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# Waiting room.

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# WAITING ROOM

By  
Helen Payne  
B.A., West Virginia University, 2002

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Science of University of Louisville  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
In Studio Art and Design

Department of Fine Arts  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY

May 2019

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# WAITING ROOM

By

Helen Payne  
B.A., West Virginia University, 2002

A Thesis Approved on  
April 18, 2019  
By the following Thesis Committee

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Thesis Director  
James Grubola, M.F.A.

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Karen Kopelson, Ph.D.

## DEDICATION

To

Jeff and to Louisa and Hazel.

Thank you for your love, inspiration, and support.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hite Art institute, University of Louisville

The 2019 MFAs

Trish Blair

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## ABSTRACT

### WAITING ROOM

Helen Payne

April 18, 2019

*Waiting Room* is an installation of drawings and monotypes that re-envision everyday printed materials common in medical offices. The brochures, poster, bulletin board and children's ABC book in this *Waiting Room* offer guidance suggest invasive and dysfunctional policy. A door opens onto a further room, where a hundred ultrasound images cascade onto the floor. This work, called *Transducer Phosphene* is the product of a fictional character's encounter with a cruel (and not fictive) abortion policy.

*Waiting Room* is the fruit of an inquiry that spanned my three years of study at the Hite Art Institute, a probing into the politics of ubiquitous measurements. With paper and ink, I asked: When does measurement become surveillance? When does it construct rather than reflect human interiority? And how, in a world intent on measuring, do I hold on to other ways of knowing?



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## INTRODUCTION

*Waiting Room* grew from a curiosity about measurement, as it appears in my everyday life. I teach figure drawing. To help students draw bodies that are not wildly disproportionate, I teach systems of measurement: counting head lengths, measuring relative widths using pencil and thumb, plumb lines, or working from point to point across the body triangulating shapes. All systems are reductive. Different systems of measurement produce different results.

If I teach Euan Uglow's rigorous system of straight-line measurement, which reduces the volumes of the body to flat planes that fit together like facets, students create Spartan architectural forms that are keenly observed but often lifeless. If, by contrast, I indoctrinate my students into Albrecht Durer's system of anthropometrics, I get invariably attenuated results that struggle with foreshortening but have an instant legibility. Drawings can say as much about the system of measurement used as the subject they purport to represent.<sup>12</sup> This seems to be true outside of the studio too.

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<sup>1</sup> Albrecht Durer Anthropometric Drawings

<sup>2</sup> Euan Uglow was my professor at the Slade School, University College London and taught famously rigorous system of measurements.

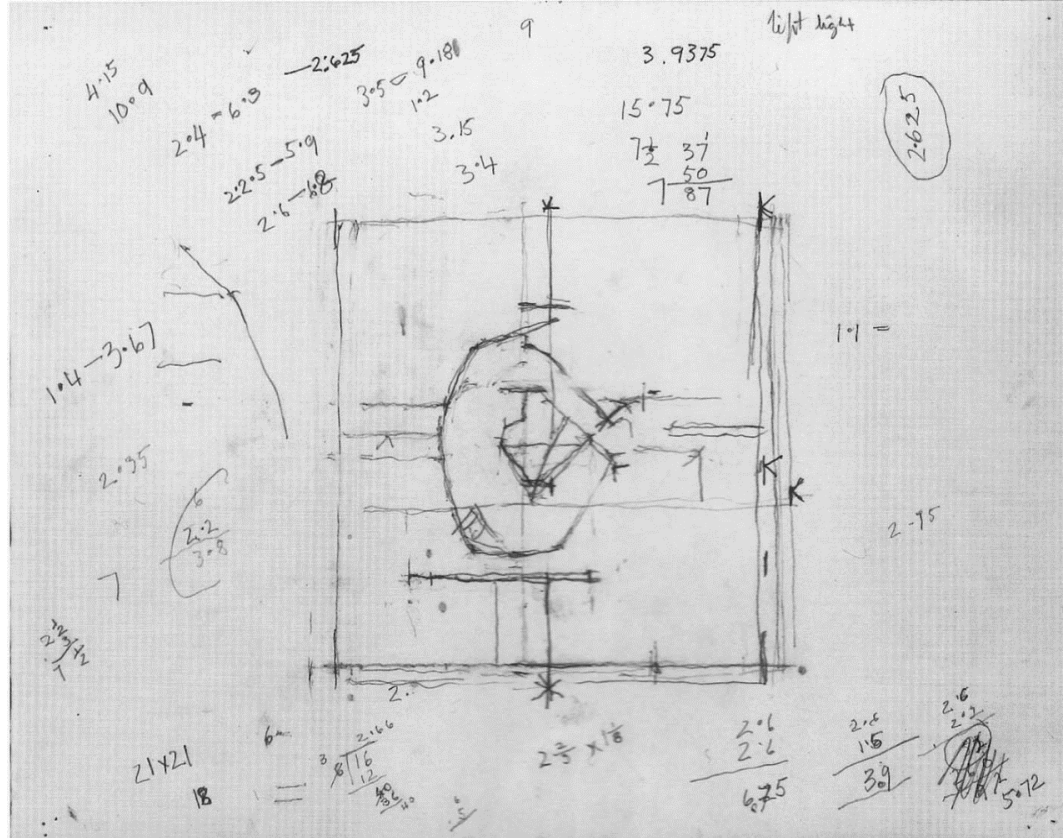


Figure 1. Euan Uglow. Study for Double Square. Pencil. 10.8 X 15 inches. 1971

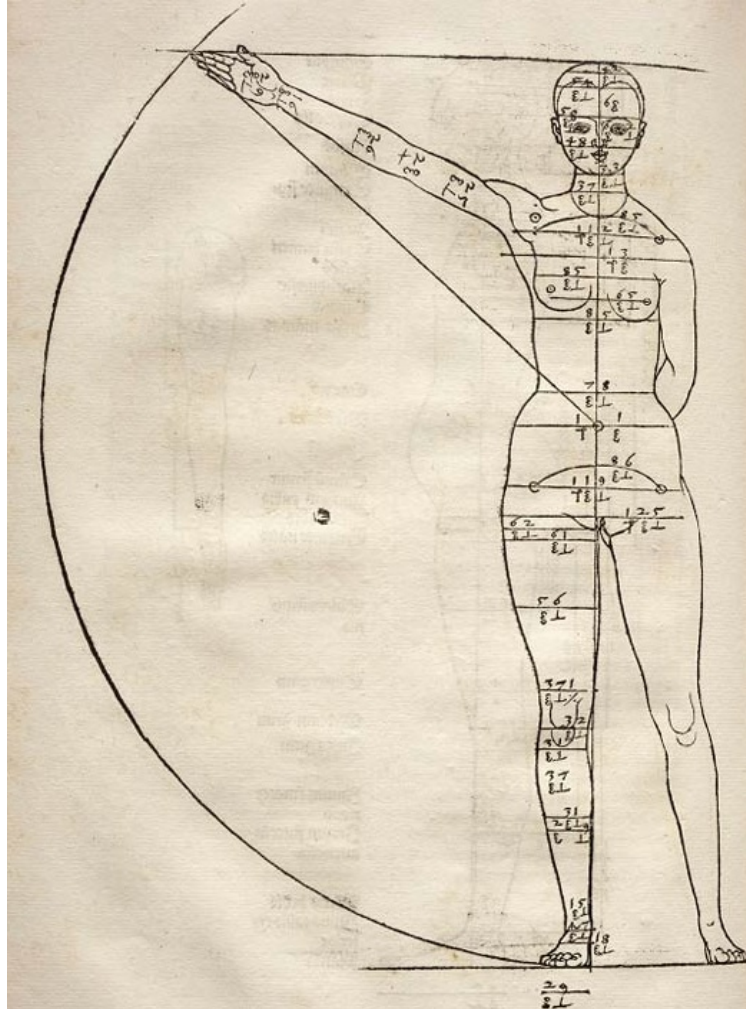


Figure 2 Albrecht Dürer. *Four Books on Human Proportion*. Page 106. 11.5 X 8.5 inches. 1528

When I became a mother, I became the object of intense measurement. Endless appointments, food diaries, weigh-ins, and ultrasounds. When the baby was born, the focus immediately shifted to measuring her. When my daughter was five, she didn't like her noisy kindergarten. The teacher was concerned. Testing was ratcheted up to a fever pitch, a diagnosis was made: the kindergarten was not too loud, but my child had an 'auditory processing disorder.' The testing put the onus on the five-year-old. The

institution, unexamined, could noisily proceed as usual. So when I came to graduate school, I was wondering about measurement, and its role in the studio and in life.

Internalizing measurement is the theme that threads through the three works in this exhibition. Intellectual measures are the subject of *The ABCs of the Weight of Measures*, psychological measures in the *Waiting Room* brochures, and medical measures in *Transducer Phosphene*.

When I began this work in 2016, we were in the last years of President Barack Obama's second term. Neoliberalism, that form of normative reason that economizes all realms of human activity, was the order of the day.<sup>3</sup> Neoliberalism turns citizens into market actors in every sphere, and every activity has its metric, its value weighed for future returns. As a parent I learned that this process starts very early. I made an *ABC of the Weight of Measures*, a somewhat menacing, tongue-in-cheek investigation into the climate of constant measurement with real sadness and a sense of loss.

*Waiting Room* expands on the themes brought up in the *ABCs*. I wondered how, through the measurement of individuals, social woes get pathologized. I created a series of public health brochures that mined my personal experiences, trying to see how neoliberal measures had shaped my most intimate moments. Was my misery the product of psychology or financial precarity? How had lack of quality health insurance become an occasion for personal shame? I was curious about how hunger for social affirmation required reconfiguration of woes to fit diagnostic guidelines. In my work I wanted to draw moments when physical and psychological vulnerability collide with institutional forces.

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, Wendy. 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books.

Measurement had seemed to me, prior to 2017, something in which we are all complicit, but entered into willingly as a result of having accepted neoliberal rationality. The surveillance that attended it came on slipped feet.<sup>4</sup> But when the political climate veered rightward, private bodies and institutional power were on a crash course. *Transducer Phosphene* is an artwork inspired by that collision and reflects on how an authoritarian government capitalized on lax expectations of privacy to mandate the surveillance of pregnant women.

In this thesis I'll explore the works chronologically. I will discuss the parameters, the process, images, and the thinking that surrounded them. Together, art work and thesis argue that the privacy of the intimate, the idiosyncratic, and the immeasurable should be protected by public policy not mined by big data or invaded by an ideological government.

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<sup>4</sup> Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs.

## THE ABCS OF THE WEIGHT OF MEASURES

During pregnancy and as my children grew up, it seemed there was a test for every letter of the alphabet. In the studio I pinned big sheets of brown butcher's paper and wrote all the tests I had taken or my children would; APGAR, BMI, CAESAR, DIL, EQ, FICO, GRE. I made a little ditty as I worked.

“A is for Apgar you were bluish at birth,  
B is for BMI your width to your girth”<sup>5</sup>

I was interested in thinking about a ‘self’, constructed by a hodgepodge of incongruous measurements. If I took my APGAR, BMI, MBTI, SAT, FICO what would it add up to?

I made drawings to go along with the rhyming couplets of the ABC's in marker on the brown paper. In the first round of twenty-six drawings, each drawing illustrated its corresponding acronym. I was dissatisfied. I wanted the drawings to gesture toward the test but also the exposure that attends them, and hint at the life that goes on beyond and between them. I needed *Gilles*.

*Gilles* painted in 1718-1719 by Antoine Watteau, displays monumental self-consciousness. The odd way that *Gilles* presents his body to the world with an exquisite embarrassment at his exposure makes this work an icon of human interiority. Watteau created space for interiority by both exposing *Gilles* and allowing him refuse legibility.

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<sup>5</sup> See APPENDIX A for full text of the ABCs of the Weight of Measures





Figure 3 Antoine Watteau. *Gilles/Pierrot*. Oil on Canvas. 72.6 X 58.8 inches. Circa 1718-1719

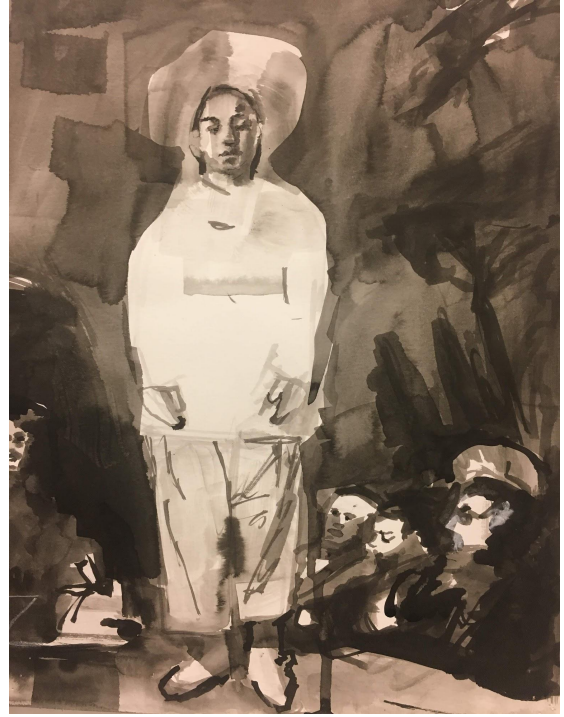


Figure 4 Helen Payne. *Z is for ZD*. Ink on paper. 17 X 14 inches. 2016

Andrew Wile says “Watteau marked out his achievement as a painter of modern interiority: for the first time in French painting, looking became a means of establishing the autonomy of the self.”<sup>6</sup>

With *Gilles* as my guide I created an installation of 26 drawings that create a field in which looking is a means to consider both exposure and its refusal.

For example; I used an image from an APGAR test being performed by its namesake, Virginia Apgar,<sup>7</sup> as my source material. But I personalized the image painting the baby as if it were my own, up close with lovingly applied ink washes.

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<sup>6</sup> Wile, Aaron. 2014. “Watteau, Reverie, and Selfhood.” *The Art Bulletin* 96 (3): 319–37.

<sup>7</sup> Cassidy, Tina. 2007. *Birth: The Surprising History of How We Are Born*, 158



*Figure 5 Virginia Apgar demonstrating Apgar score 1959, National Foundation-March of Dimes Original Repository: Mount Holyoke College. Archives and Special Collections. L. Stanley James Papers*



*Figure 6 Helen Payne. A is for APGAR. Ink on paper. 17 X 14 inches. 2016*

Some images correspond to their acronym while others are inscrutable. Some tests are commonly known, but others are arcane. It is my hope, that the gaps in understanding leave space, à la Watteau, to construct other meanings.

As I created this work I researched the fraught history of intellectual testing. My research revealed how pernicious racial, class and gender bias are in I.Q. tests. Throughout the history of their use they had been deployed to hold back swathes of the population. From skull measuring to the bell curve, junk science shapes society. (Gould 1996)

Despite their pervasive, demonstrable bias, psychological and I.Q. tests continue to expand their reach. Cathy O'Neil, mathematician and Wall Street quant, reveals in

*Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*, how the same biases that informed skull measuring in the 1900s shapes the design of algorithms that shape our trajectories without our knowledge or consent.<sup>8</sup>

It is in a climate of pervasive testing that I created the ABCs. Wondering how, like *Gilles*, we can stand up to scrutiny, at once exposed but illegible.

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<sup>8</sup> O’Neil, Cathy. 2016. *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Broadway Books.

## WAITING ROOM

The works in the waiting room started as sketches I made while waiting with my daughters at their doctor's office for check-ups and at my therapist's office. I was curious about the extent to which we know ourselves through the eyes of medical professionals. I wanted to create a space where I could playfully engage with medicalization, the "process whereby more and more of everyday life has come under medical dominion, influence and supervision."<sup>9</sup> I decided to turn my studio into a waiting room.

In the real bulletin board, the doctors wore blue scrubs and the nurses red. When I made the drawings, I carried the color coding throughout the image. I based my drawings on the photographic style of Alphonse Bertillon, the inventor of the mugshot. Bertillon is the grandfather of biometrics, the famous French police chief who brought anthropometry to forensic work, codifying a system of bodily measurements to identify criminals. Pinning up mugshots in the *Waiting Room*, a place of relentless measurement felt right.

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<sup>9</sup> Conrad, Peter. 2007. *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*. JHU Press.



Figure 7 Alphonse Bertillon. Mugshot of Suspected Anarchist from French Police Files. Albumen silver prints and gelatin silver prints 4 1/8 X 2 3/4 x 3/16 inches. 1891-95



Figure 8 Helen Payne. Meet our Staph. Colored Pencil on Vellum. 6 X 4 inches. 2018

The metric-based interiority that I had been exploring in the *ABCs* in the *Waiting Room* has become increasingly medicalized. As a parent I have seen an explosion in the medicalization of childhood behaviors; little boys lining up in the school office to get their pills for ADHD and little girls in therapy at age six for anxiety. And how had so many human discomforts become medical problems? My college-age students come to me telling about their struggles with anxiety, depression, or ADHD; a conversation reveals that they were working nights at UPS or Amazon on top of being full-time students. Were my students pathological, or just stressed and exhausted by bad policy? Like my daughter in the loud classroom, these students seemed to be bearing the brunt of a neoliberalism, where externalities are carried on the shoulders of those least equipped to carry them.

I made a series of self-help brochures that were an attempt to connect the dots between institutional failure and personal misery in my own life; a pre-existing condition clause in an insurance policy ends in a homebirth. The frayed safety net ends in depression and anger at a lack of agency that fills the body with flames. Maybe I did need therapy!

In my therapist office, there was a poster, reproduced below. Something in the plucky, no nonsense attitude struck me. It all seems so doable!

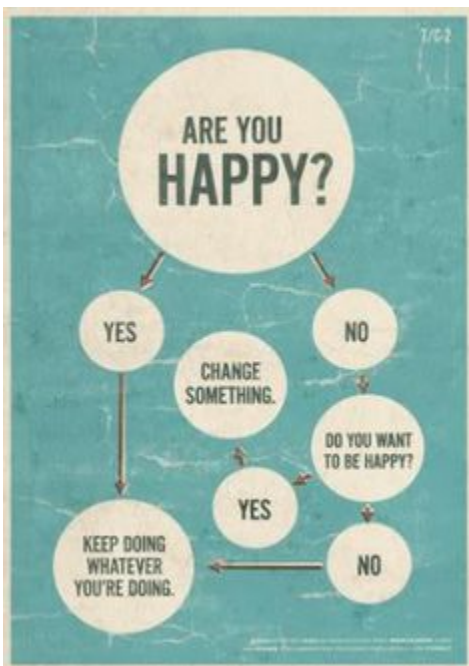


Figure 9 Type Cut. *Are You Happy?*



Figure 10 Department of Homeland Security. *If You See Something, Say Something*

It reminded me of another poster I had seen, this one in train stations, the “If You See Something, Say Something” campaign by the Department of Homeland Security.

So I made my own poster that is a composite of both signs. The similarity in graphic design, the color, and the word “something” linked the two signs and inspired me to merge them. But something else was happening too; the work in the *Waiting Room* had

brought into focus how the endless metrics had medicalized misery as individual woe.

Each individual's responsibility is to surveille it, expose it, and treat it.

## TRANSDUCER PHOSPHENE

In January 2017, Governor Matt Bevin signed the Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act. I first heard about the bill on the radio. I was horrified by the meanness of it. This legislation compelled pregnant women seeking an abortion to submit to an obstetric ultrasound.

“The bill would require the physician to perform the ultrasound while providing a simultaneous explanation of what the ultrasound is depicting, including the presence and location of the “unborn child” within the uterus and the number of “unborn children” depicted .... Additionally, the physician would need to provide a medical description of the ultrasound images, which would include the dimensions of the embryo or fetus and the presence of external members and internal organs, if present and viewable.”<sup>10</sup> The bill stipulated that the pregnant woman would be able to cover her ears and look away. Because of the mandate that the physicians described “external members” and “internal organs,” some of these ultrasounds would be performed transvaginally, especially in the case of early pregnancy when most abortions are performed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Martinez, Marshall, Yamani Hernandez, Oriaku Njoku, Hannah Brashers, Mallory McMaster, and Jennifer Conti. n.d. “Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act (HB 2) - Rewire.News.” Rewire.News. Accessed March 23, 2019. <https://rewire.news/legislative-tracker/law/kentucky-ultrasound-informed-consent-act-hb-2/>

<sup>11</sup> Hernandez, Yamani, Oriaku Njoku, Hannah Brashers, Marshall Martinez, and Jennifer Conti. n.d. “Forced Ultrasound - Rewire.News.” Rewire.News. Accessed March 27, 2019.



The forced looking, the role of the doctor being usurped by the state, the parroted speech, and, in the case of transvaginal ultrasounds, the physical violation. I could not help but imagine what it would be like to be on the receiving end of that policy.

In 2012, I heard the South African artist William Kentridge deliver his Norton Lectures “Six Drawing Lessons,”<sup>12</sup> at Harvard University. In the opening lecture “In Praise of Shadows,”<sup>13</sup> he conjured the scene of Plato’s cave. A prisoner with his head chained in place is resigned to a life of only seeing shadows on the cave wall, never coming into contact with the real world. However, if the prisoner were freed by a philosopher and dragged into the sun, after the painful glare wore off, he would be thankful to see the truth. He would recognize the error in his old way of viewing things. For Kentridge, this scenario created a metaphor for the potential violence that attends all projects of enlightenment.

“Every tyrant since then would describe himself as the philosopher in Plato's cave. Using whatever means necessary to drag, pull, the unenlightened into the sunlight ... It is not that every act of violence has had its public relations, its brochures, its paintings and murals of a better life. But rather, and more difficult to apprehend, is that every act of enlightenment, all the missions to save souls, all the best impulses, are so dogged by the weight of what follows them: their shadows, the violence that accompanied enlightenment. The colonial project

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<sup>12</sup> Kentridge, William. 2014. *Six Drawing Lesson, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures*. Harvard University Press. 26-27

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 48

in its own description of bringing light to the Dark Continent is a gruesome working out of the impulses of Plato's cave"<sup>14</sup>

The metaphor of the forced gaze became, for Kentridge, a harbinger of our worst impulses, a signal that violence is sure to follow.

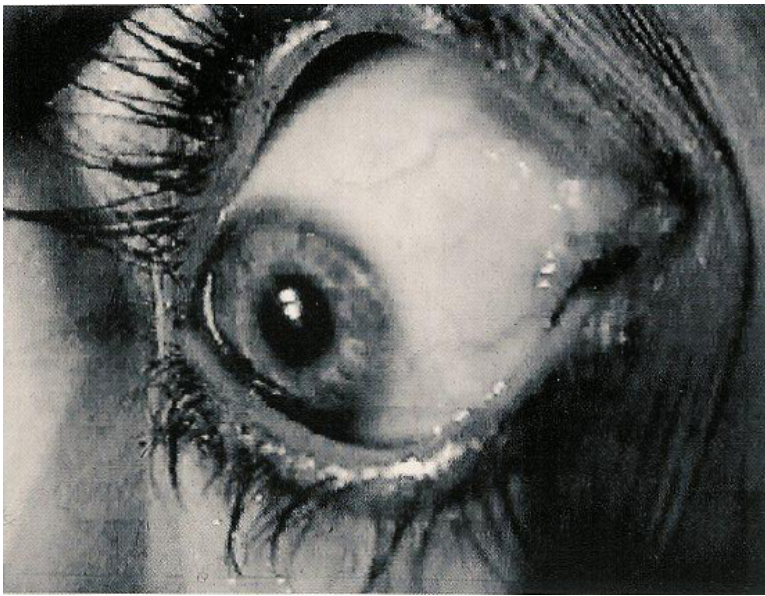


Figure 11 William Kentridge, *Ubu Tells the Truth*. Film, 35mm. 1997

The tyrant's impulse to shine a light on the unenlightened is everywhere in the Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act. Here the forced look is not a metaphor, but a literal enactment. Chad Meredith, Bevin's deputy general counsel, argued the law benignly enlightens because, "There are a number of patients who don't understand the nature of the fetus within them."<sup>15</sup> Like Plato's prisoners consigned to the world of shadows, how could the uninformed make a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 48

<sup>15</sup> Martinez, Marshall, Yamani Hernandez, Oriaku Njoku, Hannah Brashers, Mallory McMaster, and Jennifer Conti. n.d. "Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act (HB 2) - Rewire.News." Rewire.News. Accessed March 23, 2019. <https://rewire.news/legislative-tracker/law/kentucky-ultrasound-informed-consent-act-hb-2/>.

choice? Meredith says, “not every patient understands the consequences of the abortion procedure.”<sup>16</sup> Of course none of those consequences of abortion or having a baby are evident in a grainy black and white photo.

The ACLU attorney, Alexa Kolbi-Molinas, argued on behalf of Kentucky’s only abortion clinic that, “Anybody who’s ever had a medical procedure performed knows what informed consent looks like, and it doesn’t look like your doctor forcing words and images on you while you are sobbing and hiding your head in your shirt.”<sup>17</sup> I imagined the patients as the prisoners in Plato’s cave, shielding their eyes.

So, I conjured a character, Merry,<sup>18</sup> undergoing the exam, walking out of clinic, and trying to reconcile what had just happened. I wrote a story poem of Merry’s ordeal and its aftermath to guide my image making.<sup>19</sup> Each morning before going to the studio, I would imagine Merry: Her interaction with the icy Dr Siri,<sup>20</sup> who performs the ultrasound, the blinding light of sunny day after the exam, the onset of migraine, the walk down to the river beset with surveillance cameras, and finally the discovery of a dead cow in the swollen Ohio. I reenacted Merry’s walk regularly and would end up at the edge of the Ohio, trying to feel how policy, the landscape, and the gaze shape her.

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<sup>16</sup> Barton, Ryland. 2018. “Court Hears Arguments Over Kentucky Abortion Ultrasound Requirement.” 89.3 WFPL News Louisville. July 25, 2018. <https://wfpl.org/appeals-court-hears-arguments-over-kentucky-abortion-ultrasound-requirement/>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Merry is named after a character in Charles Olson’s *Maximus from Dogtown 1* who wrestles a bull and is gored to death.

<sup>19</sup> The full text and selected images for Transducer Phosphene is included in the APPENDIX B.

<sup>20</sup> Dr Siri is named after Apple’s voice assistant.

The specter of a woman is shaped in Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act which materialized as a character. As Merry came into focus, I began to make her ultrasounds in monotype. Rolling ink on a glass plate, using felt, burlap, a toothpick, q-tips, and a tampon to wipe away the viscous stuff and reveal an image. What would those shapes on the screen look like to Merry? What would she see when she squeezed her eyes tight in protest?

Phosphenes appear when you apply direct pressure on your eyelids. They also appear with migraines, hallucinations, through meditation, or after staring at a very bright light. Imagine what Plato's dazzled prisoner saw. Because phosphenes are internally produced, they became a metaphor for Merry's interiority. They offered a retreat from the surveillance of the ultrasound imaging, a refuge away from the gaze, lingering in the dark, unreadable, idiosyncratic.<sup>21</sup>

Ultrasounds use high frequency sound waves that echo when they hit a change in density. The technology was first discovered in 1906 by Lewis Nixon, who used sound waves to detect icebergs.<sup>2223</sup> Ultrasounds were adapted for use on pregnant women in the late 1950s.<sup>24</sup> First used to diagnose tumors, it was

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<sup>21</sup>Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs. 497 Zuboff describes the psychological importance of a 'backstage' where one can be uncomposed and regress. 'Backstage' is for sleep, sex, defecation, humor, transgression and where we compose our 'public' face.

<sup>22</sup> Icebergs abound in *Transducer Phosphene* maybe the machine remembers its first calling.

<sup>23</sup> Cassidy, Tina. 2007. *Birth: The Surprising History of How We Are Born*. Grove Press.172

<sup>24</sup> Freeman, Lauren. 2015. "Confronting Diminished Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Injustice in Pregnancy by Challenging a 'Panoptics of the Womb.'" *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*. 6

discovered later that “the commonest abdominal tumor in women is pregnancy.”<sup>25</sup>

Ultrasound imagery is imbued with meaning, as a keepsake for new parents or propaganda for activists, but the images themselves are often indistinct, dark, grainy and hard to decipher, a Rorschach test in the negative. Likewise, when the eyes are squeezed tight, in imagined resistance to the ultrasound, they make a phosphene: those floating geometric patterns of light behind our eyes.

A light dot on a dark field has endless possibilities; it could be an egg, a moon, or grain of sand kicked up in the Sahara. Gathering steam in the repetition of prints, egg becomes fetus, the grain of sand a super storm in the middle of the Atlantic, and the tiny dot, the highlight on her eye, watching. As the number of prints reached one hundred. Merry’s two block walk - from the clinic, past the parking lots, to the banks of the Ohio River where she wades out to a cow carcass floating in flood waters - came into view in the ultrasound prints. Rather than depict her prostrate on an exam table, I wanted to make her without picturing her, to refuse the legacy of the reclined nude, even as she emanates from it. Instead, I would look through her eyes and see what she sees. I wanted her printouts to flood out of her, overwhelming the authority of the forced ultrasounds. The term ‘medical gaze’ was defined by Michel Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic; An Archeology of Medical Perception*<sup>26</sup> where he shows that at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a epistemic shift in how medicine viewed bodies and how it

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<sup>25</sup> Freeman, Lauren. 2015. “Confronting Diminished Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Injustice in Pregnancy by Challenging a ‘Panoptics of the Womb.’” *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 40 (1): 44–68.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, Michel. 1973. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*.

viewed itself. This shift in episteme was, affirming Kentridge's proposition, tied to a revolutionary shift and renewed belief in dispassionate visual observation during the Enlightenment. Foucault argues that this newfound faith in 'looking' transformed medicine. "The silent world of the entrails, the whole dark underside of the body lined with endless unseeing dreams, are challenged as to their objectivity by the reductive discourse of the doctor meeting his positive gaze."<sup>27</sup> The distribution of eyes is fairly democratic, so why is the doctor's gaze so laden with power? "First, it was no longer the gaze of any observer, but that of a doctor supported and justified by an institution, that of a doctor endowed with the power of decision and intervention."<sup>28</sup> Rigorous schooling, wealth, the mantle scientific impartiality and good faith all conspire to privilege the medical gaze.

The medical gaze, of course, has been exponentially magnified with technologies that enhance seeing, through scopes, x-rays, MRIs, and ultrasounds; doctors have gained extraordinary power to see inside the body.

The Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act weaponized the medical gaze (which is never apolitical) building on a surveillance of pregnant women's bodies that is already ubiquitous. The pervasiveness of technology, data collection, and hyper focus on the growing fetus is commonplace in mainstream American medicine, for all pregnant women, not just abortion patients; it's even earned the title 'panoptics of the womb.'<sup>29</sup> The term panoptics is a reference to the Panopticon, a prison designed by enlightenment philosopher Jeremy Bentham.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. page 79

<sup>29</sup> Freeman, Lauren. 2015. "Confronting Diminished Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Injustice in Pregnancy by Challenging a 'Panoptics of the Womb.'" *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 40 (1): 44-68.

Jeremy, along with his engineer brother Samuel, designed a prison in which prisoners were under the ever-present threat of surveillance by an all-seeing warden sequestered in a glazed dome.<sup>30</sup> The gaze was inescapable. Michel Foucault introduced the notion that the panopticon is a metaphor for surveillance.<sup>31</sup>

For pregnant women, obsessive observation of the developing pregnancy has become mainstream. Conservative legislators, in this climate of normalized and relentless observation of pregnant women, hope that through a manipulative description of fetal heartbeats and budding appendages, they can anthropomorphize and sentimentalize the contents of the womb and make the prospect of abortion horrifying.

“This is right in the heartland of what states are permitted to do to regulate medicine,” Chad Meredith, Governor Bevin’s deputy general counsel, argued in his defense of the practice.<sup>32</sup> When Meredith uses ‘states’, he means Kentucky, but “the state,” in an authoritarian sense, has regulated medicine. When Merry is violated by policy, it is as a citizen as much as an individual personality. The right to privacy, the space to grow an interiority is about citizenship as much as psychology. But citizens are not abstractions. Privacy is a psychological need, as well as a constitutionally protected right. To join public life, we need a private life; we need the dark.

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<sup>30</sup> Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs. Page 471

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books

<sup>32</sup> Barton, Ryland. 2018. “Court Hears Arguments Over Kentucky Abortion Ultrasound Requirement.” 89.3 WFPL News Louisville. July 25, 2018. <https://wfpl.org/appeals-court-hears-arguments-over-kentucky-abortion-ultrasound-requirement/>

In *Transducer Phospene*, surveillance is everywhere: in the womb, and in the parking lot. Even the cow is a social media celebrity. When Merry confronts the surveillance camera in the parking lot, she does as she is told: she smiles and walks on. Dr. Siri embodies the detached neutrality: the data driven and gaping power differential between both doctor and patient and big data and those who are surveilled. After the exam, Merry does not speak, muted by the violation. When she tries to alert the mother and child to the cow, to show off her discovery, she cannot find her voice. Her gaze is weak, when she leaves the clinic, in a migraine daze with her glasses lost. But when she sees the cow, pleasure in looking propels her; she savors each detail as she makes her way into the water. Here, Merry has taken on a powerful gaze, both desirous and appraising. In the final scene, only after returning the ultrasound of her womb back to “the silent world of entrails”, in cow’s mouth, can she speak. Returning the images to the dark of the body was restitution.

The Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act, enacted in January 2017, was struck down in district court in September that same year.<sup>33</sup> Although I did not start this body of work until 2018. The news cycle is an endless flood and quickly moved on, but the imagination lingers. The space between the act and the art gave me room to let other meanings grow in the work. How do we tolerate surveillance? Do we say we have nothing to hide, smile and walk on? Or, as in *Transducer Phosphene*, do we wade out into the funk, knowing that our interior

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<sup>33</sup> On April 4, 2019, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the 2017 Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Bill.



images mean everything, deserve protecting, and that sometimes we need a safe space for the dark and the immeasurable.

## CONCLUSION

*The Waiting Room, The ABCs of the Weight of Measures, and Transducer Phosphene* ask how we construct human interiority in an atmosphere of pervasive measurement and encroaching surveillance. I populated two interior spaces at the Hite MFA Building with images in order to sit with this question. Architectural interior space becomes a metaphor for human interiority in these works. This trope has a long and rich history that is in no way static, notions of interiority are mutable and contingent. They have psychological, economic, gendered, and political dimensions<sup>34</sup> but the metaphor persists because interiors are designed, built, decorated, gutted, and rebuilt continuously.

In *Waiting Room* and *Transducer Phosphene* I wanted to make two sharply contrasting kinds of interior space where I could think explicitly about different constructions of interiority. The *Waiting Room* is shallow. Its architecture requires a deferment of action, loss of agency and submission to metrics and surveillance. The walls seems to be watching. Existential threats are reduced to bullet points and despair becomes a diagnosis. On the other hand, *Transducer Phosphene* is installed in a deep and cavernous room, with textured recesses that suggest an inner world. We are invited into its depths, following a stream of ultrasound images that carry multiple meanings. This space allows for movement, creative association, and imagination.

Interiority is shaped by the architecture of the outside world. Policy shapes our inner architecture. When public life supports freedom, equality and sovereignty it makes

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<sup>34</sup> Lajer-Burcharth, Ewa, and Beate Söntgen. 2016. *Interiors and Interiority*. Walter DeGruyter GmbH & Co KG. 2

room for an interior that has “dignity, self-direction, even soulfulness.”<sup>35</sup> When the regulated neoliberal regimes of surveillance capitalism permeate our lives they threaten not only our democratic institutions, but also our deepest interior structures.

My work in the studio has convinced me that there is an urgent need to name and protect interiority. The studio itself became a model for an activated kind of interiority where I could process the flood of images and from the recesses of an uncomposed self, figure out how to be in the world.



Figure 12 Hel

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<sup>35</sup> Brown, Wendy. 2015. “Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution.” Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books. 111

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# APPENDIX A

## THE ABCS OF THE WEIGHT OF MEASURES

A is for APGAR,  
You were bluish at birth.  
B is for BMI,  
Your width to your girth.

C is CAESAR,  
Get your ass in that chair.  
D is DIL,  
Open up down there.

E is for EQ,  
I love you.

F is FICO,  
But I can't pay the rent.  
G is GRE,  
You go where p-pops went.

I is for IQ,  
I knew you were smart.  
J is for JJA,  
It's long and it's hot.

K is for KIVS,  
I'm holding a knife, or maybe I'm not.  
L is for LGM,  
We're melting, we two.

M is for MBTI,  
I'm, you're, she's such a dick.  
N is NEO-PRIK,  
Her neck looks thick.

O is for O&P,  
Shit in a cup.

R is for RPM,  
You're dumb and your mean.  
S is for SF,  
Grab that flab over your jeans.

T is TPR,  
My heart is racing for you.  
U is for UA,  
Got pee in your shoe.

V is for VE,  
Open your thighs.  
W is for wais,  
Sea levels rise.

X is for x-ray  
Your spine ain't straight.  
Z is ZD,  
You were perfect at eight.

## APPENDIX B

### TRANSDUCER PHOSPHENE

Phosphene:

Jagged stars and cogs,  
Moving by each other,  
Under the disk inside,  
The dome of her eyelids.

Transducer:

High frequency,  
Submarines or foreign flesh,  
Inside and under,  
Subterranean echoes,  
Light the screen.

Gray exam table, waxy paper. “Scrunch your bottom toward edge, feet in the stirrups.”

This wasn’t her first rodeo. “Relax, let your knees fall apart, deep breath.” The transducer slips in, she winces. Not her first rodeo, no walk in the park either. Looking over at the screen, the blinking light, static pulses. Transducer probes, beyond pubes, pushes against the wall of her insides. Black light, the egg shape, the curved walls of the uterus on the screen. The doctor’s voice sounds like Siri: “I am required by law to tell you that it measures six weeks three days, heart rate 129, fetal pole dimension 28, you can see the

egg sac, less than ½ inch, the size of your pinky finger nail.” Merry looks at her fingernail, touches her pinkie with her thumb and looks back to the screen. She squeezes her eyes tight, can hear her own pulse in her head. In the phosphene, an egg sac falling through the jagged stars behind her eyes. “You can clean up now” Dr Siri says. “You’re all done, that wasn’t too bad.”

Walking out of the Women’s Surgery Center, from a state-imposed ultrasound and into a twenty-four hour waiting period. Blinking at the migraine sky, clear and blue. Sun shooting back up to the sky off of every windshield. Blink- phosphene. She stuffs the ultrasound printout deep into her pocket.

Impervious, concrete blankets the block, 2nd Street, past *Loans~Easy as ABC*, a pasture sized parking lot-black with white lines. Sign reads “Smile you’re on Camera. This lot under 24-hour surveillance.” She smiles hard and mean and picks up the pace.

She follows the easy slope of the sidewalk past the historical marker where the slave market had been, down to the tangle of underpass, spaghetti junction. The shadow of the concrete is cool, dark, echo.

Spit out at the edge of the Ohio; the river is out of its banks, flood stage. River Road closed. Merry hangs a right to stay in the throb and dark of the underpass, the rush of water below. The ultrasound is hard to shake. A row of park benches is underwater, just their backs rise out of the murk, so she sits on a concrete barricade. The gel from the ultrasound still wet between her legs. The sun mirrored on the water.

The Ohio River,

Pulsing back and forth in its banks;



Equal measure, sticks and plastics.

Lapping the concrete,

Hugging the center,

Rush of traffic,

Pulse in temples,

Static.

A working mom and her daughter come to water's edge, hand in hand. They are black. The mother is slim and coiffed, shiny loafers, slacks, the little girl has a nice coat, new sneakers, neat twisted hair. Both stare at the river. Merry smiles at the girl who explains the news said a dead cow was floating downtown, they came to see it. "It's all over Facebook," the mother chimes in.

Merry gamely scrambles up on the barricade, her plinth, and she, like Fisherman's Memorial bronze, uses her hand as a visor and angles her body flood-ward. Her jeans don't fit, her pudge and bludge over their top, the hoodie sweatshirt riding up. The neat mother scans Merry. Merry scans the water: bottles, whole trees, a tent, coolers, balls but no cow. She looks to the girl and mom and shrugs. "Oh well, we better get you to school," the mother says and leads her daughter back up the bank toward a parking lot.

That, then, there. Not far from the submerged park bench, she sees it. Closer to shore than she would have thought: a brown ear, the side of the massive head, slope of neck, a great hairy black torso bobs in the brownish water next to a beach ball. Even with her glasses lost, the hulking form of the cow, rising and falling is unmistakable. The sun mirrored in the Ohio River, she squeezes her eyes tight against the light: the glowing egg. Then the dark torso of the cow floats closer among the gears, like a horrible late stage of

a Rembrandt etching. Pounding temples, Merry turns to look at the girl and mother walking away. She can't find her voice to call to them. Training her eyes on the great mass floating, she notices a rubber glove finger. No, a single teat breaks the surface of the brown water.

The water isn't deep, but it's strong. Her shoes and backpack on the bank, Merry wades toward the cow. Savoring each detail as she gets closer, the angle of the massive jaw, the hollow above, the great eye open, long lashed as a stripper's, the solemn strong forehead.

"Relax, deep breath," Merry whispers as she digs the ultrasound out of her pocket and gently inserts her fingers into the mouth of the cow. She spreads the rubbery lips and pushes the folded paper deep inside in the mucousy cavern between cheek and teeth. Resting her hand on the bony skull, she turns toward the bank. "You're all done, that wasn't too bad."

## CURRICULUM VITA

NAME: Helen Payne  
ADDRESS: 1952 Roanoke Ave, Louisville, KY 40205  
DOB: May 9, 1974  
EDUCATION: MFA, University of Louisville, 2019  
BA, West Virginia University, 2002

### Teaching/Assistantships

University of Louisville / Graduate Teaching Assistant  
August 2016 - 2019, Louisville, KY

The New Art Center/Drawing Instructor  
September 2014 - April 2016, Newton, MA

Arlington Art Center /Drawing Instructor  
September 2009 - April 2016, Arlington, MA

### Education

2019 MFA University of Louisville (pending)  
2002 BA West Virginia University  
1998 Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, England  
1997 Corcoran College of Art and Design, Washington, DC

### Exhibitions

#### **Solo/Installations**

2017 ABC of the Weight of Measure, Bridwell Art Library, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY  
2014 Becoming Four Women, Holzwaser Gallery, Newton, MA  
2014 Here I Sit, Brokenhearted, Bromfield Gallery, Boston, MA  
2001 The Walls Have Ears, The Garo Gallery, Solo Show, Morgantown, WV

#### **Group**

2018 ABCs of the Weight of Measure performed by the Da De Dada Art Nurses, Boston, MA  
2015 Vernon Street Open Studios, Somerville, MA  
2013 Artist's Toolbox, 301 Gallery, Beverly, MA  
2012 History of Woman, Regina Quick Gallery, Fairfield, CT

2011 Bromfield Gallery, Boston, MA  
2011 City Arts, East Hampton, MA  
2011 Mobius Gallery, Cambridge, MA  
2011 Reflections, Homage to Dunkard Creek, traveling through 2013  
2010 Mothers, Woman-Made Gallery, Chicago, IL

Press

2017 Watts, Keith "Vignette, Drawing" Louisville Visual Arts  
2014 Moeller, Robert "Helen Payne, Here I Sit Brokenhearted" Art New England,  
July/August

Awards

2017 Edith Bridwell Library Grant  
2016-2019 Hite Scholarship