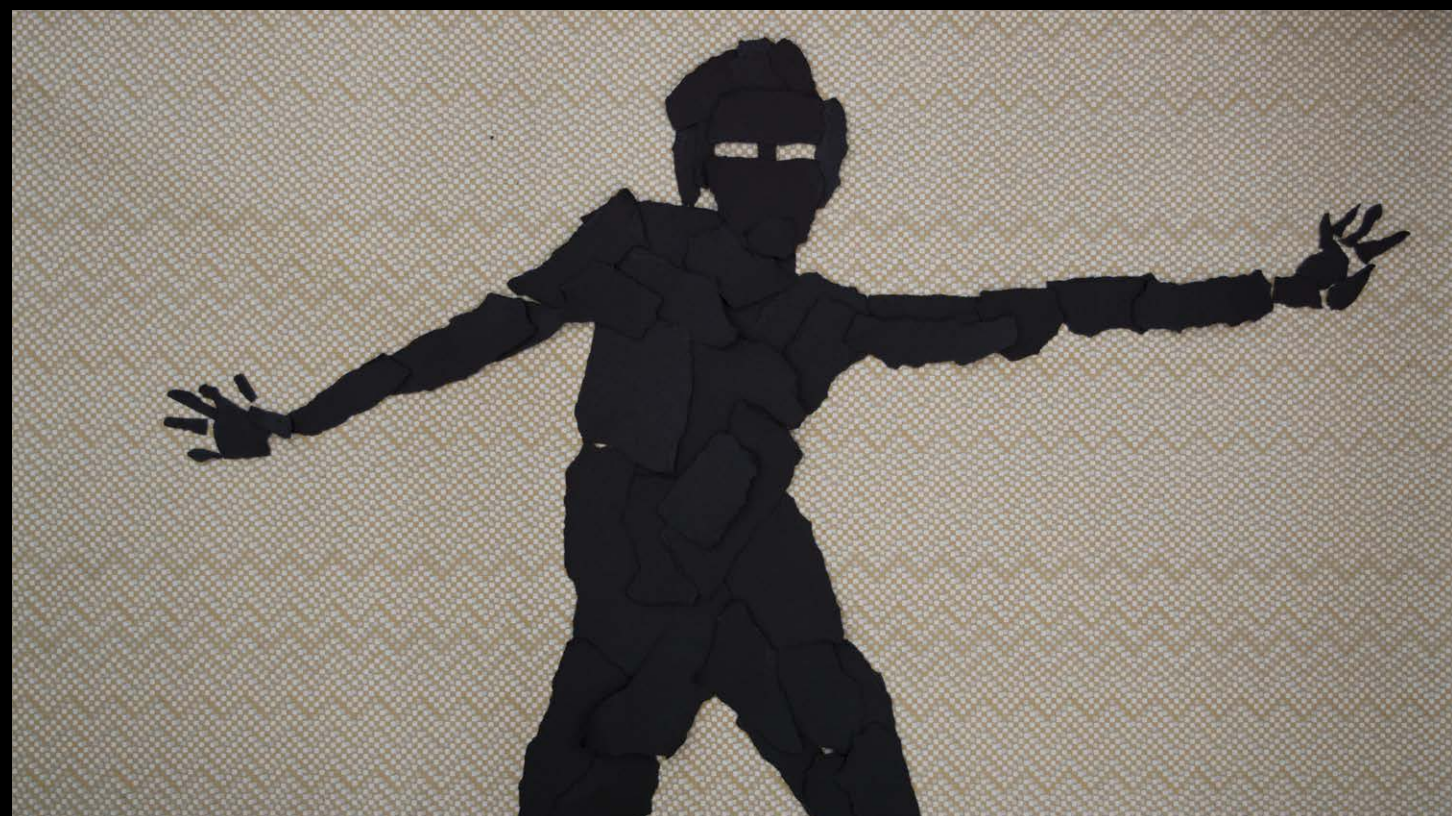
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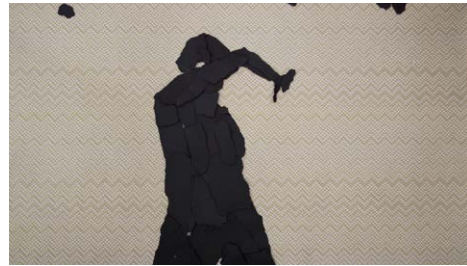


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0:19





0:27



0:28



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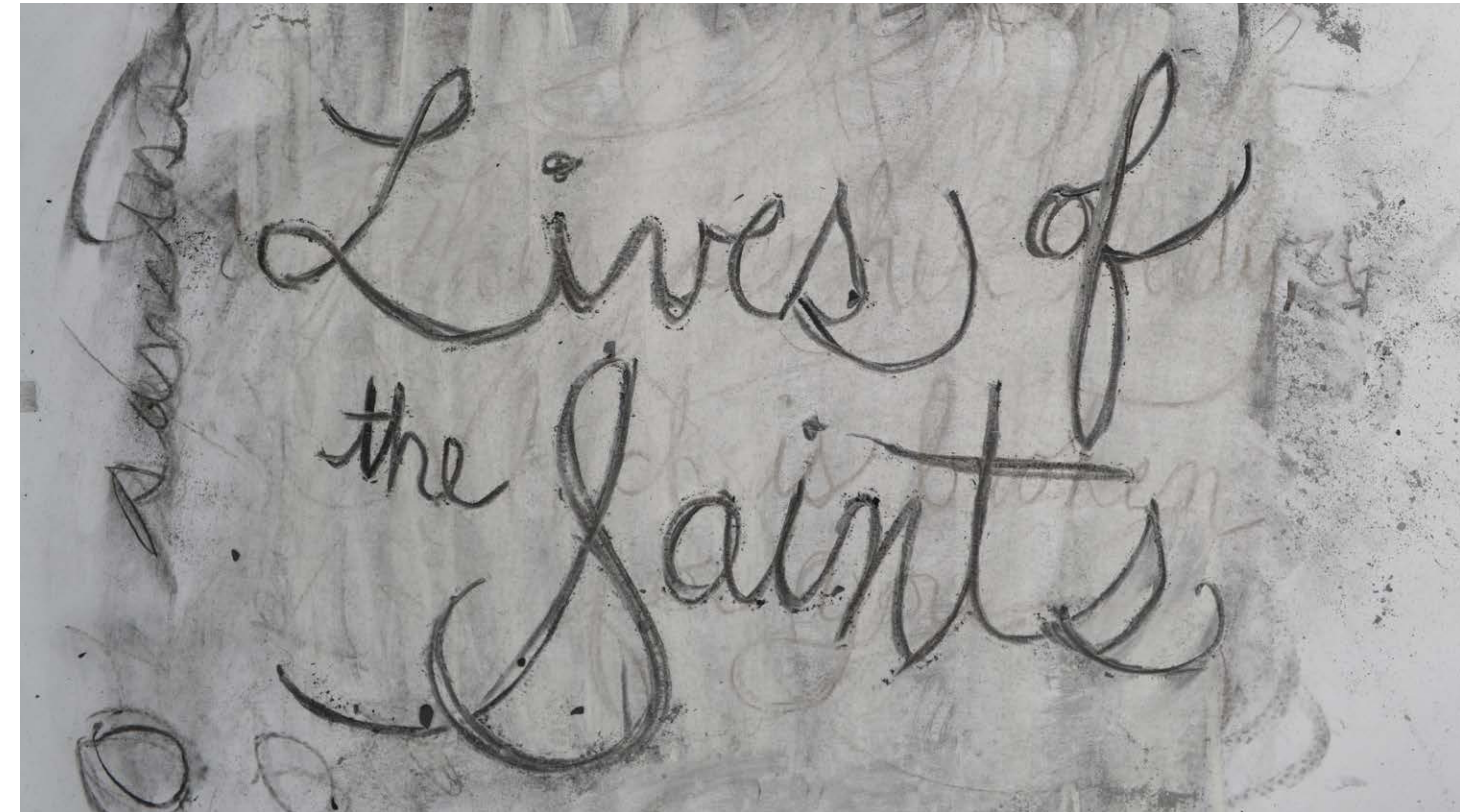
Handwritten text on a whiteboard, including the word "Abraham" and other illegible scribbles.

# Hagiography

Video  
0:36



The term *hagiography* combines the Greek word meaning holy with the verb to write. A compunction to chronicle the lives of Saints is an ancient one, starting in Roman times and escalating in the pious Middle Ages. The stories of these holy men and women served as inspirational examples—role models to the faithful and testaments to God’s miraculous powers and mysterious ways. † This video continues in this tradition, but with an unconventional and feminist bent. My hagiography combines violently scrawled stop-motion writing with captioned vignettes of saints, dramatically lit and disconcertingly assembled. Catholicism, with its love of symbolism, often represents martyrs with references to their demise (St. Katherine with her wheel, St. Sebastian stippled with arrows). I likewise utilize this graphic device. The video’s structure derives from the litany of the saints (a cantor sings the name of a saint, and the congregation chants *pray for us.*) I invoke three female saints: St. Apollonia, St. Agatha, and St. Lucy. All three are early martyrs who suffered grave bodily harm in the name of their faith—teeth pulled, breasts severed, eyes gouged. Their stories are ridiculous yet horrifying. † Raised Catholic, I love the pomp, ceremony, and archaism of the Church. There are also many things to be troubled by, among these being its patriarchal attitude towards women. Though many Saints met grisly ends, most female Saints’ primary achievement was protecting their purity from pagan potential husbands. Their dedication is admirable, but this situation, I’m afraid, fails the Bechdel test. Oh ye men of little faith! The power and the glory shall not be yours forever and ever. (Let us pray...) †

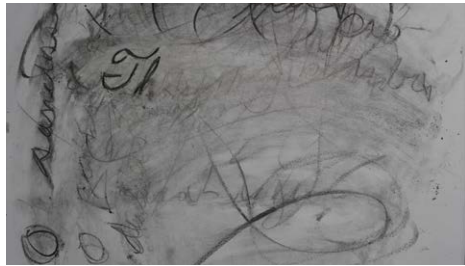


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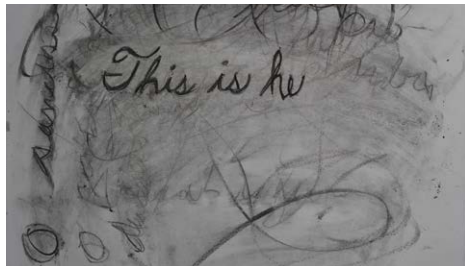
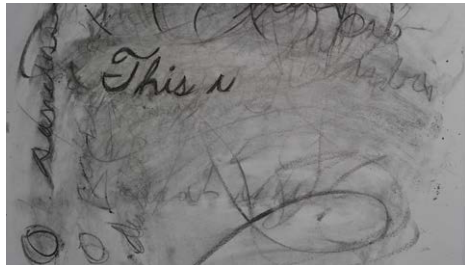
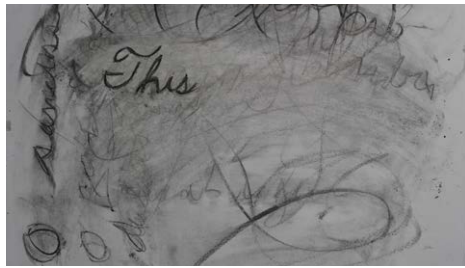
↑ Hagiography is a fancier, Greek-derived way of saying *Lives of the Saints*. The title writes itself in, letter by scratchy letter, with the help of stop-motion magic.

← Process shot—jello breasts waiting on set.

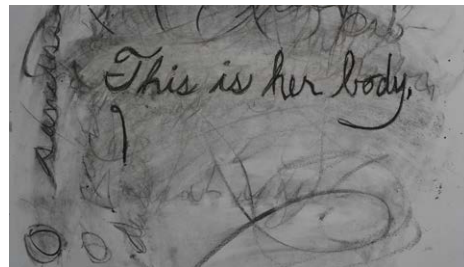
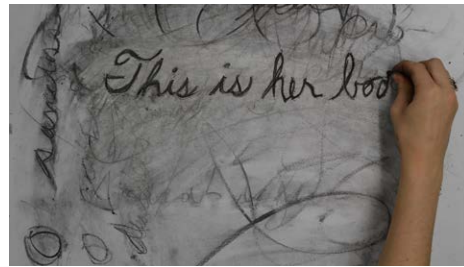
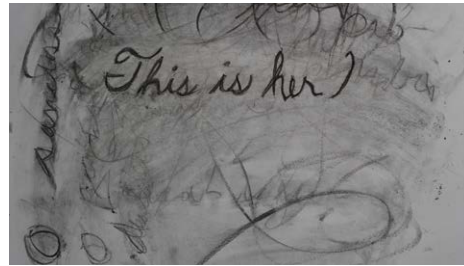




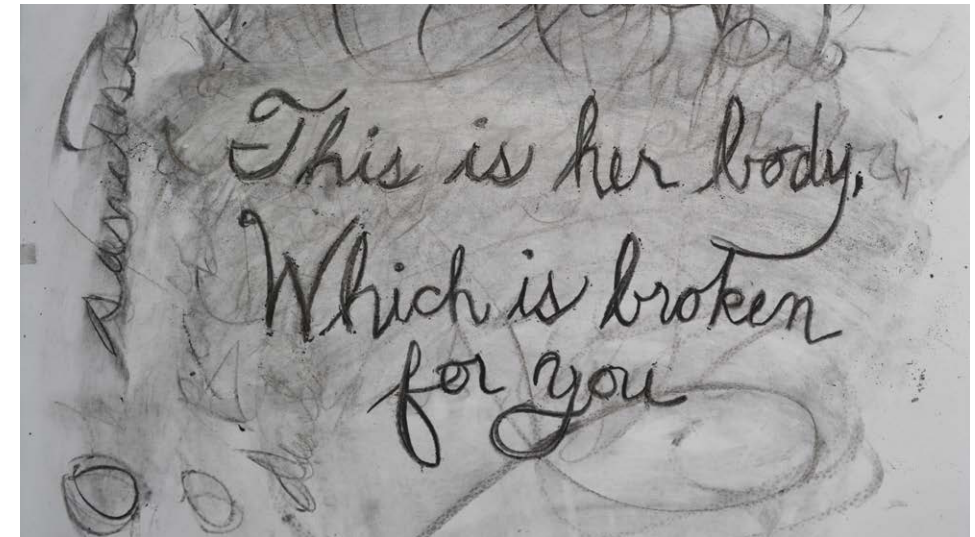
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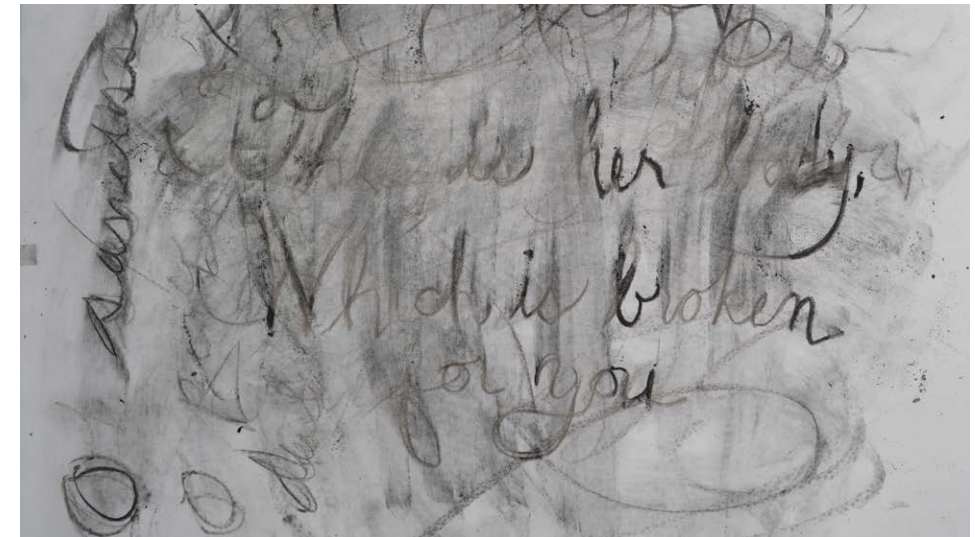
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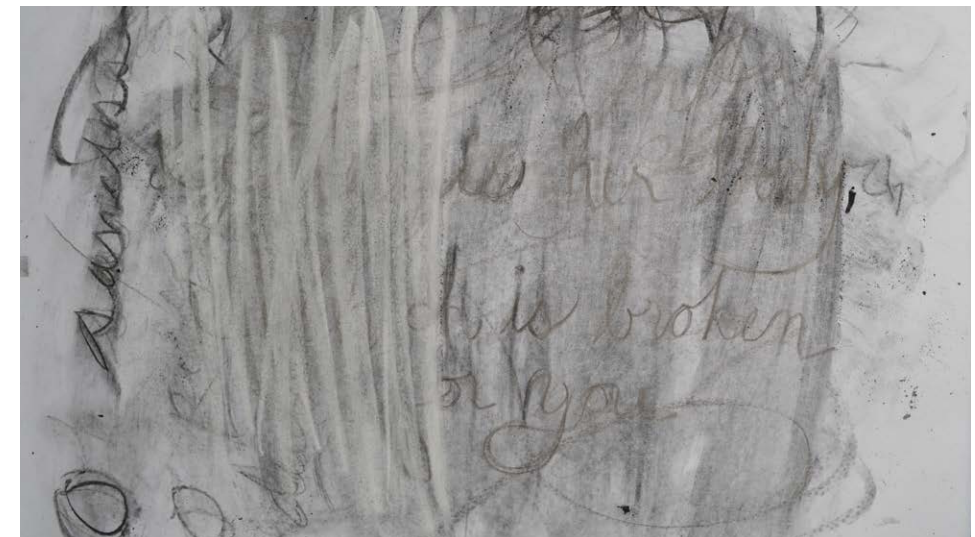
0:01



0:03



0:03



0:03

↑ A charcoal scrawl appears, appearing to write itself in, with this message. (Not familiar? It's a re-gendered line from the Catholic Eucharistic celebration, the blessing of communion hosts.)

→ The words are gesturally smudged out.

*Please kneel*

0:06

↑ Well, do as it says.

→ The darkness dissipates. We see St. Apollonia, the patron of dentists, contemplating a set of wind-up teeth. She is a second-century virgin martyr from Alexandria, who met her end during local uprising. Her teeth were violently extracted when she refused to give up her chastity and her faith.



St. Apollonia

0:07

"They knocked out all her teeth."

St. Agnes, St. Priscilla, St. Anne,

St. Elizabeth, St. Margareta,

St. Barbara, St. Ursula, St. Benedict,



Pray for us.

0:14



St. Agatha

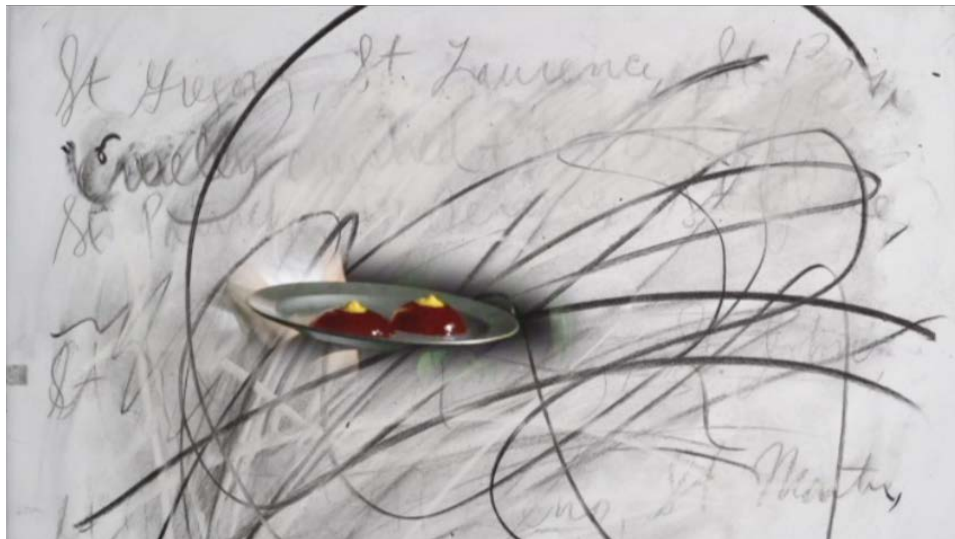
0:16

↑ Amen.

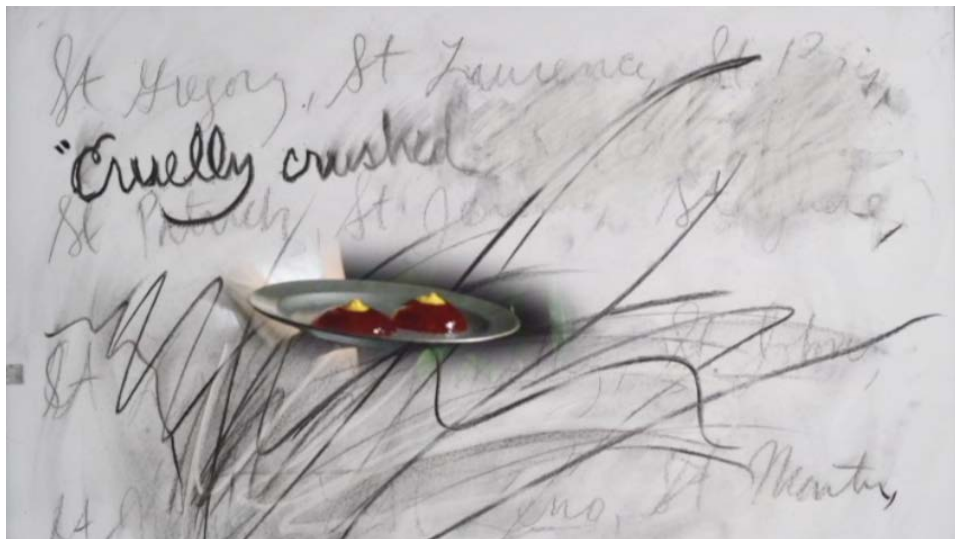
→ Next we see St. Agatha, calmly holding a platter of quivering breasts.  
(They've been cut off.)



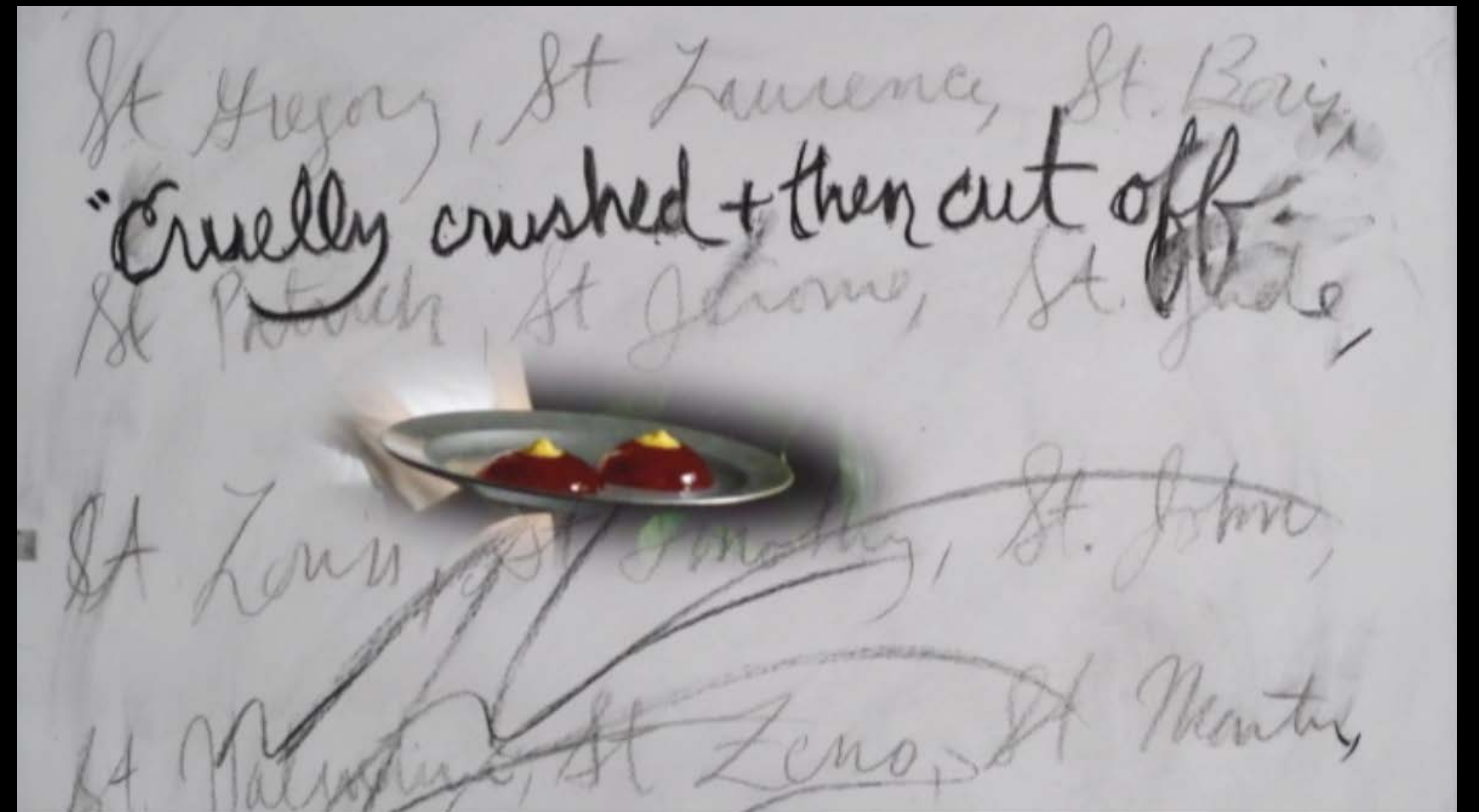
0:20



0:21



0:22



0:23

← The breasts continue to jiggle gently while charcoal thrashes in the background.

↑ This is what happens in the third century when you refuse to marry a pagan.

Pray for us.

0:24



St. Lucy

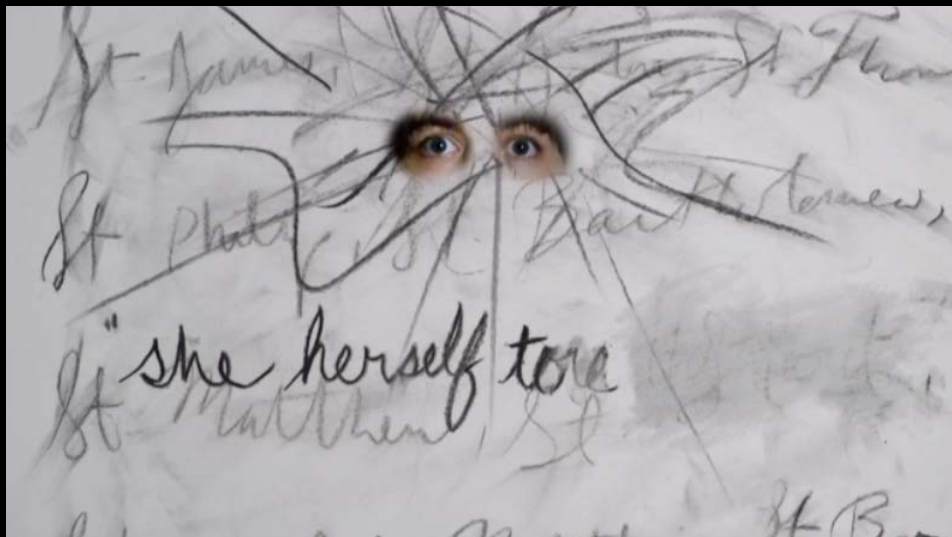
0:25

↑ Amen.

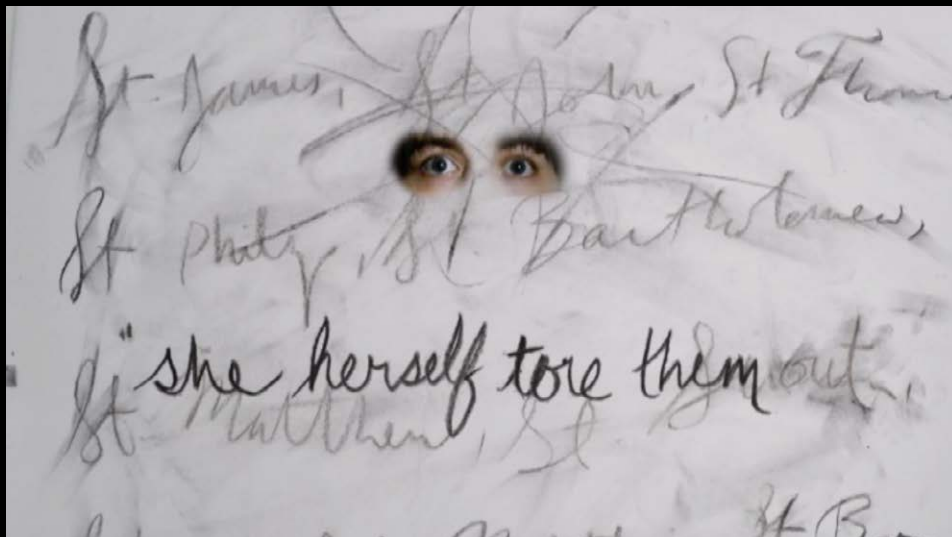
→ Finally St. Lucy appears, hand raised in blessing. This patron saint of eye problems is here crowned with a frying pan halo.



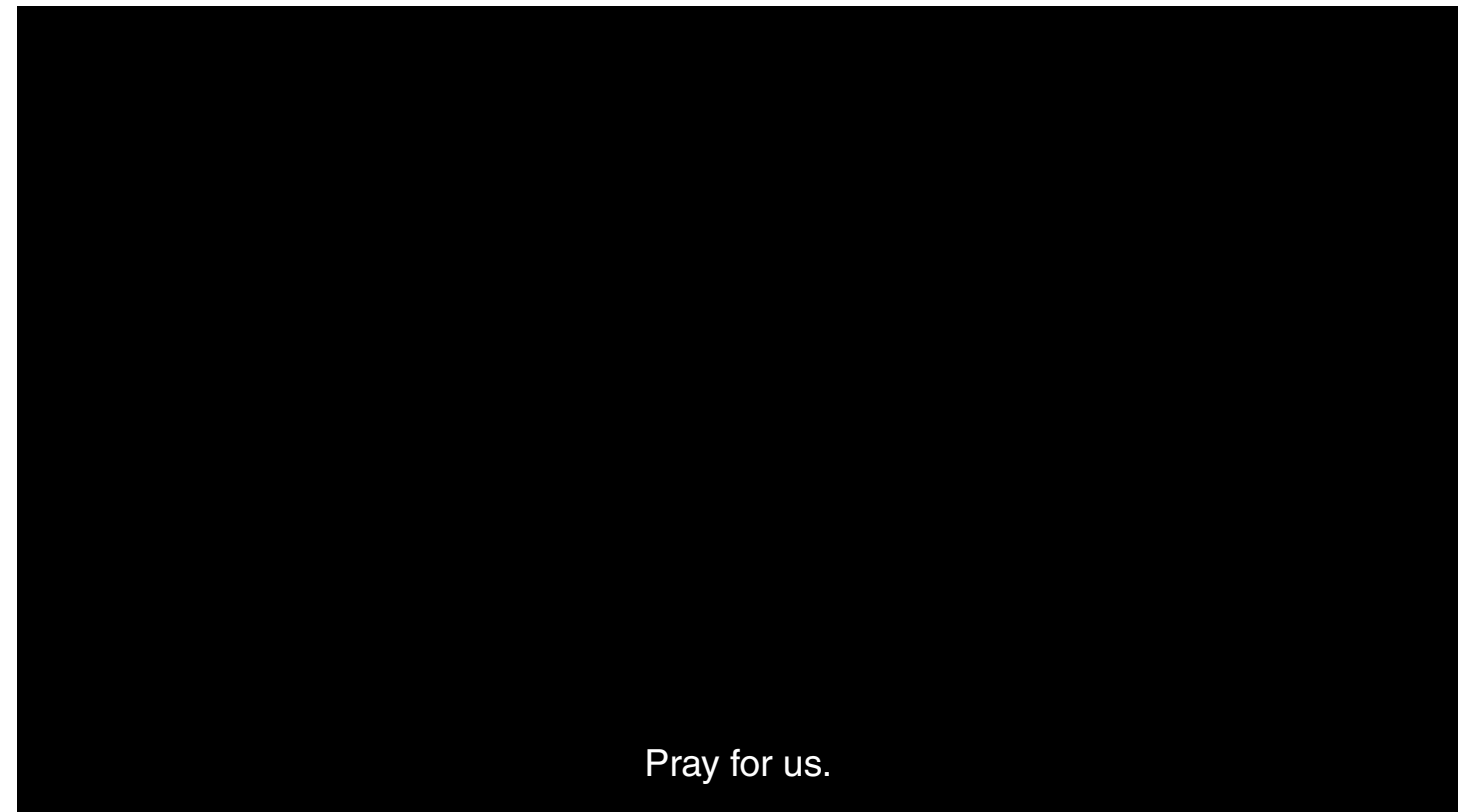
0:30



0:31



0:32



Pray for us.

0:33

← Lucy's eyes, now separated from her body, blankly blink, juxtaposed to the drawn chaos occurring around them. Yes, she too hoped to avoid impending nuptials to a pagan man, choosing instead to poke out her own eyes.

↑ (Have you noticed a distressing pattern yet?) Amen.

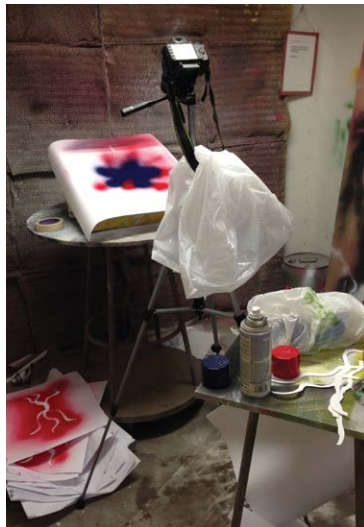


Long Beach  
California  
www.lbc.gov



# These Truths

Video  
2:22



0:08

**T**hese Truths animates a combination of historical texts—*The Declaration of Sentiments*, from the 1848 Seneca Falls Women’s Convention, and Sojourner Truth’s *Ain’t I a Woman* speech. The preamble of the *Declaration of Sentiments* (modeled after the *Declaration of Independence*) coincides with a sequence which shows a female body dressing itself in restrictive mid-nineteenth century attire. The text changes to a list of the women’s grievances, and the scene shifts into more surreal territory. The mild mannered figure appears in live-action vignettes while stenciled spray paint explodes behind. (The composition gives nod to the bizarre arrangement of decorated limbs and bodies in nineteenth century fashion plates.) I recorded the voices of women around campus reading the texts, which play as a voiceover during the video. Although these texts are products of the nineteenth century, their sentiments still ring distressingly true. † Henryk Górecki’s second movement, *Lento e largo—Tranquillissimo*, from his *Symphony No. 3* underscores the video. Soprano Dawn Upshaw repeatedly sings a prayer to Mary that an 18 year old woman scrawled on the wall of a Gestapo cell. The spirit of supplication and confinement felt an appropriate match. ‡

↑ Women’s voices begin to read from *The Declaration of Sentiments*, a feminist *Declaration of Independence* from the 1848 Seneca Falls Women’s Convention. On screen, a chemise descends, covering the body.

← Process shot—making a lovely mess in the spray booth.



0:24



0:29



0:37



0:44

← Socks are put on, followed by pantaloons. She crisply sets the bow. Next comes the corset, cinched tightly, followed by a hoop skirt. The reading continues.

↑ The dress is donned—more fastening. Lace cuffs and a collar will come next. This concludes the reading of the document's preamble, which closely resembles that of the *Declaration of Independence*. But here, all men *and* women are created equal.



0:56



0:57



0:59



1:02

↑ → The figure stands in the center of the frame, tying her bonnet. Suddenly a red rush of spray paint jets out from behind her. A stencil lifts to reveal a pattern. Is it vandalism or patriotism?

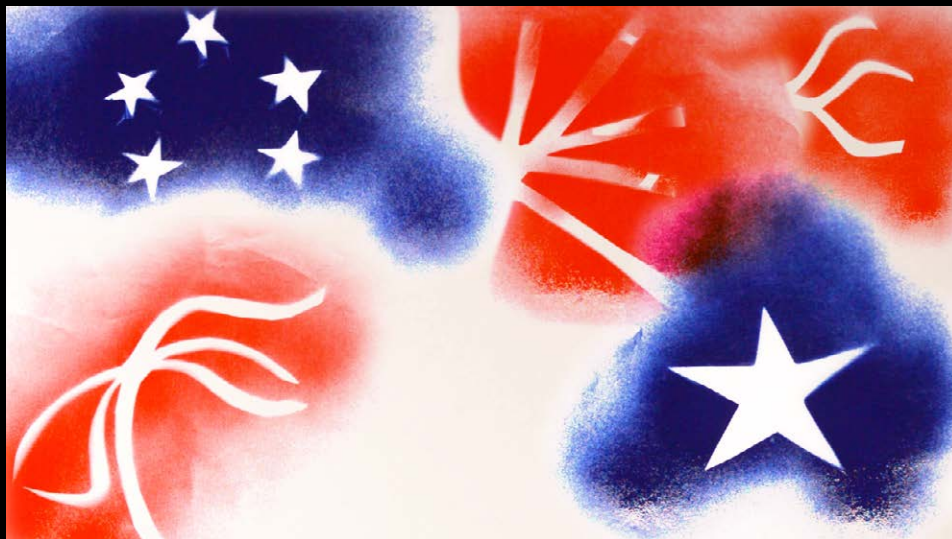




1:28



1:33



2:03



1:43

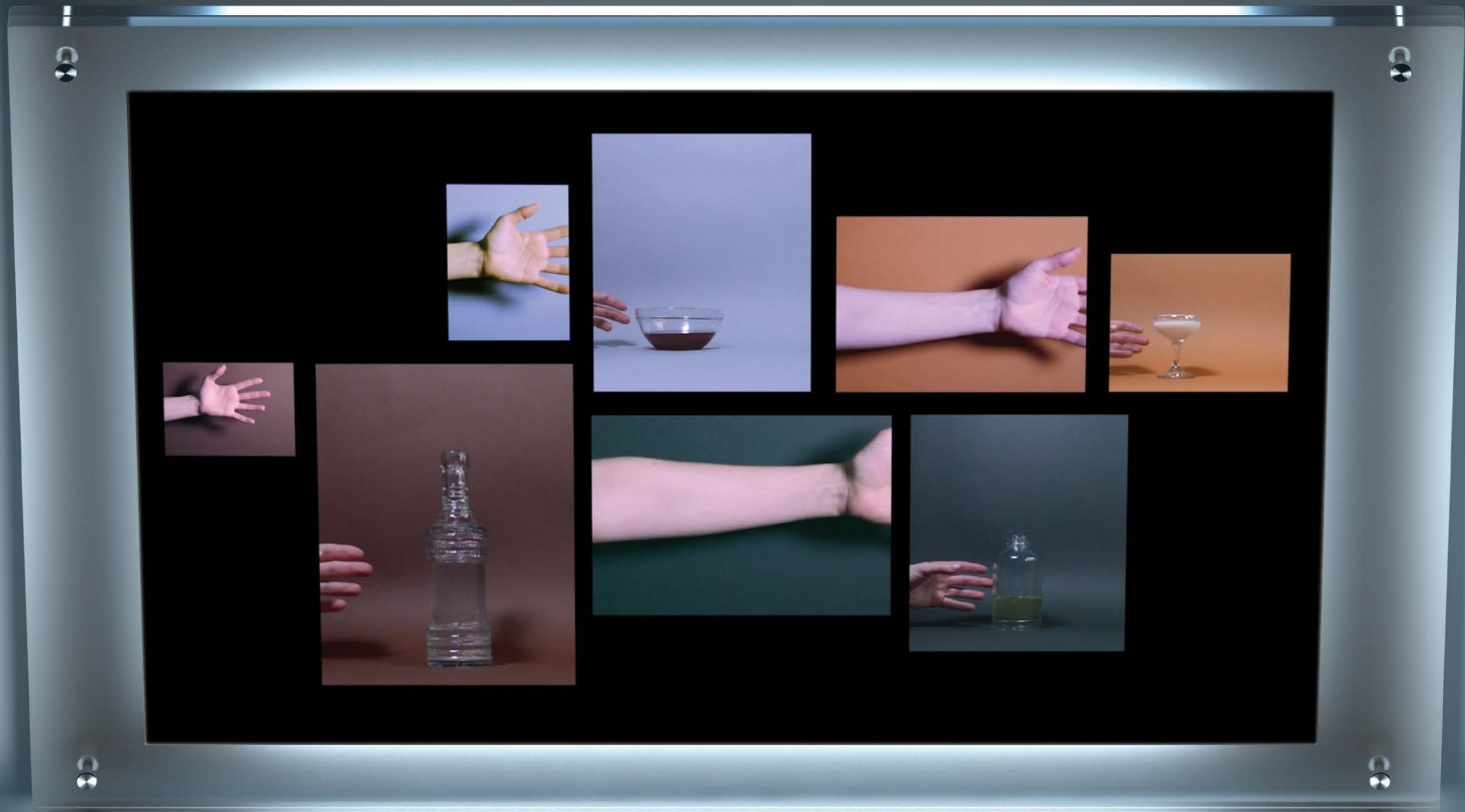
← More figures, each with a flare of spray paint bursting behind her. Their composition resembles the surreal quality of a 19th century fashion plate, where women float across the page, often in fragments, to display the latest trends. The voices are now listing their *sentiments*—beef with the patriarchy, circa 1850.

↑ The figure appears in color, slowly shaking a can of spray paint. The photo studio in the background is also revealed. A final voice reads a rousing piece from Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I a Woman* speech.

# In Theory



Purity & Danger  
Object! Agency!  
Structure, Sign, & Play



# Purity & Danger

Video  
1:17



**S**crimshaw piece, carved after 1837. Anonymous. An excess of time and an excess of teeth. Listless in the Pacific, whalers carved. Compelled by hands invisible, they roved in search of golden grease. The sperm whale's teeth, useless, were left in their grip. On these unsalable canvases, they inscribed the desires of those long left from home. On this tooth, a woman for each side. Curious cohabitants: a fashion plate female and a mythical piratesess. The sanctified and the sanctioned. (Wasn't a woman's place in the home?) Tenderness and violence, tangled into this tooth, the by-product of a gory hunt. Rictus of our largest mammalian kin, domesticated and lovingly inscribed with another object of pursuit. † Man, woman, whale—bound together in a time when purity was prized and separate spheres governed lives. A product of nineteenth century "modernity," but a contradiction to it. † A recent encounter with anthropologist Bruno Latour's essay *We Have Never Been Modern* provided fodder for an investigative framework. Latour argues that modernity, in all its complexity, at its base relies on a single basic binary: a division between nature and culture. As modernity strives to separate one from the other (a process that he names purification), it also creates hybrids between the two (translation), a generative act which propels the progress on which modernity survives. The two processes require each other to exist. Translation needs the dichotomy between nature and culture to be drawn in order to reconfigure it. Purification makes sense of the world's chaos, defines a comfortable, stable, and seemingly predictable partition. Yet these processes are also in opposition to each other—we draw definitions and then we confound them. Modernity, Latour claims, relies on a paradox for its existence, and to be truly modern, we must hold to the pretense that these



0:00

two processes distinct from each other. Of course, these processes are deeply interrelated—to imagine them as distinct is not really possible without magical thinking. Thus, we have never really been modern. † That theory is a heady brew. Let's bring the scrimshawed whale's tooth back into the equation. The nineteenth century world that produced this artifact intently policed the nature-culture binary. At the same time, technological progress leapt wildly against these bounds and created a multiplicity of contradictions to the well-ordered structures of the Victorian world. For example, woman and whale—base animal and perfect angel—exist together in unquestioning harmony. † To tell this story, weighty with theory and history, I developed a visual metaphor, played out in video. To familiar yet off-kilter keening of Ben Johnston's string quartet of *Amazing Grace*, the scrimshaw piece appears showing the fashion plate figure. It turns to reveal its surprise: a rogue piratesess on the opposing face. The video proceeds into surreal territory to illustrate Latour's theory. No words are spoken to lay out the theory; the encounter is meant to have emotional, rather than rational resonance. Hands symbolize culture, four liquids—oil, milk, blood, and water—stand for the natural elements in the story. The hands and liquid exist in their own distinct frames, bounded and "purified." Color, inspired by early American painting palettes, organizes the various binaries. But as the video proceeds, hybridization begins: the hands reach across the divide and subdue the liquid, while the liquid pours messily onto the hands. In the end, the separate frames are gone, replaced by the human figure interacting with each liquid within a frame. After all, we have never been modern. †

↑ Behold—a sperm whale tooth, meticulously inscribed with a fashion plate female. It currently resides among the Providence Public Library's special whaling collection. 19th century whalers would carve whale teeth as gifts, often using fashion plates as source imagery. The PPL has managed to track down the original reference for this image. It appears on the previous page.

← Cocoa powder and powdered sugar mixed with red food dye makes a nice fake blood. It also makes a nice sticky mess. This project required a great many splash guards, buckets, and paper towels.

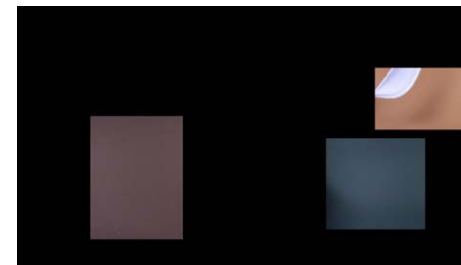
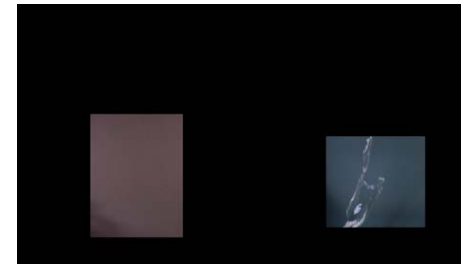
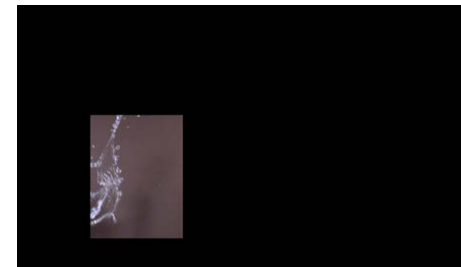




0:05

↑ The scrimshawed tooth rotates slowly and reveals its verso—a rogue pirate! She was copied from a popular book about pirates published in 1837, which begins with the story of Awilda, who we see here. A 5th-century Scandinavian princess, she and her ladies dressed as men and turned to piracy when she refused to marry the Danish prince Alf. After Alf gets the upper hand in a naval battle, Awilda, impressed with his bravery, reveals her identity and marries him.

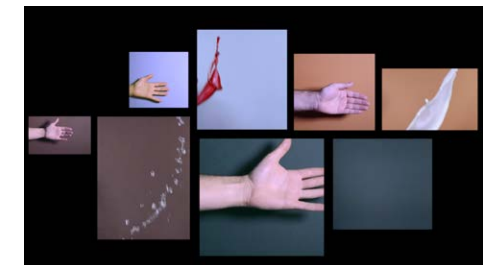
→ Splash—water! Splash—blood! Splash—milk! Splash—oil!  
Hands emerge.



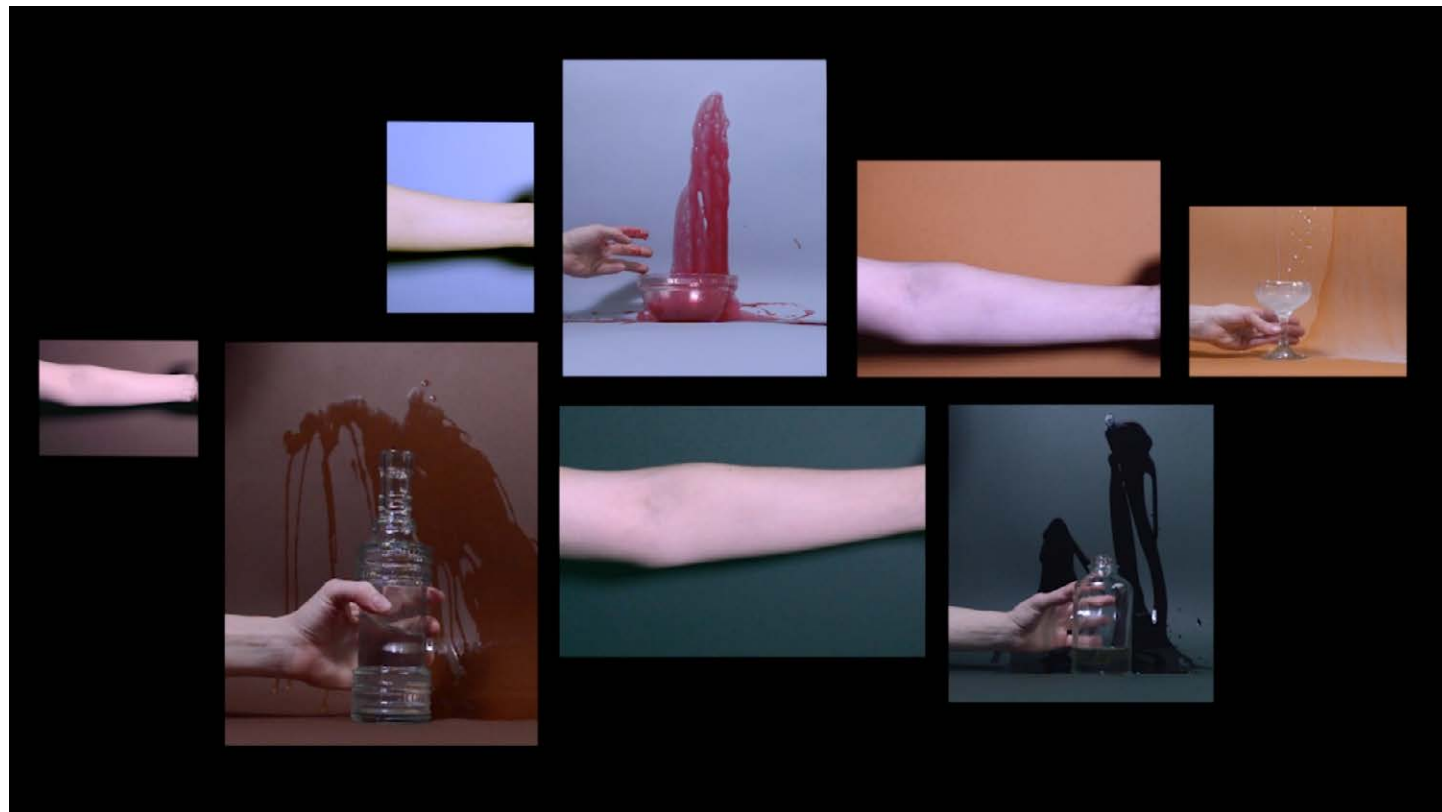
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0:15

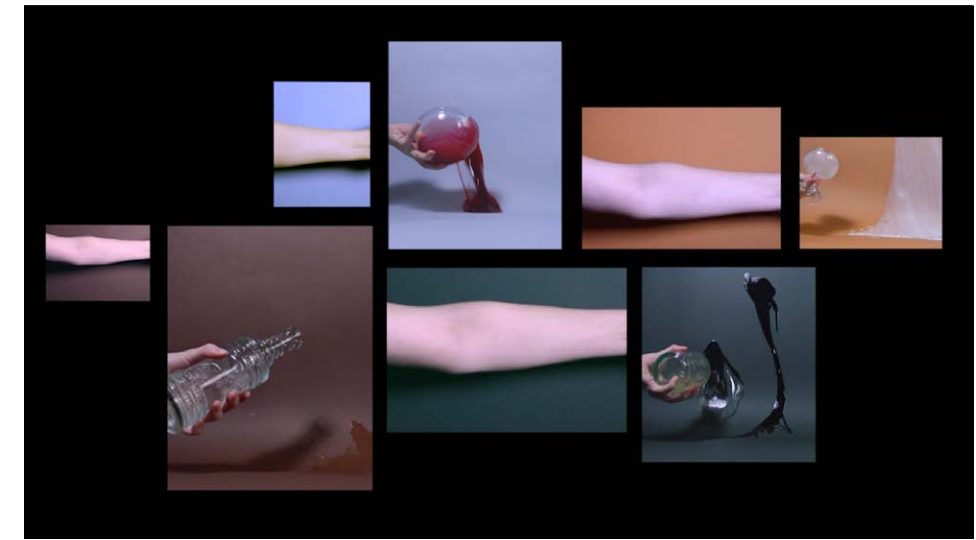


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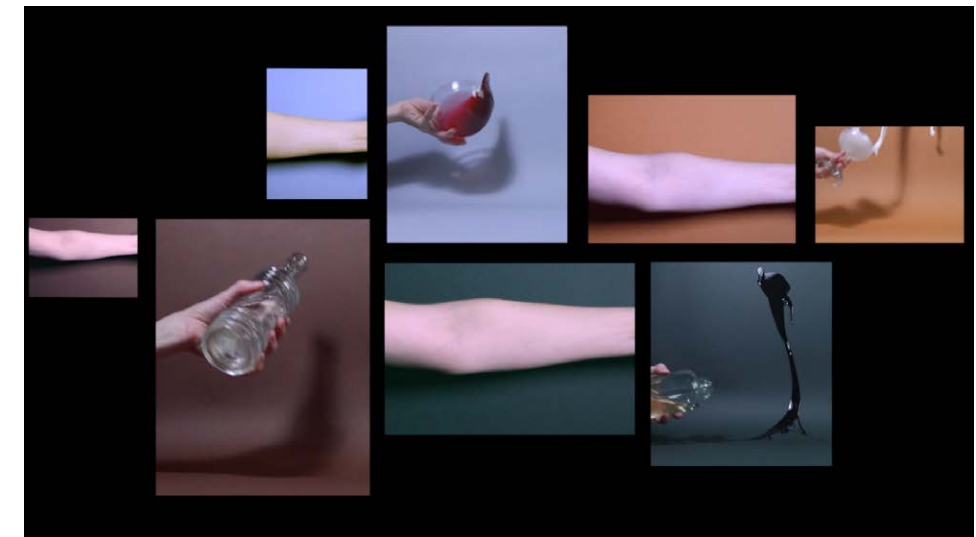


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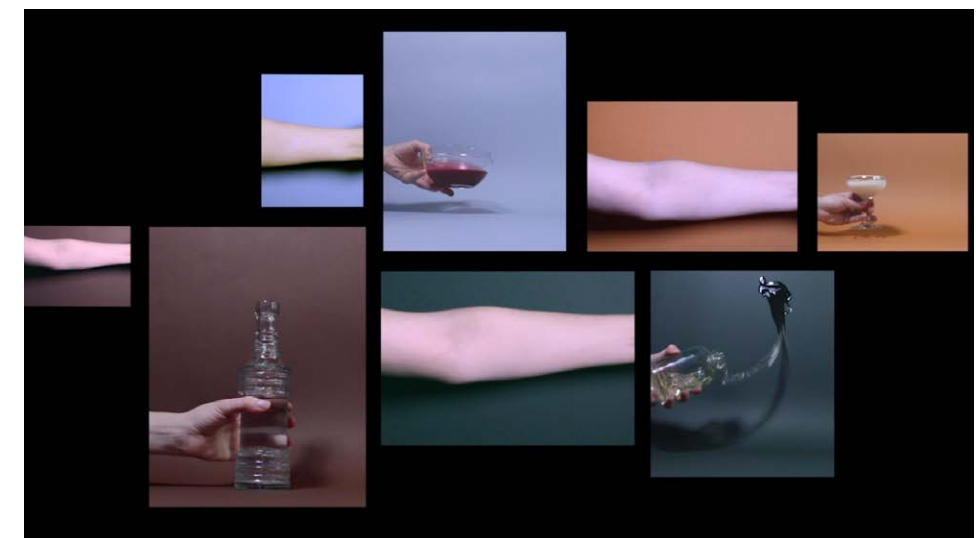
↑ → The scene resets, with the liquids splattered on the background. Hands reach into their neighboring frames, inexplicably gathering the spilt liquids back into the glass containers. This back and forth illustrates Bruno Latour's theories about modernity. He posits that it relies on creating binaries between nature (here, the liquids) and culture (the hands). At the same time, it requires hybrids between the two to progress (the interaction between the frames).



0:30



0:31



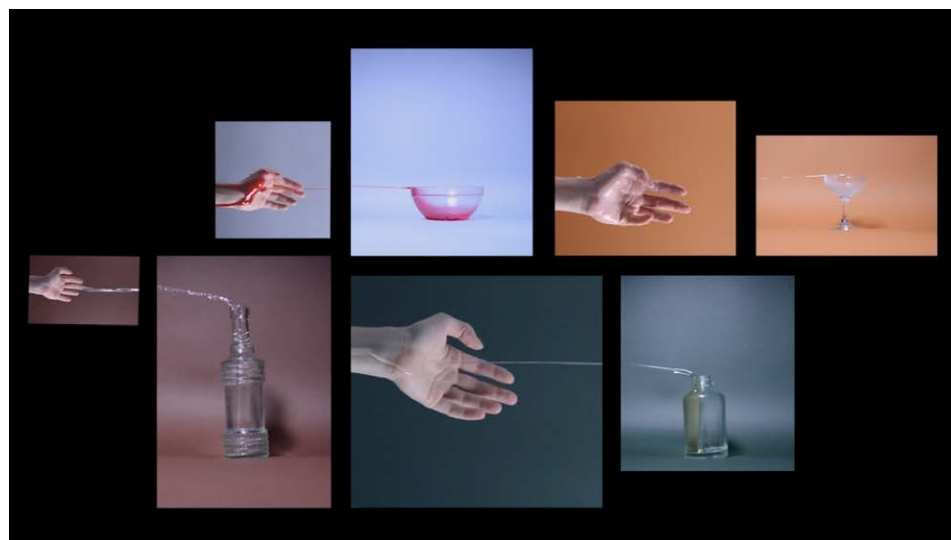
0:32



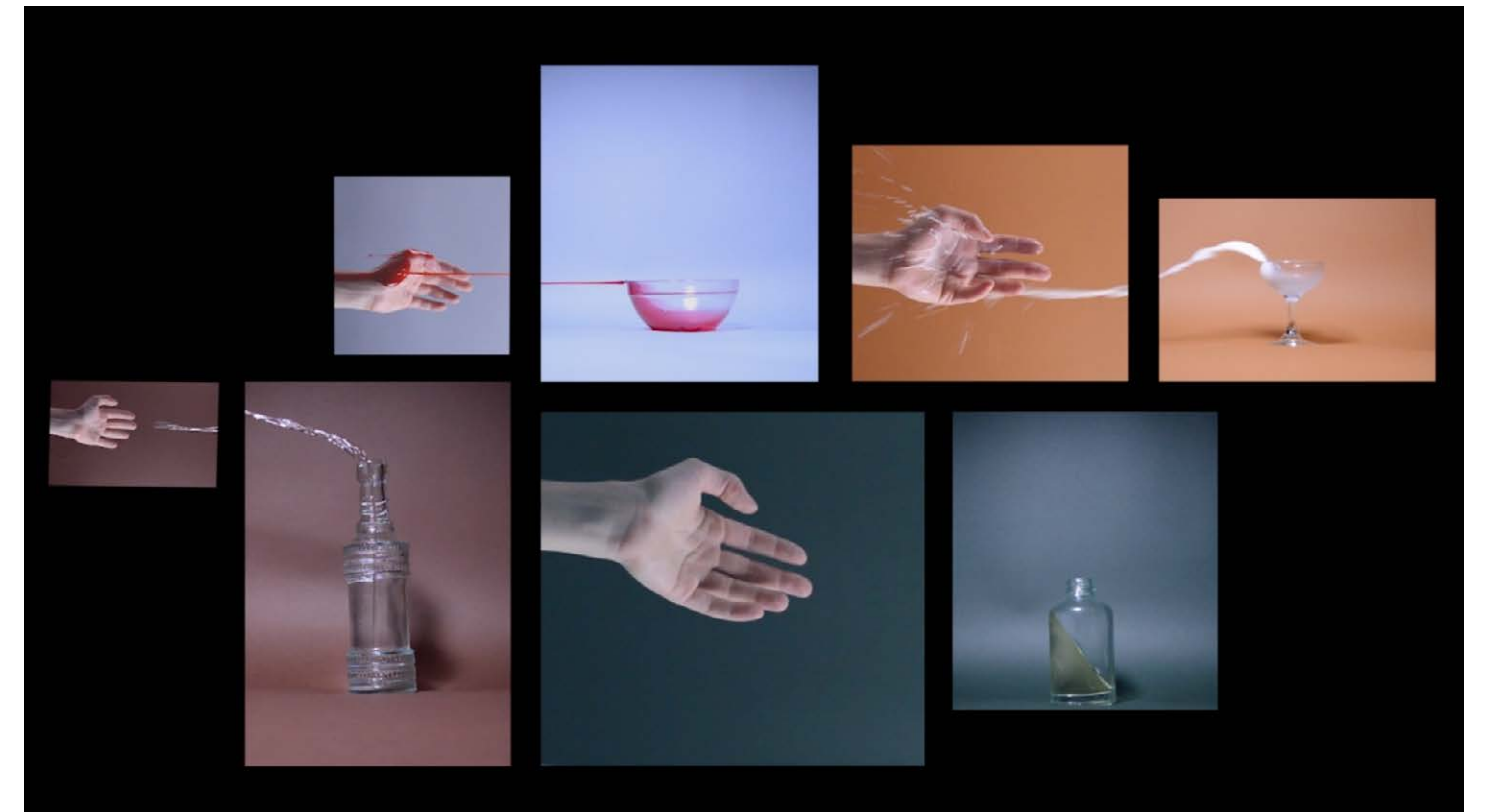
0:35



0:36



0:37



0:38

← ↑ Liquids (nature) defy gravity, pouring up and out of their vessels and splashing onto the hands (culture). What a mess—more hybridity. Latour argues that while modernity likes to think that purification (binary making) and hybridization are separate, they really are not. It's not that clean-cut. Ergo, we've never been modern, as seen on the following page.



**OBJECT! AGENCY!**

# Object! Agency!

Live Performance  
15:00



In his essay, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” Tony Bennett juxtaposes Foucault’s theories on discipline to the rise of museums in the nineteenth century. According to Foucault, states displayed power through punishment—first with public display, and then with incarceration, keeping the condemned separate and out of sight. Museums, however, followed a contrasting trajectory, moving from the private collections of the powerful, to being put on display for the public as a means of education and controlling knowledge. That’s a bit bleak. Objects and observers have agency too—let’s claim it. † With institutions, indoctrination, and confinement on the brain, I liked the idea of using a book and hula hoop to juxtapose a stance of controlled confinement with an action that is playful, even defiant. These musings resulted in a performance piece held in a RISD Museum gallery, in conjunction with the Performing the Museum class. Its title was originally eponymous with the essay, but when I revisited the piece for Lost&, a show in the RISD Museum’s Gelman Gallery about utopian futures by fellow GD MFA’s, it gained a spirit of dark optimism and its new title. (A special thanks to the RISD Museum for letting me hula hoop multiple times in the museum.) † The performance begins with my body standing obediently within the bounds of the golden hoop, a white book balanced on my head. In conversation with my female form, the objects call to mind separate spheres and hoop skirts, comportment and the well-mannered “feminine” body, these symbolic attributions further amplified by the museum context. After minutes of serene stillness, the book falls into my hands, I lift the hoop and begin to hula and read from the text (a selection from the full essay by Bennett). Suddenly, those very same objects take on a provocative, resistant role. The full performance lasts approximately fifteen minutes. At the end of the text, the book returns to my head and the hoop to the floor. The arrangement is the same, but the symbols of confinement have become agents of action and opportunity. †



↑ Inside the RISD Museum, a golden hoop and book, with a trace of the performer. (She’s taking a water break.)

←The performer assumes her posture. Standing rigidly, the pernicious body is contained by book and hoop.

## THE EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX

by Tony Bennett

*As read during the performance.*

In reviewing Foucault on the asylum, the clinic, and the prison as institutional articulations of power and knowledge relations, Douglas Crimp suggests that there “is another such institution of confinement ripe for analysis in Foucault’s terms—the museum—and another discipline—art history.” Crimp is no doubt right, although the terms of his proposal are misleadingly restrictive. For the emergence of the art museum was closely related to that of a wider range of institutions—history and natural science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national and, later, international exhibitions, arcades and department stores—which served as linked sites for the development and circulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision. Furthermore, while these comprised an intersecting set of institutional and disciplinary relations which might be productively analyzed as particular articulations of power and knowledge, the suggestion that they should be construed as institutions of confinement is curious. It seems to imply that works of art had previously wandered through the streets of Europe like the Ships of Fools in Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*; or that geological and natural history specimens had been displayed before the world, like the condemned on the scaffold, rather than being withheld from public gaze, secreted in the *studiolo* of princes, or made accessible only to the limited gaze of high society in the *cabinets des curieux* of the aristocracy. Museums may have enclosed objects within walls, but the nineteenth century saw their doors opened to the general public—witnesses whose presence was just as essential to a display of power as had been that of the people before the spectacle of punishment in the eighteenth century. Institutions, then, not of confinement but of exhibition,

→ The book drops from her head into her hand. She lifts the hula hoop and gives it a twirl. She begins to read.



forming a complex of disciplinary and power relations whose development might more fruitfully be juxtaposed to, rather than aligned with, the formation of Foucault's *carceral archipelago*. For the movement Foucault traces in *Discipline and Punish* is one in which objects and bodies—the scaffold and the body of the condemned—which had previously formed a part of the public display of power were withdrawn from the public gaze as punishment increasingly took the form of incarceration. No longer inscribed within a public dramaturgy of power, the body of the condemned comes to be caught up within an inward-looking web of power relations. Subjected to omnipresent forms of surveillance through which the message of power was carried directly to it so as to render it docile, the body no longer served as the surface on which, through the system of retaliatory marks inflicted on it in the name of the sovereign, the lessons of power were written for others to read:

The scaffold, where the body of the tortured criminal had been exposed to the ritually manifest force of the sovereign, the punitive theatre in which the representation of punishment was permanently available to the social body, was replaced by a great enclosed, complex and hierarchised structure that was integrated into the very body of the state apparatus.

The institutions comprising *the exhibitionary complex*, by contrast, were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society.

→ The text is dense. Very unmuseum-like undulations continue. But they hinder not the reading—she expounds with zeal. The author compares museums and prisons—both are institutions of confinement, constructed to educate and regulate the behavior of the masses. That's a bit bleak. Objects and observers have agency too—let's claim it.

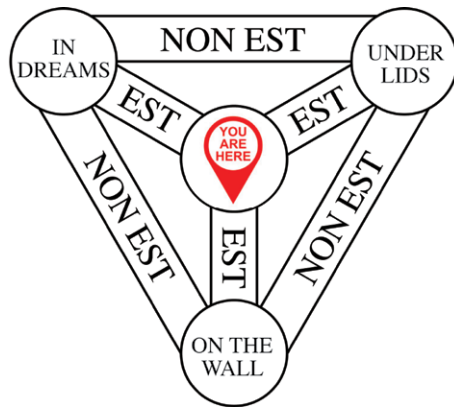




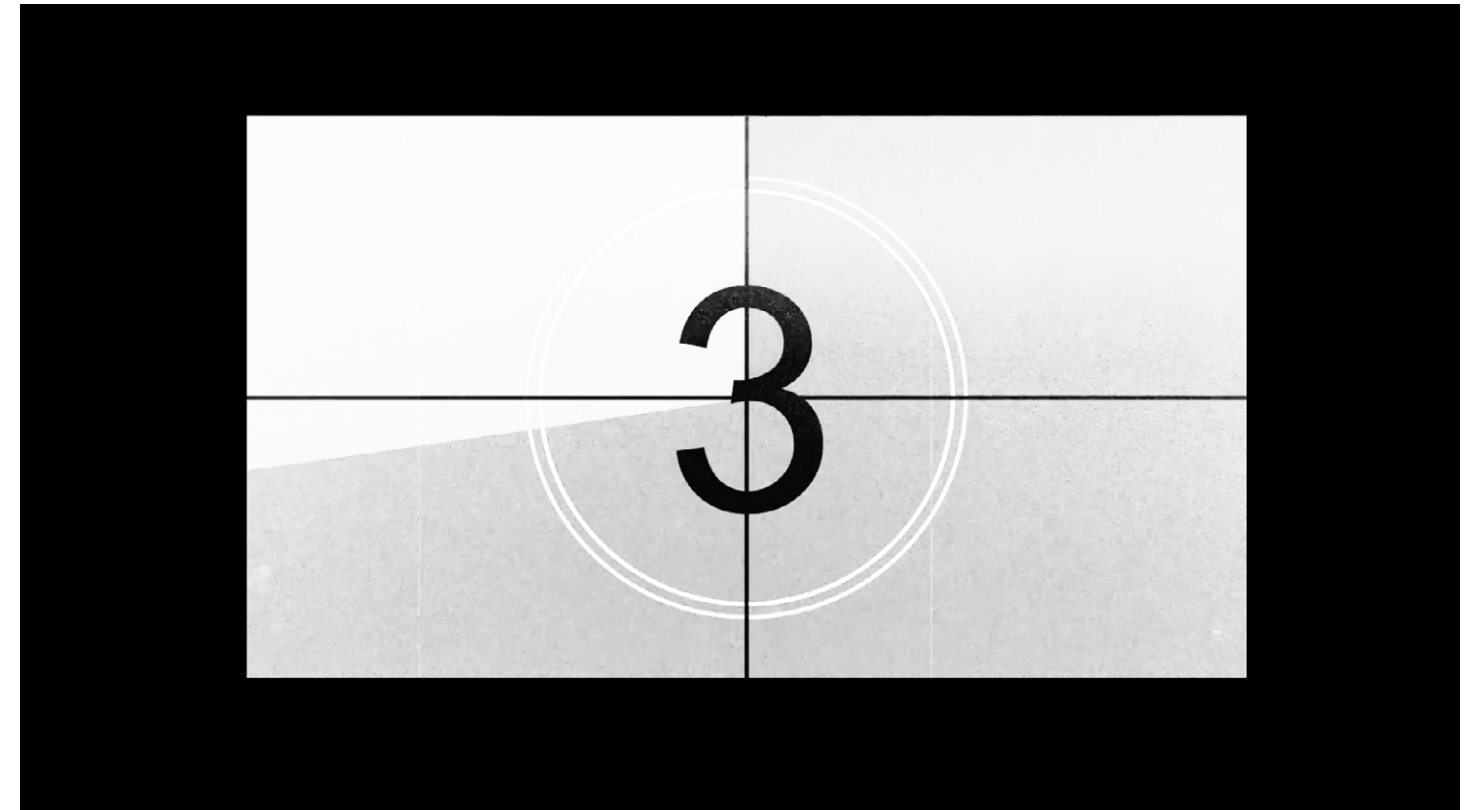


# Structure, Sign, & Play

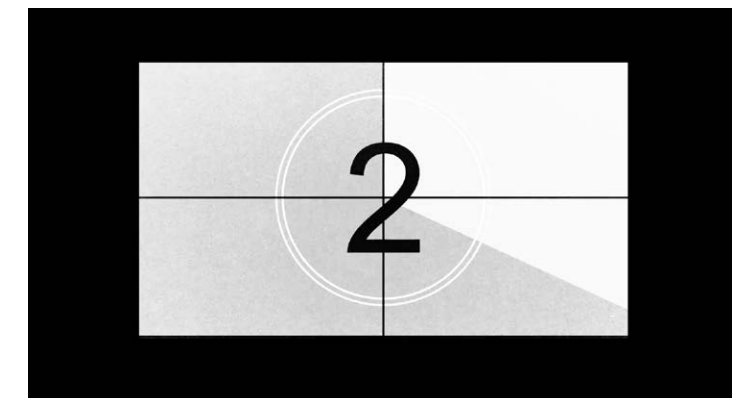
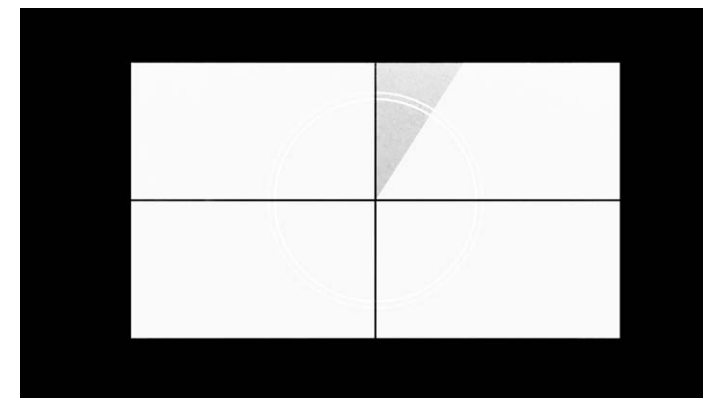
Video Installation  
2:26



Three is a magic number. † Classical rhetoric recognized this power, and created the hendiatis: an emphatic figure of speech, where three words that are used to express one idea. (Think *veni, vidi, vici*.) † This piece was originally installed in a triangular configuration, inspired by the *Scutum Fidei*, a diagram developed in the 12th century to explain the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity. The project had emerged from a fascination with this diagram—a very clear and logical attempt to explain an essentially inexplicable. I compiled an extensive list of common triads: Three Little Pigs, omg, stop lights. Arranging my collection in a loosely associative narrative arc, I mined YouTube for illustrative clips. (Each triplet had to either come from the same video or show different versions of the same thing—a strict methodology.) I recorded myself singing the list, layering my (decidedly untrained) voice into triadic combinations. The piece’s structure may be rigorous and repetitive, but the views and the voice add vulnerable and humorous elements. † The title, *Structure, Sign, & Play* is a loose reference to an eponymous lecture given by Jacques Derrida, which is regarded as the starting point of post-structuralism. I can’t boast a profound understanding of Derrida, but he did make the perfect hendiatis to name my piece. But the post-structuralist association was also apt. While this piece is, in some ways, an ode to structure, it’s also a parody of strict, overly-simple systems, such as the *Scutum Fidei*. Structuralists felt that knowledge is grounded underlying societal or linguistic structures, and that discovering these structures would lead to understanding. In contrast, post-structuralists believed that any such structures would inevitably contain human bias. It was necessary therefore not to discover systems and hold them as truth, but to examine them critically. †



0:01

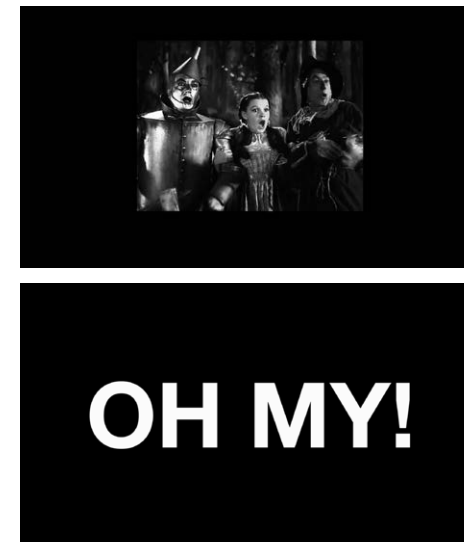


← The *Scutum Fidei* is an early infographic explaining the Holy Trinity (one God in three persons—*est* means *is* and *non est* means *is not*). It got me thinking about pairs of threes. Pictured here is one of my own arbitrary groupings placed into the diagram.

↑ This piece involved three screens, each with their own video, syncopating and aligning according to the groupings of three that I sing (roughly) in the background. It begins with a countdown: 3-2-1! All footage was scavenged from Youtube.



0:21



0:26



↑ Niña, Pinta, & Santa María.

→ Lions and Tigers and Bears—oh my!

↓ Bipity, bopity, boo.



SCREEN 1

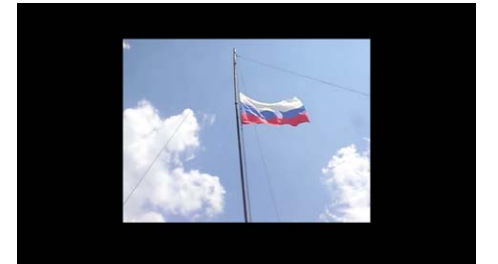
SCREEN 2

SCREEN 3

SCREEN 1

SCREEN 2

SCREEN 3



1:43

1:57

↑ Ruth Bader Ginsberg (Notorious).

→ Red, White, and Blue.

↓ Hickory, Dickory, Dock.





# Intermission

Simple Mechanics





# Simple Mechanics

Video Operetta  
Collaboration with Lauren Traugott-Campbell  
10:17



labor. A fraught topic, particularly now. Globalization and mechanization have transformed the way we work, but America retains a strongly mythologized view of labor. Edgy urbanites don Carharts and swig Pabst, yearning for a gritty authenticity which modern, computer-driven life can lack. Pundits, politicians, and corporations sing paeans of the proletariat, while simultaneously using them as pawns. Meanwhile, the working class feels increasingly disenfranchised and ignored. There is a mismatch between rhetoric and reality—disparity increases and political polarization accelerates, and no one can agree on a solution. † Visions of labor are outdated, often exclusive. “American Labor” conjures images of 1930s WPA posters and 1960s Labor movements, the protagonist often white, straight, Protestant, and male. We wanted to present an alternate, more complicated view. † The impetus for this project did not begin on such a serious note. One desk away, Lauren, interested in probing the relationship of labor and play, felt compelled to collect snippets of Car Talk and brightly colored manufacturing leftovers. I felt compelled to choreograph and orchestrate these materials. A partnership was formed. † Inspired by the work of Philip Glass (particularly *Einstein on the Beach*) and John Adams, the project took the form of an operetta. A ridiculous choice in many ways—two graphic designers making an operetta in a very short timespan. But opera, as a means to combine image, sound, and multiple voices, as a medium of complexity and deep emotion, it was destined to be. † *Simple Mechanics* maintains a number of conventional operatic trappings. We have an overture where the orchestra tunes, a first and second act, and an intermission. We have a grand red curtain, arias, characters, conflict, high drama, and an accompanying libretto to help the



0:45

audience follow along. But our skill sets and our vision dictated that convention end there. Our curtain was assembled from greasy red mechanics’ rags. We had no actors or singers. On screen you see hands clad in work gloves interacting with a giant spool of orange tape printed with the word *American*. In the first act, the spool unwinds, in the second, it is cut across the word *American*. As for the score, our arias were cyclical spoken word poems accompanied by samples from the virtuosic YouTube spoons performances of Abby the Spoon Lady. We assembled the rest of the score from YouTube clips of pundits, politicians, corporations, and activists. As they talk, chant, and sing about labor and the working class, their voices mix together into a confusing blur, punctuated by weird and endearing mechanical imitations from Car Talk. During the Car Talk interludes, brightly colored industrial cast-offs perform with ebullience. It’s an odd mix—parts serious, parts hilarious, parts uncanny—but it manages to strike a compelling chord. † The storyline follows a rough chronology from the rise of the Labor movement in the 1960s, through its gradual unraveling over the past few decades of neoliberal policy. The voices are only identified in the printed libretto at the end of each act—with such a politically-charged topic, the anonymity acts as an equalizer. We have our opinions, but wish the viewer to form their own. †

↑ How does an operetta about labor begin? With an tuning orchestra that includes drill sounds and a large stage curtain made of greasy red mechanics’ rags.

← Click and Clack, the Tappet Brothers were well known for making callers impersonate the strange sounds their cars made on their NPR call-in auto repair show, Car Talk. We borrowed this same playful-verging on bonkers spirit (and some audio clips) when making our operetta. The title, *Simple Mechanics*, is a nod to them.



1:05



1:06



1:07



1:11

← Work-gloved hands part the curtain for Act I, accompanied by a cello cover of Rhianna's *Work*.

↑ Next we see the hands supporting a giant spool of orange ribbon upon which the word *American* is inscribed. Pete Seeger's *Solidarity Forever* plays in the background. This first act documents the rise of the Labor movement.



1:25

- '81 Jeep J10
- '93 Pontiac Sunbird
- '96 Dodge Stratus
- 1978 Toyota
- Bob from Queens
- Cathy with a C
- Dave from Westover
- Vanessa Nagel

ONE HAND WASHES THE OTHER  
 MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS  
 THEY'VE TWISTED THE TRUTH THAT  
 ONE HAND WASHES THE OTHER  
 MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS  
 THEY'VE TWISTED THE TRUTH THAT  
 ONE HAND WASHES THE OTHER  
 MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS  
 THEY'VE TWISTED THE TRUTH THAT

Badgingding, and then  
 pretty soon it sounds like Yatzee dice.  
*Which side are you on, boys?*  
 It is about our national priorities,  
*Which side are you on?*  
 It is about who we are as a nation,  
*Which side are you on, boys?*  
 It is about which side we are on.  
*Which side are you on?*  
*They say in Harlan County*  
 It is about which side we are on.  
*There are no neutrals there.*  
*You'll either be a union man*  
 It is about which side we are on.  
*Or a thug for J. H. Blair.*  
*Which side are you on, boys?*  
 It is about which side we are on.  
*Which side are you on?*  
*Tell me—which side are you on, boys?*  
 It is about which side we are on.  
*Which side are you on?*  
 Self interest, directed by the invisible  
 hand of market prices explains why  
 steak gets to New Yorkers.

BOW YOUR HEAD  
 HANDS PRAY  
 PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF  
 THE INVISIBLE HAND SAYS  
 BOW YOUR HEAD  
 HANDS PRAY  
 PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF  
 THE INVISIBLE HAND SAYS  
 BOW YOUR HEAD  
 HANDS PRAY  
 PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF  
 THE INVISIBLE HAND SAYS

Well in a nutshell,  
Here's the deal.  
Ok.  
(Whistles)

But if a man doesn't have  
a job or an income,  
he has neither life nor liberty,  
or the possibility for the pursuit  
of happiness.  
He merely exists.  
But if a man doesn't have  
a job or an income,  
He merely exists.  
He merely exists.

(Instrumental interlude of the spoons)

EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYEE,  
EMPLOYER, PLOY,  
PLIED, PILLORIED,  
THEY MEANT YOU TO

eee-eee-eee-eee

EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYEE,  
EMPLOYER, PLOY,  
PLIED, PILLORIED,  
THEY MEANT YOU TO  
EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYEE,  
EMPLOYER, PLOY,  
PLIED, PILLORIED,  
THEY MEANT YOU TO

Here are a couple of things  
America got right:  
Cars, and freedom.  
Cars, and freedom.  
Here are a couple of things  
America got right:  
Cars, and freedom.  
Cars, and freedom.  
America got right:  
Cars,  
Cars,

Yes, yes. Cars,  
The answer is unequivocally yes.  
Cars, and freedom  
There are a lot of people out here  
trying to carve out their American dream.

Dave, from Westover  
Kathy with a K

While they have different lives,

Jennifer, from Tallahassee, Florida  
different jobs, different needs,

Bill, from Swisher, Iowa  
they all rely on the same truck.

And I am confident that after it's all over  
with, there will be a better understanding  
between employer and employee.



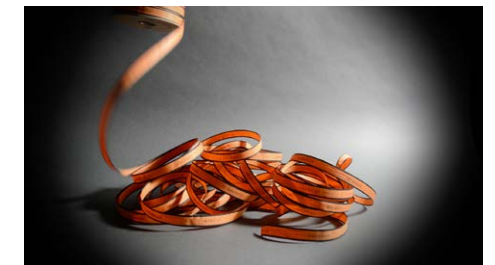
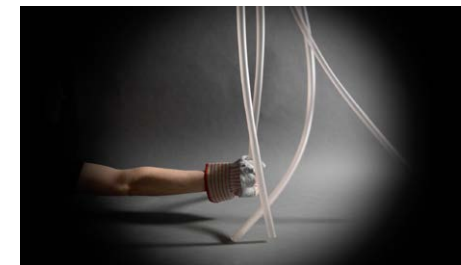
2:40



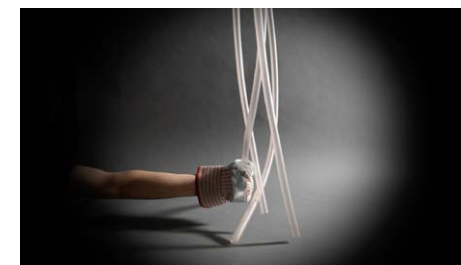
3:06



2:15



2:41



3:12

3:54



↑ The ribbon slowly unspools. Disparate vocal samples weave together our operatic tale. Pete Seeger, Bernie, MLK, a Ford commercial, Reagan, several spoken work arias, and, of course, Car Talk samples set the stage in Act I. (Cars and freedom, y'all.) The slide towards spool-entropy is punctuated by gloved hands playfully interacting with industrial cast-offs—seen here in the center column. Car noise impressions from Car Talk accompany these outbursts.

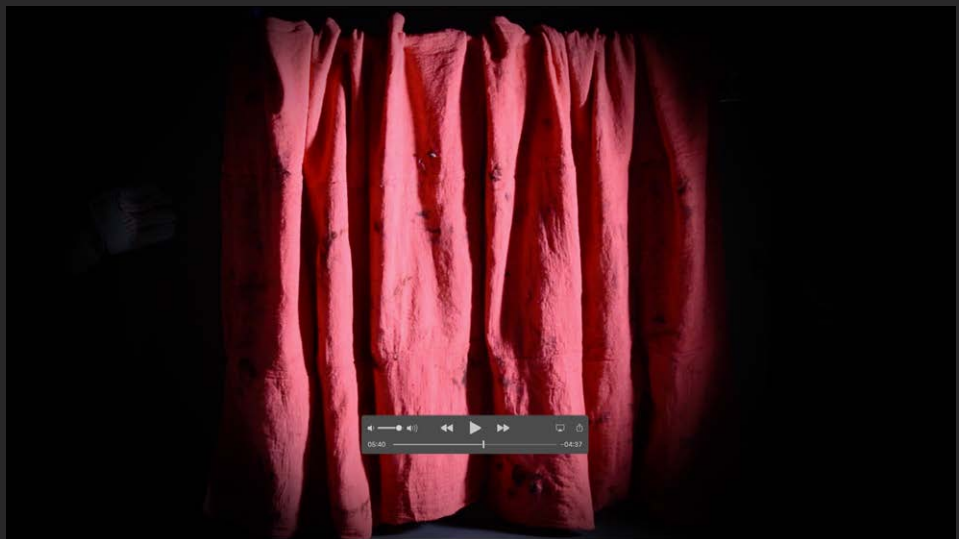
A photograph of red, textured curtains hanging in a dark room. The curtains are illuminated from the side, creating deep shadows and bright highlights. The word "INTERMISSION" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the curtains, enclosed in large white curly braces. The overall mood is dramatic and theatrical.

{ INTERMISSION }



*(Cheesy orchestral music)*

I've been collecting stories  
I will follow you that are told in the Soviet Union  
Follow you wherever you may go by their people among themselves,  
which reveal that they've got  
a great sense of humor, but also  
a pretty cynical attitude  
towards their system.  
There isn't an ocean too deep,  
I told this one—  
Bill you'll have to hear it again—  
I told it in the car.  
A mountain so high it can keep  
(I didn't tell this one to Gorbachev.)  
me away.  
(Laughter)  
I must follow you You know there's a ten year delay  
in the Soviet Union  
Ever since you touched my hand,  
I know. of delivery of an automobile.  
Only one out of seven families  
in the Soviet Union own automobiles.  
That near you I always must be  
There's a ten year wait.  
And you go through quite a process  
And nothing can keep you from me  
when you're ready to buy,  
and then you put down the money  
in advance.  
You are my destiny. This happened to a fellow—



I love you, This is their story they tell—  
 I love you, this is their joke—  
 I love you, And where you go and this man,  
 I'll follow, he laid down his money.  
 I'll follow, And then this fellow,  
 I'll follow, the one that was in charge,  
 You'll always be my true love, said to him:  
 "Ok, come back in ten years  
 my true love, and get your car."  
 my true love, From now until forever,  
 And the fellow said:  
 forever, "Morning or afternoon?"  
 forever. (Laughter)  
 I will follow you And  
 Follow you wherever you may go  
 The fellow behind the counter says:  
 "Well, ten years from now,  
 There isn't an ocean too deep  
 what difference does it make?"  
 And the fellow said,  
 A mountain so high it can keep  
 "Well, the plumber's coming  
 in the morning."  
 Keep me away, away from my love  
 (Laughter)

I LOVE YOU,  
 I LOVE YOU,  
 I LOVE YOU...  
 AND WHERE YOU GO  
 I'LL FOLLOW,  
 I'LL FOLLOW,  
 I'LL FOLLOW...  
 CAUSE WE SUPPORT THE UNION,  
 THE UNION,  
 THE UNION...  
 AND THAT'S THE WAY WE LIKE IT,  
 WE LIKE IT,  
 WE LIKE IT...  
 OHHH OHHH OHHH  
 OHHH OHHH OHHH



5:59

↑ The curtain opens for the second act with upbeat music and a speaker for The Heritage Foundation announcing: "Our rallying cry is opportunity for all and favoritism for none."

→ We hear a clacky spoons performance from Abby the Spoon Lady and another spoken word aria. The second half follows the erosion of Labor and the rise of neoliberal policy.



6:10





7:17



7:16

7:19



7:18



7:23

↑ The samples of Car Talk recordings with people imitating their car sounds punctuate the score. These staccato moments are visually disruptive as well—the viewer sees short flashes of hands playing with colorful industrial cast-offs. (As seen in the center column.)

→ The ribbon gets cut in the middle of the word *American*.



9:41

→ Well I'm calling you because  
I think I have a problem.  
I have a 1998 Ford Explorer.

POWER DYNAMICS  
DAMN THE SEMANTICS  
SYCOPHANTIC  
HALLS OF POWER  
IN THE THRALLS OF  
POWER DYNAMICS  
DAMN THE SEMANTICS  
SYCOPHANTIC  
HALLS OF POWER  
IN THE THRALLS OF  
POWER DYNAMICS  
DAMN THE SEMANTICS  
SYCOPHANTIC  
HALLS OF POWER  
IN THE THRALLS OF

Heheh. It's an automotive problem,  
though I suppose it could turn legal.  
I have a 1984 Renault Fuego.

I think most Americans are worried  
that we are going in the wrong  
direction as a country.

*Hello Detroit autoworker,  
Let me thank you for you time,  
you work a 40 hour week for a living,  
just to send it on down the line.*

BY-PRODUCTS  
BUY LOCAL  
BY MYSELF  
BY GOLLY  
GLOBALIZED  
BY-PRODUCTS  
BUY LOCAL  
BY MYSELF  
BY GOLLY  
GLOBALIZED  
BY-PRODUCTS  
BUY LOCAL  
BY MYSELF  
BY GOLLY  
GLOBALIZED

It's like R-r-Rrr. Ok but does it—

Who protects the worker? Who, who  
protects the worker? Who protects the  
worker? Who, who protects the worker?

*Hello, A-mer-i-ca.*

I go around in my pick-up truck.  
85 Toyota Avalon?  
I have an 88 Honda Accord.  
—the frequency as you get closer  
and closer—woowooowowo.

All power to the people!  
All power to the people!

And I want to talk a little about a new  
plan we have today. It's called "power to  
the people."

Which side are you on, my people,  
Which side are you on?

We're on the freedom side!

(Drill sound)

I think it has a lot to do with speech  
and deeds, thought and action.

(Instrumental interlude of the spoons)

SIMPLE MECHANICS  
MACHINATIONS COMPLEX  
PLEXIGLAS CEILINGS  
THE ART OF THE  
SEAL THE DEAL  
IT'S MACHIAVELLIAN  
DO YOU MOCK US?

·  
·  
·

For everyone who works  
behind the scenes,

Well, you've wasted another perfectly  
good hour listening to Car Talk.

You can see them every morning,  
in the factories and the fields.

In the city streets  
and the quiet country towns.

Working together  
like spokes inside a wheel.

They keep this country  
tur-ning  
around.



9:45



9:46

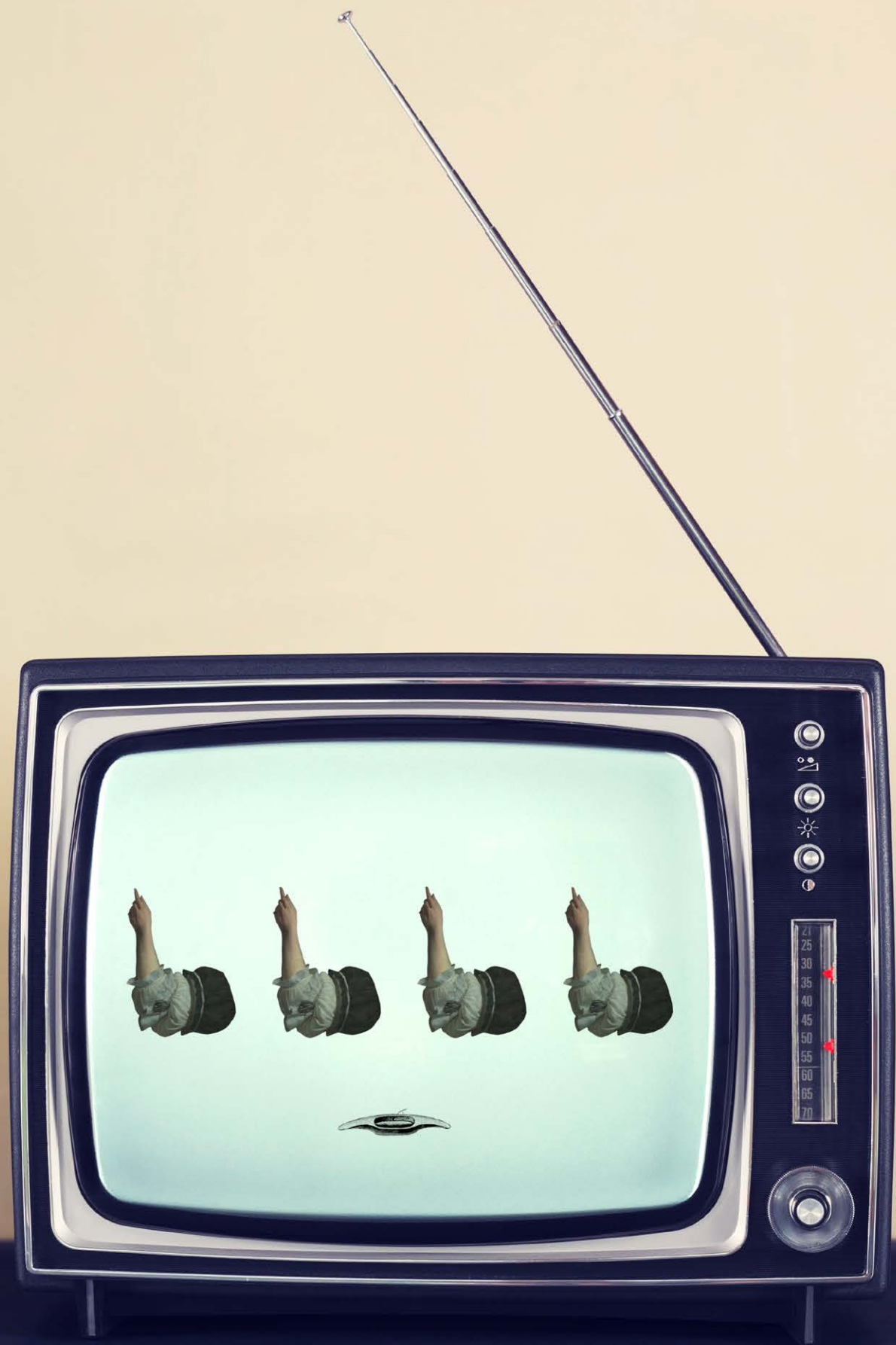


9:55



# Common Thread

Flax Processing  
Tirocchi

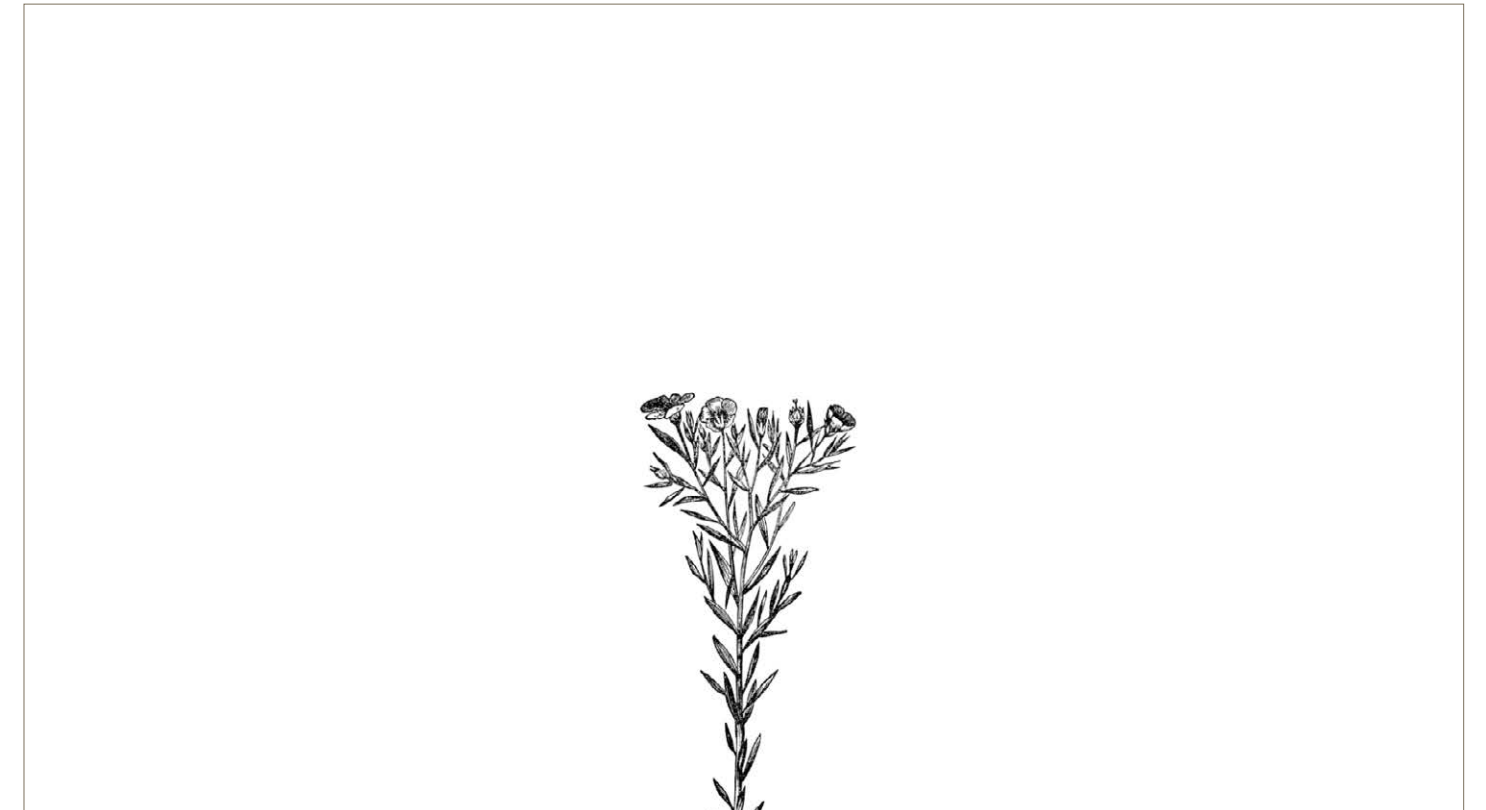


# Flax Processing

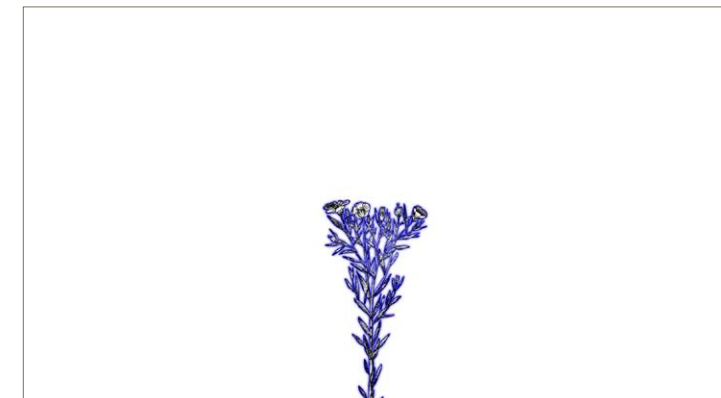
Video  
4:04



earn to make linen by hand! Linen production has a delightfully archaic argot—*heckling!* *scutching!*—and a fascinating array of wooden tools used to beat and break the flax plant, yielding its fibers. It’s a tremendously laborious and violent process that produces long and exceedingly strong fibers that resemble a delicate swath of golden blonde hair. † My resulting homage is an off-kilter instructional video—pre-industrial process meets YouTube tutorial. Although this piece revolves around the metamorphosis of the flax plant into linen cloth, you never see the flax as it transforms. I craved a level of abstraction, letting the viewer focus on what had captivated me most about this process: the language, the gesture, the violence. A flotilla of disembodied arms, harvested from the Rijksmuseum’s Old Master paintings drift across the screen, while YouTube presence Brother Christian Zinzendorf explains the linen making process. An ethereal composition by Hildegard von Bingen plays in the background. Cards with the corresponding tools follow the narration, and the hands uncannily come to life, demonstrating the required actions. It’s simultaneously explanatory and surreal. † The video production itself was incredibly labor-intensive: hours in Photoshop spent meticulously cutting and articulating finger joints, followed by more hours in After Effects animating them. A funny avenue for expressing this content, perhaps. But it was important for me to represent this preindustrial practice from the perspective of the 21st century. Industrial and now digital technology has upended our relationship to the material world and physical labor. Glued to our desks and screens, we now watch YouTube videos of others performing manual labor, an activity tinged with exoticism and nostalgia, while we ourselves execute inordinate amounts of digital labor. †



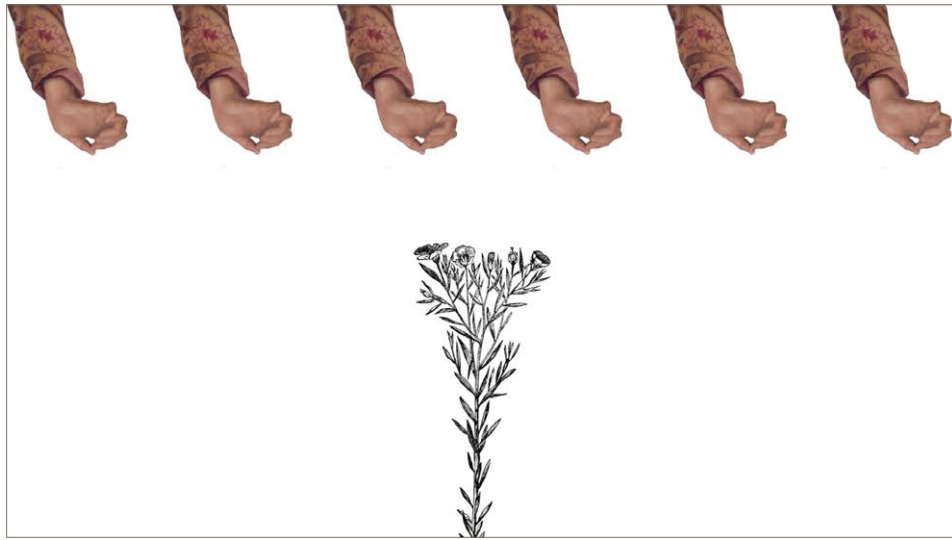
0:00



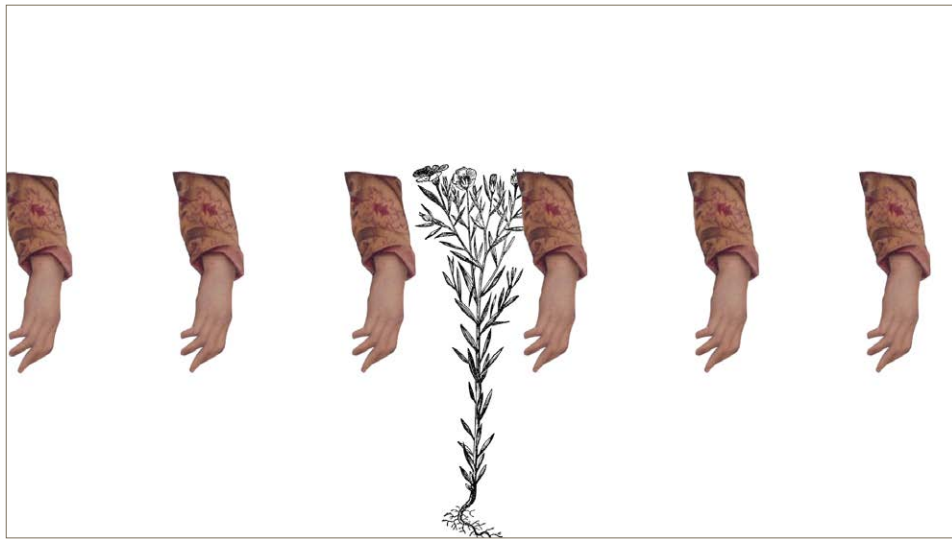
0:03

↑ A flax plant pulsates with a blue glow. (An allusion to flax’s blue flowers and the blue of a hyperlink.)

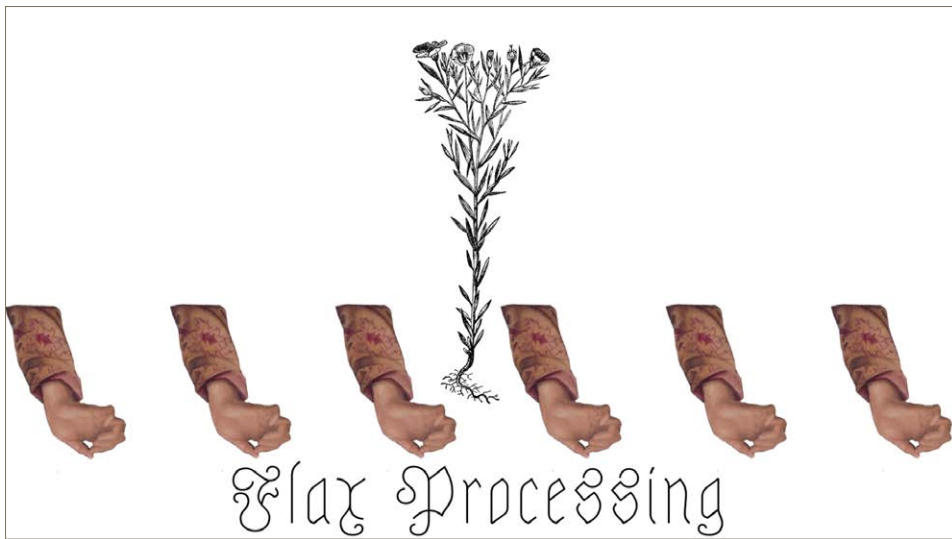
← An amusing 17th-century Dutch engraving depicting pigs processing flax from the Rijksmuseum. (Accompanied by a less amusing poem about how women should stay in their place.)



0:10



0:12



0:14



0:17

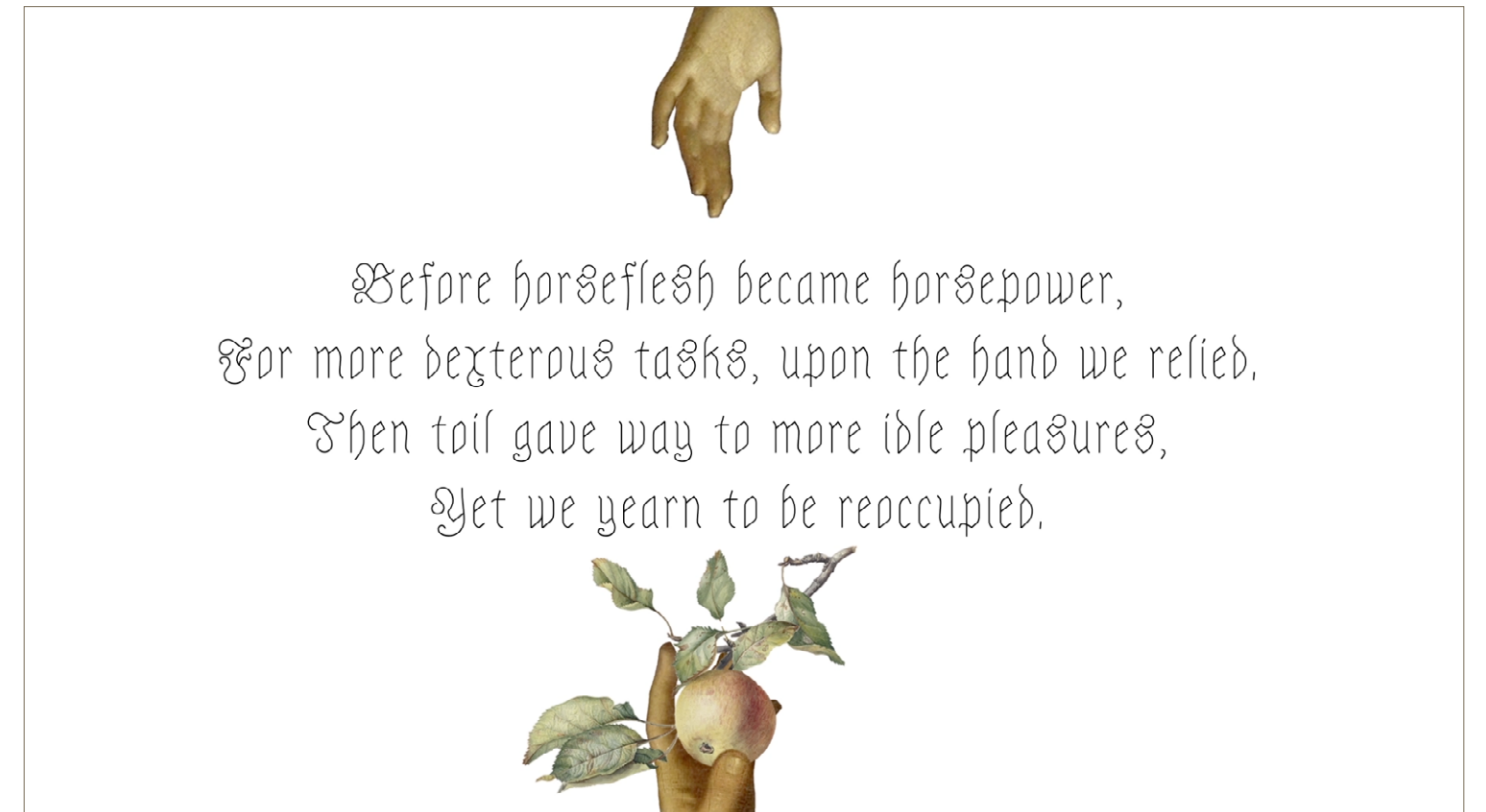
← ↑ This video illustrates the laborious steps for processing flax into linen fabric. Using hands harvested from the Rijksmuseum's collection of Old Master paintings, I created After Effects animations to demonstrate the violent actions necessary to extract the flax fibers from the plant stalk. Ethereal music by Hildegard von Bingen plays in the background.



0:22

↑ Hands swing into and out of the frame, removing the title and flax stalk.

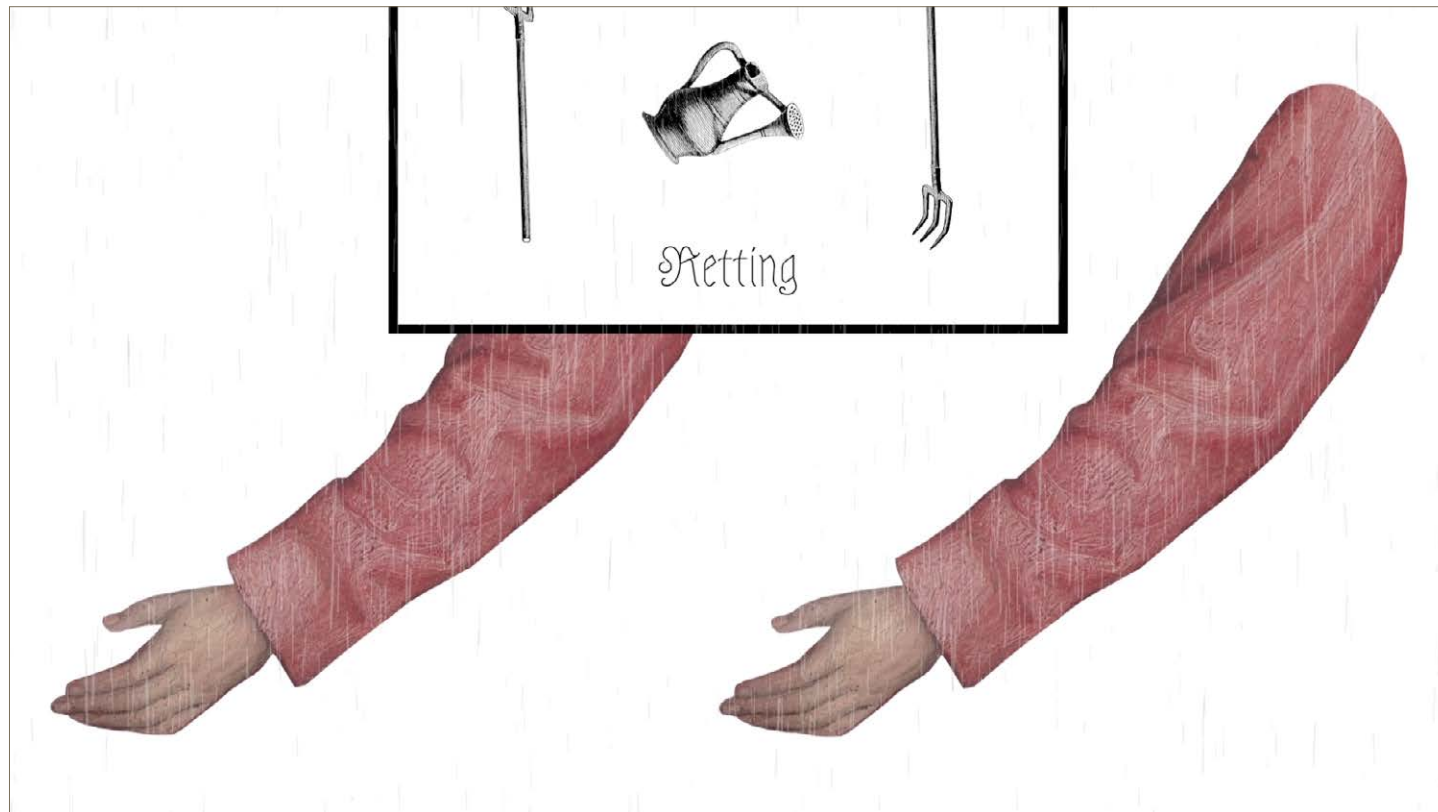
→ Making a digitally-fabricated animation about pre-industrial manufacturing process was a very intentional choice. This video is as much about our current relationship to manual labor and digital labor as it is a curious instructional video of archaic craft practices. I wrote a couplet to reflect this tension.



0:28

Before horseflesh became horsepower,  
For more dexterous tasks, upon the hand we relied,  
Then toil gave way to more idle pleasures,  
Yet we yearn to be reoccupied.



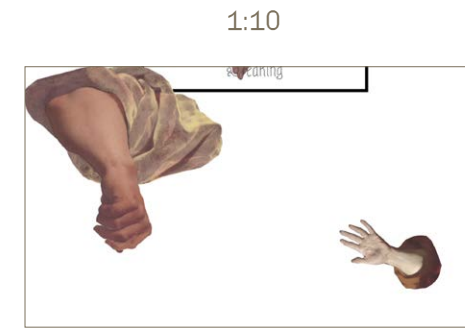


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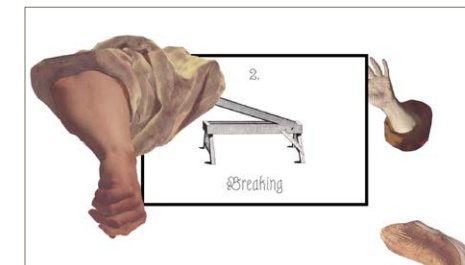
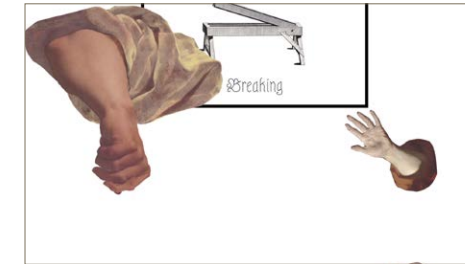
↑ → The hands mostly drift across the screen, but occasionally they (and eerily) articulate their joints to perform the flax processing gesture which corresponds to the tool and step listed on the card. Retting involves leaving the flax to soak, softening the tough outer stem. Breaking violently crimps the stems, beginning to separate them from the valuable inner fibers.



1:07



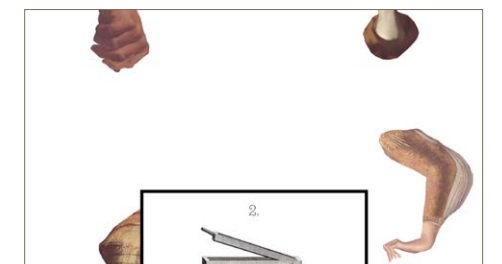
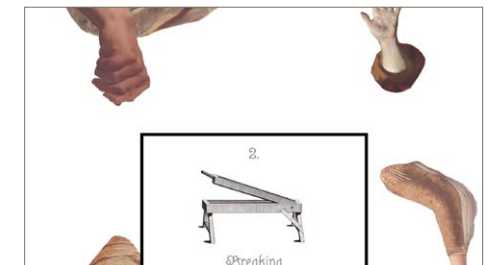
1:10



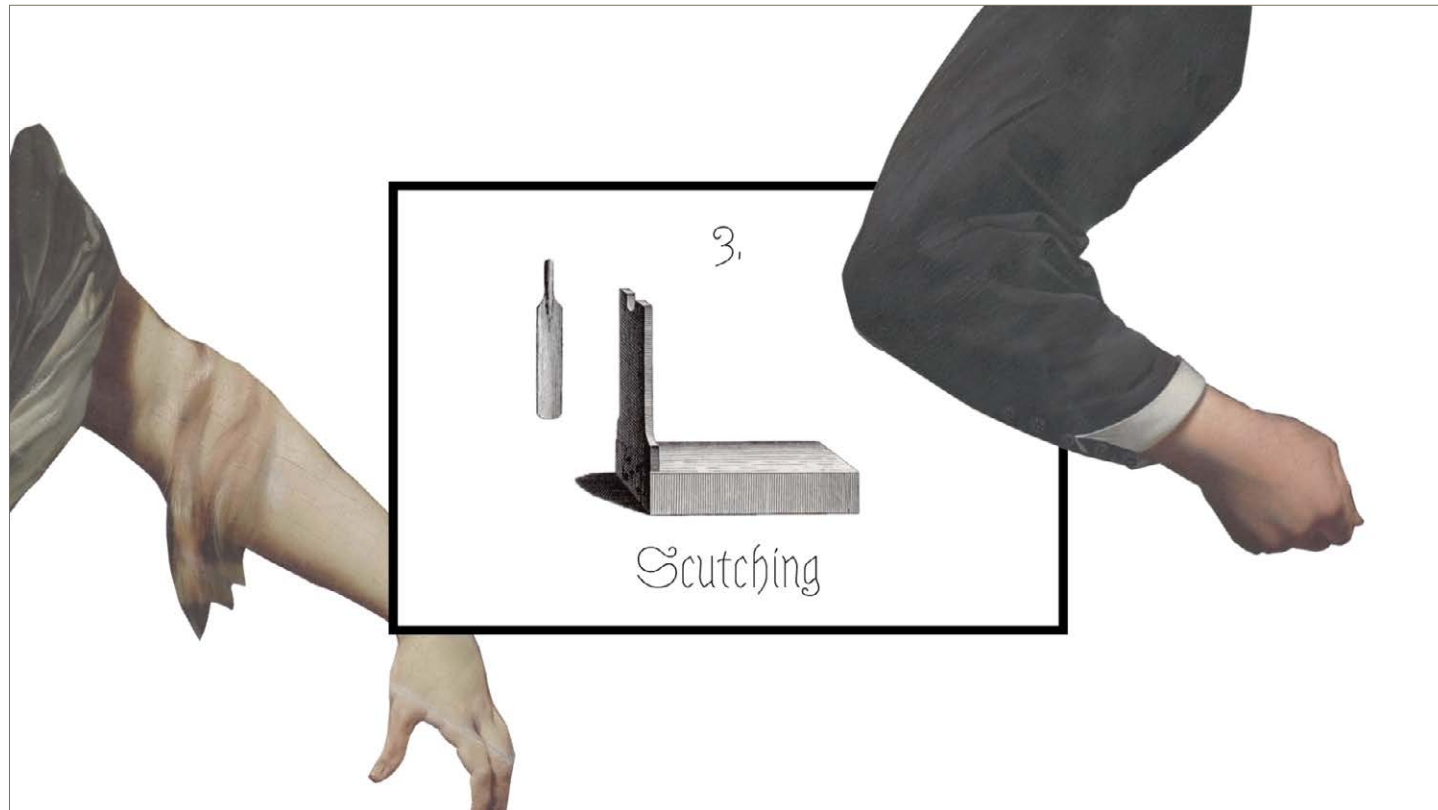
1:15



1:17



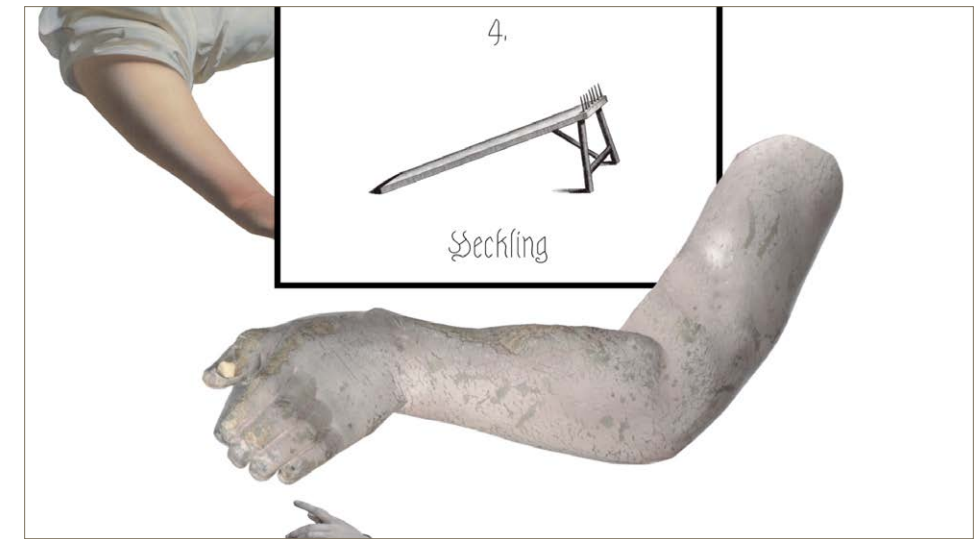
1:21



1:53

↑ As the hands demonstrate, YouTube personality and flax expert Brother Christian Zinzendorf explains the steps. To scutch, one takes a scutching knife and beats the flax fibers further.

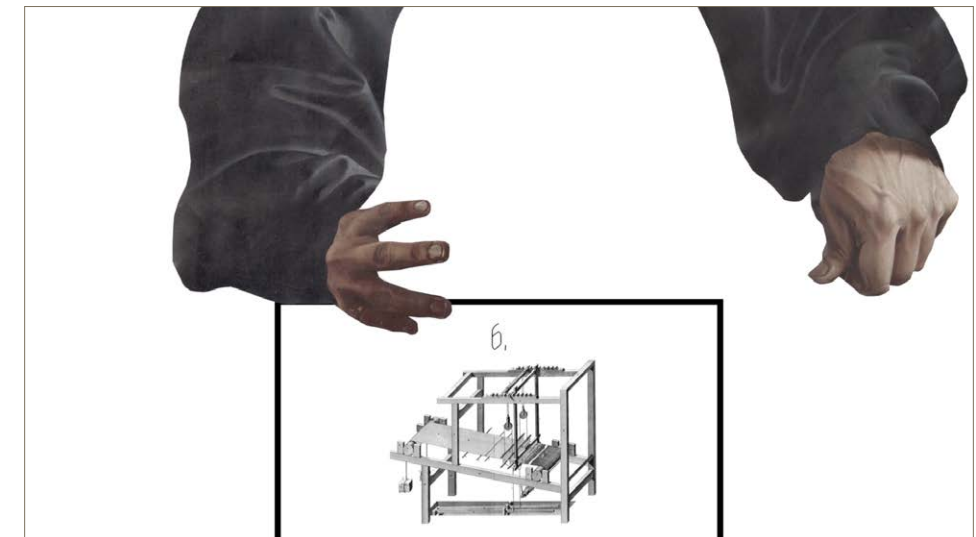
→ Heckling combs out the rough stem from the flax fibers.



2:23



3:01



3:30



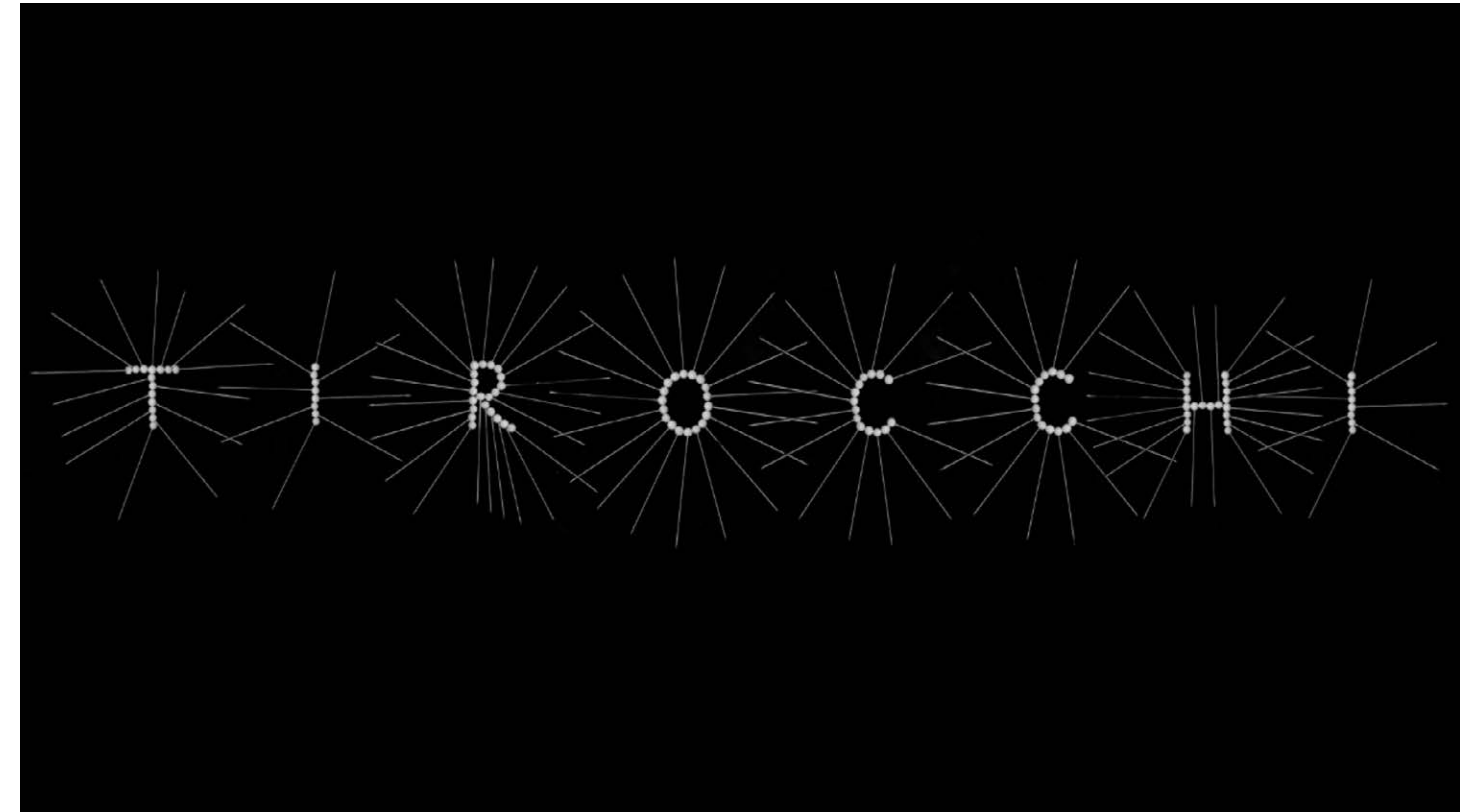


# Changing Patterns

Video  
2:44



Just blocks from my house stands a Victorian gingerbread house of particularly striking grandeur. It's aptly nicknamed the Wedding Cake House, and it once held the Tirocchi Dressmaker's shop. Living and working amongst Providence's thriving Italian-American community, Anna and Laura Tirocchi clothed the city elite from 1915 to 1947. The shop became a time capsule when Anna passed away in 1947—she'd been the director of operations. Everything remained carefully packed up and undisturbed until Laura's son donated the collection to the RISD Museum in 1989. Its contents now form an archive that gives an unparalleled glimpse back at American bespoke dressmaking business during that era. † Custom dressmaking was undergoing a massive transformation. Ready-to-wear had hit the scene, and was mixing things up in the fashion world. The Tirocchi sisters managed to stay in business during this turbulent era by adapting their business to accommodate both custom and ready-to-wear orders. This part of the story piqued my interest; now I have a video to show for it. I wrote a script in verse around the theme of *changing patterns*—naturally, sewing puns and double entendres abound. The words do the explanatory heavy lifting, while the visuals act as expressive backdrop. Shot with the black and white Edgertronic high-speed camera, I focus on the gestures of sewing. The camera's high frame rate stretches and prolongs every movement. Fabric appears to float, skin pulls like thick rubber. The world becomes viscous, focusing the eye on details that might otherwise go unnoticed and giving room for the ear to process the piece's complex language. ‡



0:33

↑ Pin letter forms.

← Anna and Laura Tirocchi, two Italian immigrant sisters, operated a couture dress shop in Providence, RI from 1915 to 1947. This picture shows Anna and one of her seamstresses at work.



0:03



0:08



0:12

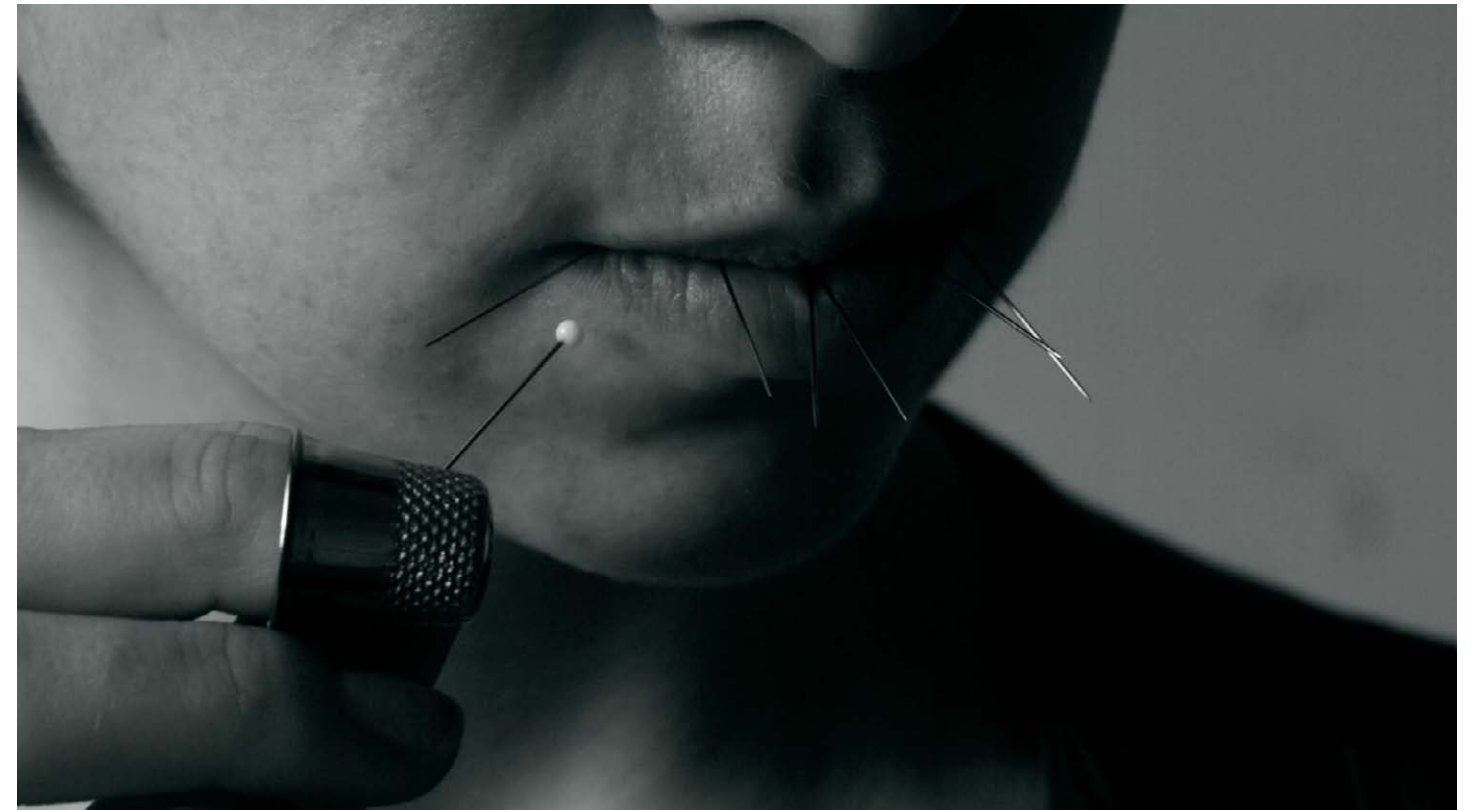


0:13

↑ ← The high speed Edgertronic camera captures and amplifies small, quiet movements.



0:27



0:32

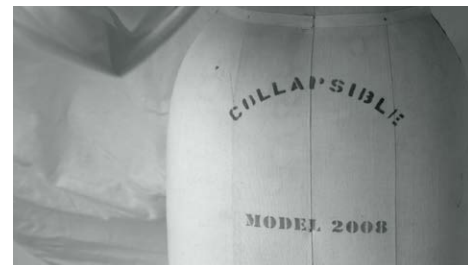
↑ → If you think sewing is dainty, think again. Fingers are in constant contact with swiftly moving sharp and hot objects. You rip, snip, pierce, and tear.



0:51



0:52



0:54



1:34



1:37



1:41





1:23

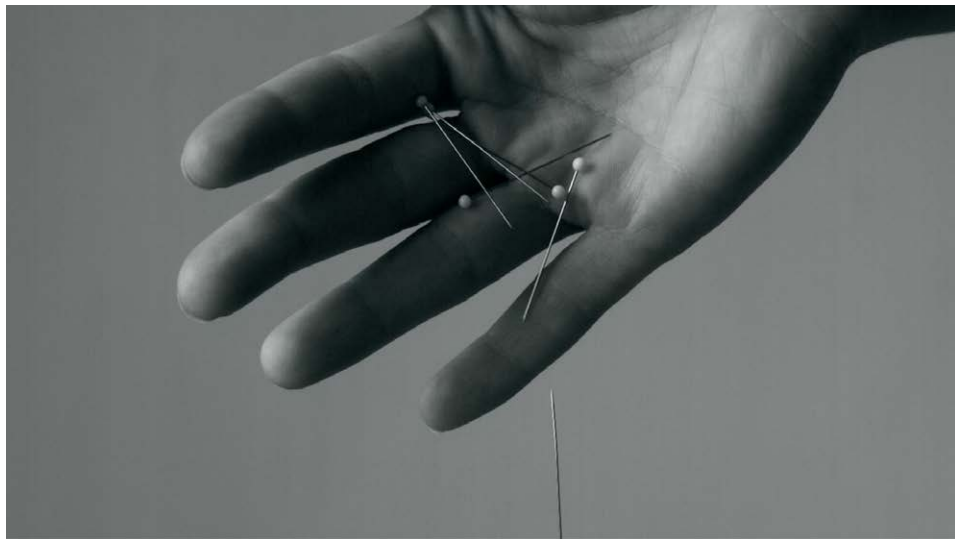


1:24

↑ Fashion underwent a drastic change while the Tirocchi shop was getting off the ground. While the 10s were more ruched and matronly, the 1920s brought with it a taste for simpler, more streamlined silhouettes. The fussy, corseted look gave way to a boxier, more androgynous shape. Keeping up with fashion meant not only being aware of trends, but also learning how to construct differently cut garments.



1:44



1:47



1:54



2:19



## CHANGING PATTERNS

by Carson Evans

*The video's accompanying verse.*

Waistlines out!  
Hemlines and Hairlines up!  
Down with the dour,  
The dull and restrained.  
The progression of fashion  
Moves at a relentless clip.

None know this better  
Than the dressmaker  
Her genius as fluid as the fabric she shapes.  
Well-suited  
To changing patterns.

In 1911, the sisters Tirocchi,  
Anna and Laura,  
Charged into the fray.  
They opened up shop,  
Grand plans up their sleeves  
To court the closets  
Of the Providence elite.

But theirs was an operation  
On the fringe of revolution.  
The cut of clothes  
was not the only factor in flux.  
The very fabric of the fashion trade  
Reshaped itself.

Fashion's simplification and mechanization  
Brought great alteration to the clothing atelier.  
With three small words:  
Ready to wear.

And, oh, the world was ready.  
For cost and convenience,  
it couldn't be beat.  
Each tried to out-outfit the other.

To contend with  
A debutante's need to distinguish herself  
with that quality of quality—  
That was the Tirocchi's true stock and trade.

Custom, from kits, or full ready made,  
By the mid-1920s  
A & L Tirocchi offered a spectrum,  
And received stability.

Familiarity for the mother,  
Fast French fashion for her daughter.  
This new, more varied model provided  
Clients kept and gained.

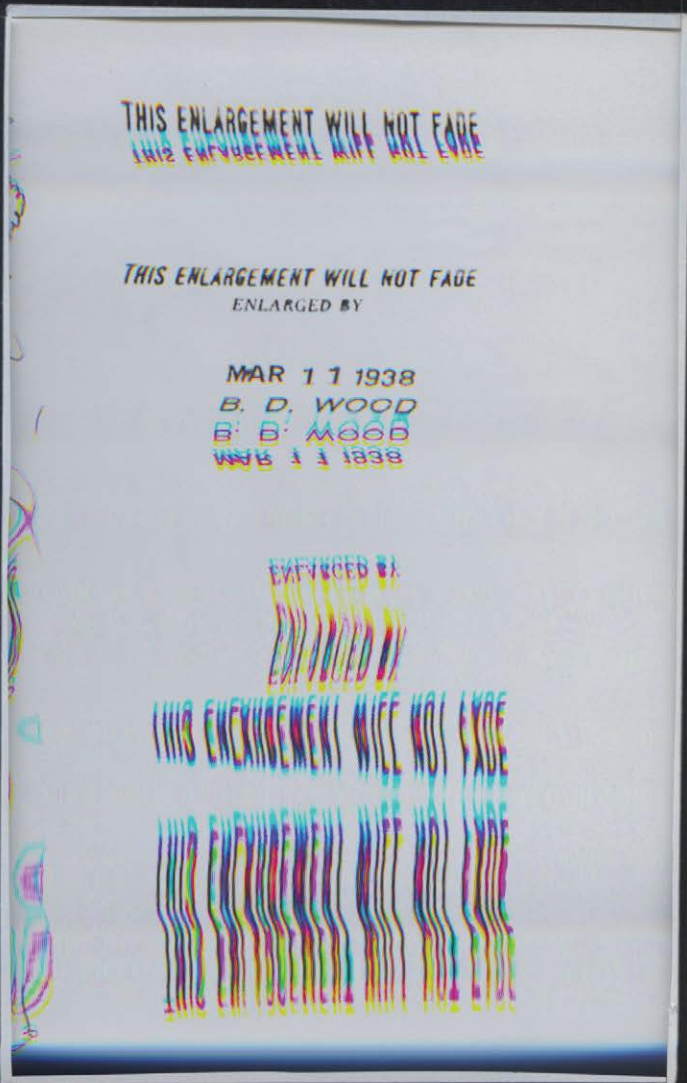
Have you ever noticed  
That a Pattern can be  
In something  
On something  
Or for something?

A familiar rhythm,  
Or practiced monotony.  
Make one, break one,  
Learn to follow or come undone.



2:37

# Prima Fugit



Carry My Heart  
Dear Folks  
Once Removed



# Carry My Heart

Video Loop  
0:32



**b**eryl is a mineral made of beryllium aluminum cyclosilicate,  $\text{Be}_3\text{Al}_2(\text{SiO}_3)_6$  for short. You might also know it as emerald or aquamarine. It's also my maternal great grandmother's name. Both make an appearance in this video loop. You might even call it an ode to Beryl. The most present yet elusive character in the family archive I collected, she died suddenly of a brain aneurysm in 1938. Losing her mother was a traumatic experience for my grandmother who was eight at the time. Despite my grandmother's reticence when it came to her family and childhood, we've suddenly come to know Beryl through the plethora of items she left behind. † I choreographed a simple sequence to the chorus of a sappy song—*Carry My Heart*. (That's the extent of the lyrics.) The genre is Americana—it's languid with a twang, and my motions match that tone. However, Fragments of face and rock animate over my motions, a full-body mask. The nested screen that hides my body expands at the end of the loop, filling the screen as I run backwards to begin the sequence again. †



0:00

↑ An empty room on top of a room with a figure. An unusual space. A guitar twangs some opening notes.

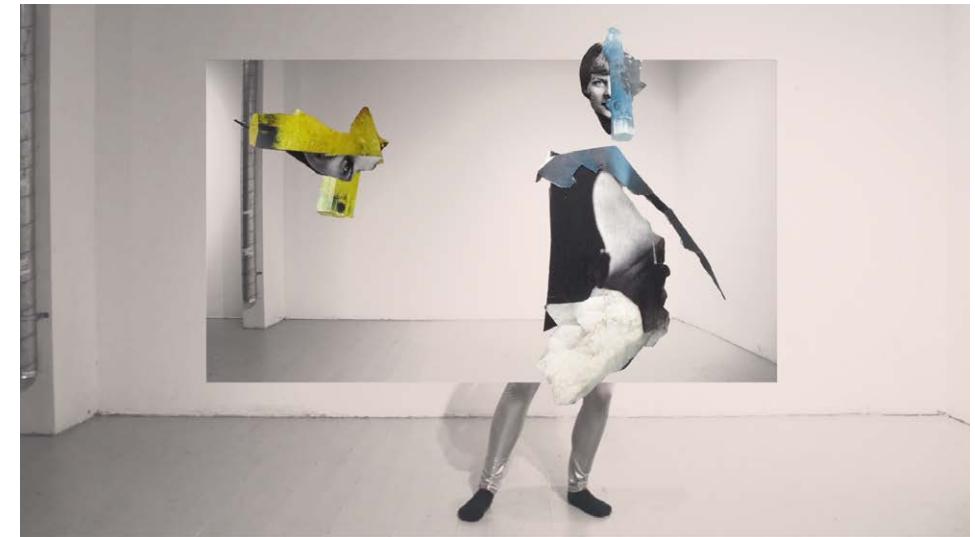
← Beryl is a rock (aquamarine here) and my great grandmother's name.



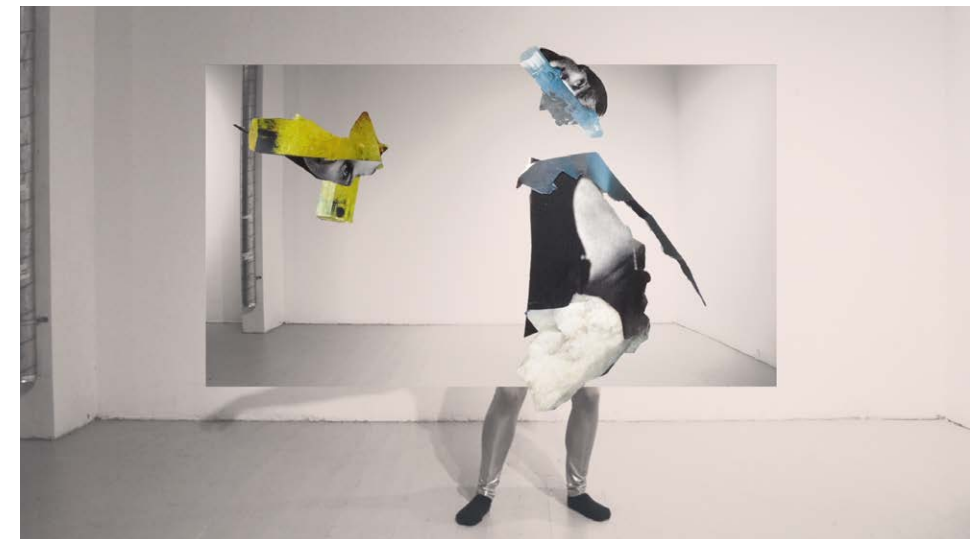
0:02

↑ Fragments of beryl and Beryl materialize, matching the placement of the hidden figure. (Yes, it's me.) The twangy guitar is joined by lyrics: *carry, carry my heart.*

→ I begin a slow and simple dance—my feet and my shadow the only visible indications of movement. The fragments follow my motions, behaving close to, but not quite like my concealed body. (No, my head does not rotate that way.)



0:06

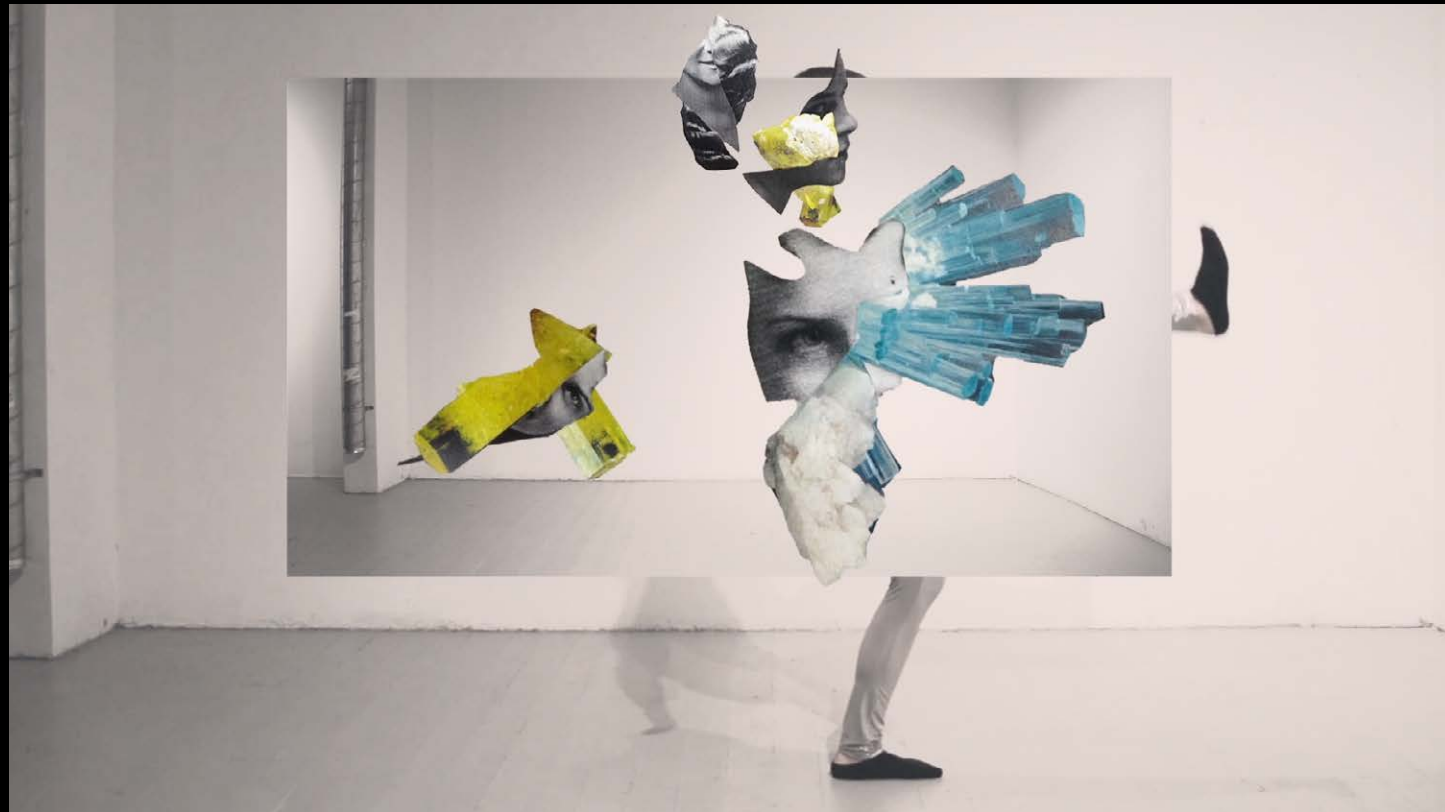


0:11

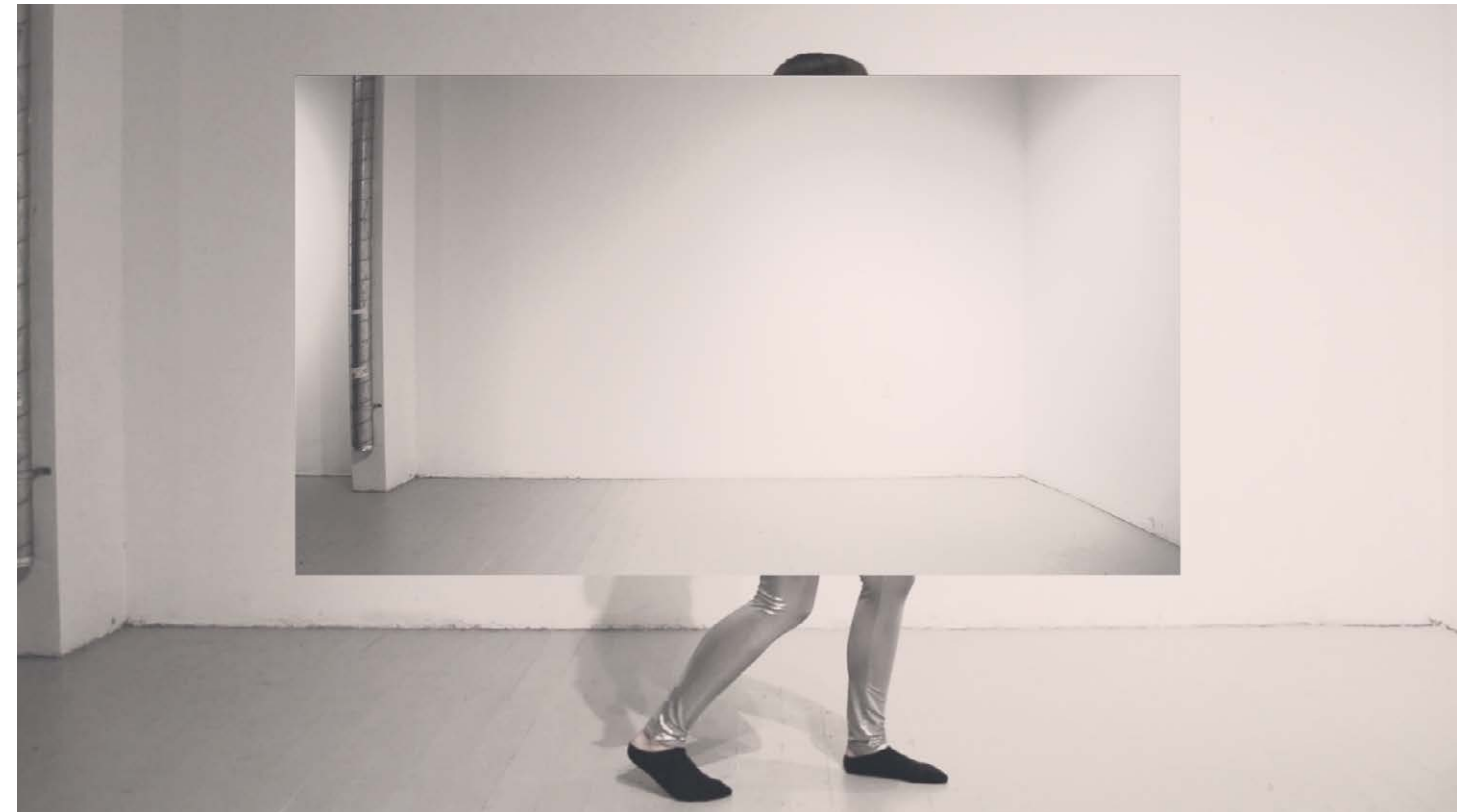


0:15





0:27



0:29

← I turn to the side and the fragments change. (But it's still beryl and Beryl.)

↑ I kick and the fragments disappear.



0:29



0:30



0:32



0:00

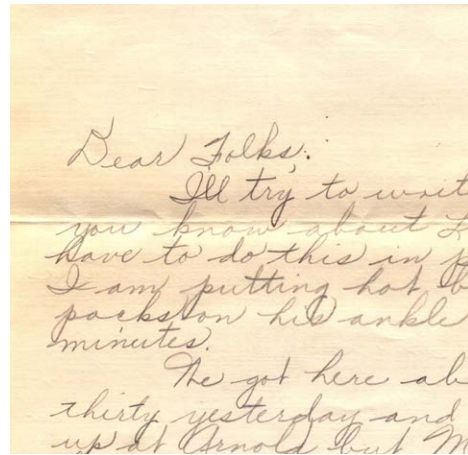
← Suddenly I appear in the empty frame as well, standing up and running backwards. Meanwhile the frame moves forward to fill the screen, leaving me standing in the same place I was at the beginning.

↑ The loop is set to begin again.



# Dear Folks

Video  
4:15



This is a correspondence piece, and epistolary film. In it, I assume the guise of my relatives, reading excerpts from their letters now preserved in my family archive. (The title references my great grandparents' salutary habits.) The video starts with me in Providence—by a letter box, later engaging with my mailman (a fantastically serendipitous shot). Then, one by one, I appear as my great grandfather, Loyd; my great-grandmother, Beryl; my grandmother, Lynnette, and my grandfather, Mike. Providence remains in the background, but each character is framed by a vignette of prairie landscapes. Crisp New England Fall dialogues with the sunny shots I collected during my summertime trip to Nebraska. † In her essay “Packing history, Count(er)ing Generations,” Elizabeth Freeman proposes the term temporal drag. Rebecca Schneider summarizes this concept nicely as “temporal play as cross-generational negotiation.” I had some initial anxiety about dressing up as my relatives—“dressing up” feels cavalier, silly. My inhabiting of these characters was far from that, and act of earnest fondness, of “cross-generational negotiation.” Stepping into these identities through clothing and make-up creates a visceral connection that can't be achieved through other means. Assuming alternate identities is no flippant matter, even if it appears artificial or oddly exaggerated. That being said, it is a little silly and obviously artificial. It's very clearly me appearing in different guises. My costuming is enough to signal a change of character, but I do not fully conceal my identity. Nor am I a trained actor providing a studied performance. Yes, I'm going for that squeamish amateurism. It's a cheekily earnest, physics-bending conversation across space and time—between Providence and Nebraska, between me and my ancestors. ‡



0:07

↑ A post box to begin this epistolary video, the location—Providence—conveniently inscribed in the background.

← A 1929 letter from my great grandmother Beryl to her in-laws, Eva and Jim Torbert. It's the first of 77 letters she wrote to them from 1929 to her death in 1938, now digitized in my family archive. Beryl and her husband Loyd had a sweet salutatory habit, addressing all their letters *Dear Folks*. It also made an apt title for this video.



I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia.

0:28

↑ Oh look who's here in that stylish faux fur. This Georgia peach is (for now) a damn yankee.

→ Another serendipitous shot to set the Providence and postal stages—a cameo by a RIPTA bus and my postman as I captured a shot of my house. I tried to be discrete while filming, but he saw me right away. He took his moment of fame with a laugh: "This is my good side," he cried. But look, suddenly Nebraska springs into the scene. (That's where my mom's family is from—it's a shot of the Martens family farm.) Where are we?



0:40



This is my house in Providence, RI.

0:41



All my mom's family is from Nebraska.

0:55



1:03

↑ Ah, yes we're in Providence.

→ But here appears Loyd Torbert, my maternal great grandfather. Isn't he dapper in his WWI uniform?



1:09



1:13

↑ → As Loyd, I read his 1918 letter to his parents, written when he was at basic army training at a YMCA in Lincoln, Nebraska. He discusses vaccines, town trips, and errant letter papers flappin' in the wind. Loyd was in Nebraska when he wrote this letter, so he gets a Nebraska video backdrop. But I'm really reading these in Providence, so the local streetscape shows, too.



1:22



1:26



1:35

"Will try and write a few lines altho' the wind is blowing a little hard, and am out in the 'Y' tent, every piece of paper's flapping."



1:44

↑ Another downtown Providence scene.

→ Now we meet Beryl, my maternal great grandmother.



1:49





1:56



2:03



2:10

“I’ll try to write and let you know about Loyd. I’ll have to do this in pieces because I am putting hot boric acid packs on his ankle every five minutes.”



2:17

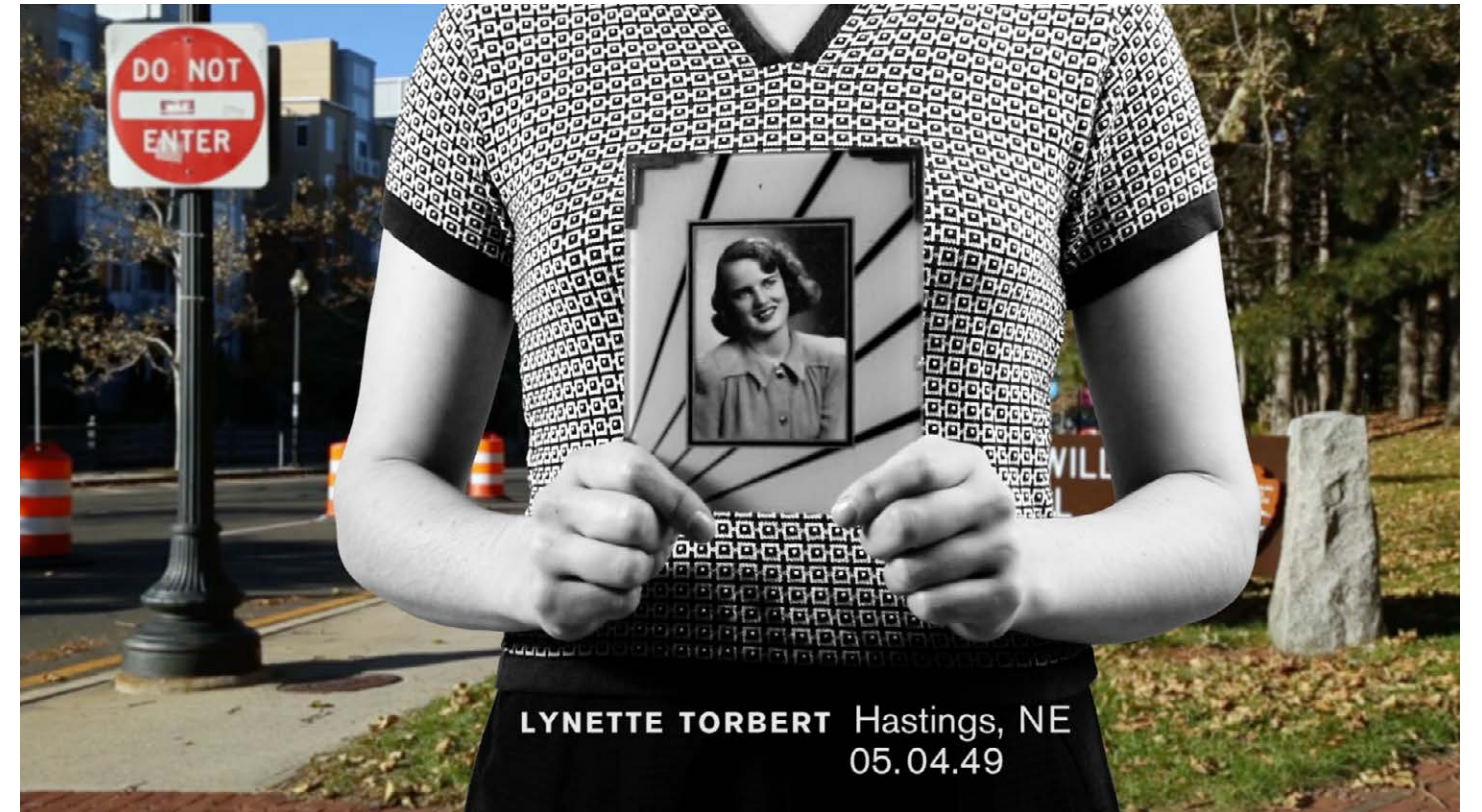
← ↑ Now as Beryl, I read a letter she wrote as a newlywed to her in-laws in 1929. Loyd had gotten a nasty foot infection and risked amputation. She had taken him to her father’s hospital in Gothenburg, Nebraska. (The foot recovered without requiring removal, in case you were worried.) Once again, Beryl is framed by a video I shot during my summer sojourn to the Cornhusker state, while a scene from the Ocean State remains around the edges. Space and time—they’re all shook up.



2:23

↑ Roger Williams founded the State of Rhode Island. So, yes, we're still very much in Providence.

→ Here is my maternal grandmother, Lynette Torbert (soon to be Lynette Martens.)



2:27



2:33



2:41



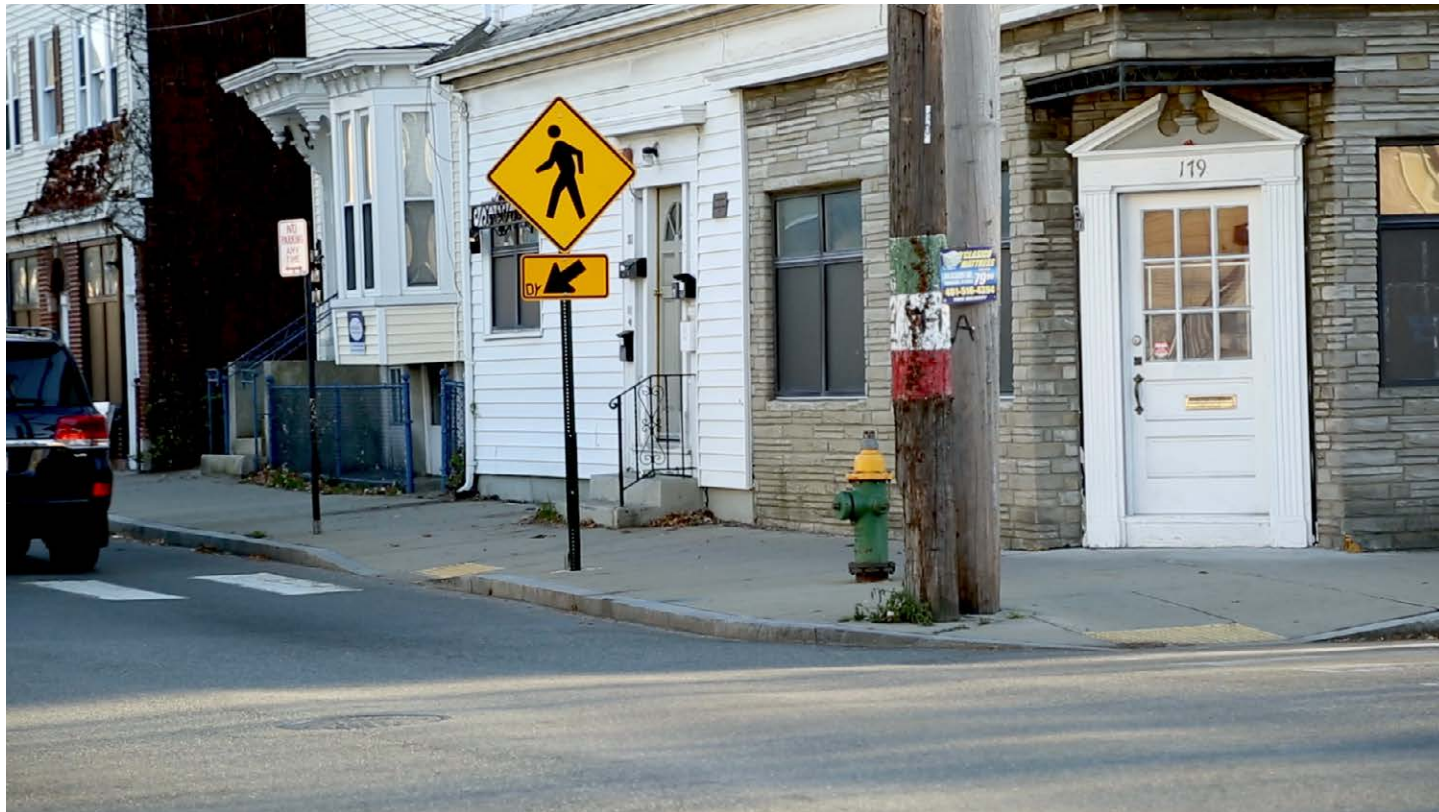
3:03



3:10

“Just what are we going to do with all our letters. There is a slight pile of them... We should tie them up with ribbon and put them in a box where no doubt future generations would find them and giggle over them.”

← ↑ As Lynette, I read a letter she wrote to my grandfather in 1949. We have their entire courting correspondence (about 200 letters), written during her first year at college. In keeping with the video's theme, we see both Nebraska and Providence in the background.



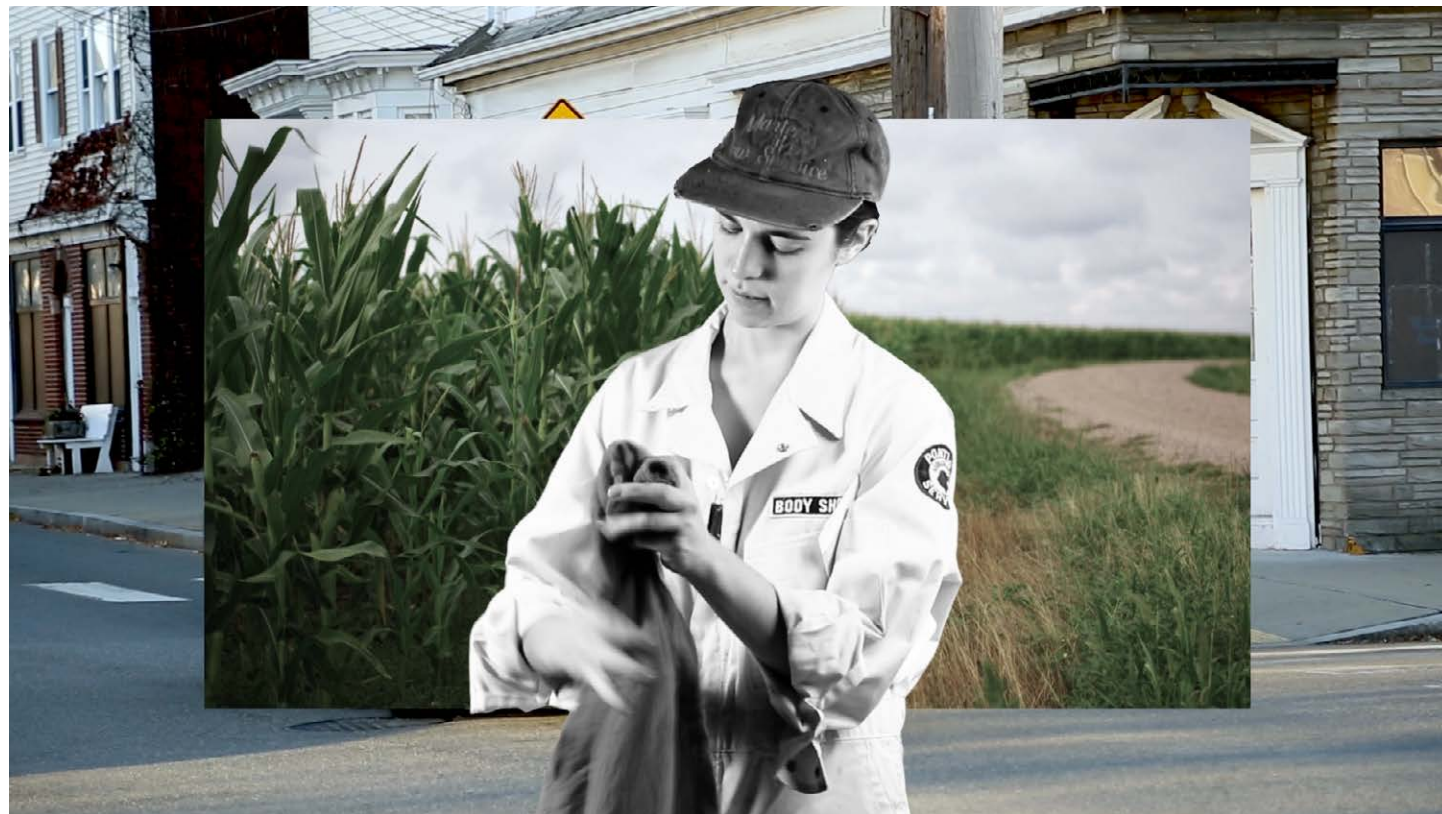
3:17



3:20

↑ Another very Providence scene, this time in Little Italy near Atwells.

→ This is my maternal grandfather August Martens. (But everyone called him Mike.)



3:26

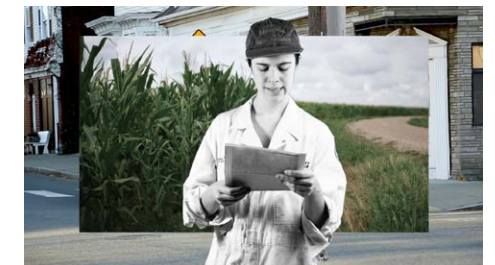
↑ → As Mike, I read a courting letter he wrote to my grandmother in 1948. Where my grandmother's letters were chatty and descriptive, his are short, sweet, and full of aw-shucks. (Much as he was in life.) He was an auto mechanic (and later a tow truck driver). We still have his jumpsuits—that one's the real deal, along with the hat. As are the cornfields behind him. I shot those at the family farm where he grew up.



3:32



3:47



4:02

"There isn't much to write about, except the town somehow seems a bit empty with you gone. No kiddin' I miss you a lot. More that I tho't I would."





# Once Removed

Looped Video  
4:20



**W**hat does photography capture? First viewed as a medium of truth and indexicality, contemporary thought is no longer convinced that photography is a purely objective medium. The mechanical apparatus of the camera, the physical film or the digital software, the corporations which produce these technologies, even the photographers themselves influence the image we hold in our hands or see on the screen. The camera shapes the world as much as the world shapes what the camera “sees.” That being said, I love looking at old photos, as an insatiably curious observer of humans, and as means of attempted time-travel. It may be a mediated window into the past, but it’s a view nonetheless. † My family archive project had me scanning hundreds of snapshots, mostly from the early 20th century. I garnered a strange familiarity with the folks appearing in these images, nearly all of whom I’d never met. Mostly members of my grandmother’s side of the family, any personal connection I had with them beyond genetics had passed on along with her. (She might not even have known some of them—they were mostly her mother’s pictures.) Yet here I was, imagining lives for them. I couldn’t help it—they seemed so vivid, many characters appearing multiple times, evolving over the years. What a strange combination of fact and fiction, of familiarity and distance that old photographs evoke. † With those thoughts lingering on the brain I made this piece. From the lens of a small Brownie camera, images of my relatives project on the wall, appearing to drift away from the viewer. They are arranged in a strict pyramidal typology: first one girl, then two seated older couples, three women of different ages holding things, four people with four-legged friends, and five men holding babies. Each figure, originally black and white, has been



0:01

tinted—a non-naturalistic vivification. Like little dioramas, each sits in a small “set” constructed of inverted black and white stock photography. (Prairie scenes for all, of course.) Each row of figures is accompanied by a different mournful slide guitar piece, the music overlapping as the figures come into the frame and then recede. The central photograph of the last set had captured the shadow of the photographer. I played with this illusion, the viewer of my piece now seeming to cast the shadow. † You might not catch the typologies on first glance, perhaps you never will. You might not know that these people are related to me—you certainly won’t know who they are. I don’t mind. This is the nature of looking at old snapshots. They may be worth 1,000 words, but they sure aren’t straight talkers. †

† My great grandmother Beryl as a child.

← Hand colored still from the 1926 film *Vater Werden ist Nicht Schwer*, (It’s Not Hard to Become a Father). I found a book about hand colored film stills used for promotion in Weimar-era Berlin. I’m sure that the intent was to make these black-and-white images look more life-like, but instead they end up surreal. The colors are both too bright and too muted to lend any naturalism.





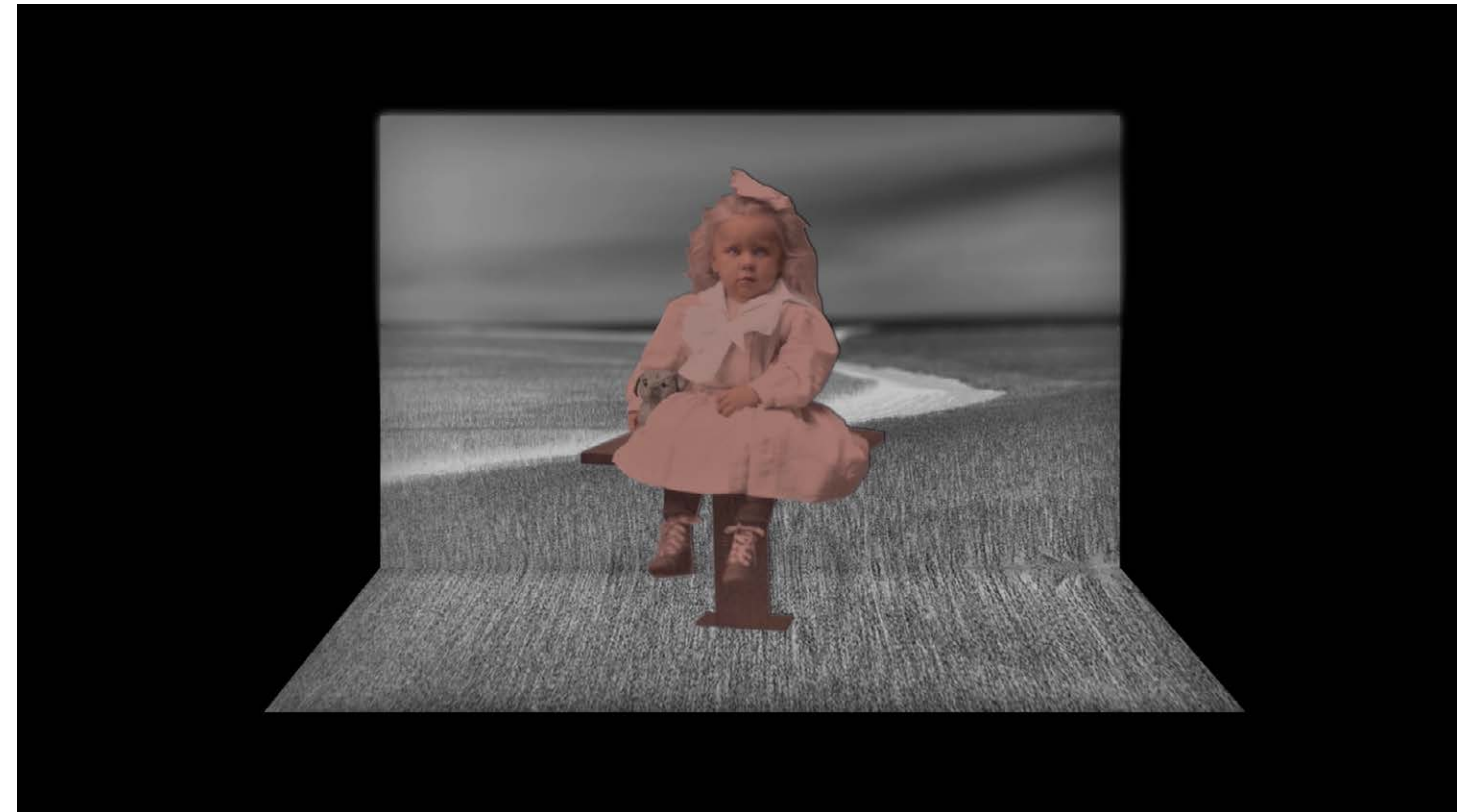
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0:28

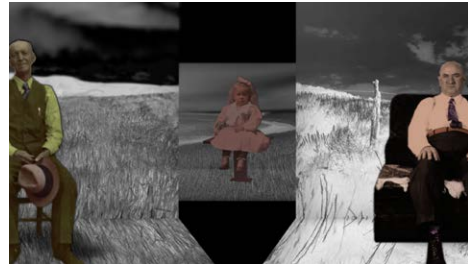
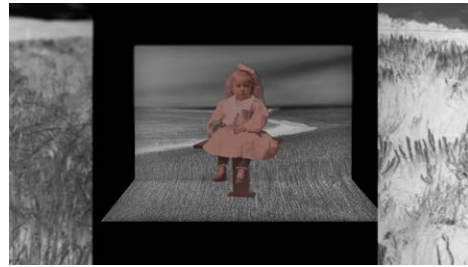


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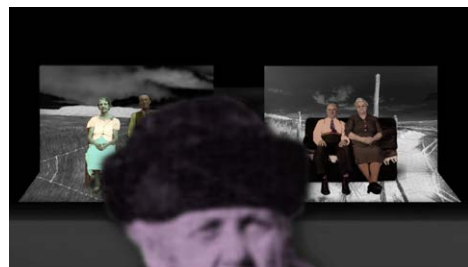


0:39

← ↑ Beryl and the background slowly recede, parallaxing. She begins to develop an increasingly rosy hue. What first appeared to be a close-up of a snapshot reveals itself to be a small digital diorama.



0:59



1:09



1:37



2:00



2:04



2:08

↑ Two new stages enter the frame, each with a seated pair. They too recede. A head appears, retreats, revealing a woman holding a bouquet.

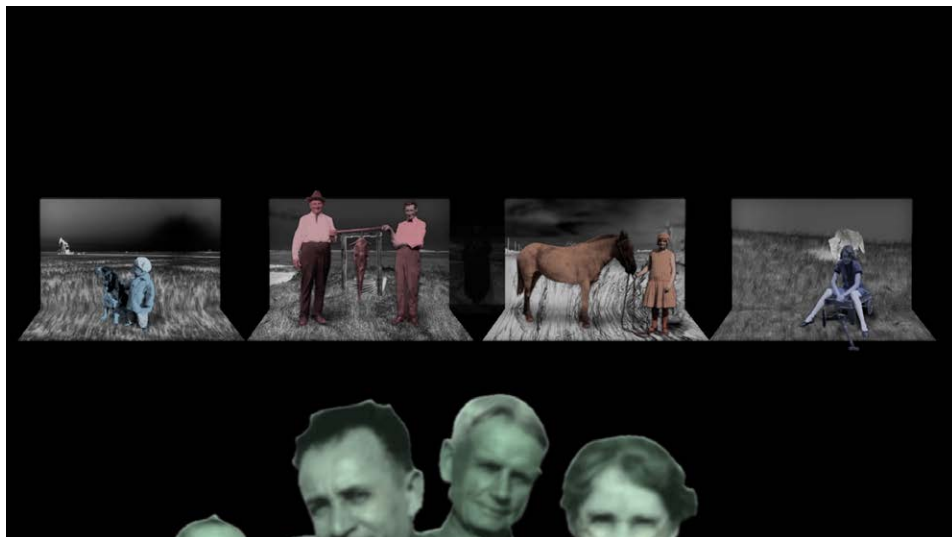
→ Three women holding things. (The one on the right is Beryl holding my grandmother. Fun fact.) Now what's this coming into the frame?



2:22



2:33



2:47



2:58

← Four-legged friends.

↑ A hint of the photographer.

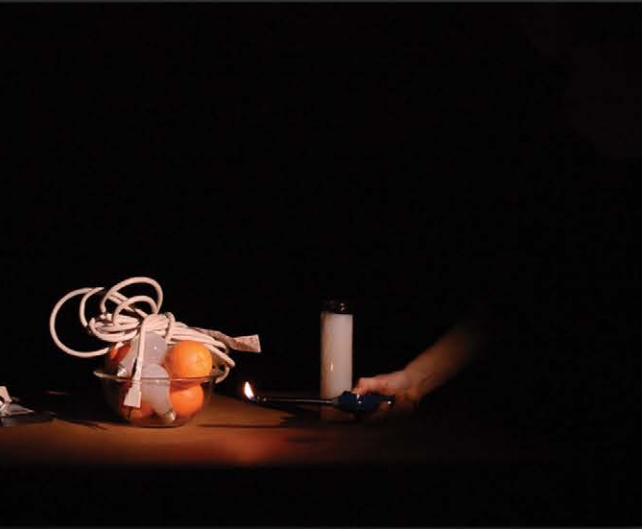


# Illumination



Fiat Lux

Indulgences



# Fiat Lux

Website with 14 Videos  
6:14 (compiled)



hallelujah, I've seen the light. † The soul, knowledge, truth, the divine, warmth, goodness—light is a metonym of power. As creatures of the 21st century, when illumination is just a switch flip away, the sense of enchantment is difficult to maintain. How does belief in light, in any of its metaphoric iterations, continue in the face of disillusionment? Can reverence and modern skepticism coexist? What began as a lighting project turned into a meditation on illumination. It took the form of fourteen short video vignettes, housed in a website, [www.fiatlux.site](http://www.fiatlux.site). A visitor to the site is greeted with the text seen at left; clicking replaces it with the site's title, *Fiat Lux*. Scrolling reveals each successive video, playing in a loop. Each starts from darkness. Light pools into the inky blackness as the figure plugs the studio lights into extension cords. The scene comes into view, light by light. The cords are part of the composition—there is no effort to hide the anachronistic tangle that hints at the light sources off camera. A wink at the illusory nature of studio composition. Practicals—on camera light sources, both artificial and natural—also play a key role. † This work's title comes from the beginning of Genesis (*fiat lux* translates to *let there be light*), while the compositions are references to artworks found in the Western art-historical canon (de La Tour's *Penitent Magdalen*, Vermeer's *The Milkmaid*, Bronzino's *Portrait of a Young Man*, Ingres' *The Virgin Adoring the Host*, Zurbarán's *Still Life*, Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of St. Thomas*, Millais' *Lost Piece of Silver*, Zurbarán's *St. Francis in Meditation*, van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait*, Heda's *Still Life with Glasses and Tobacco*, Ingres' *Portrait of the Princesse de Broglie*, Ingres' *The Small Bather*, Cotán's *Still Life*, Copley's *Paul Revere*.) The references provided

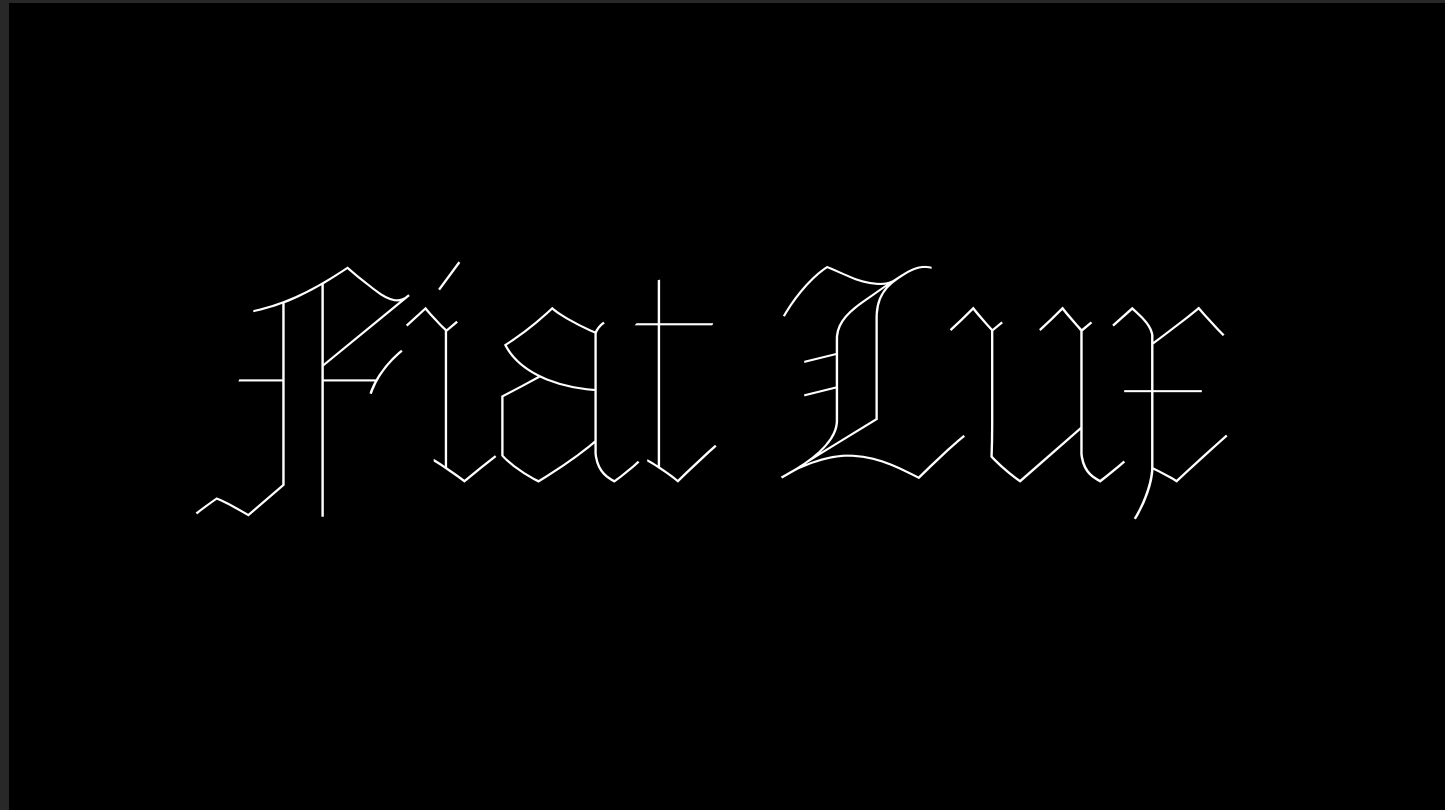


0:03

compositional cues, which I then recreated with materials I had on hand. These were frequently and purposefully ahistorical—trash bags became ball gown skirts, REI rain pants adorned arms as ballooning sleeves, paper bags formed monk's hoods. Forms reshaped by hand and light, these materials were transformed into images that were neither too earnestly historical nor jarringly contemporary. Listing the materials under the title was a way to quietly clue the viewer into these small moves that might not be visible on first glance. †

↑ The website greets you with a reference to Genesis, where God creates the earth. A click reveals the videos below.

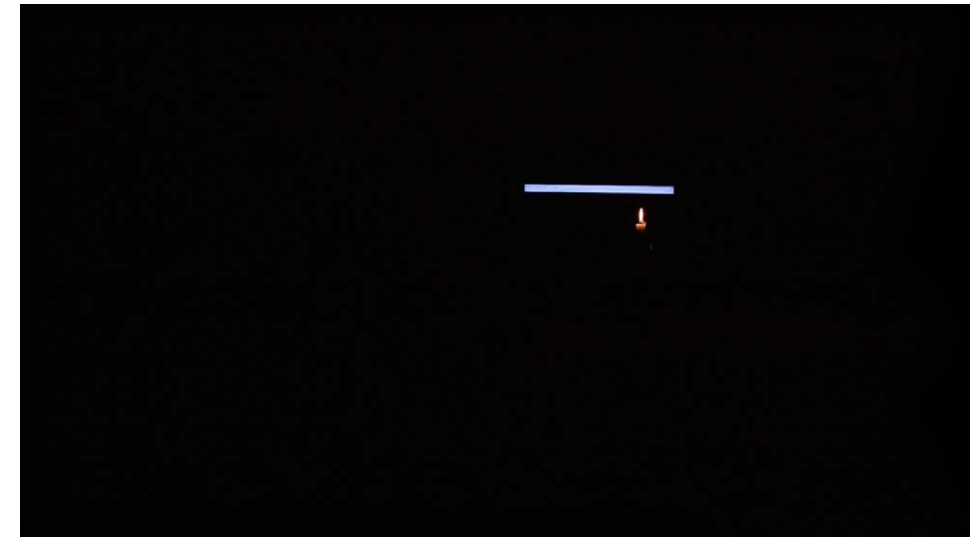
← *St. Francis in Meditation* by Francisco de Zurbarán, 1635-9. The National Gallery.



0:10

↑ Fiat Lux translates to *Let There be Light*.

→ *The Penitent Magdalen* by George de La Tour with chair, Styrofoam head, candle, black shirt, & monitor.



0:12



0:16



0:25





0:33



0:46



1:00



1:36

↑ *Portrait of a Young Man* by Bronzino with hat, bike pants, torn paper, iPhone, sawhorse, & box.

← *The Milkmaid* by Johannes Vermeer with half a gallon of milk, glass bowl, paper towel, & light therapy lamp.



2:19

↑ *The Virgin Adoring the Host* by Ingres with two tapers, towel, light stand, hand mirror, & flashlight.

→ *St. Francis in Meditation* by Francisco de Zurbarán with brown bag, pillowcase, & iPad.



3:52



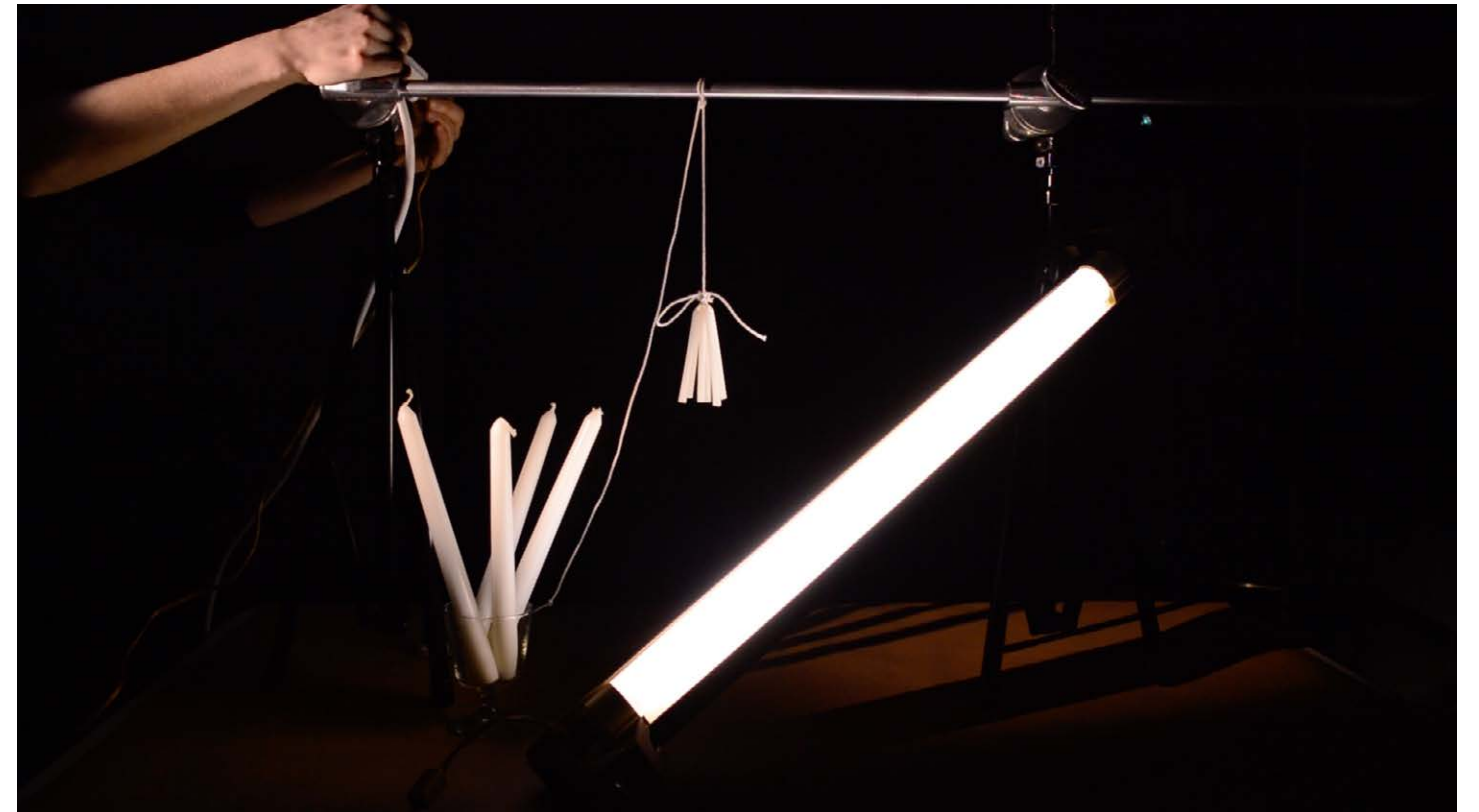
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4:14

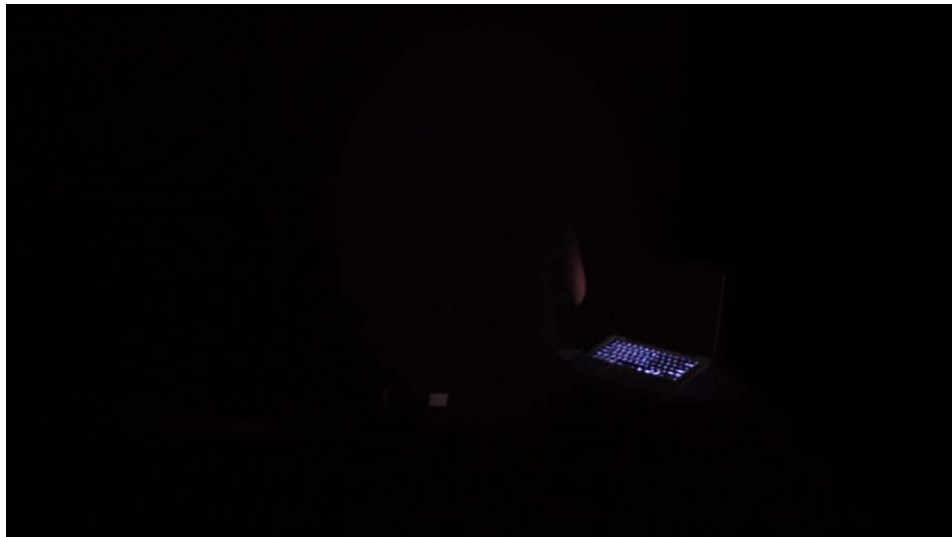


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5:49

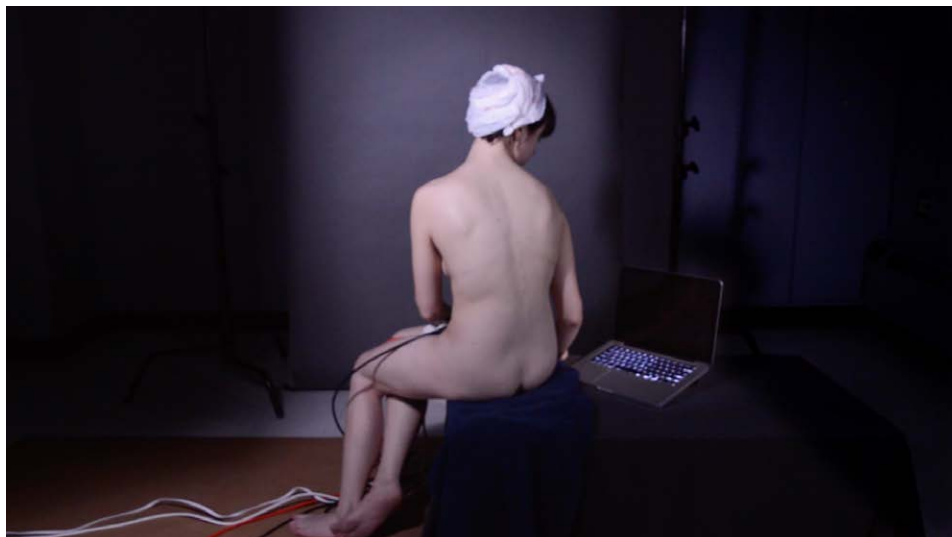
↑ → *Still Life* by Juan Sánchez Cotán with tapers, string, light stands, & fluorescent light.



5:23



5:25



5:32

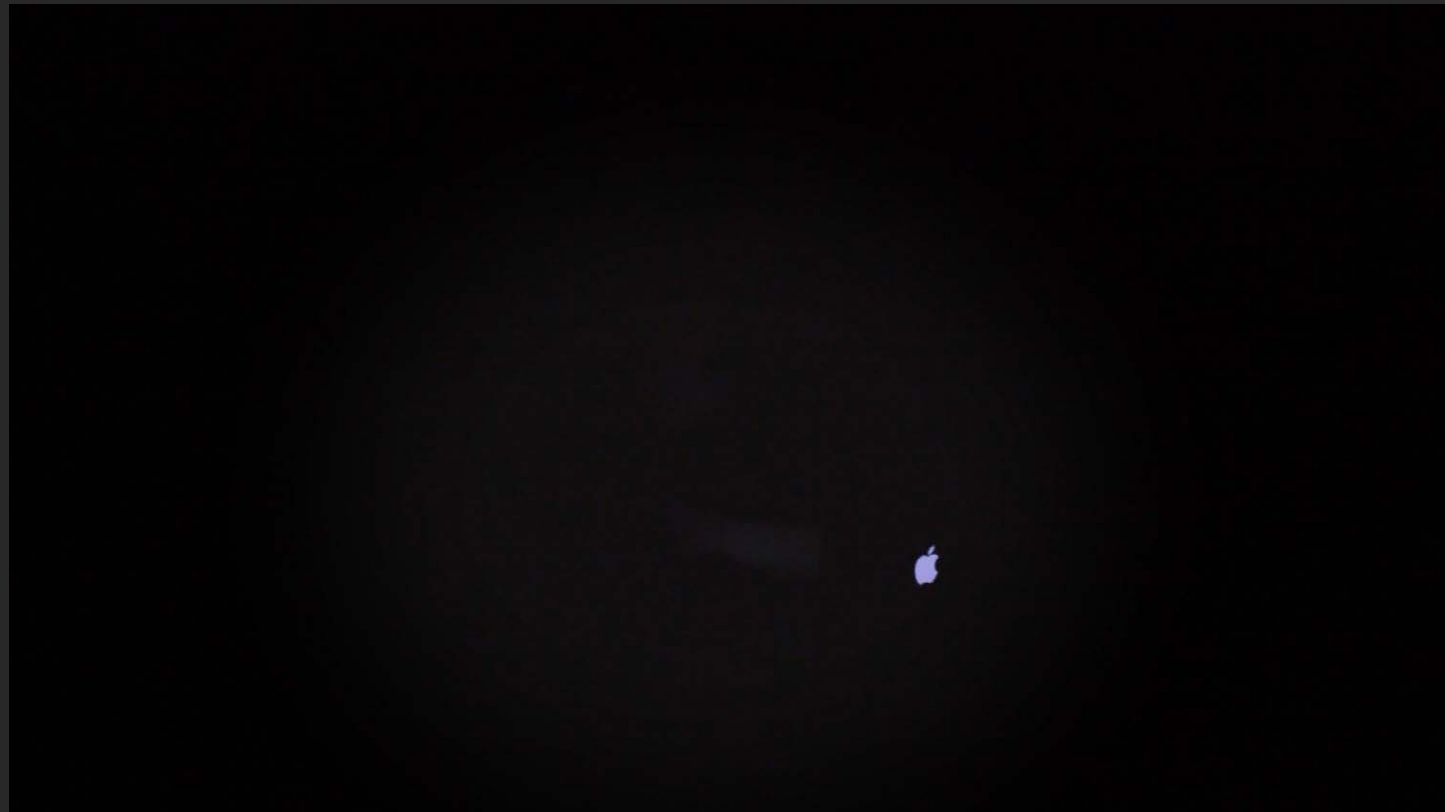


4:31

↑ *The Arnolfini Portrait* by Jan van Eyck with monitors, candles, two black hats, mink stole, belt, and dishcloth.

← *The Small Bather* by Ingres with plastic bags, blue towel, & laptop.

↓ *Paul Revere* by John Singleton Copley with laptop, cords, & revolutionary spirit.



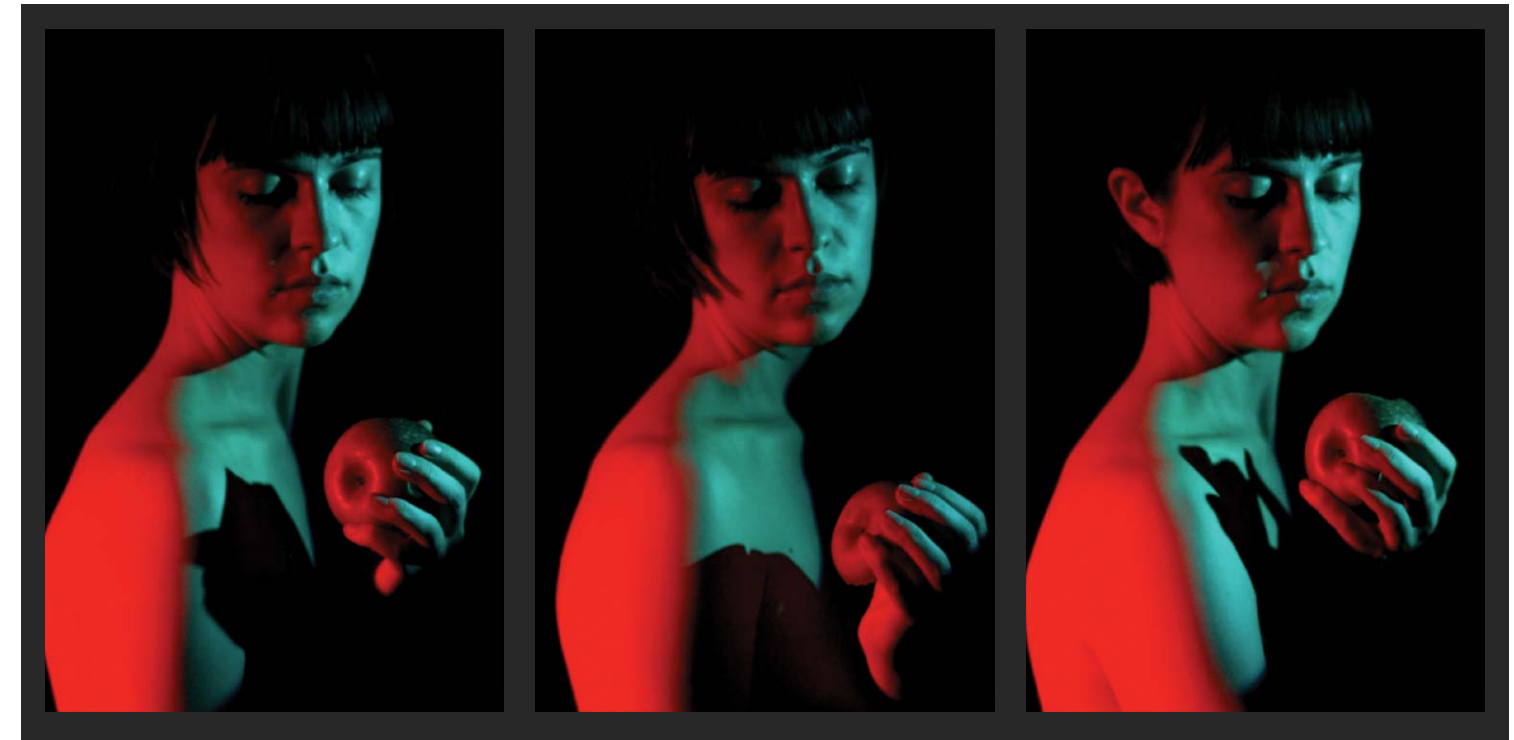


# Indulgences

Video Installation  
3:00



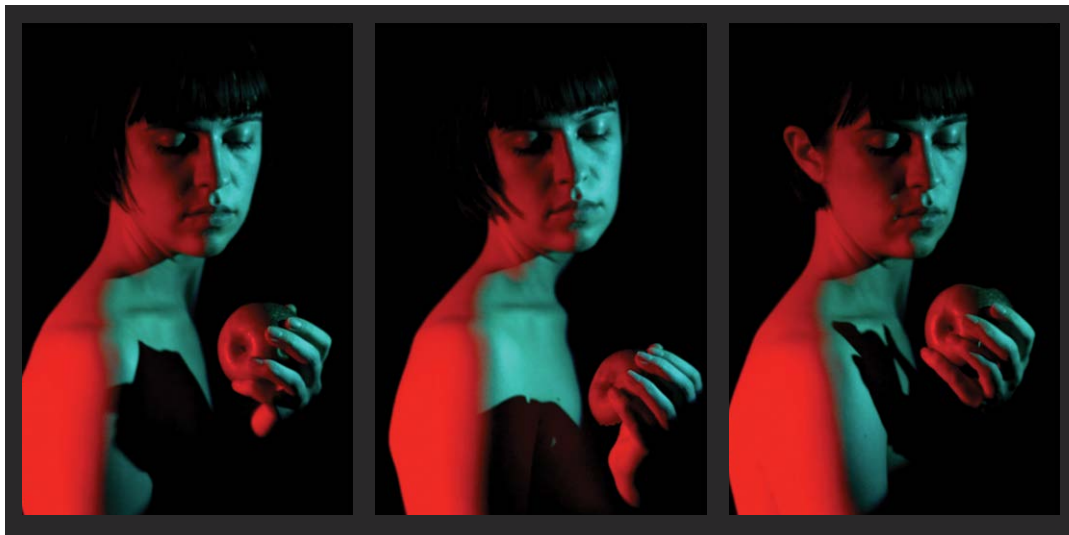
Souls were at stake. When an angry Martin Luther affixed his *Ninety-Five Theses* in public view in 1517, precipitating the Protestant Reformation, he had many complaints against the Catholic Church. (Ninety-five, to be exact.) Chief among these was the selling of indulgences. This was a transactional practice—give the Church money, get time off of purgatory. Indulgences had a long history (and, technically, still exist today), but by the Renaissance things had gotten out of hand. As Luther was quick to point out, indulgences had become less about congregants' salvation and more about augmenting the very worldly resources of the Church. The Holy Father in Rome, infallible? More like corrupt as hell. So Martin led a little schism. † Last year was the 500th anniversary of Luther's *Theses*. I happened to read an article about them and ended up with indulgences on the brain. The word brought to mind lowfat yogurt and Dove chocolate commercials, with their portrayal of female temptation and "acceptable" satisfaction—women and their just desserts. After some percolation, I made this project. † Here we see three iconic women of the church—Eve, Mary Magdalene, and Mary (the Immaculate one). Eve bites into an apple— forbidden fruit. Mary M. eats and pits a cherry—she's a little tart. Mother Mary appears to breastfeed, but instead reveals her breast to be a grapefruit half that she proceeds to juice—for the fruit of the womb? I shot their gestures with the Edgertronic high speed camera. Every movement becomes stretched, excruciatingly suspended. Placing food into the mouth is sensuous—chewing is not, especially in slow motion. Each woman appears in triptych, performing her gesture, lit with red and blue colored gels. Is it the same woman three times or three similar women? (The classic trinitarian conundrum!) The better question is: when will female bodily acceptance not be seen or felt as self-indulgent? †



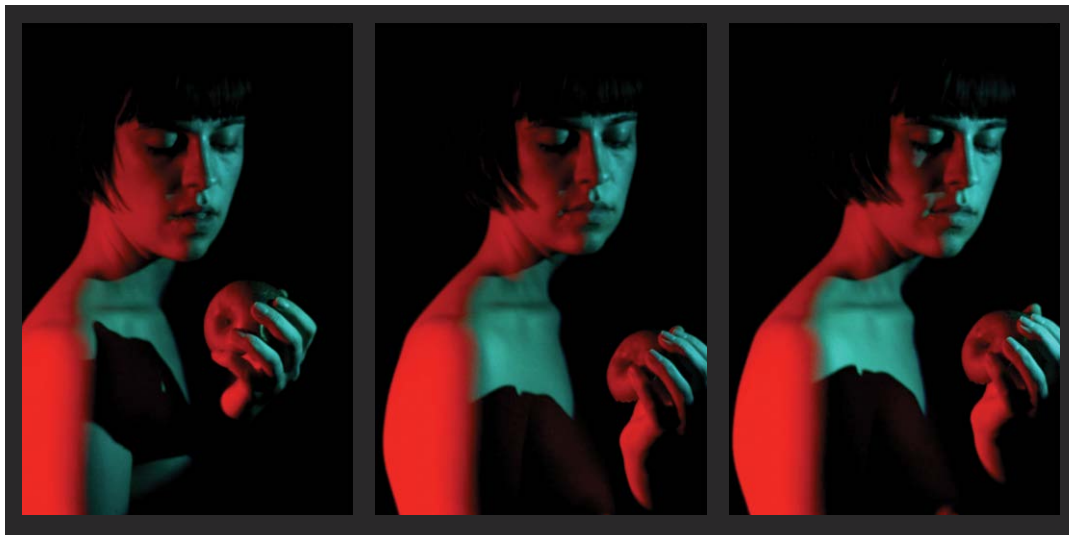
0:00

↑ Eve contemplates the apple. It's so tempting.

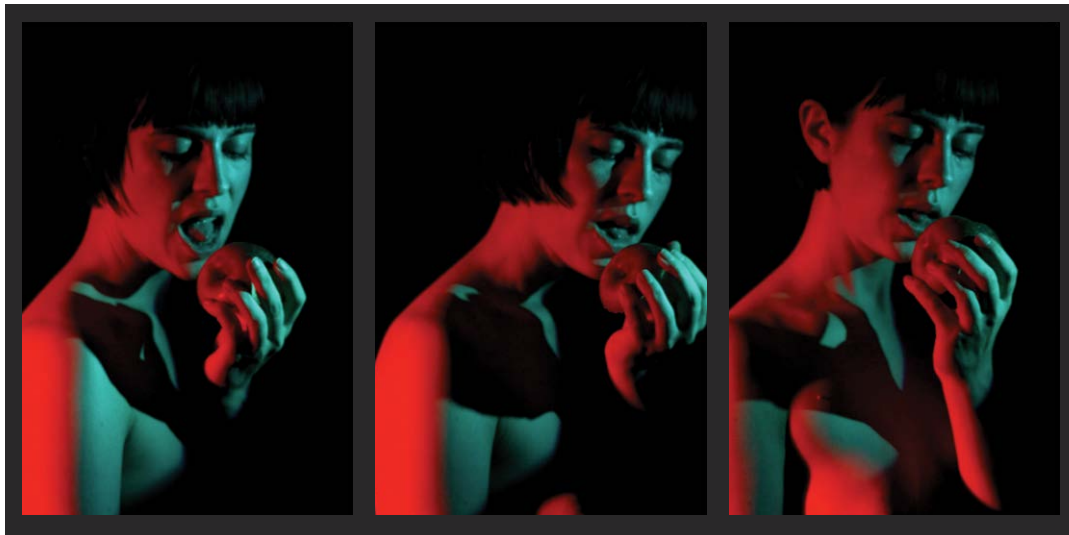
← Martin Luther nails his *Ninety-Five Theses* to a church door in 1517. He had beef with the Catholic Church's practice of selling indulgences, an exchange which left the Church with money and a sinner with time off purgatory. He didn't buy the validity of this transaction, so he started the Protestant Reformation. More or less.



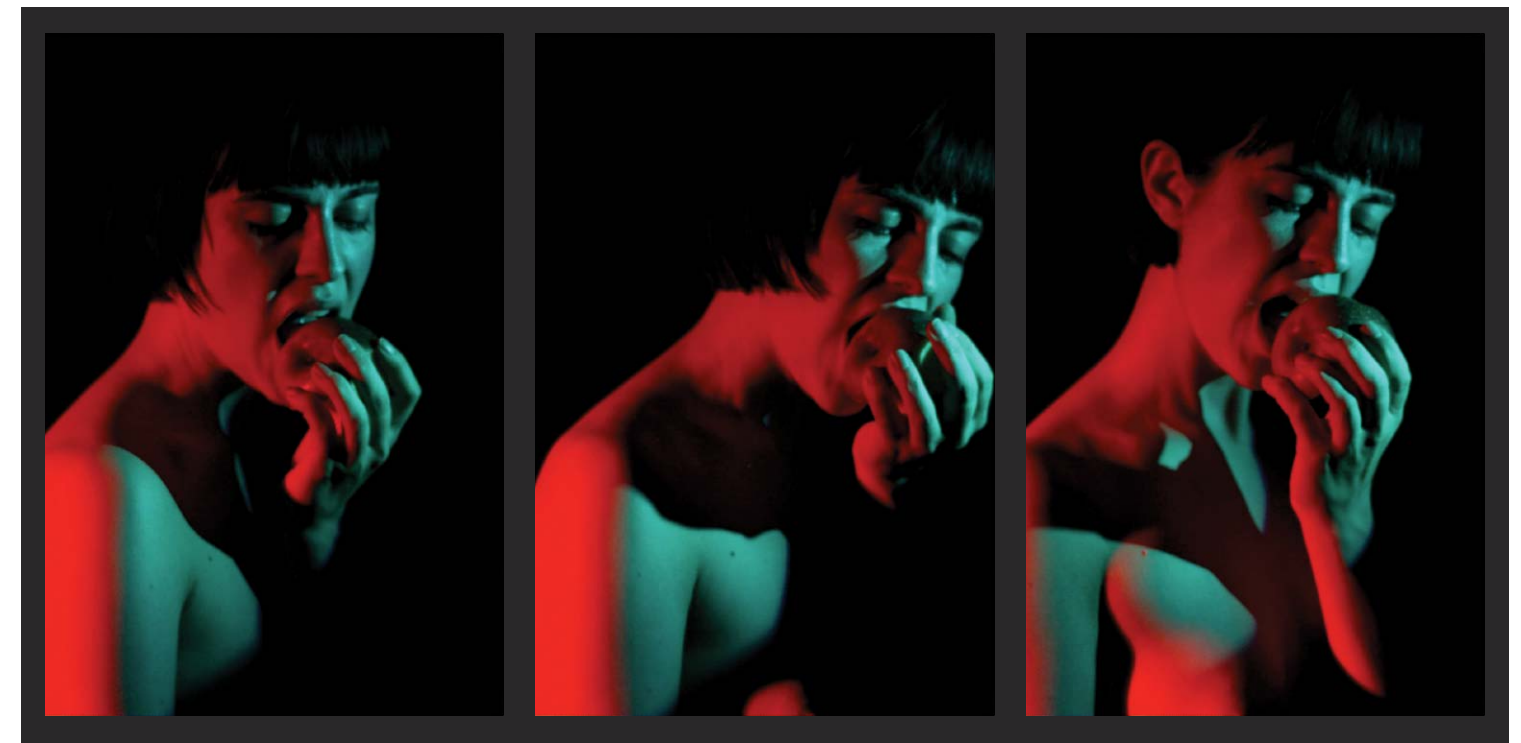
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0:17



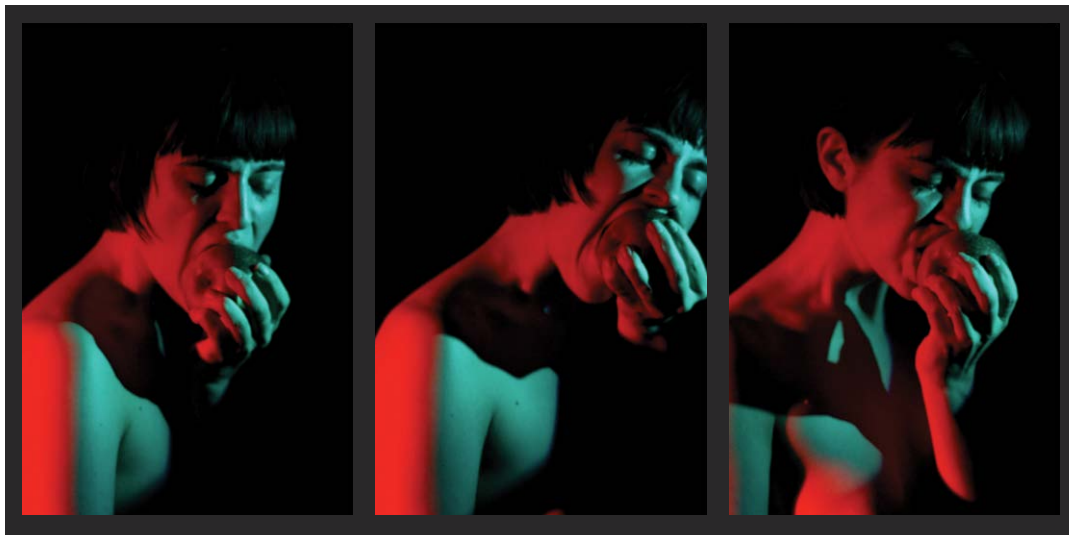
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0:27

← ↑ Eve had to know; she takes a bite. Shot on a high speed camera, her gesture is drawn out. Because of the camera's frame rate, the blue light exhibits a strobe effect, heightening the tension.

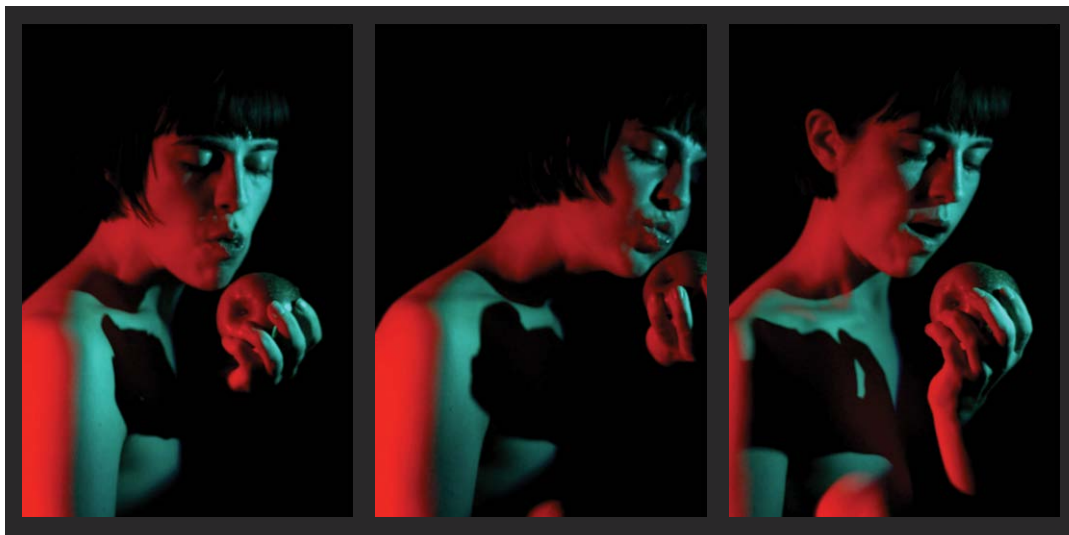




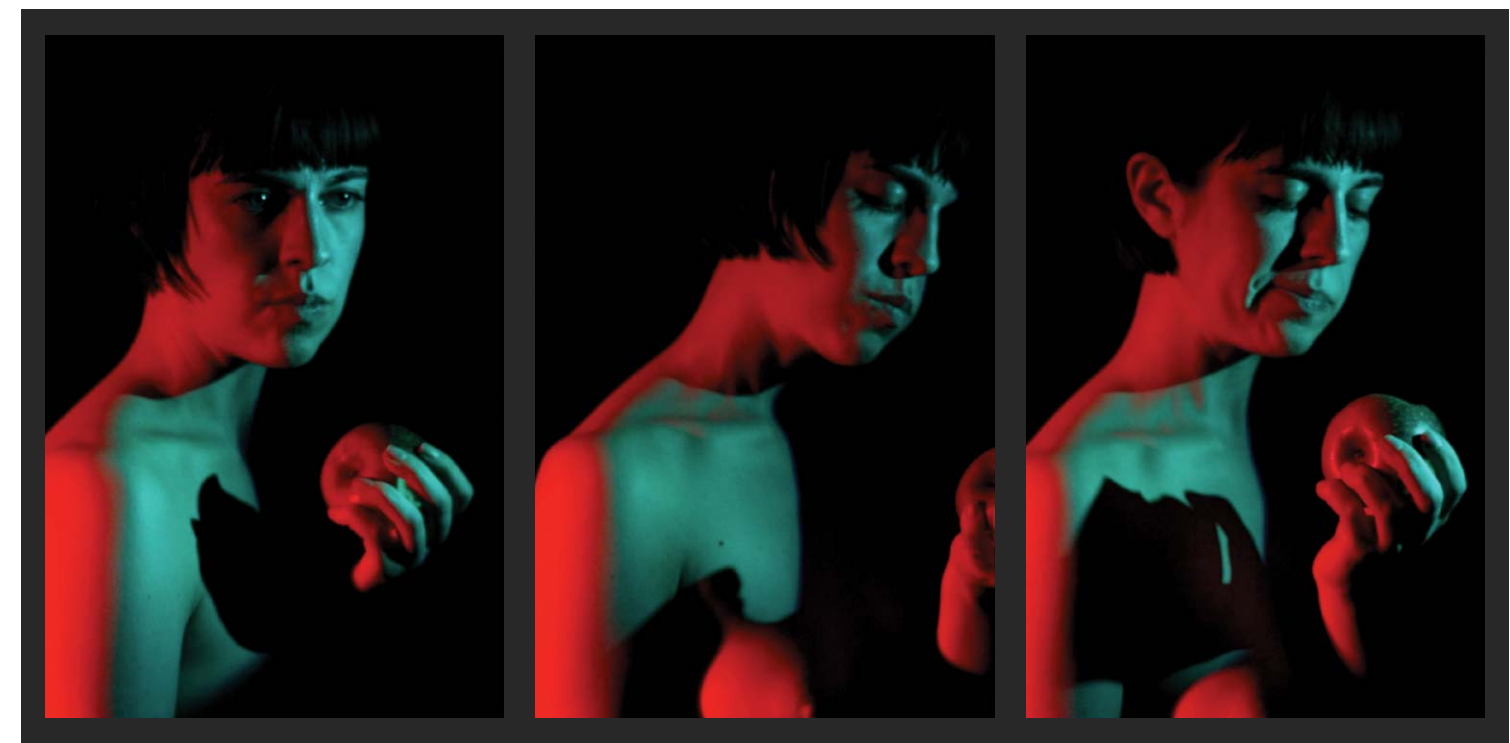
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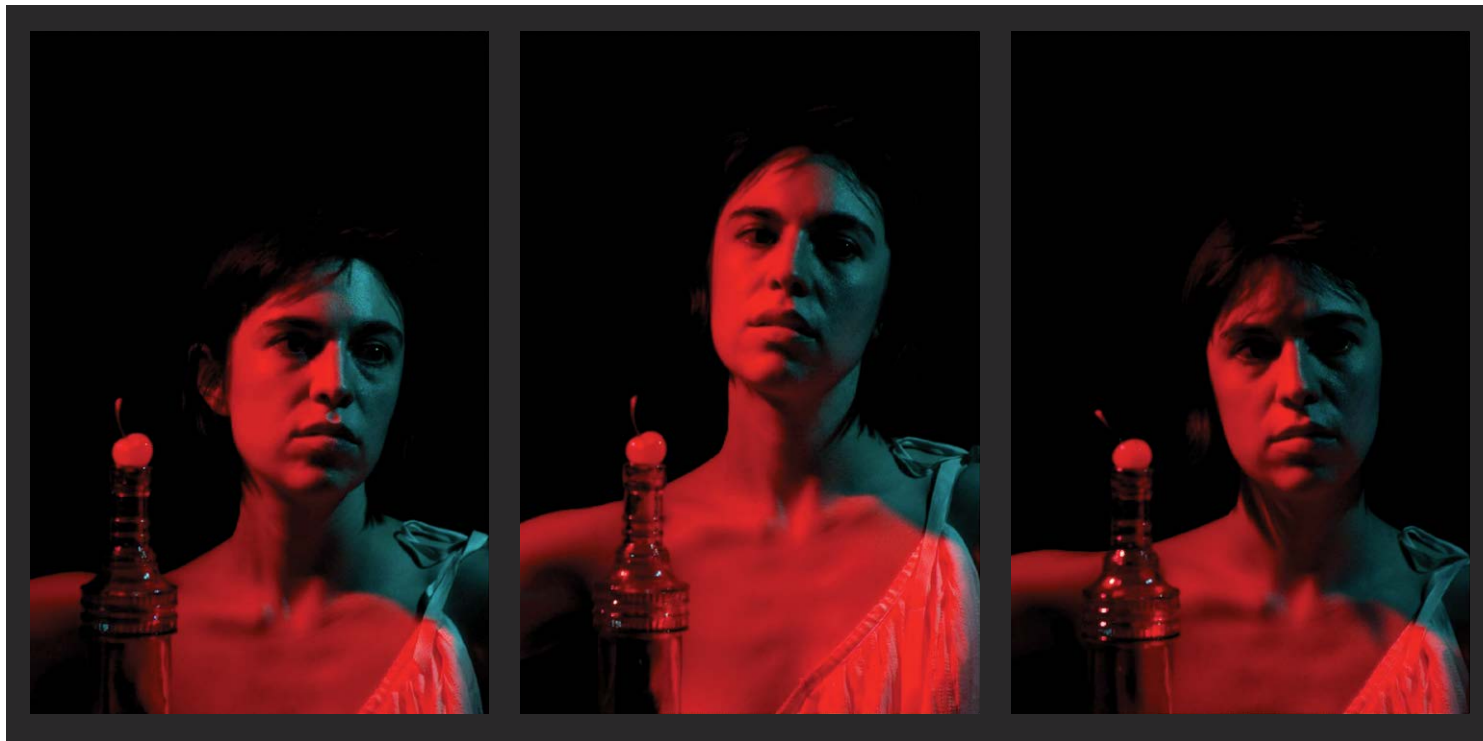


0:40



0:55

← ↑ Original sin in slow motion. It doesn't end pretty.

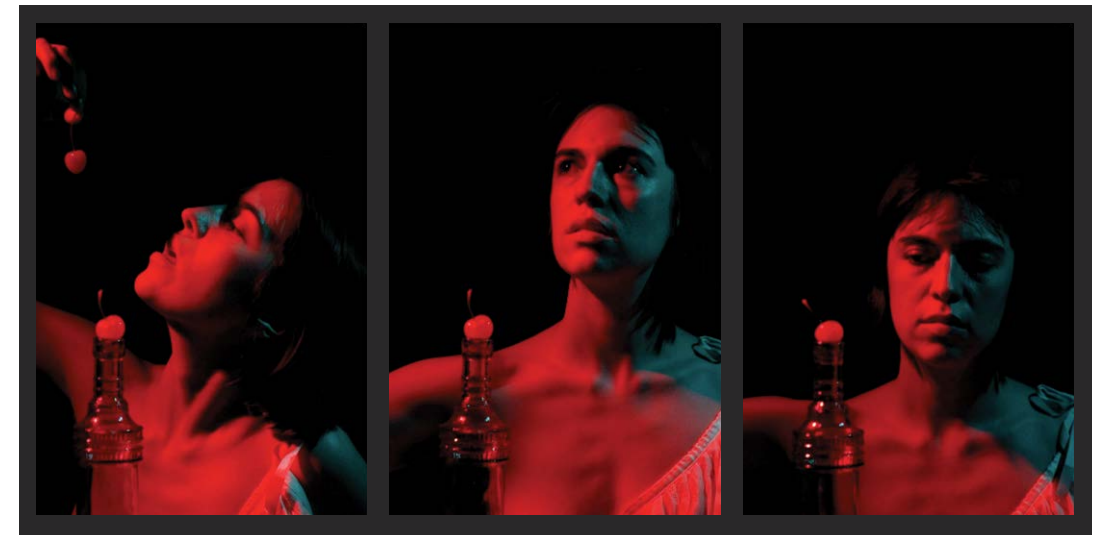


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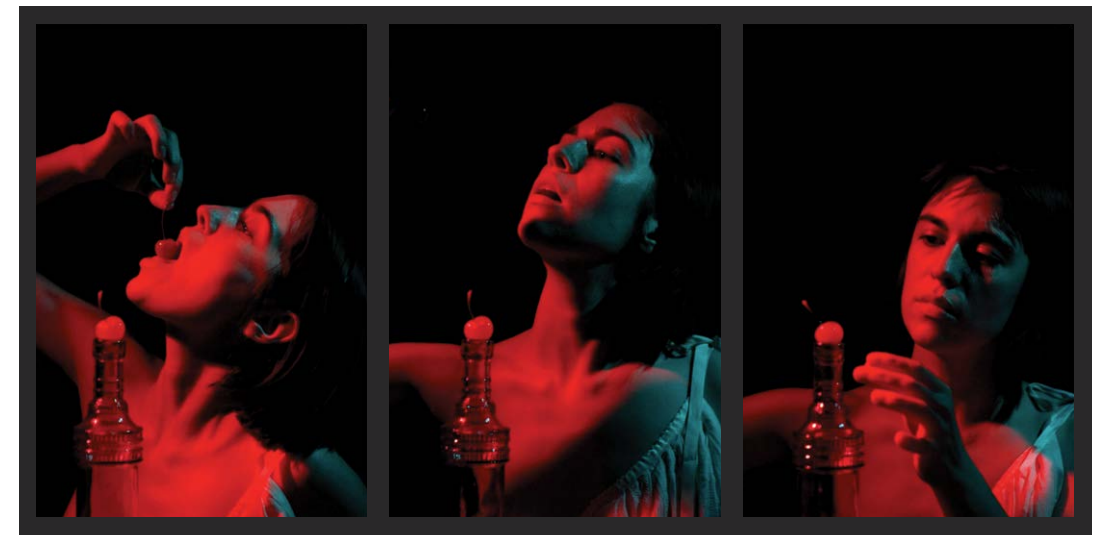
↑ → Mary Magdalene is one of the most prominent women in the New Testament. In the Middle Ages, she became conflated with another biblical Mary, a known prostitute. She's never quite been able to shake that reputation. I depict her with a cherry, which she pops into her mouth.



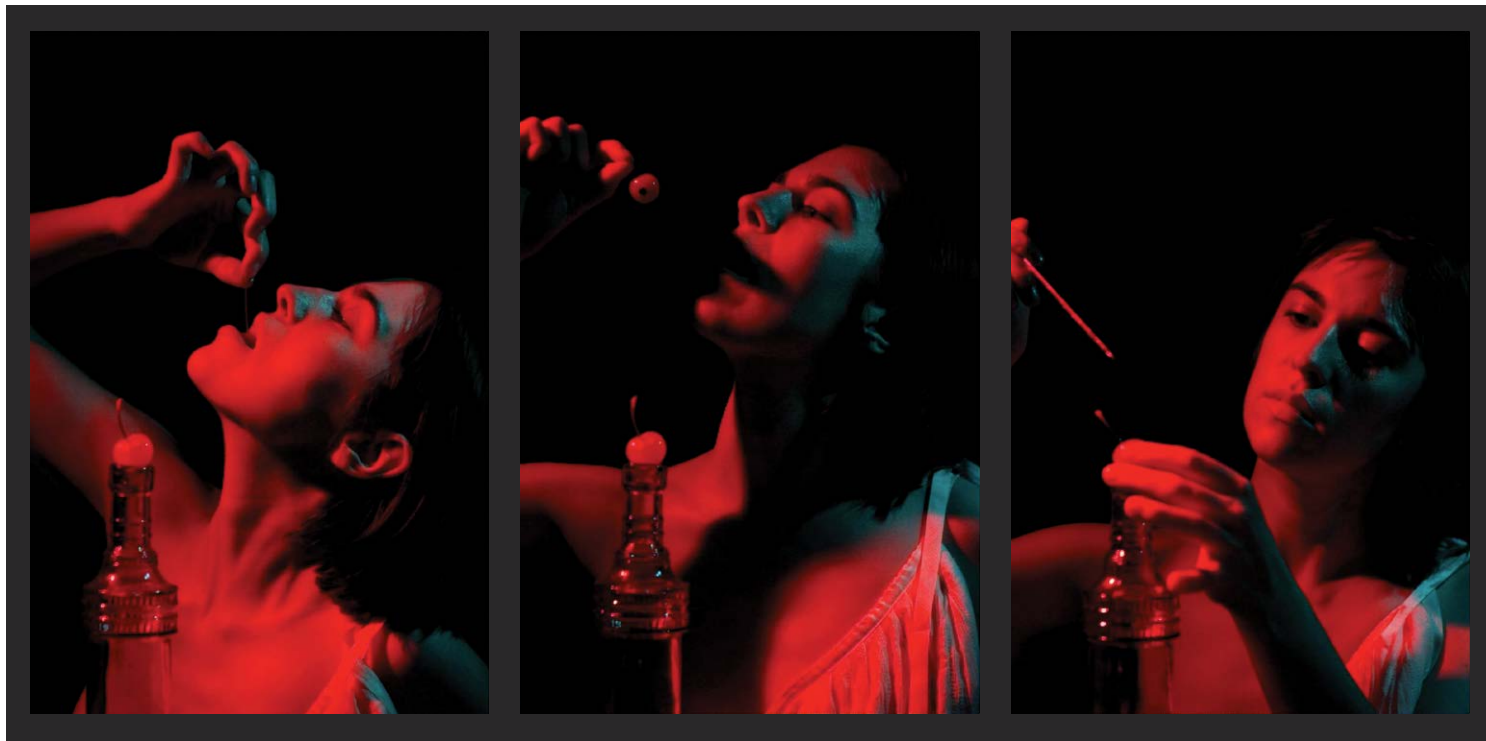
1:09



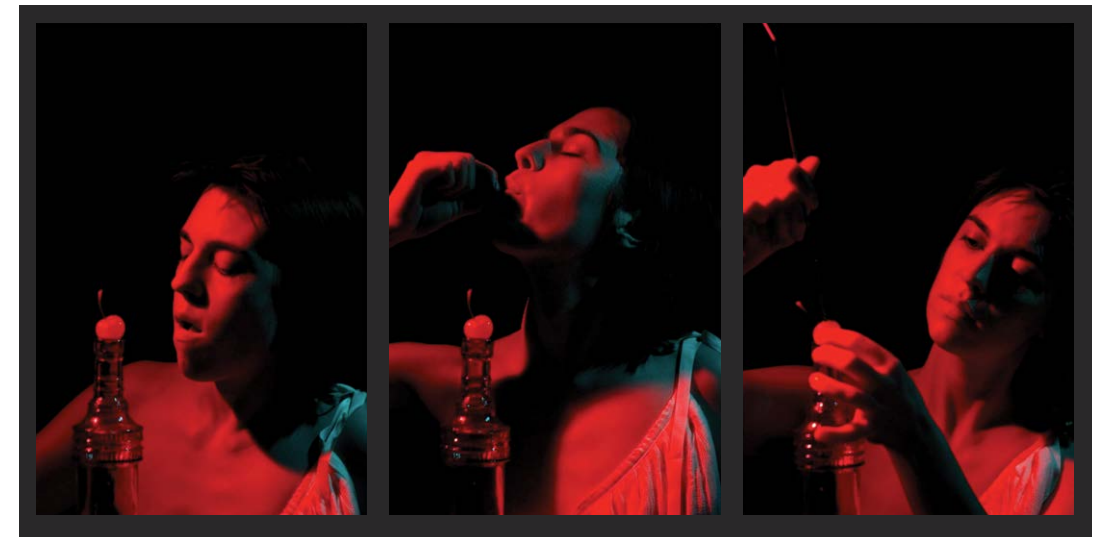
1:17



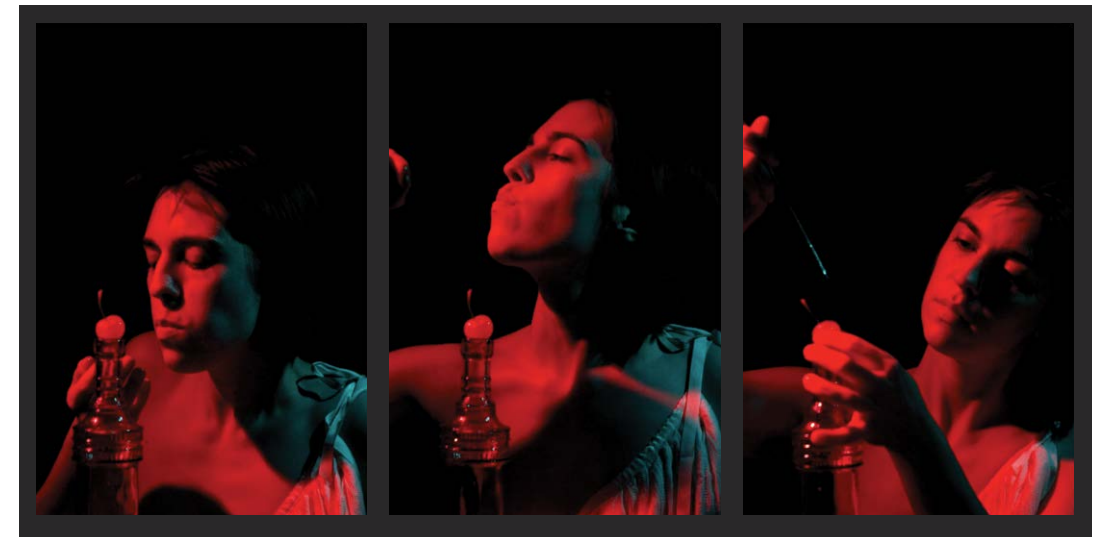
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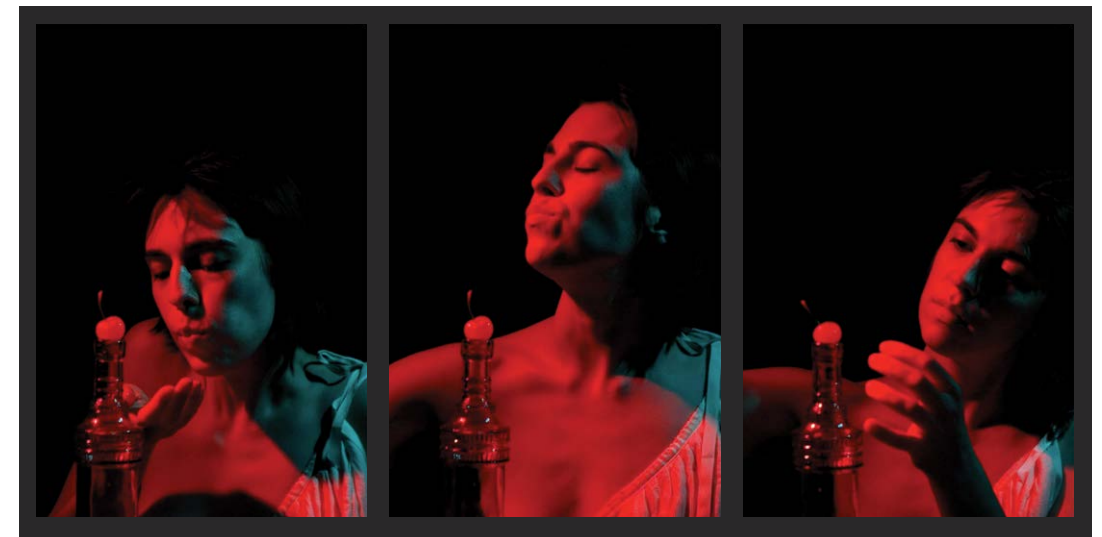
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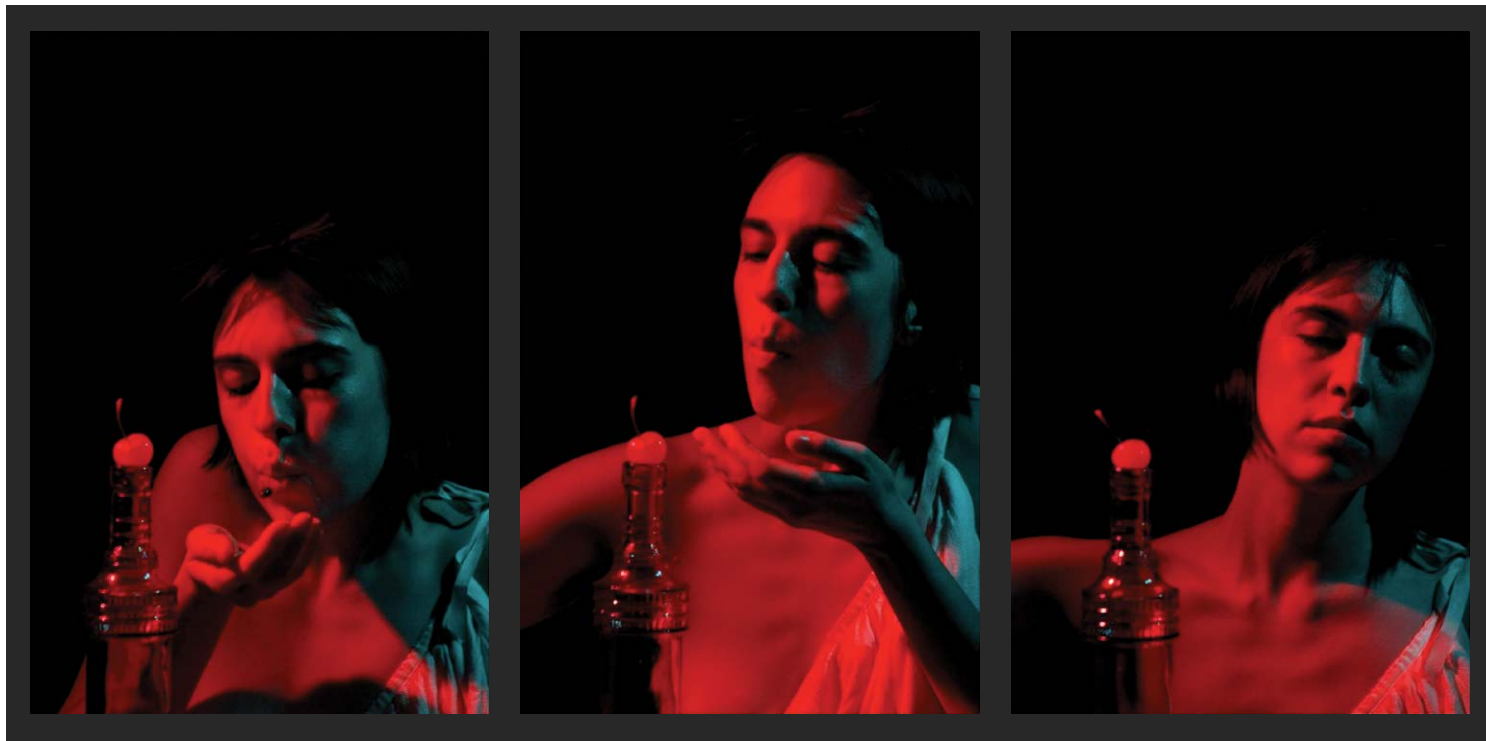
1:38



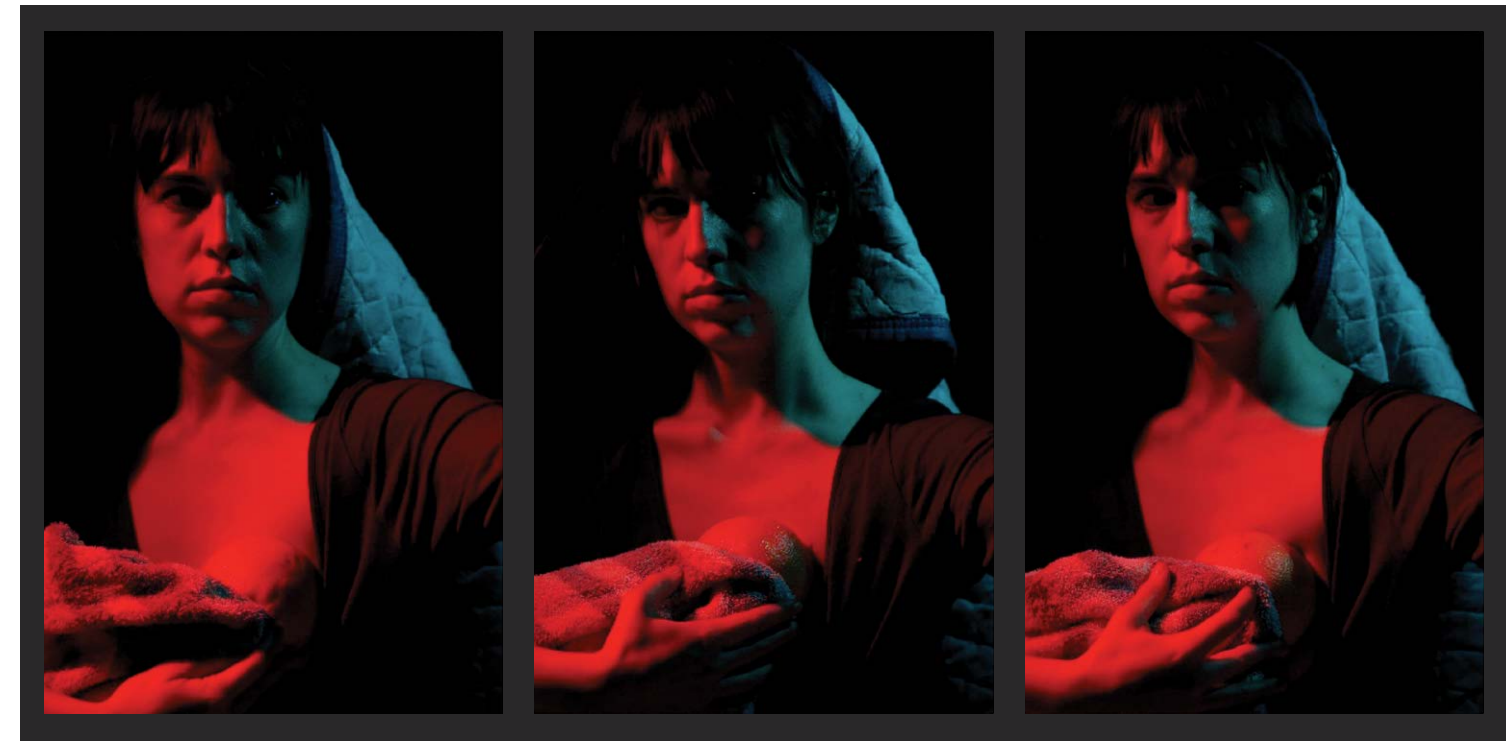
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1:55



2:02



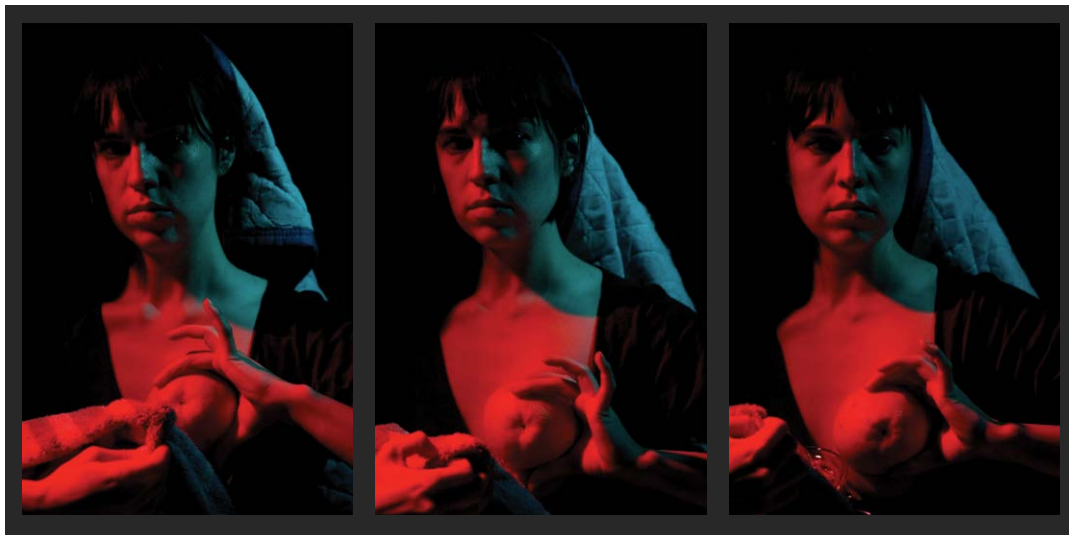
2:05

↑ Using a wine bottle and stick to pit a cherry is handy kitchen hack.

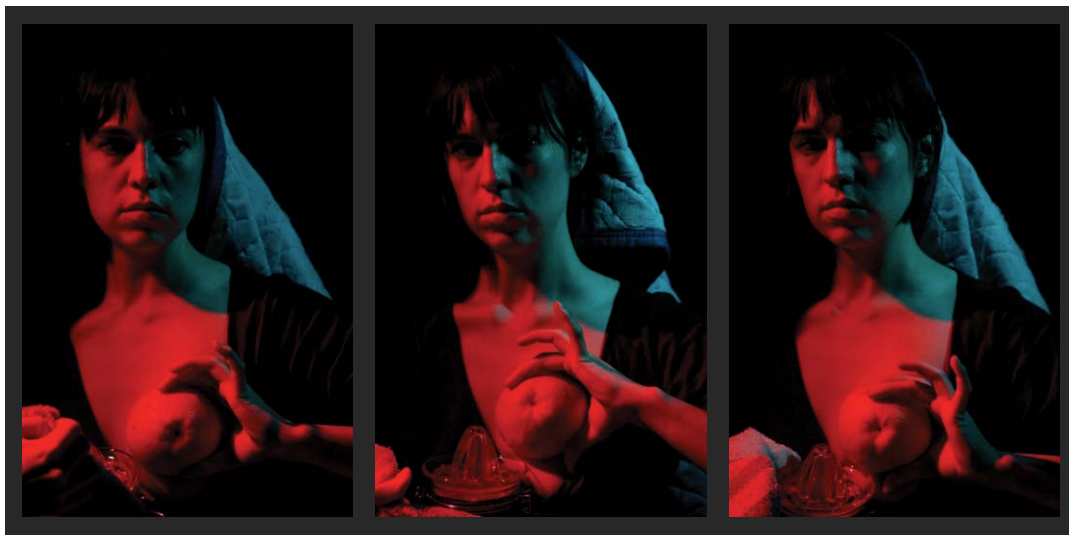
→ Meet the other, more famous Mary. There is a long tradition of depicting the Blessed Virgin as the Madonna Lactans. (That's Latin for unabashed public breastfeeding.)



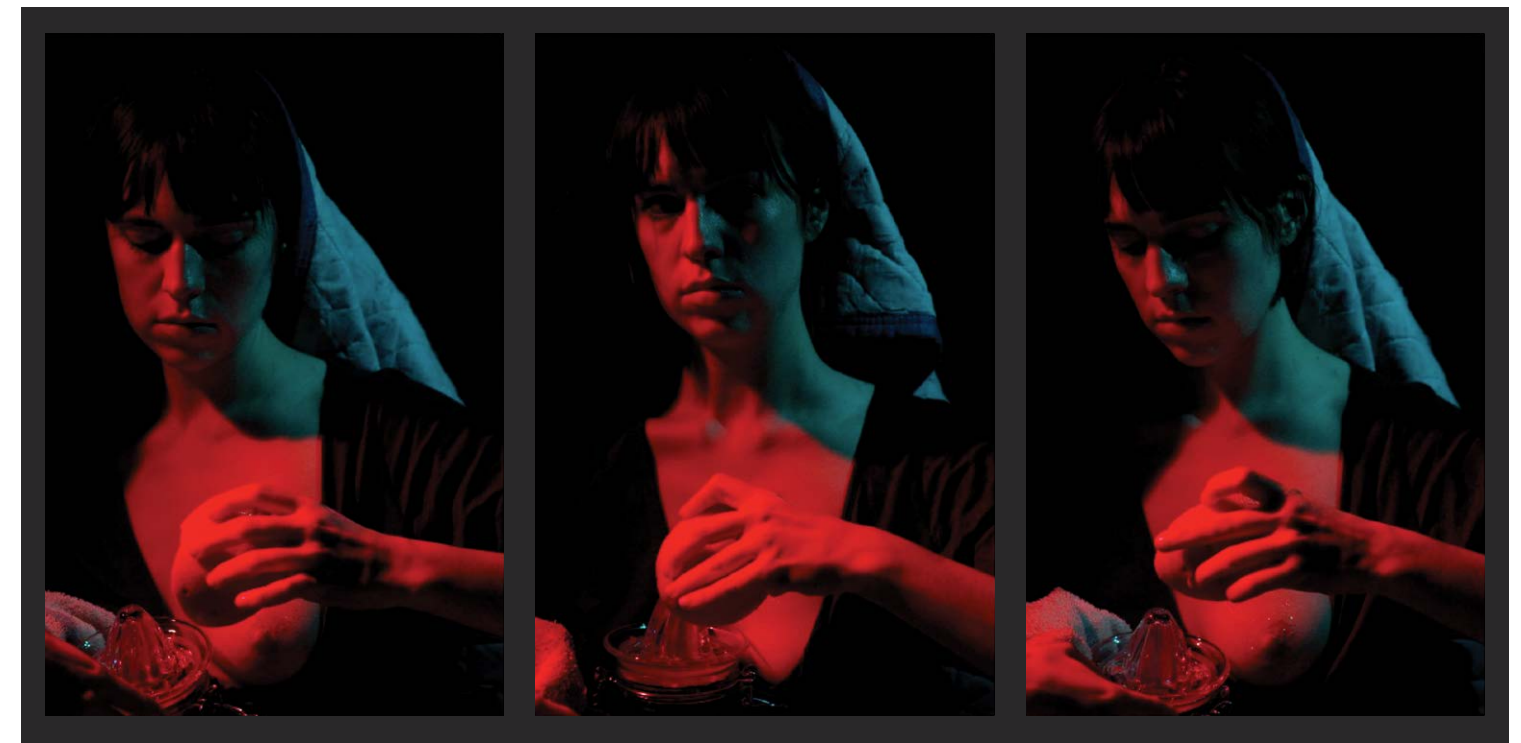
2:19



2:30



2:37



2:44

↑ That's not a breast, that's a grapefruit. Do I detect some bitterness?



2:55



# Appendix of References



← Jan and Hubert van Eyck. *Ghent Altarpiece*, c1430.

## APPENDIX, MY MOTHER'S

My grandmother never threw anything away. This collection included my mother's appendix, removed and subsequently jarred in 1962. My mother had been touring the local sugar beet factory for her 9th birthday with friends Londa Vasquez and Becky Belsen. She was overcome by a queasy feeling, and later taken to the hospital. The appendix itself has since mysteriously disappeared, but the receipt for the procedure remains, now scanned into the family archive. (The appendectomy cost a grand total of \$167.45.)



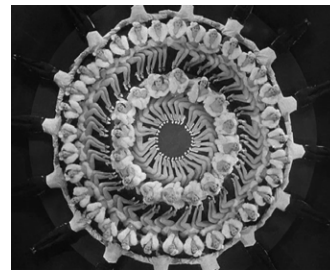
## BELOFF, ZOE

(1958–present) Scottish-American artist working primarily in film and illustration. I drew formal inspiration from her film, *Two Marxists in Hollywood* (2015). Two children dress and speak as Sergei Eisenstein and Bertolt Brecht, who each spent time working in Hollywood in the 1940s. We see modern L.A. in the background, but the actors stand in front of grayscale paintings of vintage Hollywood done by Beloff.



## BERKELEY, BUSBY

(1895–1976) American choreographer and film director. Berkeley created wild, kaleidoscopic arrays of dancers, particularly popular in the movie musicals of the 1930s. His focus was on the decorative—composition and costume—rather than the dance technique of his performers. It's both lavish and slightly surreal.



## BERYL

(1907–1938) Beryl Atla Torbert née Harvey was my great grandmother—the Nebraskan mother of my maternal grandmother, if we're getting specific. She died suddenly in 1938 at the age of 30. My grandmother (I called her Oma) was eight and fairly traumatized by the incident. She rarely spoke about her side of the family. We were therefore surprised to find a wealth of photographs, letters, documents, and ephemera belonging to Beryl among my Oma's things at her passing. A vivid portrait of a lively young woman has emerged—Beryl horses around with friends as a girl in the 20s across photo albums, and writes expressively to her mother-in-law about life as a newlywed and young mother. I've formed a strong attachment to this unexpected specter.



## BOURDIEU, PIERRE

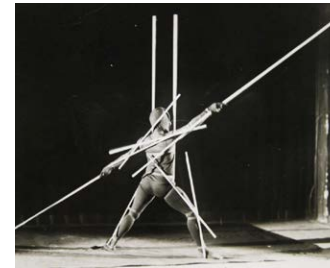
(1930–2002) French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher. He is associated with structuralism—"belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations," according to Simon Blackburn in the *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Bourdieu, interested in how the body relates to social structures, developed the influential concept of habitus.



## BAUHAUS COSTUMES & DANCE

The Bauhaus—a German art school operating between 1919 and 1933—influenced design in many ways. The best part in my opinion? The costumes. Those folks knew how to dress up. In 1925, participant Farkas Molnár wrote: "The essential difference between the fancy-dress balls organized by the artists of Paris, Berlin, Moscow and the ones here at the Bauhaus is that our costumes are truly original. Everyone prepares his or her own. Never a one that has been seen before. Inhuman, or humanoid, but always new. You may see monstrously tall shapes stumbling about, colorful mechanical figures that yield not the slightest clue as to where the head is. Sweet girls inside a red cube. Here comes a winch and they are hoisted high up into the air; lights flash and scents are sprayed." They also made some wacky dance pieces under the direction of Oskar Schlemmer, whose choreography was largely influenced by geometry and the interaction of odd costumes and

the human body. His 1922 *Triadic Ballet* (pictured below) is his best known work.



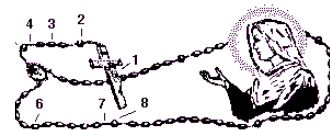
## CATHER, WILLA

(1873–1947) Author from Red Cloud, Nebraska. Cather's novels examine the lives the American Great Plains' first Western settlers.



## CATHOLICISM

The original Christian church, headed by the Pope in Rome. Pluses: smells 'n' bells, Saints, Mary, historical funding of the arts, liberation theology. Minuses: a long history of corruption, backwards views on women's roles and rights, and LGBTQ issues.



## CHIAROSCURO

A method of lighting, using high contrast between light and shadow. This effect creates a sense of depth

and volume. Originating as a term in the Renaissance, chiaroscuro became the hallmark of Baroque painting, often representing a holy glow emanating from divine figures. Caravaggio took chiaroscuro to the next level with tenebrism, creating canvases where figures emerged dramatically from inky backgrounds, lit as if by a spotlight. Now that's my jam.



## DA CORTE, ALEX

(1980–present) American artist. A sculpture MFA from Yale, he's a master of symbol and visual allusion. (And a fellow tortured Catholic.) He works wonders with neon lights and plastic in video and sculptural installation pieces.



## DICKINSON, EMILY

(1830–1886) A prolific poet and recluse from Amherst, Massachusetts, Dickinson remained largely unpublished until her after death. Her verse is highly idiosyncratic,

unusual for its time and it's quiet mysticism and peculiarities remain fresh today. If you have not read her recently, seek her out I implore you.



## DIETRICH, MARLENE

(1901–1992) German-born American actress. She was a character.



## DOUGLAS, MARY

(1921–2007) British anthropologist. Her 1966 book *Purity and Danger* remains an influential text in the field. In it she defines dirt as "matter out of place." Poetic and profound.



## DREYER, CARL THEODOR

(1889–1968) Danish film director. Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) is a silent masterpiece—one of the greatest films ever made, according to myself and many other more reputable critics. Stark and full of close-ups, it portrays the trial of French Saint and historical icon Joan of Arc with an incredible performance by actress Renée Jeanne Falconetti.



## FASHION PLATE

From a compositional standpoint, they're marvelously surreal and stylized.



## FOUCAULT, MICHEL

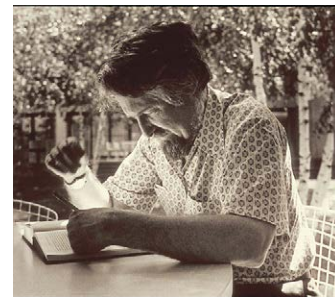
(1926–1984) French philosopher and social theorist, critic of modernity. (He is associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism, but did not like those terms himself.) I won't lie—I haven't been able to make it through a full Foucault essay without succumbing to sleep. (One day.) But it seems like everyone has read him, and I like what they have to say about

his ideas. Foucault wrote about how power influences and shapes knowledge—a fascinating topic. Institutions and social control feature heavily in his writing. Here's how Pierre Bourdieu describes Foucault's work: "A long exploration of transgression, of going beyond social limits, always inseparably linked to knowledge and power." (Quote from scholar Didier Eribon's 1991 biography of Foucault.)



## GEERTZ, CLIFFORD

(1926–2006) American anthropologist. "Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expression on their surface enigmatical." (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973)

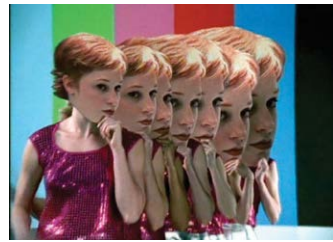


## GONDRY, MICHEL

(1963–present) French director. Gondry directs feature films, but it's his music videos I love. Each builds according to its own strict but fundamentally simple logic, which reveals itself and descends



into a fantastic chaos as the song progresses. They're smart, systematic, and quirkily charming.



#### HENROT, CAMILLE

(1978–present) In *Grosse Fatigue*, Henrot telling of the universe's origin. Carried by a spoken word piece assembling various creation myths, the 13 minute video meshes together footage from time spent among the Smithsonian Institute's collection with found footage and studio footage. The video functions like a computer desktop, with files opening and closing and layering into compelling juxtapositions.



#### INCUNABULA

The term for books printed before 1501, when the technology was in its infancy. (Gutenberg invented the printing press around 1436.) Wondrous odd creatures. Although printed, they often incorporate illuminated letters or hand coloration.



#### JULY, MIRANDA

(1974–present) American artist (and film director, screenwriter, actor, and author). About her performance work she says: "I reenact things you've seen a million times before. Straight things, TV things, and medical things: These are the transactions that we all participate in and memorize accidentally. Then I wiggle my hand and wink and you know that everything I just said was in code, and the real truth is the sick or incredible way you feel."



#### KAHLO, FRIDA

(1907–1954) Mexican painter. Owner of an exceptional pair of eyebrows, she mixed realism with fantasy, often appearing in her work. Her style was folk art-informed; her content addressed identity, gender, class, race, and postcolonialism.



#### KALMAN, MAIRA

(1949–present) American artist and writer. Having arty parents,

I grew up surrounded by arty children's books. Kalman's series about Max Stravinsky, the poet dog has stuck with me over the years. It's no ordinary children's book. New York resident Max dreams of making it as a poet in France. Type jingles around the pages, filled with Kalman's surreal illustrations and wordy wit. I'm a cat person myself, but I love Max. Kalman also composes—to simply say writes and illustrates doesn't quite capture it—books for adults using the same colorful and insightful style. Her work also appears on *New Yorker* covers—perhaps you've seen it?



#### KENTRIDGE, WILLIAM

(1955–present) South African artist. Kentridge works across media—prints and drawings, sculpture, opera sets—but it's his animation work I love best. He draws each frame with charcoal, erasing and redrawing on the same surface to create the motion, palimpsest-like. For other animations, he combines projections and cut paper, puppeted with stop-motion. His work frequently deals with apartheid; he also takes inspiration from Russian short stories and personal narratives. Once an aspiring actor, the young Kentridge trained as a mime. (He frequently appears as a character in his pieces.)



#### LANDY, MICHAEL

(1963–present) British artist, associated with the Young British Artists (YBAs). A 2013 visit to London happened to coincide with Landy's *Saints Alive* at the National Gallery. The product of a residency at that institution, Landy cultivated an interest in the numerous Saints represented in the collection. Beginning with elaborate collages, Landy created big kinetic sculptures, the violence of sainthood.



#### LATIN POETRY

You are looking at the former co-consul of her high school's Junior Classical League. In other words, I was a bona fide Latin nerd. My senior year we read the Catullus' witty epigrams and the myth-filled *Metamorphoses* of Ovid—those guys have a way with words. Unlike English, Latin doesn't rely on word order to form meaning; its poetry is filled with complex rhythmic patterns and illustrative arrangements of words. It's worth learning Latin to read the poems.



#### LATOUR, BRUNO

(1947–present) French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist. In his book *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour argues that modernity establishes many binaries, but it also requires hybridization to keep going. That hybridization is in conflict with the binaries, but modernity turns a blind eye to that contradiction. Ergo, we've never actually been modern.



#### MAUSS, MARCEL

(1872–1950) French sociologist. He developed the idea of techniques of the body, positing that bodily movements are socially learned.



#### MCQUEEN, ALEXANDER

(1969–2010) British fashion designer. That man knew how to cut a coat. He also had a delightful knack for mixing the sartorial new and old at a structural level.



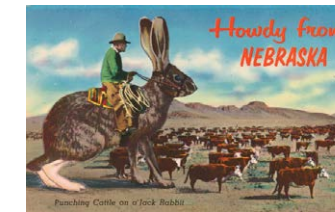
#### MERCHANT & IVORY

I love a good costume drama. The best ones feel strangely timeless, a product of a time that is not their own. These two did that well.



#### NEBRASKA

My mother's family is from Nebraska. I grew up making pilgrimages to visit my grandparents there every summer. Born and raised in tree-filled Atlanta, "big-sky country" is far cry to what I'm used to. Nebraska feels like an ancestral homeland, pulling at my heartstrings while remaining deeply alien.



#### POLYPTYCH

A painting divided into many panels. We're most familiar with diptychs (two panels) and triptychs (three panels), but there's no need to stop there. Why not an octaptych! Polyptychs were all the rage for Late Medieval and Early Renaissance altarpieces. Many were hinged, with panels opening up to reveal different views.



#### PHOTOS OF GEORGIA O'KEEFFE BY ALFRED STIEGLITZ

Alfred Stieglitz took over 300 images of his wife, Georgia O'Keeffe. He felt that portraiture should capture more than just a face: "To demand the portrait that will be a complete portrait of any person is as futile as to demand that a motion picture be condensed into a single still."



#### ROSLER, MARTHA

(1943–present) American artist. In her video, *Kitchen Semiotics* (1974), a deadpan Rosler alphabetically names and demonstrates cooking implements with increasing strangeness, a feminist parody of the cooking show format.



#### SAINTS

I'm certainly not the first artist to be inspired by the lives of the Saints. (In the Catholic church, anyone who reaches heaven is a saint, but only canonized individuals get the capitalized version of the word.) They have wild lives. They fight

dragons. They break giant torture wheels with a touch. They get gracefully porcupined with arrows. I'm named after St. Catherine of Siena, a Dominican nun who convinced the Pope to return to Rome after he had fled to Avignon and received the stigmata. She was the first woman named as a doctor of the church.



#### SACRED HARP

The name *Sacred Harp* refers both to a style of singing, originating in colonial New England, later taking root in Baptist communities of the nineteenth century South. An eponymous hymnal, first printed in 1844, remains this style's most prominent and ubiquitous songbook. (The sacred harp itself is the human voice.) This music is participatory, not performative. Songs are always *a cappella*, and written in four parts, employing harmonies not often heard in traditional Western choral arrangements. Singers sit facing each other in a square and take turns leading. The music is written on a standard staff, using relative rather than absolute pitch. The notes are described by four different shapes, *fa*, *sol*, *la*, and *mi*, that represent pitch relationships. Singers first sing the shapes to learn the tune, and then sing the words—the louder the better.



SAUNDERS, MATT

(1975–present) American and German artist. Frequently using found footage as a base, Saunders creates colorful abstractions of form and the occasional human gesture across thousands of frames with ink and oil paint.



SCHNEIDER, REBECCA

Professor in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies. She wrote *Performing Remains* (2011), detailing her research on historical reenactors.



SCUTUM FIDEI

Also known as the Shield of the Trinity, the Scutum Fidei is, essentially, a traditional Christian infographic. (And God’s heraldic shield because clearly They needed one.) It illustrates the vagaries of the Athanasian Creed, which states that God is three persons, but there is only one God—the concept of the Holy Trinity. Clearly this does not mathematically work out, but we’re operating on some holy logic here. The Scutum Fidei is triangular, with each member of the Trinity—Father, Son, Holy Ghost—appearing at the three corners. Each corner is connected

by bar labeled *non est* (is not). At the center of the triangle is the word God. Three inner bars connect the outer entities to God in the center, labeled *est* (is). I love this diagram that makes all sense and no sense at the same time. While bluntly writ out, the concept of the Trinity remains inexplicable.



SHAW, CAROLINE

(1982–present) American musician and composer. *Allemande* from her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Partita for 8 Voices* knocked my socks off. It’s a blend of square dance calls, Sol Lewitt drawing instructions, and early music polyphony.



SHERMAN, CINDY

(1954–present) American artist. Sherman has made a career photographing herself in various (usually female) guises. She is best known for her *Untitled Film Still* series, where she poses as a range of ingénues, highlighting the media’s tropic habits when it comes

to depicting women. Naturally, I am partial to her series based on historical portraiture.



SILENT FILMS

There’s such experimental energy in silent films, as people began to figure out how the medium could be used. Early film has a strong connection to the stage—it looks and feels different from contemporary cinema, a delightful hybrid of the two media. No surprise that I like it. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) is one of my favorites, with its distorted expressionist sets. The silence of early film is also striking, a creative challenge for actors and directors alike.



SUGIMOTO, HIROSHI

(1948–present) Japanese photographer and architect. Sugimoto has a breathtaking series of abandoned movie theaters. With a single, several-hour exposure, he captures an entire film, the image yielding a ghostly glow. He has also photographed natural history dioramas and wax figures.



TIROCCHI SISTERS

Anna and Laura Tirocchi were Italian immigrant sisters who operated a high-end dress shop in Providence from 1915–1947. They ran their operation out of a spectacular Victorian gingerbread house on Broadway, a few blocks from where I reside. When the shop closed at Anna’s death, it was packed up and undisturbed until Laura’s son donated the contents to the RISD Museum. The collection forms an unparalleled archive of a dressmaker’s shop during this period, when consumers were transitioning from custom garments to ready-to-wear.



TUDOR & JACOBAN PANEL PORTRAITS

In college, I got a job researching Tudor and Jacobean panel portraits for the Yale Center for British Art’s painting conservation department. A mouthful to say, but what does that mean? These are 16th century British portraits painted on wood (usually Baltic Oak) panels. Canvas was too expensive at that point to be popular for painting

on.) My job entailed spending many hours fruitlessly trying to determine the lost identities of those housed in the YCBA’s collection. Conceived originally more as social markers than fine art, they often have complex histories. Formally, they are wonderfully rigid—thanks in part to the costume of the day—and chock-full of symbolism. The image below is my own rendition, inspired by my research.



VIOLA, BILL

(1951–present) American video artist. Viola creates slow motion video pieces, often informed by Medieval and Renaissance composition, but with a stark, modern aesthetic. His work probes the profound, often with a religious cast. The warping of time and lack of sound highlights the emotions and gestures of the figures in his images.



WILSON, ROBERT

(1941–present) American theater director and artist. Wilson’s work for the theater—directing and staging—is truly remarkable. (He worked with Philip Glass to make *Einstein on the Beach*.) His use of space, light, costume, gesture, and speech is transporting, surreal, sublime. And he makes video portraits. How could I not be a fan?



WORSLEY, LUCY

(1973–present) English historian, Chief Curator at Historic Royal Palaces, author. Worsley is a very public-facing historian, unafraid of engaging in experimental archeology, which she describes as “dressing up and trying things out.”



Y’ALL

I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. I don’t have a Southern accent, but I do employ its characteristic second person plural with frequency. It’s wonderfully specific and gender-neutral, y’all.



# Appendix of Gesture



← Arms, after Georgia.

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A

to adjudicate  
to agree  
to arrange  
to assemble

---

B

to balance  
to bathe  
to bear  
to be in awe of  
to bless  
to blink  
to break  
to button

---

C

to caress  
to catch  
to chew  
to choke  
to chomp  
to claim  
to clench  
to colorize  
to close  
to collage  
to comport oneself  
to conceal  
to contemplate  
to contort  
to creep  
to cross one's arms  
to crouch

---

D

to dance  
to dangle  
to disembody  
to display  
to decorate  
to don  
to douse  
to drape  
to draw  
to drop

---

E

to eat  
to exude  
to erase

---

F

to fabricate  
to fasten  
to fold  
to fold one's hands  
to forget  
to fret  
to flail  
to flick  
to fling

---

G

to gaze pensively  
to glance up shyly  
to glance up slyly  
to grasp

---

H

to heckle  
to hold  
to hula

---

I

to inflame  
to inspect

---

J

to jiggle  
to juice  
to juxtapose

---

K

to kick  
to kneel  
to knit the brows

---

L

to lactate  
to lean  
to let loose  
to lift  
to lift one's face  
to light  
to loosen

---

M

to marvel

---

N

to nestle  
to nudge

---

O

to obsess  
to open

---

P

to pick  
to pin  
to place one's hand  
on one's hip  
to pluck  
to plug in  
to point  
to pop  
to pour  
to pit  
to protest  
to pull

---

Q

to quote

---

R

to raise one's eyebrow  
to reach  
to reach around  
to read

to rearrange  
to recite  
to regulate  
to remember  
to rest upon  
to rett  
to rotate  
to rub  
to run backwards

---

S

to scribble  
to scutch  
to shake  
to shimmy  
to shrug  
to sip  
to snip  
to spew  
to spin  
to spit  
to spray paint  
to stand still  
to startle  
to squeeze  
to support  
to swaddle  
to switch on

---

T

to tie  
to tighten  
to toss  
to tousle  
to tuck  
to twirl

---

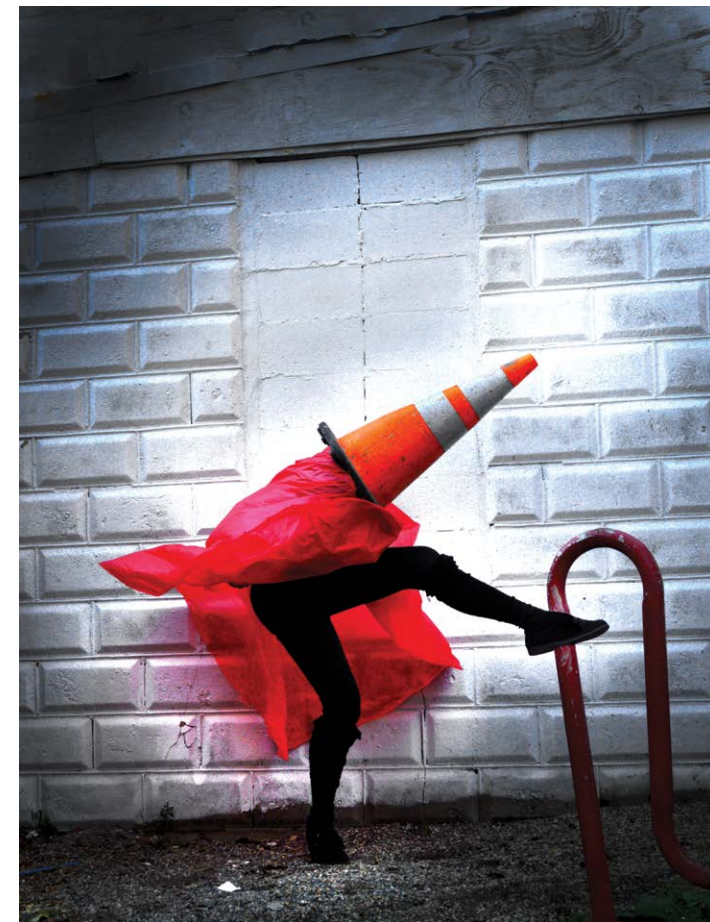
V

to venerate

---

W

to wave  
to weave  
to wipe  
to wish  
to wrap  
to wriggle the shoulders  
to wipe one's hands  
to write



↑ To kick



# Appendix of Properties

THAT FLEXIBLE PERSON

Chair, my limbs.



DEAR EMILY

Pink twine, left-hand green dishwashing glove, foam head, small fake candle, red Solo cup, picture of Emily Dickinson, plastic knife, plastic strawberry, plastic carrot, plastic cheese, plastic cat figurine, sprinkles.

*Not pictured:* red plastic tablecloth.



MADONNA

Blue moving blanket, light blue sheet, peach nylon slip, twine, bubble wrap.

*Not pictured:* two clip boards, bar code, i.d. tag, plastic wrap.



BACCHAE

Ripped black paper scraps, long tweezers.

*Not pictured:* ladder, projector, mosaic paper.



HAGIOGRAPHY

Shower curtain, white t-shirt, wind-up teeth, candle in glass, white hand towel, lemon, cherry Jello, frying pan, taper, Matthews Hollywood grip head.

*Not pictured:* charcoal, pewter platter, large potted plant.



THESE TRUTHS

Hoop skirt, curly brown mid-length wig, white corset, straw bonnet, lace ruffle, fake flowers, red spray paint, blue spray paint, light blue cotton chemise.

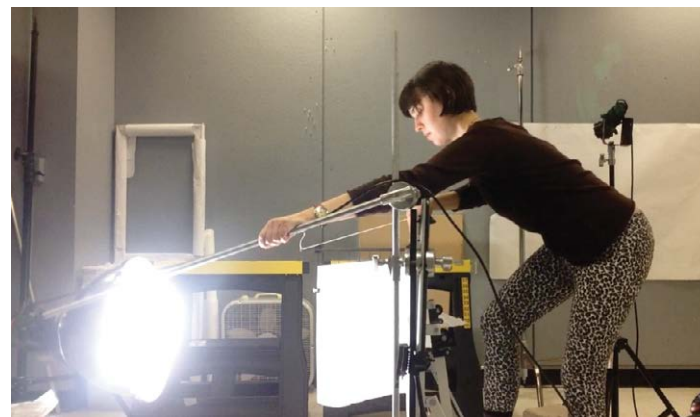
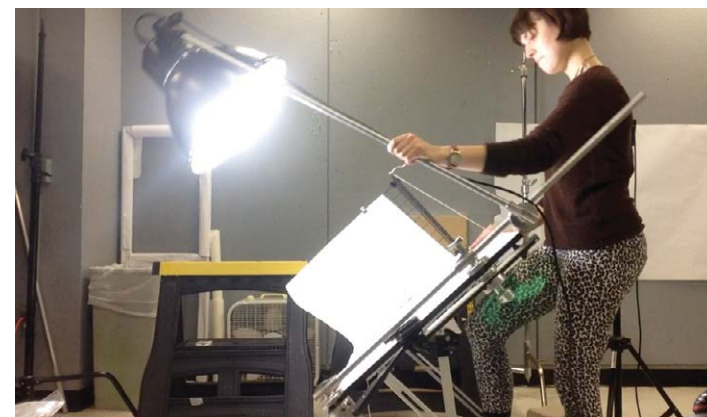
*Not pictured:* 1840s-style plaid dress, lace cuffs and collar, white knit socks, pantalettes, petticoat, white gloves, fan, book.



PURITY & DANGER

Champagne glass, two glass bottles, glass bowl, confectioner's sugar, cocoa powder, red food coloring, spill rig.

*Not pictured:* milk, oil, water, splash buckets, colored paper.



OBJECT! AGENCY!

Gold duct tape-wrapped hula hoop, book with white cover titled *Object! Agency!*



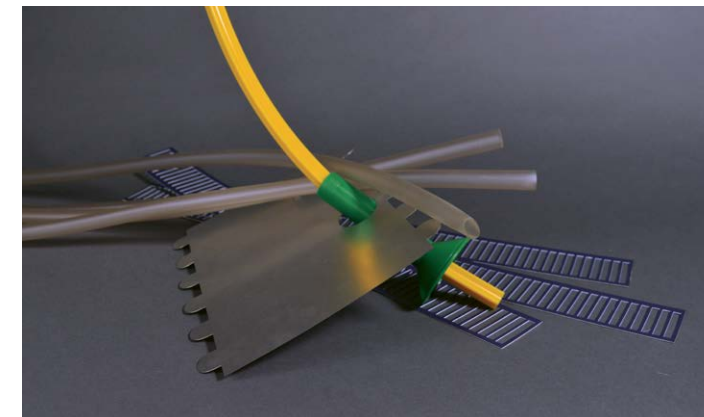
HENDIATRIS

Tricorner hat.



SIMPLE MECHANICS

Spool of paper tape with the word American printed on it made by the New England Paper Tape Co., red mechanics rags, bike grease, scissors, blue leather glove, knit glove, grey and red work glove, five industrial thread spools, squares of blue and red leather with holes cut in them, foam circles, yellow medical tubing, clear medical tubing, blue plastic laddered segments, metal sheet, green bobbin



FLAX PROCESSING

Hands from the Rijksmuseum's painting collection.



TIROCCHI

White sheet, blue striped wool suiting, thimble, pins.

*Not pictured:* dress form, pinking shears, 1910s blouse pattern



CARRY MY HEART

Silver leggings from a thrift store in Helsinki, scanned photographs of Beryl.

*Not pictured:* pictures of beryl.



DEAR FOLKS

Modified boy scout hat, Women's Royal Army Corps jacket from 1956, my partner's khaki pants, my partner's belt, white dress with blue pattern, light blue apron, red Marcel wave wig, concealer, brush, eyeliner, red lipstick, red bandanna, checked knit shirt, brown pants, my glasses, my grandfather's mechanic's jumpsuit, red mechanic's rag

*Not pictured:* My big faux fur coat, my grandfather's personalized Martens Independent Tow Service baseball cap.





ONCE REMOVED

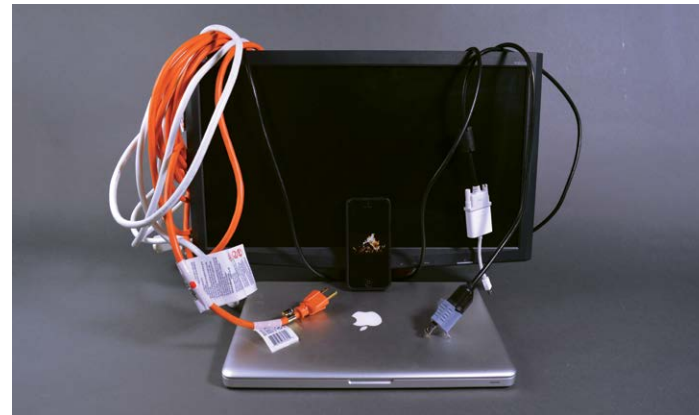
Top left to bottom right: Beryl Harvey (later Torbert), Eva and Jim Torbert, Dr. Henry and Margaret Harvey, unknown girl in wagon, Lynette Torbert (later Martens) with dog, Beryl Torbert with Lynette, Loyd Torbert with Lynette, Beryl Torbert with Lynette, Betty Jean Young, unknown men with a catfish, unknown man with baby, another unknown man with baby, Mary Jackson, Beryl and horse, Anatole Mazour holding Natasha Mazour with Howard and Mattie Jackson, Ralph Torbert holding Vera Torbert with Mamie Torbert.



FIAT LUX

Orange extension cord, white extension cord, monitor, cell phone, lap top, paper towel, plastic bag, tea towel, blue bath towel, black velvet hat, black silk hat, black fuzzy hat from Madrid, brown paper bag, mink stole, black garbage bag, leather belt, black rain pants, black silk dress, black long sleeve knit shirt, Qatar airlines grey fleece blanket, white pleated paper scrap, white foam head, glass bowl, glass bottle, small glass vase, glass ceiling lamp covering, small black light stand, lighter, light bulb on a wall plug, flashlight, glass candle holder, fake electric candle, fluorescent lamp, oranges, tea lights, tapers, knife

*Not pictured:* milk, happy lamp, iPad, hand mirror, tiny tapers.



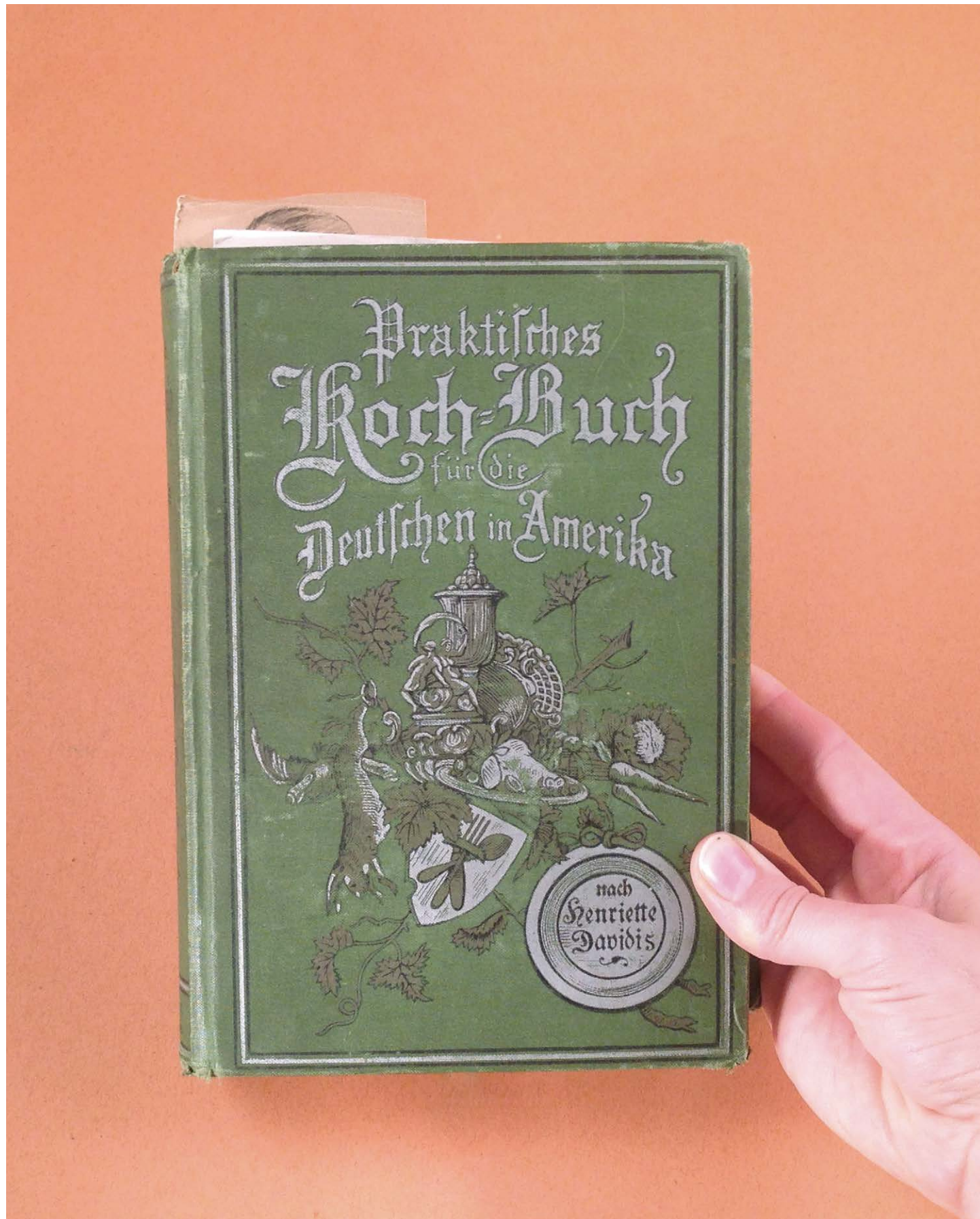
INDULGENCES

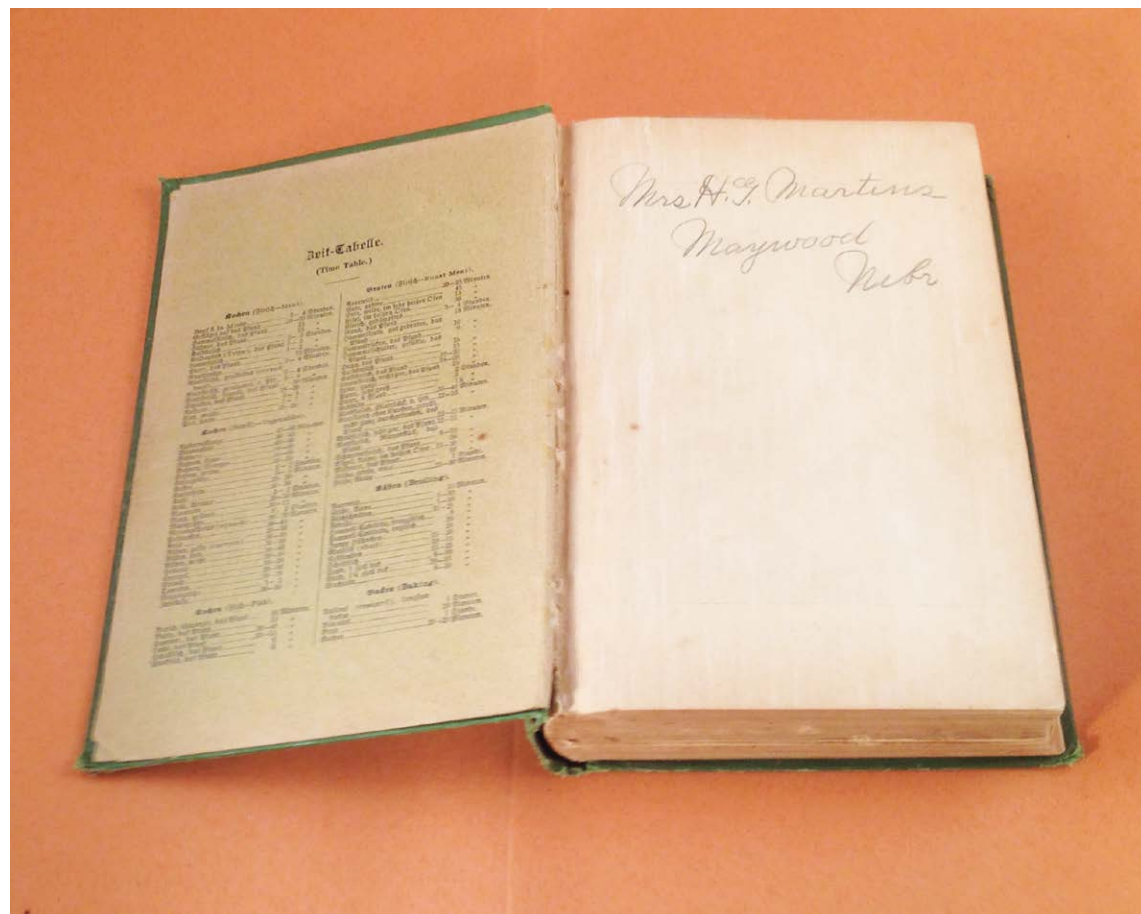
Apple, blue moving blanket, white hand towel, glass citrus juicer, grapefruit halves, white petticoat, maraschino cherries, skewer, glass bottle, glass serving pedestal.

*Not pictured:* red and blue gels.



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↑ My great grandmother Louisa Marten's cookbook.

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