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Sport Combo Theory

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Washington University in St. Louis
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ABSTRACT

The mind-body is not separate just as artist and Art are not separate entities either. Because the human subject is tied to the Art object, rather than striving for perfection, a more fruitful approach to artmaking is one that utilizes imperfection to its advantage. By subverting what is thought of as error, the *glitch* acts as a transgressive image. It functions as a symbol of embracing imperfection by leveraging mishap as a catalyst for experimentation and re/invention. *Profile on platform* serves as a curatorial space, one of agency, access, and opportunity, to display images of our *selfiest* selves. In this way, it is possible to hyper-curate a profile to the point of *epitomizing the self* as an empathy generator. From digital platform to analog substrate, this body of work demonstrates how a Painting, Drawing, Writing, Printing, and Photography practice can collapse into various "Sport Combos" in an effort to combat conformity, support subjectivity, and work towards transgressive image(s), as a means of creating… a better world.

"As Lanier argues:

Different media designs stimulate different potentials in human nature. We shouldn't

seek to make the pack mentality as efficient as possible. We should instead seek to

inspire the phenomenon of individual intelligence." (Smith 9)

In curation there is an element of control. In control there is an element of power. With

power I think of greed, with empowerment I think of generosity and gratitude. With access to

platforms housing profiles, comes agency and therefore responsibility, the largest responsibility

being: becoming oneself, radically so. While the radical subject might include a photo of their

mind-body container on their Instagram profile, what's more important is that it includes image

through their own lens, which in turn is just as true to self as the physical body, if not more.

I'm hoping for Lucian Freud meets Sigmar Polke, Rauschenberg, and Salle meets Cindy

Sherman and Barbara Krueger meets Cecily Brown, Laura Owens, and Anoka Faruqee meets

Matisse and Haring to somehow take everything I enjoy and throw it all together. The paintings

become a highly subjective synthesis of (my) generation and (my) gender as I see it in image.

The Sport Combo is just another way for saying that the way I put a mishmash of foods together

is similar to the way I concoct my artwork—like an eclectic salad, pairing motifs and palettes I

like that don't conventionally belong together, onto the same plate or substrate anyway. The

theory is that in making your own salad, (as opposed to sticking with the more typical Cobb,

Greek, or Caesar) if you put every favorite topping or ingredient in, it's going to be really good.

The same applies with an ice-cream sundae along with the original Sport Combo—bagel and

cream cheese with cheerios sprinkled on top.

Today's toppings are *the glitch*; *epitome of the self*; and *profile on platform*. This body of

work or concoction functions under the premise that the artist is the Art, and therefore

imperfection must be embraced because human perfection is unsustainable and unattainable. The best way to embrace imperfection, thereby allowing ourselves the opportunity to re/invent, is by epitomizing the self in a bona fide manner; empathy lies at the core of sincere style of self.
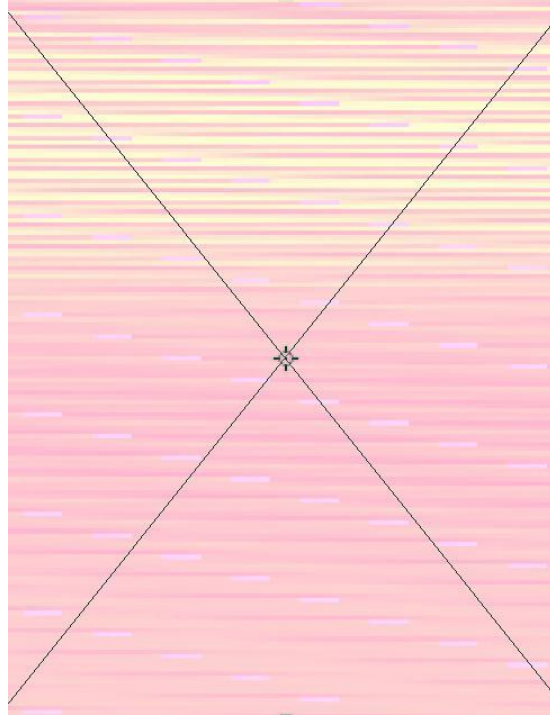
THE GLITCH

: embracing imperfection = re/invent

fig 1: *glitch 1*, 2017

"The use of the word "glitch" - derived from the German (or Yiddish) for "a slip" - to describe a design genre is a tribute to serendipity (a happy accident). This 'sudden irregularity or malfunction', as the dictionary definition has it, has been welcomed by some in the creative community as a way of turning an unintended fault to its advantage - in other words, making a virtue out of what could have been a setback." ("Glitch Issue: perfect accidents" 1)
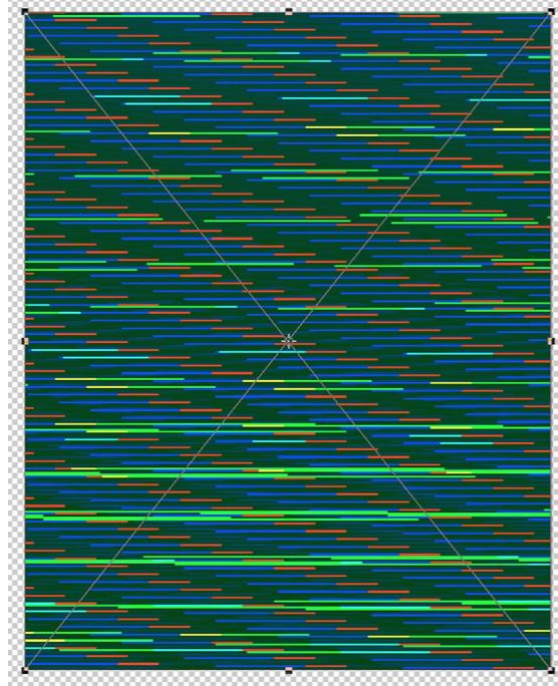
fig 2: *glitch 2*, 2017

Retrospectively, I first stumbled upon the creation of glitches when overloading my computer with too many open files. When I dragged an image into Photoshop it turned to glitch. When I Force Quit <⌥⌘◌> and recovered files, I also got glitch. Instead of getting too frustrated, I realized that the glitch and I were meant to be (acquainted). When my computer would not cooperate with me, I had no choice but to cooperate with it. <Command, Shift, 3>, a screenshot snapped, a collection compiled. **The glitch is a symbol of embracing imperfection** and experimentation by leveraging moments of mishap, **which we ultimately have to do to re/invent**.

fig 3: *glitch 3*, 2017

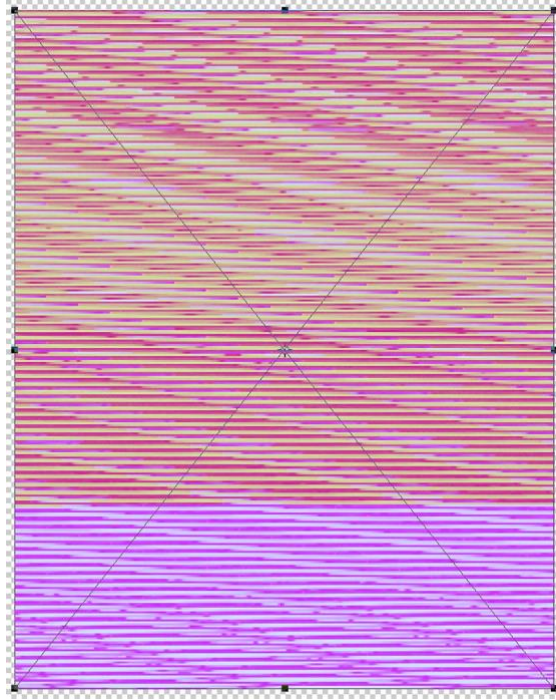When stumbling upon the glitch, I was actually working on creating a digital painting (file) in Photoshop which I would then print onto canvas and paint back into (fig. 4). My process is one of failing and fixing, but also one of knowing when to fail to fix. It is a process of negotiation with my attachment to Edit Undo <⌘z> on screen, and covering, hiding, layering, and camouflaging off screen, as well.

fig 4: *Sport combo # 11: macaronis & modesty*, oil and digital print on canvas, 44 x 72 inches, 2018

fig 5: *Sport combo #11: original file*, 2018

The glitch symbolically falls in line with the same attitude that artist Sigmar Polke embraced: "the printer's mistake is the painter's opportunity." (Cotter 1)

fig 6: Sigmar Polke, *Bikini-Frauen*, 1999, acrylic and dispersion on printed fabric, 126.5 × 156.2cm

Christie's Images Ltd. 2014

Here (fig. 6) Polke does a nice job with the Sport Combo in that the painting is functioning as a set of devices or motifs, which operate collectively as more than just the sum of their parts; the composition becomes something entirely new and its own when combined.

In my own paintings, I create and trace silhouettes leaving specified areas unprimed; I embed the figure in a print which becomes a palette, field, or ground, but also an abstract representation of the holistic human becoming in the making. (Fig 7).
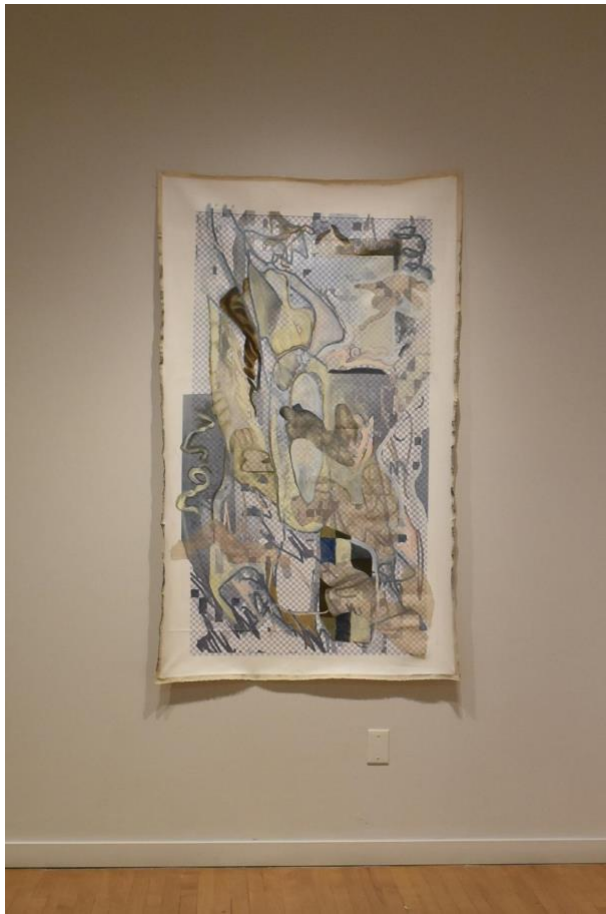
fig 7: *Sport combo # 23: gadget girls & glitch*, oil and digital print on canvas, 44 x 72 inches, 2018

fig 8: *Sport combo # 23: in process*, 2018

"Photoshop layers are the key to nondestructive image editing." (Major, E-J 1) Yet, I'm simultaneously interested in Photoshop layers as they are symbolic of human being/becoming (persons of substance), while I'm also just as invested in the destruction of image, the use of the destroyed image, and working against a ground, thereby destroying image further as a means of re/invention. "Thus, the stimulus to new invention is the stress of acceleration of pace and increase of load. For example, in the case of the wheel as an extension of the foot, the pressure of new burdens resulting from the acceleration of exchange by written and monetary media was the immediate occasion of the extension or "amputation" of this function from our bodies. The wheel as a counter-irritant to increased burdens, in turn, brings about a new intensity of action by its amplification of a separate or isolated function (the feet in rotation)." (McLuhan 34)

THE GLITCH & THE SELF AS PRIMARY SOURCE

: the artist = the Art

I like to think of persons as walking Art. Their bodies/skins are containers of or frames for Art, the Art essentially being personality and character. The way we each go about living our lives can be quite artful. I came to this observation when thinking about friends I admire for their distinctive personalities; their quirks make me smile. These friends are also the ones who are constantly saying to me after nearly anything I do, or *post,* "that's so you."
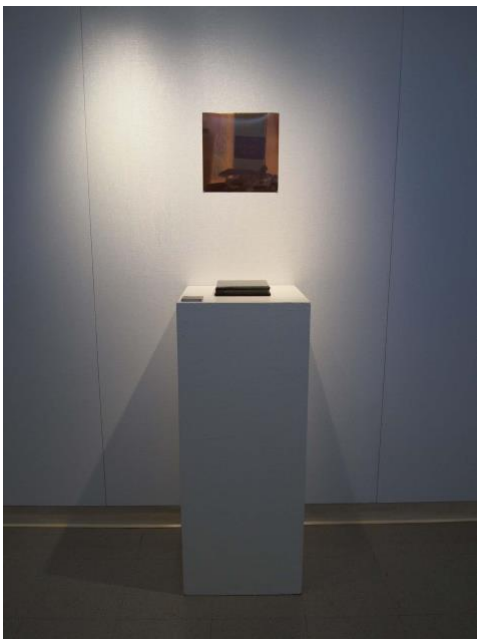

fig 9 & fig 10: *A Tribute 2My*, photograph, pedestal, photo album, 2016

This project explores the "Facebook album" prior to the advent of Facebook. Using an old photo album of my mom's, I was able to look through her social and overtly captioned images when she was approximately my current age (21). This was their version of Facebook—

the captioned photo album. By placing this album in a gallery setting, I take social media off of the screen. Paradoxically, I take my own "old-school" medium format film photos and post them on social media, shooting them back into the screen.
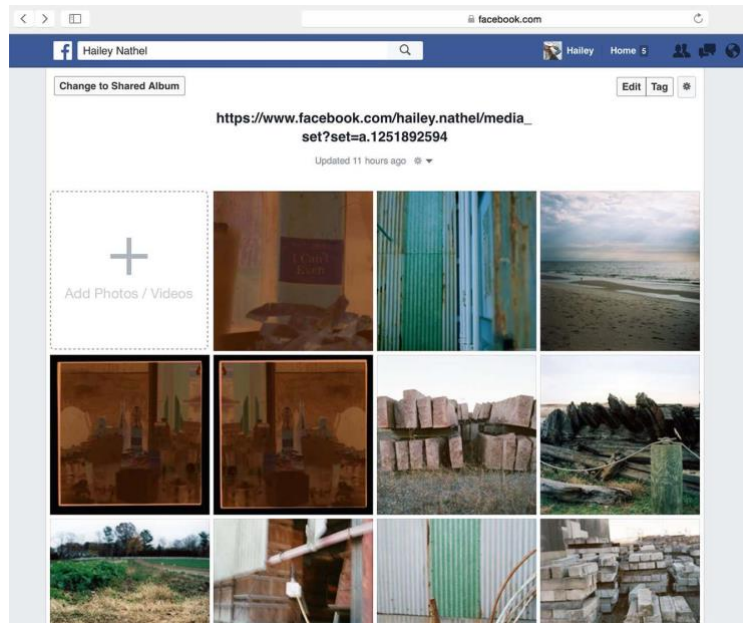

fig 11: *A Tribute 2My*, Facebook album, 2016

These photos are neither social nor digital. Instead they are more abstract, textural images (some of dystopian decay and dilapidation), not what you would expect to see on social media. I use Facebook as a "new" platform or home for which an artist's curated works can reside, while also considering my control of the privacy settings and the extent of possible public accessibility. The vernacular photo is being put on display in the gallery setting, and the not-so-vernacular "Art" photographs are being displayed on social media where there is potential for a much larger audience. The captions tell the firsthand story of my fragmented thought process, and by curating these photos onto my profile, even though they are not images of what you know to be my body,

I reassert that they are equally a part of me; the Art is tied to artist and vice versa, regardless of the extent of abstraction or representation.

"Becoming a work of art is a process that always exceeds itself; the process is more than what it leaves behind. 'Processually speaking, a making is always bigger than the made.' (Massumi 2013: xi). It is not the individual artist who becomes, but the collective event of the work of art that individuates itself through becoming." (Rousell & Fell 106) Yet, I would argue that because the artist is the Art (and therefore the Art the artist), the individual artist does become in the making, by making. Making object facilitates self-actualization of subject because we learn and grow in the process. She is tied to the collective event of the work as it is tied to her.

"In this way, the concept of 'becoming a work of art' alters the trajectory of visual arts education towards an ecological aesthetics that is distributive, collective and processual in nature... 'required in the future to transform our systems from destructive to sustainable' (Courchesne (2009: 142). This foregrounds the capacity for arts education to translate seemingly irreconcilable conflicts, paradoxes and contradictions into *patterns of contrast*, evoking an ethico-aesthetics founded on 'a caring for the relating of things as such – a politics of belonging instead of a politics of identity [...] a pragmatic politics of the in-between' (Massumi 2015: 18)." (Rousell & Fell 106)

However, in prioritizing the relationship of self to other, this doesn't mean individual identity is lost. If anything, it is strengthened; it is a more direct route to becoming the most ourselves we can be (our selfiest selves) because we have other to bounce off of. Instead of conforming to be like someone else or performing the [gendered] roles we are expected to, we take the qualities we admire in others, collectively, and we embrace those qualities, letting them

seep into ourselves, becoming more and more ourselves each day. **The artist is the primary source, the creation is secondary because the human is the Art, provisionally**; the artist is the Art is becoming.

When phone becomes appendage, and gadget becomes friend: "In this electric age we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness... we can translate more and more of ourselves into other forms of expression that exceed ourselves." (McLuhan 44) In other words, [artist is] the Art is "an organism that now wears its brain outside its skull and its nerves outside its hide." (McLuhan 45) "Any invention or technology is an extension or self-amputation of our physical bodies, and such extension also demands new ratios or new equilibriums among the other organs and extensions of the body." (McLuhan 36) Philosopher McLuhan ends his thoughts on *The Gadget Lover, NARCISSUS AS NARCOSIS* (37) by saying, "In the electric age we wear all mankind as our skin."

fig 12: *Sport combo # 23: gadget girls & glitch; test strips; Sport combo # 11: macaronis & modesty; profile on platform @hails1123,* installation shot

While I use this idea of epitomizing the self as a means of loving and embracing oneself as a selfless act, I still think there is a danger in saying that these paintings are the same as hackneyed self-portraits because that elicits the exact opposite of what I had intended: to be content in one's skin; self-love as the most selfless act. There is no way to love others without loving ourselves—jealousy is too strong a monster, and conformity is too strong a wind. I worry that in making such a claim, I lose the nuance in what I'm trying to discuss. If I call them self-portraits the conversation stops there, but perhaps they can be referred to as self-profile-portfolio-palettes, or better yet, a receptacle of essence, one that allows me a place to expunge the maximalist inside of myself.

fig 13 & fig 14: Cindy Sherman Instagram photo; Cindy Sherman Instagram profile

"Sherman is characteristically humble, almost flip, about her new digital concretions. 'All these Instagram images are, for me, just playing around,' she says. 'I don't think it at all competes with my serious work. They're just fun, like a little distraction… I'm not such a

perfectionist with using the apps. If you can erase the background and add another background, I don't really care if the edges are all clean, and if it looks kind of funky, or if things overlap in a not-so-perfect way. It's kind of freeing me up a little bit and maybe making me more open to experimentation.'" (Andrew Russeth 1)

In the way that I do not consider my works to be self-portraits, Sherman does not consider her Instagram posts to be her serious works of Art, but in this case, I completely disagree. The artist *is* the profile on platform *is* the Art. With 187K followers, Sherman's Instagram Art *is* so successful because of her ability to place less weight on perfection and more weight on play, thereby epitomizing her Self, showcasing her humility, honesty, and humor. However, I don't blame her for viewing it so separately; generation is the biggest discrepancy. My highly subjective take on my cohort's compulsive use of profile on platform is what has influenced me most to see it in this light: profile is not separate from artist is not separate from Art, particularly when *profile on platform* is a daily practice.

THE GLITCH & THE SELF AS PRIMARY SOURCE & EPITOME OF SELF
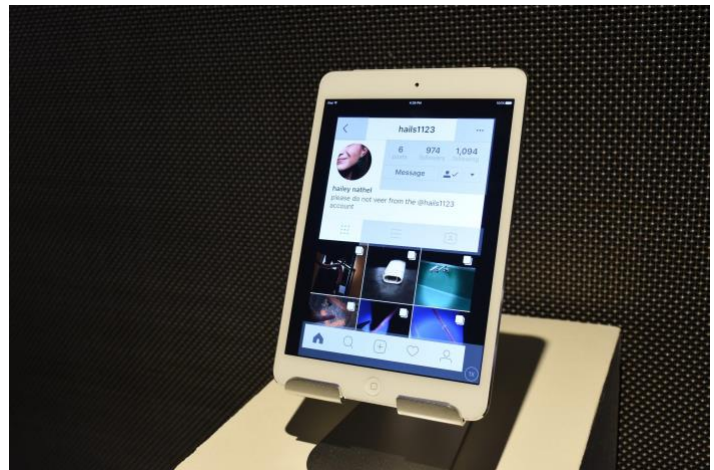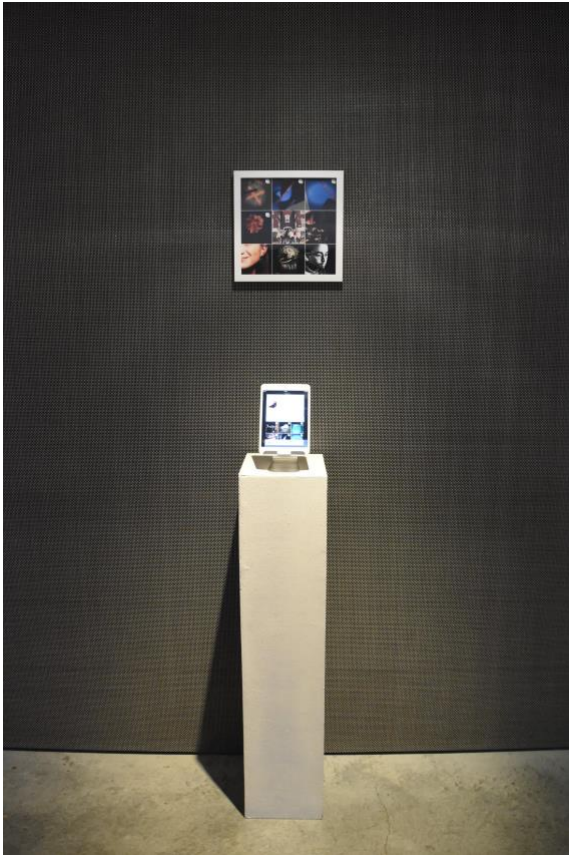
: empathy =world peace, duh

fig 15 & fig 16: *profile on platform @hails1123*, iPad on pedestal; digital print, 2018

In my photography and poetry work, I consider male/female spaces and bodies as I seek to twist conventions of femininity and masculinity, empowering people to act as themselves, not as what they think their gender asks them to be— a detriment to all. Writer Legacy Russell explains, "...within feminism is the central problematic of difference, and this difference—the split between that which we associate as 'man' versus 'woman', 'masculine' versus 'feminine'—cannot ever be truly resolved as long as our constructions of the body remain unchanged...

…Glitch Feminism, embraces the causality of 'error', and turns the gloomy implication of glitch on its ear by acknowledging that an error in a social system that has already been disturbed by economic, racial, social, sexual, cultural stratification, and globalization—processes that continue to enact violence on all bodies—may not, in fact, be an error at all, but rather a much-needed erratum. This glitch is a correction to the 'machine', and, in turn, a positive departure." (L. Russell, The Society Pages, 2013)

The glitch allows us to "redefine constructions of girlhood; maintain a particular aesthetic of youth and prospect which demonstrates a willingness to engage, to consume, to resist, and to play." (Courtnie N. Wolfgang, Olga Ivashkevic) Conformity is dangerous. The glitch destabilizes this terror.

fig 17 & fig 18: *profile on platform @hails1123*, Instagram screenshots, 2018

"If the aim is to be liked [acquire a high number of 'likes' for validation] by more and more people, whatever is unusual about a person gets flattened out." (Smith 10) In my Instagram project I aim to unflatten the 2-D, to make character and personality come to life by serving as a reminder that we can post 'outside the box', even when inside the square. I do this by "tricking" technology in hopes of creating transgressive image(s).

This photo series was made using the iPhone X camera under the 'stage light portrait mode' setting, a setting designed to create an entirely black background for a person's portrait, and therefore not fully programed to detect non-portrait. In order to get this effect with anything non-portrait, I place my hand in front of the camera so that it detects flesh, and then I quickly remove it, which often works imperfectly creating a black painterly quality. More than anything this project functions symbolically for our agency in how we can positively use technology and social media.

These photos are the epitome of myself. The image functions as my mind-body, and the captions as my voice; together they are my lens, my perspective, and this entity becomes a

composition and artifact of the radical subject and self. In this way, **it is possible to be so curated to the point where you are being and becoming your most genuine self.**

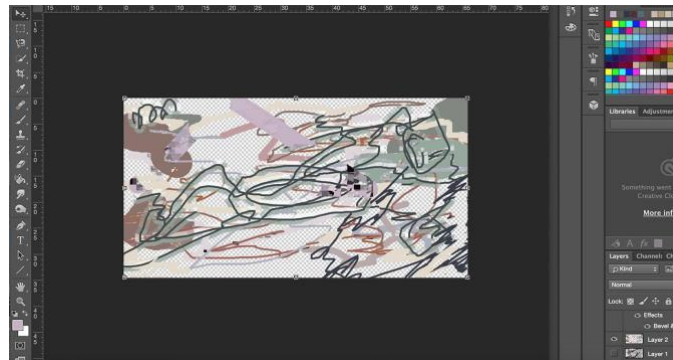

fig 19 & fig 20: *In process files*, Photoshop screenshots, 2018

"'Aesthetic sympathy means this: to experience and feel oneself in another, at the same

time in as characteristically intensified, pure, and free a manner as the nature of the aesthetic

object brings with it. Aesthetic enjoyment based on this is the felicitous feeling of the objectified

self.' This notion of empathy inverted the kenosis or self-emptying of Schopenhauer's aesthetic

contemplation. The presence in the work of art was ultimately the presence of one's own self, the

animation of otherness with the viewer's ego. As the concept of empathy became more

circumscribed within the bounds of perceptual psychology, the aspect of identity shifted from a pantheistic-ontological unity of mind and nature to an epistemological imperialism of the human personality responsible for overcoming all otherness, all difference with its powers of animation." (David Morgan 322) The paradox here is that when we are our most radically subjective selves, it is then that we can most successfully self-empty into object, making artist and Art one and the same which begs the question…
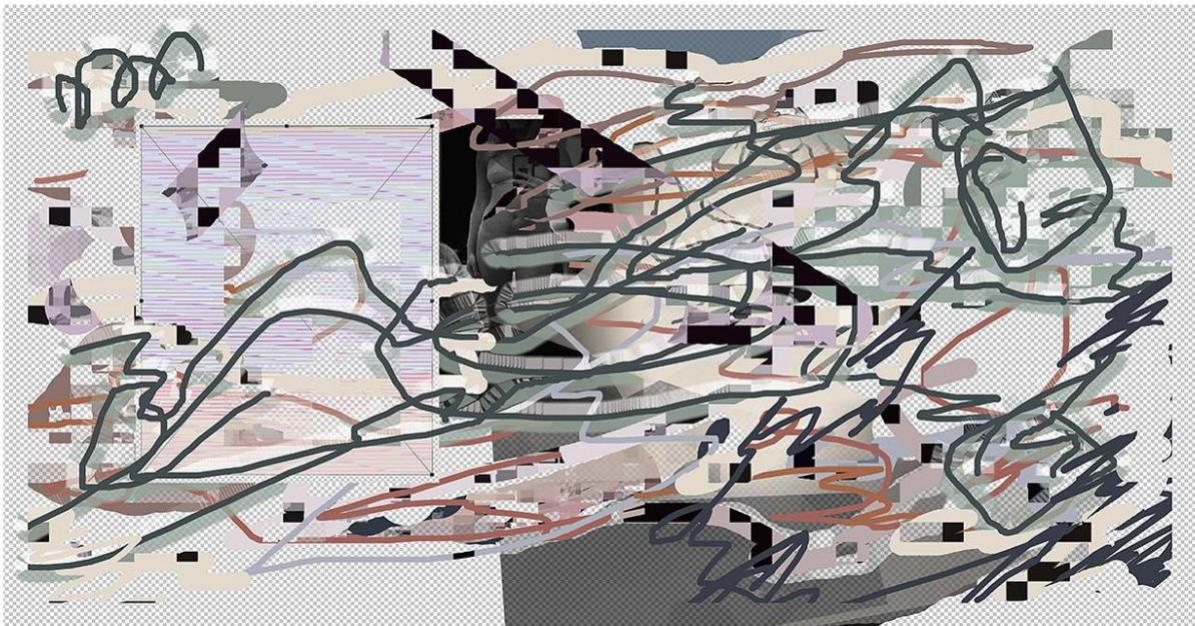

fig 21: *Sport combo # 23: gadget girls & glitch*, digital file, 2018

If artist *is* Art then why bother making Art at all?

Thinking through making is something that human life fundamentally needs to be doing to survive, and as it is done more extensively, surviving may become thriving (self-actualizing). We create life to continue to exist. That is a thinking through making process. Procreation

(positive creation) is art is us is we is you is me. Creating and learning how to make is empowering. When we are empowered we feel good about ourselves, and when we feel good about ourselves, we can then be good to others. In fact, we continue to make Art not because we care about ourselves alone but because we care about each other; we make art to see if it can benefit others, we make art because we care about humanity.

Is not **salad** \ ˈ**sa-ləd** \ *n.*—
any of various usually cold dishes;
small pieces of food often combined with toppings, usually mixed with a dressing;
an incongruous mixture: hodgepodge—
but a hot-fudge ice-cream sundae?
(how to cite own poem?)

fig 22: *Sport Combo #1: challenging conventions, conformity, & normalcy*, poem, 2018

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