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A spectacle and nothing strange

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

Taylor Zarkades King, MFA 2019

Director: Susan Ganch
Interim Chair
Craft / Material Studies

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
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ABSTRACT

A SPECTACLE AND NOTHING STRANGE

Taylor Zarkades King, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019.

Major Director: Susan Ganch, Interim Chair, Craft / Material Studies

Working through methods of abstraction and comedic mimicry I choreograph awkwardly balanced sculpture with objects of adornment as a means to defuse personal sensitivities surrounding my experiences of gender, desire, and home. The research that follows is concerned with the adjacent, the in between, above and underneath, because I feel that this kind of looking means that you are, to some degree, aware of what lies at the edges. Maybe this is what Gertrude Stein means to act as though there is no use in a center—because this concerns a way of relating, though there are many things in the room.

'A spectacle and nothing strange' is an arrangement of gestures, of made difference, of kinships, of orientations and possible futures, sustained tension, coded adornment, big dyke energy, shifts in hardness, leaning softness, much more than flowers, ...and in any case there is sweetness and some of that.

INTRODUCTION

I have learned that it is strangely awkward to say the word *lesbian* or *dyke* in a room without another, or someone who once was another. Sara Ahmed writes, “If orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails.”¹ The rooms I have occupied for the last two years have been anchored on a tilt, and I regularly pause when speaking about my life as there is an abundance of language that no longer carries. Or at least, not as it used to when I was surrounded by those I would call my familiars. This is not to say that I have been without queer community here, it is to notice that community as largely cis gay men, which is to say a different tribe. Simple thoughts can require some version of education and it has caused much of my person to feel theoretical, maybe stereotypical, and cold handed. I will not call it painful, but rather, an uncomfortably sustained point of tension in the way I deliver an expression. This has led to a practice that works through methods of abstraction and comedic mimicry as a means to defuse personal sensitivities surrounding my experiences of gender, desire, and home.

Working through abstraction is not about a desire to be less clear, nor to avoid or induce a misunderstanding, but rather to allow room. Language is always shifting depending on the crowd it is exchanged in. Amongst many things, Maggie Nelson reminds us that “Words change depending on who speaks them; there is no cure,” that “the answer isn’t to just introduce new words. . .and then set out to reify their meanings (though obviously there is power and

¹ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham and London: Duke

pragmatism here). One must also become alert to the multitude of possible uses, possible contexts. . .”² This is an echo—like how repeating a word out loud over and over shifts its form.

In a 1992 *Artforum* article titled “The Body You Want,” Judith Butler, in conversation with Liz Kotz, speaks of how a “bad reading” of her book *Gender Trouble* is to come to the conclusion that the performance of gender insinuates that one’s gender can be changed throughout the day—that it is incorrect to assume she was speaking to an understanding of gender as a consumable commodity. When she speaks of performativity, she means “performativity has to do with repetition, very often the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in.”³

After letting this soak in I could not help but send myself on several loops, repeating an act over and over, repeating a word, until I had cycled through something so many times that a shift occurred, and something opened. I agree with Butler in recognizing the relentless staying power of hegemonic social, economic and political systems that deploy a dictation of being. I also believe that repetition has a natural tendency to break open and mutate. Maybe this is a branching of something Lauren Berlant calls “cruel optimism.” When speaking of this concept in relation to her current project, “The Inconvenience of Other People,” she speaks of cruel optimism as

...being stuck in relation to your object, that is the object world that you are in. And so the inconvenience of other people is about how to lose your object. It’s trying to think about the problem of why it’s hard to lose your object... because you think you’ll have nothing. But transformation isn’t only loss, it is also a space where many structures multiply as conditions of possibility.⁴

² Nelson, Maggie, *The Argonauts*. Minneapolis: Greywolf Press, 2015, 8.

³ Butler, Judith. Interview by Liz Kotz. “The Body You Want: An Interview with Judith Butler.” *Artforum*. November 1992. www.artforum.com/print/previews/199209/the-body-you-want-an-interview-with-judith-butler-33505

⁴ Berlant, Lauren. “Interview with Lauren Berlant: Research Center for Cultures, Politics and Identities (IPAK.Center).” *YouTube*. Video File. November 28 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih4rkMSjmjs>

I understand this to mean that we can become stuck in our object, or rather person, that we have come to form. That it is easy to wish that the world meet you where you stand, and that the inconvenience of other people is to say that when our surroundings change we are inevitably faced with a loss, and in turn a change—a reorientation. My father has said to me time and time again that the definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result. These words fill the space between Butler and Berlant—That repetition is resignification, is being stuck in relation to your object. But as I said before, repetition can also be an opening because it is also a mimicking, and in turn, maybe, there is mockery. As Berlant writes, “Comedy is a lot about the breaking of a form and the emergence of multiple potential consequences in space, and that's what funny, lots of different things could happen and you're surprised by that and it's hard to organize.”⁵

In her exhibition “Funny Face, I Love You,” Tammy Rae Carland examines comedy as a site of rebellion, aggression, and the diffused reckoning, or playing out, of old wounds. This feeds into her interest in pulling back the veil of vulnerability to reveal humanity, and how capable comedy is at revealing a place of hurt while it subtly obscures. In this series Carland distills the photographic theory of a *punctum*, a small distinct point, as the punchline of a joke. She alludes to her experience as someone who laughs around, but not directly at, the punchline, and considers this perspective when choosing her gaze and moment of photographic capture. In a sense, she is looking at something's edges rather than its center. There is a Steinian way of acting as if there is “no use in a center.”⁶ *A kind in glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing.*⁷

⁵ Berlant, Lauren. “Interview with Lauren Berlant: Research Center for Cultures, Politics and Identities (IPAK.Center).”

⁶ Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons*, Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997, 43.

⁷ Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons*, 3.

Edges are of great importance to me. My interest in how we extend ourselves into space is the keystone to why I return to the figure and objects of adornment. That is, what we carry with us. Sara Ahmed writes:

The work of inhabiting space involves a dynamic negotiation between what is familiar and unfamiliar, such that it is still possible for the world to create new impressions, depending on which way we turn, which affects what is within reach. Extending into space also extends what is “just about” familiar or what is “just about” within reach.⁸

I have been working with collected objects, discarded scraps, and home renovation materials as a means to work through, and maybe reconcile, my surrounding and interior tensions. My interest in found objects comes from my belief that we are a collaboration of what came before us, what has informed our sense of *familiar*. That we are essentially “of another.”⁹ Through the integration of discarded scraps I draw attention to an improvisational way of being, and embrace the makeshift. I remain working in a space of inhabited process by way of materials used in home renovation such as linoleum flooring, plywood, screws, wallpaper, and ambient light. Most of the objects and spaces I create do not exist in a fixed state—They come together by folding, bolting, tying, tacking, and wrapping. They are capable of change, albeit not necessarily with ease.

This way of working has enabled me to continually breathe into my work from one installation to the next. There are repetitions that lead to representations, and reimaginings. Chapters do not close, or find the satisfaction of an end—there is no clear timeline as things come in and out of the room. This way of keeping the work open acknowledges the process of being in flux, that is not to say that objects are left in an unfinished state but rather that they are, literally, open ended, “...a loopy temporality without a goal.”¹⁰ The continuing narratives used

⁸ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 7-8.

⁹ Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*, New York: Routledge, 2004, 19.

¹⁰ Halberstam, Jack. “Notes on Wildness: This is Not a Manifesto.” *Hemispheric Institute*. Video File. June 22, 2014. <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/enc14-5-minute-manifestos/item/2608-enc14-5min-halberstam.html>

throughout my work also allow for a range in relationships with those viewing the work. For those that are visiting for the first time, the installation acts as an introduction. For those returning, my work assumes that a connection has been made and the conversation continues, a relationship deepens and complicates. Eileen Myles writes in her book *Inferno: A Poet's*

Novel:

I like sentences. Words. Like this walk. I don't see everything. And certainly not for the same length of time. What do I see? If I'm going to be a lesbian, it will be everywhere in my work. Embedded, and I laughed. I imagined this thing called Sappho's Boat. Like a sword being a record of all my thoughts and I could just pick one thing, not so importantly, but as you made a turn, like the rhythm, the stray junk of your existence would be momentarily displayed. Like a map of your road.¹¹

The work that follows considers methods of worldbuilding, comedic mimicry, interior orientations, and a non-linear unfolding of time and material meaning. The only constant is that the figure is always in play, and is gestured towards through intentional measures of human scale and adornments I have come to define as body objects—usually referencing the forms and needs to which they belong. The work is personal, intimate, laced with humor, and inevitably queer. That last bit is not for everyone, but for those that are meant to see, I offer you this embrace.

¹¹ Myles, Eileen. *Inferno: A Poet's Novel*, New York: OR Books, 2010, 221.

LAY IT ON THICK



Figure 1: *Lay it on Thick*, 2018

In January of 2018 my research was working through a growing digital collection of lesbian portraiture and candid photography from the 1900s. Early on I came across a black and white photograph of Gertrude Stein by Cecil Beaton. Stein stands in front of a wallpaper seemingly printed with growing tendrils of morning glory while wearing a similar floral vest and a floral shaped rhinestone brooch pinned at the top center of her buttoned up blouse. She's holding a confidently relaxed stance with her left hand easily grasped over her right, eyes looking just over the lens where I imagine the photographer meeting her gaze. I loved the dichotomy of this fierce butch woman in something of a power stance amongst these wildflowers. She embodied a familiar feeling of gender, and I found something fitting about the wild weed-like characteristics of the flowers at her back. The pattern of Stein's vest is not the

same as the wallpaper behind her, but the overlapping of patterns felt like a subtle way of revealing and obscuring her presence through thinly veiled strategies of floral-on-floral camouflage. This use of layered pattern felt like an effortless metaphor for two of a similar kind entangled, and became a key strategy, amongst others, as I moved forward with what would come to be my candidacy exhibition *Lay it on Thick*.



Figure 2: *Gertrude Stein* by Cecil Beaton, 1936¹²

It is necessary to point out that this body of work did not use camouflage in a traditional sense. I was interested in how an overlapping of pattern could obscure, and possibly flatten my

¹² Beaton, Cecil. "Gertrude Stein." 1936. *2Heads*. Accessed January 2018. <https://gbenard.wordpress.com/2013/11/11/portraits-of-writers/gertrude-stein-by-cecil-beaton-1936/>

work, in turn slowing its visual read. This would enable the various details and scattered bits of the installation to become hard to isolate—symbolizing the unified strength of queer kinship, as well as speaking to my experience as a soft butch/low femme dyke who is not always immediately read as queer, by both straight and queer persons alike.

My interest in using wildflowers as an overarching theme originally stemmed from the photo of Gertrude Stein. I was interested in this idea of wildness, and became fixated on a category of wildflowers that are also identified as weeds and infiltrators which are hard to eradicate. In his work on the queer and the wild, Jack Halberstam hails “...the excluded, those that are lost. It makes common cause with the misrecognized, the misunderstood, the illegible, the brave, the wondering, the confused, and the disoriented. It does so without trying to domesticate or incorporate.”¹³ He speaks to a resistance of the social need to fit in—to engage in errors of translation. Reducing my list to three flowers I chose to work with imagery of dandelions, clovers, and thistles because of their common presence and their resistance to the iconic shape of a flower.

The presence of the hand in my work is an intimate and important choice in my process. I sought out two vintage block printed wallpaper motifs, one which featured the dandelion and the other the clover. I required that each of the wallpapers depict these wildflowers in the act of growth rather than cut from their roots. For my third flower, the thistle, I located a roll of silkscreen printed wildflowers with room to incorporate my own renderings. As representations of femininity change, it was important that the hairy fierce flower include itself where it was not previously seen. All three of the wallpaper motifs came from the same era as the walls found behind Gertrude Stein in her 1936 portrait by Cecil Beaton. This choice, while also related to employment of hand/analog printing methods, ties the work back to its point of origin, and nods to its matriarch.

¹³ Halberstam, Jack. “Notes on Wildness: This is Not a Manifesto.”



Figure 3: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 1)*, 2018

While I was expanding this project, I developed my own, vaguely encaustic, technique of painting that sweat-melted crumbled crayon wax with the use of a heat lamp. It's hard to control surface was intrinsically imperfect and highly emotive as the wax would flow while some larger chunks of crayon remained protruding from a saturated, fatty pool of pigment. It was like the material found rest while remaining in a state of flux—the dust settling under heat and finding its form. Through the use of this technique I rendered my wildflowers in a way that marked their uniqueness and toyed with new renderings of a form culturally linked to femininity and the female assigned body. An oily version of itself sweating over its preceding form. Gregg Bordowitz has written that,

A queer structure of feeling is a set of cultural strategies of survival for queers. It is marked by an appreciation for the ridiculous, and it values masquerade. Mockery is its form, posing is its strategy. These general terms describe a continuity in the structure that traverses a number of generations. From generation to generation the emphasis of the structure shifts and new articulations surface to define the current moment. Some of

the defining characteristics remain present in new articulations, establishing continuities in form.¹⁴



Figure 4: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 2)*, 2018

It reminds me that one is always building off of another. There is a bumping into and a rubbing against that spurs an abstraction—a new articulation. I became increasingly infatuated with how many of the candid photographs spilled out of their frame, as if these affections could hardly be contained by the dimensions of their container. It was the gesture between individuals which marked them queerly—hand on a low and softer chest, an arm around and someone sits with arms around knees leaning back. Maybe it is nothing, simple friendship, unless you are *more* and meant to see it. Absently depicted figures and gestures in each section were marked

¹⁴ Bordowitz, Gregg. *The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1986-2003*, ed. James Meyer. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

by an object of adornment. Each of the objects were made kin with their landscape, covered in smaller waxed sequins bearing one of the three flowers. The use of wood became important in this work because of its warping, natural thirst and ability to take on oil. As the sequins shift on their axis the oily pigment would rub over the shaped wooden object creating a cycle that both let go and took on.



Figure 5: *Common Lives: Lesbian Lives*¹⁵

¹⁵ h_e_r_s_t_o_r_y. 2017. "Self-censored □ Common Lives: Lesbian Lives, Summer 1985." Instagram photo, December 4, 2017. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BcSF61ol6mh>



Figure 6: *Olivia Records Collective*¹⁶

Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something. If this seems so clearly the case with grief, it is only because it was already the case with desire. One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel. And so when we speak about my sexuality or my gender, as we do (and as we must), we mean something complicated by it. Neither of these is precisely a possession, but both are to be understood as modes of being dispossessed, ways of being for another, or, indeed, by virtue of another.¹⁷

¹⁶ h_e_r_s_t_o_r_y. 2018. "OLIVIA RECORDS COLLECTIVE: a record label founded by ten lesbian-feminists in 1973." Instagram photo, January 18, 2018. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BeF55HjFi0a/>

¹⁷ Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*, 19.



Figure 7: Lay it on Thick (Detail 3), 2018



Figure 8: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 4)*, 2018



Figure 9: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 5)*, 2018

As this project began to realize its installed form, piles of wallpapered plywood were broken down into various rectangular shapes that would ultimately be stacked and leaned into each other to create abstract figurative renderings. The piece stood entirely by leaning, balancing, and gravitational weight save for a few oddly cast brass acorn bolts. To counter the perceived softness of the florals I wanted to complicate the piece with this nipple-like hardware charged with a bit of butch bravado. One of the bolt headed screws in the installed work is seen in a mutated state of becoming, its head made of two halves seamed together in the middle. These bolts have been used in several installations of work since *Lay it on Thick* and continue to shift in their aesthetic and utilitarian roles.



Figure 10: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 6)*, 2018



Figure 11: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 7)*, 2018



Figure 12: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 8)*, 2018

EXHIBITION STATEMENT

Lay it on Thick is an imagining of possibility, assembled narratives, and the subtle support structures that aid in identity formations. The installation gestures to three curling photographs affectionately leaning into one another, the individuals in the frames identified by jewelry objects that find rest on several panels. The stability of the stacked panels rely on strangely cast bronze bolts in various states of becoming, and cut scraps from the installation that seem to add complication but play an important role in the overall balance of the piece— both tests of trust in relationship and kinship. Through thinly veiled strategies of camouflage, intimate moments are slightly obscured to slow the visual experience of the work— to encourage lingering and reward patience. Nothing is completely hidden, but it is not always readily given— and not always so easily understood.



Figure 13: *Lay it on Thick (Detail 9)*, 2018

TENDER BUTTONS

Gertrude Stein's book of poems, *Tender Buttons*, deals with the spaces around and through objects, food, and rooms, deploying observational strategies that deflect a central gaze in favor of a horizon. The seemingly flat affect of Stein's writing considers the gaze as an illumination of possibilities—much more than what stands in front. Though it has been called opaque and utter nonsense, it is in a regular re-reading that finds you invited in. This gesture is echoed by her stylized use of rhythmic repetition and looping. This scrambled grammar of nonlinear poetics has informed the processes and decided forms that make up my exhibition *A spectacle and nothing strange*.

Many of the individual objects and forms in the room bear a familial resemblance to objects, such as a tie or flower, and body forms, such as breasts. The aim of the work is not to completely confuse, but generate a system of relational decoding—similar to Stein's identifying titles followed by her abstract tellings of a form outside itself. The formulas I applied to each object is a collaboration of Stein's grammatical games and Sara Ahmed's process of defining one's orientation to objects. Though the objects that inhabit the space range in scale and level of detail, I intend the room be approached as one whole made of many—“an arrangement in a system to pointing.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 3.

INTERIOR ORIENTATIONS

CRAYON

A warm and pocketed finger. Fatty color.

ALUMINUM

Common foggy matte-silver surface and a slightly off feeling palm—lack of weight and it's suddenly balmy. Oddly similar feelings of a new relationship.

PLYWOOD WOOD

There is a stacking of peels and with it pressure and so there will always be warping.

SCRAPS

Something splintered and took on its tiny wholes. Shaded and now with extra and not more than that so it can hold open before running off again and finding.

WILDFLOWERS

There are things that are for wanting, and there are things that are here regardless.

BOLTS AND SCREWS

Teeth twisting and threading though I have know this way of coming a part and finding a stand in for the misplacing. There is always a drawer full of loose change and adding can't be nothing and adding can be nothing and nothing can be added.

WOOL BLANKETS

Anything that is a sort of wrapped in hair does me just fine.

CORD AND KNOTS

There is a good go of it all around the room but most namely on the far left but it's right there and it won't be for twelve and the others carry with and more than that.

BEDDING

It will pull you back, hold you there act as a marker, imposter. Some kind of interpretation there is a way of hiding in plain sight. Rework the pattern and this abounds.

A SPECTACLE AND NOTHING STRANGE

'A spectacle and nothing strange' is an arrangement of gestures, of made difference, of kinships, of orientations and possible futures, sustained tension, coded adornment, big dyke energy, shifts in hardness, leaning softness, much more than flowers, *...and in any case there is sweetness and some of that.*¹⁹

I want to keep this simple, because when I say *more* the whole thing goes sour, or starts to fold in when I meant it to open out. This whole room has become all too personal and I am not someone who feels at rest in definition. Probably because, though I am partnered with a writer, they are a poet after all and this means open not close. In this room there is romance for the adjacent, the in between, above and underneath, because I feel that this kind of looking means that you are, to some degree, aware of what lies at the edges. I have found a way to act as though there is no use in a center²⁰ and they say "[Describe] the thing by using only gestures, but no pointing to the thing if it is in the room."²¹ —because this concerns a way of relating, though there are many things in the room.

¹⁹ Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons*, 4.

²⁰ Nelson, *The Argonauts*, 49.

²¹ Lo, Cheena. *NO FILTER*, Oakland: Aggregate Space, 2014.



Figure 14: *A spectacle and nothing strange*, 2019.

Lauren Berlant speaks of affect as the ways in which we assess and negotiate our sense of belonging, ways of relating, to the world's social contracts and histories. To me this is a perspective that centers an emotional experience over a rational one. The feeling of your feet on the ground rather than the literal touch. I like a mixed bag of association and hold this experience of affect close to Sara Ahmed's consideration that "phenomenology reminds us that spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body."²² They are embedded. Between these two ways of seeing *A spectacle and nothing strange* considers my personal orientations and ways of relating to gender, desire, and home through the space of a body. This room is one piece, made of many.

²² Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 9.



Figure 15: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 1)*, 2019.

I have spent a lot of time looking at a series of photographs by Tammy Rae Carland titled *Lesbian Beds*. Carland, who regularly constructs and stages her work, followed an intuitive interest to break from form and shoot flat aerial perspective images of her communities unmade beds. The series began with a photograph of her own bed, which she shared with her girlfriend at the time—bedding tucking around idiosyncratic items such as floral cased pillows, a blue and white striped jock sock, a dog bone, and the book *Grapefruit* by Yoko Ono. I love the boringness and human comedy of each portrait, and its reliance on natural light. This series also came into being at another time but parallel to my own. The work portrays a community of lesbians in their 20s-30s that occupy spaces built of hand-me-downs and pieced together. They represent a class of women who “have not fully arrived to an assimilated adulthood or a sort of domesticity

that is completely paid for.”²³ Carland leans into and embraces these abstract portrait not as individuals but as “certain kinds of lesbians,” emphasizing a range in identification and pointing to the gravity of signifiers.



Figure 16: Tammy Rae Carland, Untitled “Lesbian Beds” (2002), inkjet prints²⁴

When you enter the installation you are met by a stretched set of mismatched floral beddings that attempts to hold an arched and off kilter (bed) frame. The bed is alive, supporting a semi-private vasing of wildflowers and leafy weeds—its gesture resting under varying intensities of twisting pressure and tethered pull. My intention with placing it at the center is

²³ Carland, Tammy Rae. “Tammy Rae Carland Speaks About the Lesbian Beds Series,” *Kadist*. Video File. December 9, 2012. <https://vimeo.com/55194545>

²⁴ Carland, Tammy Rae. “Untitled ‘Lesbian Beds,’” *Hyperallergic*. January 22, 2015. <https://hyperallergic.com/176778/art-in-the-grip-of-riot-grrrl/>

because it has a strange way of being seen, of pulling focus. The flirtatious use of form was chosen to resonate with popular perspectives of lesbian sex—something surveilled, largely misrepresented, and spoken of as a game, because of parts.



Figure 17: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 2)*, 2019.



Figure 18: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 3)*, 2019.

Lesbian signs and signifiers adorn the room—from brooches that have reimagined their connection to the figure by way of carabiners, to a leather strapped necklace bearing an O-ring that connects to a chainmaille dildo made of linoleum floor tiles and unruly nylon cords. A clip-on tie made of folded chain encased in cut pieces of floral bedding lays casually on a pale green table that has been laced together with utilitarian cord and acorn bolts. A common house plant has been re-rendered through crayon coated torn paper with sloppy floral imagery precariously tacked onto scraps of wood leaning against the wall.



Figure 19: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 4)*, 2019.

This room, in all its Steinian winks and multidirectional pointing, draws on José Esteban Muñoz's understanding of Queer Utopian Time, which he phrases as “a then and there” or “a horizon,”²⁵—something that Jack Halberstam has also described as “a wild journey through a random archive.”²⁶ The objects that make up the space are built off a non-linear time frame.

²⁵ Muñoz, José Esteban, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: NYU Press, 2005, 29-32.

²⁶ Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time & Space*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2005.

Each form has found its shape by way of recontextualized memory built of history and felt experience.



Figure 20: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 5)*, 2019.

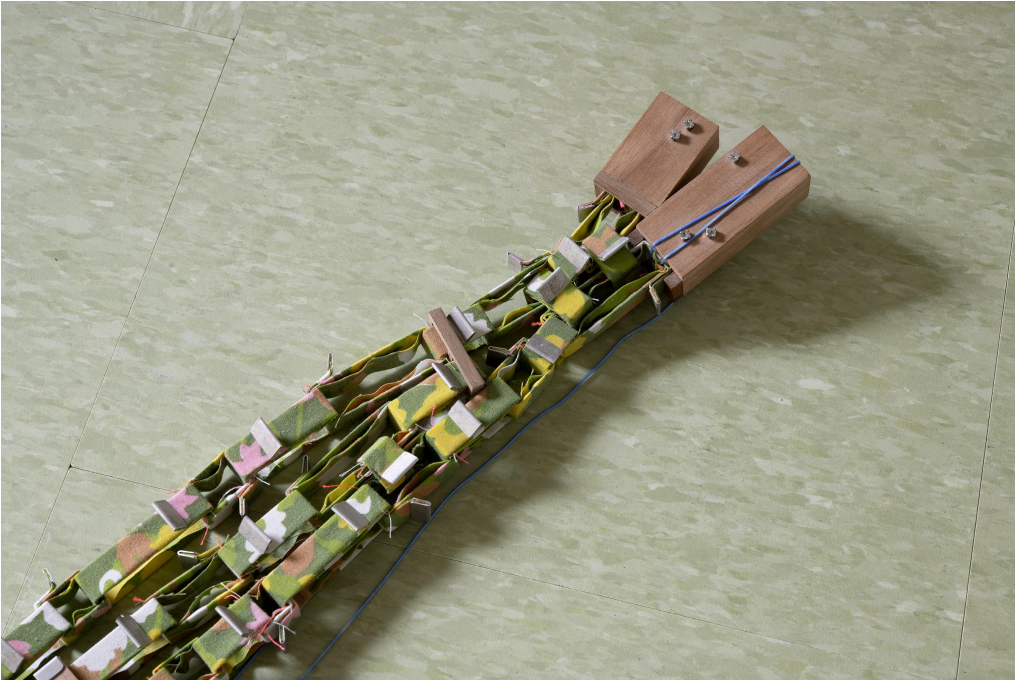


Figure 21: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 6)*, 2019.



Figure 22: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 7)*, 2019.



Figure 23: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 8)*, 2019.

There is a repeated revisiting of the chest throughout the installation. A reclining pair of breasts lays glowing on the floor next to a leaning arched form that bears a woolen stuffed sack adorned with odd disjointed pieces coming into being. Again, but this time different, a necklace that bears kinship to another, made of folded chain encased in floral bedding, is suspended with its literal knockers hanging out in space. Hidden around a corner, an odd interpretation of a midsized sports towel awkwardly backs against its environment, a clamped and screwed set of boards holding it in place on the chest—but the censoring is failed by a pair of nipple-like bolts marking what lies beneath the towel. The room rests literally with its tits out, a gesture of feeling at home even in the midst of strangeness and sustained tension. This is a nod back to Halberstam’s use of *wildness* as a metaphor for queerness: “The wild is an encounter, it’s random, it’s a hope for a longed for way of bumping into the counter intuitive, the silly, the

incomprehensible, and the unknown.”²⁷ The wild requires an adjusted line of sight, and an embraced humor towards laws of gravity.



Figure 24: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 9)*, 2019.

²⁷ Halberstam, Jack. “Notes on Wildness: This is Not a Manifesto.”



Figure 25: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 10)*, 2019.



Figure 26: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 11)*, 2019.



Figure 27: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 12)*, 2019.

Sara Ahmed writes: “Becoming reoriented, which involves the disorientation of encountering the world differently, made me wonder about orientation and how much ‘feeling at home,’ or knowing which way we are facing, is about the making of worlds.”²⁸ This room echos a domestic space, and a lived experience, in an attempt to correct the tilt I have navigated the past two years— knock kneed and barely balanced—my rock standing across the way anchored by a blue C-clamp. This piece a tender nudge to my partner Cheena, and an offering to a long standing queer history of coded love notes and sweet nothings.

There is a object in the room that only faces you as you approach your leaving. In a nod to Harmony Hammond’s 1979 work *Swaddles*, a cinder block has been fitted with a plaid wool blanket. This is not a covering but a recontextualizing of something ridged—a meeting of hard and soft and a celebration of butch. She writes: “If we are to make art that has meaning, it must

²⁸ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 20.

be honest, and to make art that is honest, it is essential that we do not cut off any part of ourselves. . . a sense of touch is necessary. For art. For revolution. For life.”²⁹



Figure 28: *A spectacle and nothing strange (Detail 13)*, 2019.

²⁹Hammond, Harmony. *Wrappings*. New York: Mussmann Bruce Publishers, 1984, 84.

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Education-

2019 MFA, Craft & Material Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2010 BFA with High Honors, Jewelry/Metal Arts, California College of Arts, Oakland, CA

Solo Exhibitions-

2019 A spectacle and nothing strange, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA
2017 Evidence; small bits, Nook Gallery, Oakland, CA
2011 Other Things, Remedy Gallery, Oakland, CA
2010 What was Seen in the Space Between Us, South Gallery, Oakland, CA

Group Exhibitions-

2019 Jewelry Edition Vol. 5, touring exhibition 2019-2020
Sparkle Plenty, Quirk Gallery, Richmond, VA
Earrings Galore, Heidi Lowe Gallery, Rehoboth Beach, DE
Mad for Hoops, Gallery 2052, Chicago, IL
2018 Adorned Spaces: Ripple Effect 168, SNAG Conference, Portland, OR
Methods, Artspace, Richmond, VA
Radical Jewelry Makeover, Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Ripple Effect 168, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
2017 Radical Jewelry Makeover, Baltimore Jewelry Center, Baltimore, MD
Beijing International Jewelry Exhibition, Beijing, China
Real Mind Control, Et al (Alter Space), San Francisco, CA
Fifteen: Emerging Artist Exhibition, Shibumi Gallery, Berkeley, CA
The Teacher is Artist, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA
2014 Faultline, Concept 47, Oakland, CA
2013 Residency Closing Exhibition, Druckwerk Atelier, Basel, Switzerland
2012 The Salt Pantry, Olive-Route Print Shop, Berkeley, CA
Resident Artists Exhibition, Noodle Works Studios, Seattle, WA
2011 Opening Night, Incline Gallery, San Francisco, CA

- 2010 AJF SCHOOL'S OUT VII, Step Gallery, Tempe, AZ
CCA Baccalaureate Exhibition, Playspace Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2009 Oax-i-fornia, La Casa de la Ciudad, Oaxaca, Mexico
Department Re-Accreditation Exhibition, CCA Nave, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 Radical Jewelry Makeover III, Velvet Da Vinci, San Francisco, CA
360 Degrees : Ring Show, South Gallery, Oakland, CA

Residencies-

- 2019 Quirk + VisArts Artist Residency, Richmond, VA
- 2013 Druckwerk Print Residency, Druckwerk Atelier, Werkraum Warteck,
Basel, Switzerland
- 2009 Oax-i-fornia, Oaxaca, Mexico

Professional Experience-

- 2019 Teaching Artist, VisArts Center, Richmond, VA
- 2018-19 Studio Assistant, Susie Ganch
- 2018 Adjunct Faculty: Jewelry & Metalwork
- 2017-17 Teaching Assistant: Metalwork, Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, VA
- 2015-17 Teaching Artist: Metalwork, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA
- 2015-17 Pre-College Workshop Instructor, California College of Arts, Oakland, CA
- 2013-17 Head Production Jeweler, Alchemilla Jewelry, Oakland, CA
- 2011 Gallery Assistant, The Compound Gallery, Berkeley, CA
- 2010 Gallery Assistant, Shibumi Gallery, Berkeley, CA

Publications/Works Cited-

- Jewelry Edition Vol.5, 2020
- 2019 MFA Thesis Exhibition, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019
- Beijing International Jewelry Exhibition Catalog, 2017
- Art Jewelry Forum, SCHOOL'S OUT VII, 2010

Representation/Stockists-

- Quirk Gallery, Richmond, VA
- Shibumi Gallery, Berkeley, CA