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

by

Connor Marie Stankard Master of Fine Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021 Bachelor of Arts, Pace University, 2015

Director: Hilary Wilder Associate Professor, Painting + Printmaking Department Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, Virginia May 2021 This is dedicated to my family, only tomorrow more than today.

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Hilary Wilder, Caitlin Cherry, Cara Benedetto, Gregory Volk, Noah Simblist, Orla McHardy, Nicole Killian, Amber Esseiva, Chris Mahonski, Noam Segal, Hope Ginsburg, Peter Baldes, Silvia Kolbowski, Brooke Inman, Kat Wilson, Ezra Marcus, Emily Bannon, Mercedes Beach, Maddie Malenfant, John Sandroni, Julia Minin, Hanaa Safwat, Ellen Hanson, Mariah Barden, Martha Glenn, John Chae, Raul Aguilar, Damien Ding, Eleanor Thorp, Kelly-Ann Lindo, Jahd Khalil, Dylan Ahern, Michael Martin, Luis Vasquez La Roche, GM Keaton, Kyrae Dawaun, Sydney Finch, Bryan Castro, Seren Moran, Monica Kinsey, Chase Westfall Connor Marie Stankard was born in Princeton, New Jersey on October 26, 1992. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Pace University (New York, New York) in 2015, and her Masters of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond, Virginia) in 2021.

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A B S T R A C T

In this thesis, I trace the compulsive fear of holes, known as trypophobia, from an uncontrollable obsession to a pleasurable preoccupation. The body's physical porousness makes us receptive to our surroundings, allowing external matter in and destabilizing the boundaries of self and other. Matter invades us, encoding itself into our DNA and transforming humans into chimeric creatures.

Through paintings and multi-media installations, I encourage viewers to reflect on their own bodies as a series of holes, vulnerable receptors to the world. I use the figure of a woman to personify a human hole which has been infected by the outside, giving her the power to infect others. I employ Luce Irigaray's formation of mimicry to hyperbolize tropes of feminine performance, building a world where being hole is both offensive and defensive camouflage.

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Nothing That's where The hole begins and ends. Like a big fat snake eating its tail

- William Pope.L¹

Trypophobia is the fear of small holes. While the stimuli that trigger the fear are niche (lotus pods, insect egg pods, the iPhone 11 Pro's three cameras), its evolutionary root is thought to be common — a dread of bodily rot. Pathologists believe it derives from "an evolutionarily prepared response towards a class of stimuli that resemble cues to the presence of parasites and infectious disease."² If being afraid of holes means fearing parasites, it also indicates an anxiety towards the vulnerable body.

Though I was once repulsed by these clustered holes, my disgust eventually developed into a fascination. I would look up pictures of lotus pods, repeatedly cut open a persistent wart, and tweeze my pubic hair to see the engorged follicles. Obsession drives both phobia and philia.

Trypophobia's suffix suggests a level of irrationality, but what about this fear is irrational? Human bodies are crowded with between twelve (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, nipples, genitalia, anus) and five million (piercings, pores, digestive tract) holes which constantly receive the world. If the trypophobe fears they will become infected by parasites through one of these orifices, their fear is founded. Our porousness makes us accessible to external actants: the sun burns my eyes, a bacterial infection makes me pee blood, I absorb pleasure and energy from food.

Jane Bennet employs Bruno Latour's term 'actant' in *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things* to describe "that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events."³

³ Jane Bennet, Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things, viii.



¹ William Pope.L, Hole Theory, Parts: Four & Five.

² Disgusting Clusters: Trypophobia as an Overgeneralised Disease Avoidance

Response, Tom R. Kupfer & An T. D. Le, abstract.

Whereas Latour used the word to refer to human and nonhuman matter alike, Bennet concentrates on the agency, or 'thing-power' of non-human life to give voice to "a world populated by animate things rather than passive objects."⁴ She does not negate the power of humans, but instead frames us as configurations of vibrant matter: nerves, bones, cells, tissue. For Bennet, human-power is thing-power.

I have been trying to raise the volume on the vitality of materiality per se, pursuing this task so far by focusing on nonhuman bodies, by, that is, depicting them as actants rather than objects. But the case for matter as active needs also to readjust the status of human actants: not by denying humanity's awesome, awful powers, but by presenting these powers as evidence of our constitution as vital materiality.⁵

Bennet acknowledges the apprehension some may have in reframing subject and object, outlining the ways this transposal has been both abused (in instances of "humanon-human instrumentalization," i.e., the exploitation and subjugation of persons) and accepted (in cases of consensual BDSM) but maintains that, "such a newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers will not solve the problem of human exploitation or oppression, but it can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations." Bennet's scholarship upsets an anthropocentric default by centering the power of non-human actants: hurricanes, metal, worms, stem cells, vitamins, etc.

In the parallel universe of my art, human is shown between stages of receptive inertia and decadent unbecoming, while

⁴ Jane Bennet, Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things, vii.

⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁶ Ibid., 13.

non-human matter is represented as lively and encroaching. I am critical of Cartesian human exceptionalism; therefore, my work presents a somatic alternative. I am interested in how humans can, through embracing hole-ness, become more connected to thingness. I explore the ways a trypophobic fixation on porosity is also a fascination with the passive, vulnerable body — especially within a field of external vibrant matter.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam, pushes against goal-oriented feminism and instead "propose[s] a radical form of masochistic passivity that ... offers up a critique of the organizing logic of agency and subjectivity itself." Halberstam terms this 'shadow feminism,' as a "feminism grounded in negation, refusal, passivity, absence, and silence" and encourages a "complete dismantling of self."⁷

The women in my work reflect Halberstam's rejection of wholeness, resist healing, and embody wounds. Woman is passive and scarce in my paintings, videos show her melding with environment, and my sculptures define the body by its holes. These modes propose a comingling of outside and inside, agentic other and passive self.

P A R A S I T E

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari use the wasp and the orchid to exemplify the intense incorporation of the other, which they call 'becoming'.⁸ The hammer orchid can only be pollinated by the male thynnine wasp and has evolved to become similar the female thynnine wasp. The orchid both looks like the female insect and excretes a similar pheromone. As the orchid cannot exist

⁷ Jack Halberstam, The Queer Art of Failure, 124.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 10.

without the wasp, the two are incorporated into each other. "Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other" Deleuze and Guattari explain, "the two becomings interlink, and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further."⁹ The wasp and orchid present a tidy arrangement. Both are involved in a cyclic act of re and deterritorialization: the wasp 'becomes-orchid' as it pollinates the flower (it is deterritorialized from its wasp-ness) and the orchid 'becomes-wasp' as it has adopted the insect's attributes (it is deterritorialized from its orchidness). The orchid is not merely emulating the wasp and the wasp is not just inseminating the orchid; the two exist as extensions of the other, making them one mutually reliant, interconnected chimera.

I got a pinworm infection at the age of six. These tiny parasites can inhabit the intestines and lay microscopic eggs inside your digestive tract. I discovered the infection when I caught one such worm on my fingernail. Engrossed by its movement, I didn't notice the ant which had also crawled onto my finger until the two creatures spotted each other. Each reared up and aggressed the other. To the worm and ant, I existed not as a human but as a cave, a stage, and a functional resource. Realizing that my body is not wholly mine, that I am interconnected, was equal parts exciting and horrifying.

T H R E A T

Processes of re and deterritorialization occur in microscopic, churning streams, both too slow and too fast to be caught. In *Threat Web*, I explore the streams of unruly matter which neutralize the boundaries of self and not-self. *Threat Web* is a four-part painting series that explores how our orifices (breast, groin, eye, mouth, and rectum) allow the outside in.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 10.

Technological threat modeling is the process of identifying vulnerabilities in software programs by hiring experts to breach them. The collaged images in *Threat Web* plot out interlopers: an ant which might crawl into the eye, a mosquito into the teat, robotic sperm fertilizing a womb. In the series, humanity is reduced to an abstract attack surface. Each painting begins with a flat green hue. Scrubs are a similar color, designed so surgeons can refresh their eyes from blood. The second layer introduces dark, calligraphic linework into the shallow space of the scene. These lines extend past the edges of the canvas, suggesting a larger rhizome which might connect the paintings. The lines will at times invoke mathematical precision but, as they inevitably devolve into insect legs or dendrites, platonic geometry is undercut with something messier. The third layer introduces images sourced from biology textbooks, porn, confessional blogs, my iPhone camera roll, or Google images. Working in this three-layer system allowed me to focus on the site specificity of each orifice while developing a common language to connect the work as a body.

When this series was exhibited in Virginia Commonwealth University's Fine Arts Building, I filled the gallery with a subtle perfume. The scent, containing notes of damp earth, algae, and leather, was synthesized to olfactorily pair with the painting's green hue and engage the orifice of the nose. Anicka Yi, who created a line of perfumes called *Biology*, talks about scent's ability to claim space: "Smell is a form of sculpture, because it has a lot of volume."¹⁰

"But it's a hard area to be experimental, because people won't wear unfamiliar smells," she says, in another interview, "We haven't gone very far outside of polite smell, which

¹⁰ Ted Stansfield, "Fragrance Artist Anicka Yi Wins Major Art Prize," *Dazed*, October 25, 2016, https://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/ article/33466/1/fragrance-artist-anicka-yi-wins-major-art-prize.

has everything to do with social constructs around smell and power relations. People are afraid to smell strange."¹¹ Considering the volumetric qualities of perfume and its ability to enter and transform a host, I intuit that this resistance is not only xenophobic, but by extension, trypophobic. The fear of the molecular unfamiliar is rooted in a fear of other.

Michel Serres discusses the parasitic nature of social relations in *The Parasite*. Summarized by the book's translator, Lawrence R. Schehr, "the parasite is the primordial, one-way, and irreversible relation that is the base of human institutions and disciplines: society, economy, and work; human sciences and hard sciences; religion and history."12 Perfume is inherently parasitic in that scent is our strongest involuntary link to memory. Inhaled perfume molecules dissolve into the damp lining of our head and lungs and influence the very biology of our brains. Addressing the parasitism of scent, Serres says, "What is a milieu, my milieu, his milieu, or the animal's? Simply, it is the full extent of the phenomenon, the volume filled by the process. The first, the very first occupation of spots. The expanded must be found. It has to be a sound or an odor. It must hit the open ears or nostrils. These phenomena are common to all receptors that are always open."13

As I worked on my perfume, I naively assumed the kitchen would be a suitable laboratory, until the concoction leaked somewhere into my cutlery or dishes. For weeks after, the distinct flavors of the oils would appear sporadically in my food. Meanwhile, I had a small mouse infestation. The perfume's comingling green notes began to register as fecal.

¹¹ Ross Simonini, "In the Studio: Anicka Yi," *Art News*, March 24, 2017 https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/in-the-studio-anickayi-63254/.

¹² Michel Serres, The Parasite, x.

¹³ Ibid., 141.





In the first painting of the *Threat Web* series, *A Mosquito's View of a Dairy Cow*, the orifice of the nipple is represented in an allegory of excess and overproduction. The central image shows an udder dripping with teal Bag Balm. This product is used to prevent mastitis and infection in dairy cows by plugging and soothing the teats' canals during periods of unuse. Drops of the blue liquid break from the picture frame and trickle along the canvas. The teal color rhymes with a wedge of blue cheese in the bottom left corner, also dripping as if lactating. Parasitic rot makes blue cheese a delicacy.

In other passages of the painting, cheese, wine, and a high heel create a tableau that refers to hosting, an act both social (to host a party) and biological (to host a parasite). In the painting, the high heel and a wine glass have been stretched to the point of uselessness: both become too brittle to function. I hyperbolize tropes of feminine identity with absurd objects, assembling a field where gender is bought and sold. These objects are actants which shape me, supposedly, in that they might make me a woman: the appendage of the heel affects one's gait, perfume casts a synthetic pheromonal ambiance, and the contents of a wine glass can alter mental states, especially when potentiated with something stronger. I've been told I'm a woman. This description can be precise, facile, aspirational — usually all three at once. In any register, gender feels like a costume.

Watching my mother defrost hamburger, make a roux, or apply perfume were my first lessons in mirroring womanhood. Luce Irigaray considers mimicry a "playful repetition" of feminine affect which acts as both offensive and defensive camouflage. She says that "one must assume the feminine role deliberately."¹⁴ Mimicry uses humor to problematize the feminine by amplifying absurd stereotypes rather than

¹⁴ Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*, 76.

neutralizing or ignoring them. "In other words" Ping Xu summarizes, "mimicry is used not only to facilitate [Irigaray's] attack on phallogocentrism but also to prevent herself from being reassimilated by the same power that could otherwise reduce everything into the economy of the Same."¹⁵

The paintings in *Threat Web* present a similarly exaggerated feminine formation. Hyperbole introduces levity to what might become paralyzing essentialism. Cliché as the heel, glass, or perfume may be, these signifiers continue to fascinate. While the practice of forming one's identity around gendered objects serves consumerism, my painted mimesis of these things is a form of casual shoplifting. I am held captive and captivated by a masquerade of feminine performance.

Hidden in the back of Ariana Reines's book of poetry *The Cow* is a photograph of two women. Their legs are spread to accommodate heavy udders which droop from their laps, as do their bare breasts. In the bottom left of *A Mosquito's View of a Dairy Cow* is an image of a figure with three breasts. The image has been printed out and pasted on, alluding to a rapid proliferation of pornographic imagery. Through mechanical reproduction, I am contributing to the enormous pile of these images while groaning under its weight.

Relating woman to animal, especially cow, is business as usual. Reines writes that "cow is a common epithet for a slow woman or a clumsy woman; a woman with a foul smell."¹⁷

To identify with an animal, however, is something else. I feel sympathetic to these cow-women. I connect to the chimeric quality of their bodies, to being clumsy or foul, to their selectively recognized sanctity. Though they are not self-



¹⁵ Ping Xu, Irigaray's Mimicry and the Problem of Essentialism, 5.

¹⁶ Ariana Reines, *The Cow*, 109.

¹⁷ Ibid., 31.

portraiture, my works are always autobiographical. Woman as a whole can be reduced to neither breast nor bovine; rather, I explore the ways I relate to both. Reines notes, "Everything good's an animal."¹⁸

Fine as it may be, the line between associating myself with a cow and involving others in the cowness is the same line between masochism and sadism. Jack Halberstam's 'shadow feminist' is masochistic. Connecting eros and thanatos, Halberstam likens masochism to a feminist act as "the willing giving over of the self to the other, to power; in a performance of radical passivity, we witness the willingness of the subject to actually come undone, to dramatize unbecoming." This 'shadow feminism' is not after egalitarianism, as is traditional feminism, but a "critique of the very ground of the human."¹⁹ Self-implication allows me to both explore and explode stereotypes of gender performance and unhumanism on myself.

I painted the next work in the series, *Placenta Variations*, as I was reading Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*. Firestone imagines a socialist, post-patriarchal society where "childbearing could be taken over by technology"²⁰ and children would be raised by groups. She proposes that this decentralized responsibility will collapse the nuclear family and create a utopia where women are free from a gendered model of childbearing and rearing. Sophie Lewis, in *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, elaborates on Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's call for "Abolition of the family!"²¹ Lewis expands on the emancipatory potential of mechanized reproduction, arguing for increased rights and protections for gestators.²²

¹⁸ Ariana Reines, *The Cow*, 11.

¹⁹ Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 131.

²⁰ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 270.

²¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 45.

²² Sophie Lewis, Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family.

Firestone explores the negative capacity of her world's vision in a "Fears and Considerations" section. She speaks to us as a strawman mumbling, "inhuman ... unnatural ... sick ... perverted ... communistic ... 1984 ... what? Creative motherhood destroyed for babies in glass tubes, monsters made by scientists?"²³ This misapprehension of Firestone's (as well as Marx and Engel's) proposal reminded me of Elliot Rodger's hideous 141-page diatribe *My Twisted World*, which concludes with his vision for women's reproduction: "A few women will be spared, however, for the sake of reproduction. These women would be kept and bred in secret labs. There, they will be artificially inseminated with sperm samples in order to produce offspring."²⁴

In the imaginations of both Firestone and Rodger, reproduction is mechanized by external forces. However, while Rodger was advocating for the forced reproduction of women, Firestone, Lewis, Marx, and Engels were proposing increased agency as an escape from patriarchal and capitalist control.

These are radical views, for better and worse. *Placenta Variations* approaches a similarly bureaucratic system of reproduction, using both sides of the horseshoe in an exploration of how one extreme position can lead to its shadow opposite, a phenomenon Carl Jung calls 'enantiodromia'.²⁵ Projective possibilities for the reproducing body are referred to in the painting as robotic sperm swim through the same green backing, vials of mystery liquid sit at the bottom, and a portrait of a woman has been painted twice, one smaller than the other. This duplication recalls the way bacteria reproduce asexually through the process of binary fission, or splitting in half to create identical 'daughter

²³ Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex, 237.

²⁴ Elliot Rodger, My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger, 136.

²⁵ Carl Jung, Psychological Types, 426.

cells.' Referencing this genetic copy-paste, the cloned woman becomes both mother and daughter to herself. The portraits are rendered in an inverted color scheme, casting a subtly disorienting effect and underscoring the digital origin of the image.

The woman depicted in the painting is a porn actress who I discovered through Pim Eyes, a facial recognition website I used to search for images similar to my own. The imperfect algorithm brings up many un-likenesses as well. She is one of myriad women that the search engine had mistaken for me.

Bodily autonomy has, for the whole of my life, felt like a myth. Feeling plastic, loose, and hole-like are integral to my experience of becoming-woman. In the real, this often manifests in violence. Rape, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation — which disproportionally effect women exemplify the ways we are denied agency of our bodies. And while being treated like a hole is worlds apart from seeing yourself as one, both are connected to the aesthetic experimentation in my work. To be hole is to be 'loose.'

Post-linguistic media gives me the agency to set parameters of what enters my 'looseness,' and experiment with multivalent approaches to the multidefinitional word. Melissa Febos, the author of *Whip Smart*, an autobiography of her time as a dominatrix, discusses connotations of looseness in *One Word: Loose.* "Every other thing on the loose is free. The only reason we are ever given not to be [loose] is to avoid the punishments of men."²⁶

The women in my work are permeable, but they are never permeated by men. While accounting for real-world suffering, I explore ways porosity, looseness, and malleability can construct forms of freedom. Within the confines of my art,

²⁶ Melissa Febos, "One Word: Loose," *The Paris Review*, https://www. theparisreview.org/blog/2021/03/01/one-word-loose/.

porousness becomes a quasi-spiritual relinquishing of power. I wonder how our egos might deflate if we dispel the myth that we are autonomous, 'whole' subjects.



If I have to be an object, Let me be an object that screams

— Clarice Lispector ²⁷

I have addressed holes: our fractures which leaves us susceptible to rot and pleasure. And the parasite: the agenticother which stalks the \bigcirc of our porous bodies. With these two figures, we come to the woman in my work, a personification of the parasite-hole: a creature that infects and transforms as she is infected and transformed. I will use 'girl' and 'woman' interchangeably to refer to the ageless and genderless state of being both passive hole and aggressive parasite.

When my work makes the human presence visible, she is shown as a creature masquerading as a woman. I formulate woman as arrested in a mid-transition state, caught in loops of becoming and unraveling. She is cyborglike, animalistic, parasitic, and girlish. When a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, it begins to digest itself within the cocoon. The pupa becomes a liquified mass of cells which will eventually organize into a butterfly. These states of melting into the Other relate to notions of the sublime: a sometimes-horrific collision of nature and man. However, woman is the vaporous and engulfing *Sea Fog* in contrast to the *Wanderer*.²⁸ Like Irigaray's mimicry, staying liquified is both defensive and offensive camouflage. I encourage making a home in the liquid state of malleability.

What is a girl beyond age and gender? Deleuze and Guattari say, "girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages,

²⁷ Clarice Lispector, *The Stream of Life*.

²⁸ Caspar David Friedrich, Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, 1818.

sexes."²⁹ Rather than biological, they formulate the figure as both infectious and endlessly vaporous.

When Virginia Woolf was questioned about a specifically women's writing, she was appalled at the idea of writing 'as a woman.' Rather, writing should produce a becoming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, of sweeping them up in that becoming. Very soft particles – but also, very hard and obstinate, irreducible, indomitable.³⁰

Contamination, sweeping up, and impregnation address the consumptive essence of ontological womanhood. Deleuze and Guattari say as much as woman is infectious (), she is also infinitesimal ().

"If a body is already defined (by misogynistic culture) by its holes, where's the heroism — even if it's a nihilistic heroism," Maggie Nelson wonders, "in boring one hole after another, until what lurks behind begins to seep through?"³¹ Classification of woman as a contaminating object finds thorny ground in various demeaning tropes (the hysterical woman, the sterilizing feminist, the Salem witch, *vagina dentata*). Meanwhile, woman as imperceptible is also potentially disparaging (unseen in the workforce, performs invisible labor, lacks financial autonomy or social status). However, I relish in and perform the power to be at once feared (parasitic) and overlooked (hole). Mutating both of these tropes into weapons is a way to embrace and examine the position of the girl as equal parts passive and agentic: a hole that both swallows and spits, bites and aches.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 277.

³⁰ Ibid., 276.

³¹ Maggie Nelson, Art of Cruelty, 174.

Deleuze and Guattari's use of hard and soft particles recalls the plasticity which Heather Warren-Crow assigns to the figure of the girl in Girlhood and the Plastic Image. 'Plastic' as an adjective refers to both hard and malleable states. Warren-Crow compares the status of the young girl to the shifting, plastic nature of digital images: "Images are pliable; they can be sculpted like clay and circulated like money."³² The attributes of the digital image, the ability to be both manipulated (hole) and used as a tool to generate capital (parasitic) are "not gender neutral,"33 and "our operative notions of image plasticity are entwined with conceptions of the plasticity of girls."34 Warren-Crow uses Alice in Wonderland as an example of girlish empty vessel-hood: "Alice is ... able to be filled with everything or nothing. She is a theory of girlishness as a metaform of selfhood."³⁵ States of plasticity (hardness and pliability alike) construct the girlishness into an agentic hole.

I am sold with as I am sold to. When I was 16, I began a stint of modeling for American Apparel. I shot for e-commerce and was surprised to see myself on a few gas station billboards around Los Angeles. As is typical in this type of modeling, I was not told how the images would be used. Despite a slight unease at the surprise, it felt wonderful to be publicly inaugurated as an attractive girl.

One of the other pictures that came up on Pim Eyes was from an American Apparel photoshoot. It was of me this time, wearing a figure skater-style dress in a color which closely matched my skin. Pim Eyes flagged it for nudity and blurred the image, showing only my face on a pixelated body. The tight fit and color tricked both the algorithm and me into thinking the image was a stray nude, and I nervously approved the \$29.99 charge to find out what I was looking

³² Heather Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image*, 2.

³³ Ibid., 8.

³⁴ Ibid., 22.

³⁵ Ibid., 39.

at. Behind the paywall it was revealed to me that, while I was in fact clothed in the photograph, yet another algorithm had taken the liberty of uploading it to some conglomeration of thousands of images of naked young women.

Both American Apparel and Pim Eyes deterritorialized me. I went from a subject to an object; person to a signifier, used to buy and sell. I found the experience exciting and realityaffirming. I recalled my encounter with the pinworms. In both, distrust of my bodily agency was upheld. Seeing the mass of similar looking women reminded me that my body is not mine alone.

Tiqqun's *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl* imagines the ways in which the ageless, genderless signifier of the girl has become anthropomorphic of capital itself. The collective authors say that the young girl has been imbued with "an absurd symbolic surplus value."³⁶ This overvaluation has rendered her into a potent (parasite) nothingness (hole). This book begins with a medieval composite creature: a horse head standing with crocodile legs. Breasts are the only discernible nod to gender on this ridiculous creature. Though of course, breasts, or any other body part, do not make a woman; the hybridity of animal and human registers a potent formation of woman as both unknowable (hole) and fearsome (parasite).



Andrea Long Chu too defines an ontological female-ness as lacking in *Females: A Concern*. "For our purposes here, I'll define as female any psychic operation in which the self is sacrificed to make room for the desires of another. These desires may be real or imagined, concentrated or diffuse ... but in all cases, the self is hollowed out, made into an incubator for an alien force." The hole, which composes us, leaves us

³⁶ Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl, 2.

³⁷ Ibid, i.

hollowed out, not just for desire but as vessels for any vibrant matter of life. Long Chu specifies that it is not just women or girls who are females but "everyone is … and everyone hates it."³⁸

O R T E X

A vortex is an agentic hole. In Edgar Allan Poe's *A Descent into the Maelström*, a doomed sailor saves himself from a perilous whirlpool by gazing into it and examining the vortex's attributes in an attempt to work within rather than against it.³⁹ Poe's sailor examines the whirlpool the same way I examine gender: a desire to observe and understand without resisting. Like Halberstam's shadow feminist, my work is not goal-oriented. It would be easy, but inaccurate, to claim empowerment. I do not criticize formations of feminine passivity or toxicity but sublimate them with fascination.

Jacques Lacan offered two definitions of *jouissance*. The first is a "superabundant vitality," or a surplus of life, and the second is what he called a "backhanded enjoyment,"⁴⁰ or excessive pleasure which surpasses social mores. It's the second formation that applies to Mark Fisher's use of *jouissance* in *The Weird and The Eerie*. Fisher pins down Lacan's slippery term in saying:

An excessive preoccupation with objects that are 'officially' negative always indicates the work of *jouissance* — a mode of enjoyment which does not in any sense 'redeem' negativity: it sublimates it. That is to say, it transforms an ordinary object causing displeasure into a Thing which is both terrible and alluring, which can

³⁸ Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl, 11

³⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, A Descent into the Maelström.

⁴⁰ Owen Hewitson, "What Does Lacan Say About... Jouissance?," *Lacan Online*, https://www.lacanonline.com/2015/07/what-does-lacan-say-about-jouissance/.

no longer be libidinally classified as either positive or negative. The Thing overwhelms, it cannot be contained, but it fascinates.⁴¹

There is a perverse sense of pleasure in assembling my own objectification; a pleasure which will always feel distinct from external objectification constructed around me. It is the fascination of and cooperation with the maelstrom which feels, as with *jouissance*, transgressively pleasurable. I claim the figure of the parasitic hole not as empowering, but as fascinating. I have been hypnotized by the vortex.

Marshall McLuhan employs Poe's vortex in his book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, to describe his approach of cataloging and analyzing an array of Fordist advertising tools. McLuhan does not underestimate the agentic power of media, noting that it is "intended to be absorbed through the pores or gulped in a kind of mental breathing,"⁴² and hopes the book can be an antidote to the passive consumption of agentic material. The book's titular essay describes a mechanization which disassembles the whole, unique woman into various parts for commercial use. One advertisement asks, "What makes a gal a good number?"⁴³. The image behind the text shows a woman's body halved vertically. On the left she is dressed and smiling, on the right her face has been removed and she is shown wearing only her underwear.

McLuhan is ultimately critical of this archetypification of woman, but his criticism reveals a slight unease, verging on fear: "The reader has to be a second Ulysses in order to withstand the siren onslaught. Or, to vary the image, the uncritical reader of this collective novel is like the person who

⁴¹ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 9.

⁴² Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man, 10.

⁴³ Ibid., 95.



looked directly at the face of Medusa without the mirror of conscious reflection. He stands in danger of being frozen into a helpless robot."⁴⁴ A parasite's incentive is to survive and reproduce. McLuhan's mechanical bride uses the camouflage of replaceability to hide as a hole while she populates the world with more of the same. Warren-Crow analyzes McLuhan's mechanical bride saying, "She appears in different forms ... but is always essentially the same: a girl-commodity whose flocked, touchable skin and soft-focus veil belie the danger of her robotic heart. Ultimately, the mechanical bride transforms the adult male viewer into a version of herself ... both consumer and consumed."⁴⁵

Although gender constructions can feel consuming, I explore a sublime release of agency within consumption. My work gazes down at the signifiers of transmutable womanhood and feminine performance assertorically. Sometimes the vortex will drown me, sometimes it will quench me. My fascination is not a move to exit the whirlpool, but a way to do more than simply exist within — to bathe in its swirling froth. In this way, when Pim Eyes pulls up dozens of women who are not me, but could be, it was not wrong.

Thinking about dolls as substitute human objects, in *Cavity*, I sink an image of a woman into a slab of wax — a material which can be melted and dripped on flesh or modeled to imitate it. A black silhouette has made the woman anonymous. Her flattened figure and the green-screen-green colored wax reference states of imperceptibility. The photo was taken from a pay-to-play website where users must spend money before seeing the unblurred faces of the women they'll be interacting with. Taking this further in *Cavity*, all identifiable features have been obliterated.

⁴⁴ Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man, 97.

⁴⁵ Heather Warren-Crow, Girlhood and the Plastic Image, 39.

A series of orbs edited into the scene suggests both offensive protrusion (like bullets) and defensive intrusions (as with traps). The illegible pose becomes inhuman and unnerving. Is she facing toward or away from us? From where will she attack? A poem embossed into the wax below offers little resolution. The lines alternate between arcane sex doll assembly instructions, "GREASE CAVITY AND PACK LIMBS WITH SAWDUST" and a nightmare scenario for the user of this doll, "SHE WANTS YOUR MONEY" inspired by incel vernacular. This is a portrait void of a legible subject. Like camouflage, *Cavity* uses disorientation as a weapon.

The figure of the white woman, mine, is a state of transmutable nothingness. My particular subject position entails a pronounced degree of privilege, and it is this privilege that allows me to explore the *jouissance* of the self-consciously misogynistic formulation of myself as both hole and parasite. The females, which is to say like Long Chu, the people, in my work, are holes that hunt, using imperceptibility and masquerade as defense and offense.

N I T Y

Α

Vanitas painting, a still-life genre which dates to the 16th century, combines *memento mori* and signifiers of pleasure to moralize the futility of beauty and emptiness of indulgence given the inevitability of death. Fruit and flowers are painted in stages of decay, bubbles float through the compositions ready to pop, and skulls rest next to venomous reptiles. Analogously, it is my prerogative to use products to resist signs of decay: snail mucin, Lip Venom, mushroom powder, chemical exfoliants, etc. As much pleasure as I find in my routine, the implicit inevitability of aging and death tinges it with a rejection or concealment of self, a subtle cruelty. Rather than moralizing differences of beauty and rot, my artwork engages with an intermingling of the two — accepting both as

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inextricable. 'Vanity,' which signifies both pride and futility, can loop into itself, becoming masochistic. Extreme narcissism and self-loathing witness the unsustainable act of gnawing self-consumption.

Vanity is an artwork that converts a dressing table (a vanity) into a composite sculpture. Referencing both the vanity (narcissism) and futility (vanity) of beautification, the sculpture presents an array of products in stages of decay, suggesting a masochistic and abstracted beauty routine.

An acrylic table is topped with a slab of wax which has had various anti-aging products set into it. When removed from the wax, the negative space from the containers creates craters which allow for replacement products to be inserted. A silver tray holds seven small perfume atomizers which are full of fetid river water. A breast pump churns rotten milk in a small glass bottle, emulsifying the curdles back into liquid. Wax indentations have been filled with masticated food: cherries and caviar float in spit, making a dark purple jelly. A pair of high heels has been papier-mâché'd to a point of absurdity — they cannot be walked in without tripping. Snails from the same river wander free. Mold blooms in a petri dish fashioned into a compact. By placing a mirror beneath the table, I invert the typical dressing table's utilitarian, anthropocentric orientation. The mirror also creates both a pool on the floor for the narcissist to gaze into and a potential trap for upskirting viewers. Referencing the compositional and iconographic strategies of *Vanitas* paintings, the sculpture both alludes to and is a vanity.

The Little Mermaid's villain, Ursula, can be seen preening as Ariel first enters the sea witch's lair. Ursula slicks back her hair with goo from a jellyfish and pinches a crustacean to dispense bright red lipstick.⁴⁶ In another scene, Ariel invites her fish

⁴⁶ The Little Mermaid, Disney, 1989.

friend to admire her collection of human objects which have floated down from passing ships. She is enamored of them but, with no context, presents them in states of misuse. A fork, she thinks, is a hairbrush. This misinterpretation of feminine rituals relates to the sometimes absurd, sometimes humiliating experience of participating in the performance. Beautification can feel like an exercise in futility, even when you know the difference between a hairbrush and fork. *Vanity* operates as a fun-house mirror, reflecting a tragicomedy of ego and deterioration.

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The fictional collective *Nosteria*, presents my thesis exhibition *Cloaca Palace*, an installation that centers around a series of unusable devices — seven glass body plugs: one to enter each human orifice. In both the brand's sci-fi universe and the gallery, the devices exaggerate our orifices by visualizing the flow between environment and body. Mark Fisher said, "There is no inside except as a folding of the outside; the mirror cracks, I am an other, and I always was."⁴⁷ Collapsing outside and inside reminds me that I'm a vulnerable, non-autonomous creature.

Affective relationships between beings work like fluids or vapors in that they seep invisibly between interstitial vectors. But for something so pervasive, this seepage is often imperceptible. Typically, we notice the symptom (a pimple, a shoe fetish, the desire to buy pleather pants) rather than the moment of incorporation (particulate matter penetrating the opening of a pore, castration anxiety, a surreptitious series of Instagram ads). *Nosteria's* devices crystalize this leak event by exaggerating the openness of holes within swirling, volatile environments.

C P L

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⁴⁷ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 6.

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Each glass plug contains a liquid matched to its hole. The liquid's color, opacity, and viscosity relate to its corresponding orifice, suggesting both the introduction of external matter into the human body and an extraction of liquids from the body while implying a liquidation or vaporization of the human form. *Cloaca Palace* casts the body as an object made of orifices, designed to eject and receive vibrant matter.

Mika Rottenberg presents a similarly liquified body in *Squeeze* (2010). The 20-minute video montages scenes of women within a Rube Goldberg-esque factory setting. One woman is compressed between two mattresses, the video then cuts to a glass filling with dark yellow liquid. Another woman empties her bladder and a fountain sprays. Intricate operations of discrete juicing suggest an elaborate finale. But in the end, the women's excrement is pressurized into a bathetic puck of lettuce, rubber, and foil. Rottenberg's *Squeeze* builds a world where women are harvested for their raw materials.

Nosteria's glass forms are larger than their corresponding orifices, inviting viewers to reflect on their own forms as equally agape and vulnerable. Pushing on the edges of our bodies, the works recall permeability by instantiating its ridiculous opposite — the plug. Amplified in scale, the devices recollect the ritualistic stretching of body parts performed throughout cultures and time, ranging from the erotic to the disturbing to the mundane. The origin of the ball gag, a common BDSM accessory, can be traced back to the Scold's Bridle, a torture device used to prevent women from speaking. The speculum, an instrument still used in contemporary pelvic exams, was pioneered by James Marion Sims in the 1840s. Sims experimented on and tortured enslaved Black women and children, refusing them anesthesia. Ear gauging is a common body modification among emo and scene cultures, as are Kegel eggs among others. Engaging with the history of these often-phallocentric devices, the

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plugs hover between attraction and repulsion, consent and nonconsent, complicating notions of good and bad touch.

Cloaca Palace contextualizes biological vulnerability within frameworks of both objectivity and emotion. The glass forms suggest laboratory beakers or medical devices, four wallmounted television monitors in the room recall a hospital waiting room or day spa, and large sheets of fabric are printed with small "fine print" text. However, each clinical gesture is undercut by a moment of sensuality: the monitors outpour manic, operatic music as they rotate between video pieces that show women in states of unbecoming, the fabric has been burned, obstructing the precision of the printed letters, and the contents within the glass leak, rot, and crawl. Half anatomy theater, half opera theater, the two aesthetic modes create a spectacle of contrasts. The confluence of clinical and messy aesthetics destabilizes both realms, much like the tension of grooming a body to conceal its functions or maintaining a body destined for decomposition.

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The fluid in three devices (*Auria, Respair*, and *OS*) has been contextualized through a fictional short story and images which have been printed on large translucent sheets. The story centers on 29-year-old Louisa and her older boss, Verónica. Lou struggles with her resentment towards Verónica, who represents the woman she is destined to become. Lou is finally released from her gerontophobia when she wakes to realize that she has merged with Verónica. Her response is not confusion or fear but a sense of peace: "Her mouth splits into a wide grin. She's finally free." Lou's apartment is one large room, its walls tiled with mirrors. The use of the mirrored room is a composite reference to The Room in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* ⁴⁸ and *Harry Potter*'s⁴⁹ Mirror of Erised, both of which show the inhabitant their truest desire. In this case, Lou's room is a stage for the fulfillment of her subconscious wish to unbecome.

Lou floats through life, passive and malleable. She lets her boss bully her, her boyfriend chose her food, and misunderstandings consume her agency — always resentful of her receptive, hole-like position. Verónica, the parasite, gives reckless advice, invades a party uninvited, manually penetrates Lou, and reproduces herself using Lou's body as a host. Using tropes of the maiden and crone, Lou and Verónica meld to form a chimeric hole-parasite-girl. Lou's ageism, her fear of Verónica, is a form of trypophobia; Verónica is a *memento mori* for Lou, the lotus pod which reminds her that she porous and mortal.

The story moves through three sensorial modes: *Auria* (ear), *Respair* (nose) and *OS* (genitalia). The first chapter engages the ear through miscommunication and nostalgia, the second chapter uses feces, food, and perfume to produce pungency, and the last ends in a hazy sex act which composites the two women into one.

The story was printed on sheer fabric and burned with hundreds of small holes, obstructing the reader's path and creating a hole-fear trigger. The sheets have been doused in a perfume: a pungent mix of neroli, chlorophyll, tomato, and coriander. The perfume also contains odorless androstadienone and estratetraenol, two pheromones which are purported to increase desire in male and female mammals respectively. Combining the two liquids confuses their

⁴⁸ Andrei Tarkovsky, Stalker, 1979.

⁴⁹ J. K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

essentialist binary. As viewers pass through the exhibition, their movements agitate the sheets, causing them to emit the odor.

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The first chapter in the story informs the *Auria* plug for the ear. This glass device contains gallium, an element which resembles mercury. Mercury exposure is connected to adverse effects on the mind. Long-term contact can cause hallucination, disorientation, and suicidal ideation. Through the ear we reach the brain. Mental instability is a form of human malleability, a shape shifting of rational states which confronts the myth of Cartesian steadfastness.

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P A I

The *Respair* (nose) plug blossoms with mold grown from samples from my own nose and various plant matter. Respiration is the process by which organisms transform oxygen into carbon dioxide. Plants, using photosynthesis, present an opposite way of breathing, consuming carbon dioxide to emit sugar and oxygen. As my microfauna comingle with plant matter within the glass, so too do these two processes of breathing. The nose, unlike the eye or mouth, is an orifice which we cannot open or close without help from our hands, making us perpetually vulnerable to the agentic respiration of mold.

Cloaca Palace

H Y S T E R I	Α
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Four video pieces contextualize the liquid within the *Ocula*, *Guttur, Styx*, and *Lac*, devices. The videos suggest a set of ingredients, either real or illusory, that make up the matter inside their plug. Each video plays on its own monitor. The screens are synchronized to cycle through one video at a time with short pauses between each. The videos churn music and images into the room in a cyclical pattern, creating a vortex around the glass objects. The intense orchestral music, composed by my friend David Hertzbeg, lends itself to the lugubrious montages. The score connects the videos, creating an opera in four parts: eye, mouth, nipple, anus.

The word *Nosteria* is partially derived from 'hysteria,' a now archaic diagnosis applied to women through the 1980s. Drawing from misogynistic histories and a reclamation of the word by some feminists, hysteric behavior guides the mannerisms of the women in *Nosteria's* video pieces: the ingenue (*Ocula*, eye), a hissing monster (*Guttur*, mouth), the abandoning mother (*Lac*, nipple), and a mud creature (*Styx*, anus). Hysteria is shown through lack of speech, incoherent desire, and displaced emotion. Along with these symptoms, my stiff movements, uneasy acknowledgment of the camera, and uncanny affect portray a composite woman-animal-machine suspended mid-evolution.

Coevolution has merged, animals, humans, and machines, and as we have inherited one another's behaviors, dichotomies of self and other have become obsolete. For Donna Haraway, this obsolescence has created a new form of hybrid, intraspecies existence: "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism: in short, we are cyborgs."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Donna Haraway, A Cyborg Manifesto, 2.

Using digital software to contort, cut, and perturb flows of human movement, I render a cyborg masquerading as a hysteric woman.

G R O T E S Q U E

The video for *Guttur*, which plugs the mouth, draws from the acidity of bile and gas within the stomach to guide the behaviors of the character: sour, chthonic, and corrosive. The creature is shown between clips of bubbling tar and volcanic goo, melding with the environment. Shot in Virginia's Luray Caverns, the cave's sulphuric odor and salty dripping stalactites imply oral breath and salivation. The glass sculpture features a small dangling component, dually suggesting a stalactite or uvula. With exposed openings and discrete chambers, caves are like mouths and guts.

Caves, specifically grottoes, are etymologically linked to the word 'grotesque.' A style of decorative Roman paintings, discovered within grottoes in the 15th century, which featured playful merging of human, flora, and fauna, was called 'grotesque.' As a contemporary adjective, the word refers to an ugly or fantastic distortion.

For Mark Fisher, grotesque behavior is human nature. "We could go so far as to say that it is the human condition to be grotesque, since the human animal is the one that does not fit in, the freak of nature who has no place in the natural order and is capable of re-combining nature's products into hideous new forms."⁵¹

The cave creature hisses on all fours, drools into the glass sculpture, and inhabits a grotto. In the final scene, the creature grounds the cave's dirt into her mouth. This move is both an ugly, fantastic, distortion and a literal merging of

⁵¹ Mark Fisher, The Weird and The Eerie, 16.

human and environment. She acts, and is, grotesque as she fuses cave with mouth.

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In *Lac*, which plugs the nipple, I filmed myself breastfeeding a newborn goat, or kid. Implied here is that the lactating human mother has either set aside her human child in favor of feeding the goat — or is, in fact, the goat's mother, suggesting she has fornicated with an animal. She is lackadaisical with the milk: drinking it, she lets it spill from her mouth, and spits it at the camera — wasting what is the only source of nutrition for newborns. This incoherent maternal behavior relates to postpartum psychosis, once identified as hysterical.

Patty Chang's *Milk Debt* (2018, ongoing) compiles the fearful testimonies of women around the United States and Hong Kong read aloud as they breast pump. Chang recognizes lactation as a mode of empathetic porosity saying:

Biologically, breast milk is created when the body starts to produce the hormones of prolactin and oxytocin. Oxytocin is a hormone that is produced when someone is in love. The act of producing breast milk allows the woman to engage in this state of being, which some might describe as being more connected, being more open and accepting, and not thinking of oneself first.⁵²

There is a sensuality to the way the Lac mother plays with her milk, suggesting pleasure in the act of being consumed by other.

^{52 &}quot;Patty Chang: Milk Debt," Pioneer Works, https://pioneerworks.org/ exhibitions/patty-chang-milk-debt/.

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Silt and shit could have to do with each other. As fertilizer

— Ariana Reines 55

In Christianity, the "Great Chain of Being" refers to a hierarchical ranking of organisms, starting with God and descending to angels, humans, animals, plants, and finally minerals. Confusing this chain in the *Styx* video, corresponding to the sculpture which plugs the anus, I edited found footage of women bathing in mud. Relishing in the mineral, the women spin, burrow, and knead the ground into themselves.

As time passes, the figures evolve from mud bathers to one anthropomorphic being formed of mud. Edited to show no oral intake of air, the Golem can be assumed to have some amphibious way of breathing; bubbling on the surface suggests she is breathing into the dirt itself. Like action films depicting scenes of underwater suspense, the impulse to hold one's own breath is triggered by watching.

Butoh is an avant-garde style of Japanese dance created by collaborators Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno in 1959. The genre is identified by "full body paint (white or dark or gold), near or complete nudity, shaved heads, grotesque costumes, clawed hands, rolled-up eyes and mouths opened in silent screams."⁵⁴ In one routine, *Dance in the Mud* (2009), performers roll, crawl, and trudge through bubbling silt.⁵⁵

Alison Grace, a contemporary Butoh dancer, says that "Butoh dance conjures up a universe of the unconscious, the primal,

⁵³ Ariana Reines, The Cow, 35.

⁵⁴ Margarett Loke, "Butoh: Dance of Darkness," *The New York Times*, November 1, 1987, https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/01/magazine/butohdance-of-darkness.html.

⁵⁵ *Butoh, Dance in the Mud*, (YouTube, 2016), https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=eNLtvf_HQ0Q&camp;ab_channel=ZabKov.

the dark, the grotesque, mud, insects, and death."⁵⁶ The dancer's body paint and merging with environment evoke a world parallel to the *Styx* video. Both transmute horror of dirt into pleasure; there is sensuality in the mire.

DECADENCE

I fell to the ground in the dirtiest soil that could be selected by a man in a state of decadence.

— Robert Wilson ⁵⁸

Fear of mud, and filth in general, is rooted in a fear of the outside violating our bodies. What is filth until it impedes on our imagined purity? On their own, mud, dirt, and grease are raw materials: home for insects, a place to rest, a byproduct of food. Only when it threatens flesh does dirt become dirty. The trypophobe's illness is their trust in the myth of individual cleanliness. They believe in their own borders — that they do not already contain grease or shit, that they have not been encroached upon.

Christian Enzensberger addresses a fear of intermingling matter in *Smut, An Anatomy of Dirt*:

In the first place dirt is anything which threatens the proper separateness of the individual ... That is to say, in any confrontation he is afraid of succumbing to the ambiguity and mishmash, of flowing apart, losing himself, suffering injury through processes like amalgamation infiltration supplementation effluence effusion and excavation.⁵⁸

My aim is to convert a fear of filth and decline into an embrace of its sublime potential. I flip 'decadence,' which refers to pleasures so excessive as to cause decline into a decline so excessive as to cause pleasure.

⁵⁶ Alison Grace, "Interview by Francisca Sousa," Alison Grace Dance, February 10, 2015, https://alisongracedance.wordpress.com/2015/02/10/mudinsects-and-death/.

⁵⁷ Robert Wilson, Private Diary of Travels, 136

⁵⁸ Christian Enzensberger, Smut: An Anatomy of Dirt, 22-23.

Swapping phobia for philia, the person who embraces the decadence of filth is released of horror, of agency, from myths of their individual borders, and is able to embrace sensations of intermingling as a sometimes spiritual, sometimes erotic exchange between self and other. Enzensberger points out that one common case of intermingling is sex.⁵⁹

Filth is agentic. Its fantastic spores do not contaminate our human bodies, minds, or lives but instead make us aware of our eternal state of contamination. I encourage an embracing of agentic dirt and our bodies as a porous and malleable field.

In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defines the abject as a reaction to flattening of the subject into an object — human into thing.⁶⁰ I depict the human-thing as a decadent composite creature. By collapsing subject and object I encourage meditation on ways in which we can find fulfilment in being subsumed: by dirt, by parasites, by other people, through our porosity. My work is for the girl made of holes who dives into dirt.



STYX 2021, still, seven minute video

⁵⁹ Christian Enzensberger, Smut: An Anatomy of Dirt, 23.

⁶⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

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