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# Everything and Nothing

by

Andrew G. Lyman

Under the Direction of Jill Frank, MFA

## ABSTRACT

*Everything and Nothing* is an exhibition of auto-biographical narratives embodied by immersive installations of intermedia assemblages. I display compositions of my personal documents and accumulated ephemera allow their audience to inhabit my experience in a way that evokes multi-dimensional sensation. Through nuanced engagement with media, personal accounts, vision, interpretation, and memory. *Everything and Nothing* is not a self-indulgent tell-all and certainly not an act of bravery for the sake of showmanship. My relentless exposition of information and exhaustion of access to memory is necessary in order to see beyond it. My seen to its furthest extent makes absence observable. A phantom-limb suspicion catalyzed an excavation of selfhood and being, done in the hopes of generating what my observable absence articulates with its abstraction. The work defies social conservatism and appropriateness to give form to unknowable abstraction.

INDEX WORDS: Queer Ontology, Archive, Memoir, Loss, Death, Identity, Photography, Collage, Installation, Performance Art, Intimacy, Love, Polyamory, Queer History, Homosexuality, Gender, Innocence, Grindr, Strangers, Reenactment, HIV/AIDS Aftermath, Trauma, Indexicality, Prosthetic Vision, Prosthetic Memory, Adaptive Memory, Mental Illness, the Indelible Image

EVERYTHING AND NOTHING

by

Andrew G. Lyman

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2021



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2021

EVERYTHING AND NOTHING

by

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Georgia State University

August 2021

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to people who moved with me through my studies at the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design at Georgia State University as a graduate student of Photography.

Everything and Nothing is for Sarah Meng, my therapist, in profound honor of the space we share to articulate significance and revel in the wonder of being.

Everything and Nothing is for Jackson Markovic, my partner and confidant of over two years, with whom I share the world in love, devotion, and endless inspiration.

Everything and Nothing is for Olivia Grace Bolles, my best friend, whose true love and companionship transcends distance and time and makes my heart shine gold.

Everything and Nothing is for or Mattie Pieschel, my fellow graduate, in honor of the deep reverence, caring attention, and laughter that blooms in our intellectual companionship.

Everything and Nothing is for or Jill Frank, my greatest mentor and earnest champion, because of whom, this work and my career in higher education were made not only possible, but boundless and bright.

Everything and Nothing is for my parents, Alida and Steve, for giving me life and learning how to provide me with the support I ask of them that is beyond familiar conventions of parenting.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II. AN INFINITE GAZE .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>III. LOVE IN A HOTEL ROOM AT 4:30 IN THE MORNING.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>IV. I LIKE CANDY.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>V. IN ROME, DO WHAT THE STRAIGHT BOYS DO .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>VI. BOUNDARIES AND TRESPASSES .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>VII. SEPARATED BY A DOOR AJAR.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>VIII. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<i>Appendix A: Screenshots of Image Usage Consent.....</i>	<b>55</b>
<i>Appendix B: Additional Exhibition Views .....</i>	<b>61</b>
1. <i>Love In A Hotel Room at 4:30 in the Morning .....</i>	<b>61</b>
2. <i>In Spite of Fear.....</i>	<b>68</b>
3. <i>Boundaries and Trespasses .....</i>	<b>75</b>
4. <i>Garden of Ridván.....</i>	<b>77</b>
<i>Appendix C: Handwritten Short Story .....</i>	<b>81</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing - installation view, Digital Photograph. 2021.....	11
Figure 2.2 Andrew Lyman. Cody, detail view, dye-sublimation print on fabric, 80"x120". 2021. .....	12
Figure 2.3 Andrew Lyman. Cody, detail view, dye-sublimation print on fabric, 80"x120". 2021. .....	13
Figure 3.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – Skylar 4:30am at the Marriot Residence Inn Downtown Atlanta, Collage. 2021.....	14
Figure 3.9 Andrew Lyman. Skylar Laying on a Couch – detail, Pen, Ink and Wet ® Platinum ® Silicone Lubricant. 2021.....	15
Figure 3.8 Andrew Lyman. Skylar Face-down On the Couch, Pen, Ink and Wet ® Platinum ® Silicone Lubricant. 2021.....	16
Figure 3.2 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view detail – Skylar 4:30am at the Marriot Residence Inn Downtown Atlanta, Collage. 2021.....	17
Figure 3.3 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view detail – Skylar 4:30am at the Marriot Residence Inn Downtown Atlanta, Collage. 2021.....	18
Figure 5.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – I Like Candy, Digital Composites from found images, Polaroids, Pen Drawing, Dye Sublimation prints on Transparency, Metal Cock Ring, Beige Carpet. 2021. ....	25
Figure 5.2 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view detail – I Like Candy, Digital Composites from found images, Polaroids, Pen Drawing, Dye Sublimation prints on Transparency, Metal Cock Ring, Beige Carpet. 2021. ....	26

Figure 5.3 Andrew Lyman. Satellite rendering of the driveway where he waited for me in flip-flops, basketball shorts, and a tank-top, Digital Screenshot. 2021. ....	27
Figure 5.4 Andrew Lyman. Still from a Virtual tour of The Preserve Condominiums in Savannah, Georgia, Digital Screenshot. 2021. ....	27
Figure 5.5 Andrew Lyman. Note on Misprint, Pen on Inkjet Photocopy. 2021. ....	28
Figure 5.6 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – I Like Candy, Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	29
Figure 6.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – Rome, G.A., Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	30
Figure 6.2 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – Rome, G.A., Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	30
Figure 6.3 Andrew Lyman. A Day in December in Rome, G.A., 10”x15” Collage, 2021. ....	31
Figure 7.1 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange Installation View, Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	36
Figure 7.2 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange Installation View, Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	37
Figure 7.3 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange, Photographic Collage, Oranges. 2021. ....	37
Figure 8.1 Andrew Lyman. Garden of Ridván installation view detail, Collage. 2021. ....	40
Figure 8.2 Andrew Lyman. Garden of Ridván installation view detail, Collage. 2021. ....	40
Figure 8.6 Andrew Lyman. First Collage, Drugstore C-Prints. Circa 2002. ....	41
Figure 8.7 Andrew Lyman. Bahá’í Poster - detail of the Garden of Ridván, Collage. 2021. ....	44
Figure 8.8 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – back room, Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	46
Figure 8.9 Andrew Lyman. Grave Altars, day 1: Lemon Tree, Digital Photograph. 2021. ....	47

Figure 8.10 Andrew Lyman. Grave Altars, day 5: Live-Burial Zoom-Recording, Digital Photograph. 2021.....	47
Figure 8.11 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view- sun setting behind the graves, Digital Photograph. 2021.....	48
Figure 8.12 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view- sun setting behind the graves, Digital Photograph. 2021.....	48
Figure 7.4 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange, Chrome Photographic Prints, Bleach lifts. 2021.....	76
Figure 7.5 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange, Chrome Photographic Prints, Bleach lifts. 2021.....	76



## I. INTRODUCTION

I am an obsessive documentarian. My archive is prolific and ever present in my physical surroundings. My camera and sketchbook never leave my side. Where I live and work, photographs and ephemera adorn almost every surface. Interacting with my archive, I observe reality from multiple perspectives. Practicing documentation is using a camera, a pen, an audio recorder, as prosthetic senses that can be interpreted beyond the present moment. In the now, I relate to my surroundings with my human body and its limitations. Attention, desire, and state of mind narrow the complex, multidimensional phenomena at play in the ongoing moment and shape the impressions that form in the neural structure of memory. Stimuli simultaneously invigorate synapses in my brain that retain their arrangement within connections opened by tiny bolts of electric current.

The documentation that my prosthetic memory creates regenerate stimuli that my human body alone doesn't observe. When I look at a photograph I made, it portrays elements that I didn't originally have time to see or notice. Details emerge: a book of matches on a windowsill, an edge of a tattoo peeking from the edge of someone's sleeve, a wayward lock of hair wandering from its larger mass; these are all embedded in the emulsion of film, converting my initial, fleeting experience into an infinite one.

*Everything and Nothing* is an exhibition of auto-biographical narratives embodied by immersive installations of intermedia assemblages. I display compositions of my personal documents and accumulated ephemera allow their audience to inhabit my experience in a way

that evokes multi-dimensional sensation. The audience navigates the world in my footsteps and interacts with it through acts of Dérive.<sup>1</sup>

Through my written accounts, I return to the state of mind I assumed in the aftermath of the documented event. Reading my writing is a meta-engagement with the moment through immediate memory. The assemblages provide multiple access-points to penetrate the layers of time that have buried the past. While the exhibition presents a massive accumulation of information and detail, the assemblages deny the audience an omniscient, Hegelian Dialectical resolution or “greater truth.”<sup>2</sup> within the installation. In agreement with what Wojnarowicz posited in his prior quotation, I want to preserve the abstraction within the discordant textures of thought and therefore sew together a sense of doubt and uncertainty. The intent of the work is to challenge the efficacy of the pursuit an indexical truth by exposing the disparities that the contradictions between accounts display to the audience. Suspended in a state of flux, the fragmented narrative re-abstracts the unabstracted information the elements of the assemblages would articulate if viewed independent of each other.

Verbal language undermines the accurate retelling of experience because of its political foundation and the potential for it to be manipulated to skew meaning. In an allegory he uses to demonstrate the functions of interpretive storytelling, Leo Tolstoy writes, “...*if wishing to evoke fear in others... [the boy would] invent an encounter with a wolf and recount it so as to make his hearers share the feelings he experienced when he feared the world.*” Verbal language in its

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<sup>1</sup> The theory of Dérive is a strategy of virtually inhabiting two-dimensional space introduced by the French Marxist theorist, Guy Debord, in his writing, *Les Lèvres Nues* #9, November 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel articulated an interpretive method in which the contradiction between a proposition (thesis) and its antithesis is resolved at a higher level of truth. (synthesis).

design enforces the values of a hegemonic state.<sup>3</sup> Because my identity deviates from the conventions enforced by a public that historically condemns my way of life. To remedy dialectical oppression, I must surpass language with my work to legitimize my existence and portray it in a way that undoes the violence of weaponized narratives and propaganda. I must prove my humanity to be seen by others and advocate for my safety and respectful treatment by others.<sup>4</sup>

By adding complexity to the perception of my identity, I strive towards a safer way of navigating the world. Excluded by the common vocabulary, I am perceived as a threat to order with the spaces I occupy. In my participation with the oppressive state, I am forced to forfeit parts of my selfhood and practically accept a criminal identity and vulnerability to violence from radicalized groups of people in the region of the South that I reside in who believe my character does not deserve the right to live. Internalized systems of the state pervade the Queer community as well, most visibly within the personal profiles on the Queer social media app, Grindr. A contemporary iteration of men-seeking-men personal ads, Grindr is a transactional marketplace for personal encounters ruled in part by internalized homophobia and heteronormative fetishizations. A number of the events I present in my narrative installations articulate experiences of fracturing my identity to present in a way that is marketable to a masculine-favoring homonormative gaze. I use the gallery space to construct complex representations of my identity that reintegrate the shards of my ego I fractured to substantively get by in life. In

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Dwyer, in the third issue of *Journal of Thought*, describes German Philosopher, Friedrich Engels's, concept of *the state* to be, "an instrument which attempts to reconcile antagonisms within society," and a "gentile constitution [...] which was based only on the coercive power of public opinion."

<sup>4</sup> Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience*, states, "Given the iconic visual nature of traumatic memories, creating pictures may represent the most effective initial approach to indelible images. The completed narrative must include a full and vivid description of traumatic imagery."

Everything and Nothing, I assemble a Queer ontology that envisions futurity in open self-representation.

Everything and Nothing is an invitation into a realm of intimate uncertainty where I offer an audience permission to observe the complexities in my humanity. The work probes my Queer ontology born of the first generation raised on the internet and ruled by verbal and media-based communication. A newfound pseudo-acceptance of queerness in the eyes of faceless capitalist monoliths that colonize cyberspace compounds the ostracization of those who journey outside of American Idealism. The concept of Queerness<sup>5</sup> as a rejection of definition is obscured by a façade of Queerness that is a constructed to serve American capitalism.

My unwavering disclosure of personal narrative is commonly interpreted as assuming vulnerability, when in my experience, in the act sharing of my history, I make myself less vulnerable. I allow others to understand the depths of my experience in a way that resonates with universal human nature. It is not bravery. It is not vulnerability. It is a proclamation of the power in my existence. My intentions align with the motivations of Andrea Dworkin as described by Olivia Laing in *Everybody: a Book about Freedom*.<sup>6</sup> By publicly disclosing and disseminating the accounts of my experiences in unwavering, intimate detail makes me the repository for thousands of people whose stories are written out of history and the public discourse. I share all

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<sup>5</sup> In his article, Queer Photography, in Aperture, Issue 218, Vince Aletti describes the term, Queer; “[Queer] doesn’t have a look, a size, a sex. Queer resists boundaries and refuses to be narrowly defined.”

<sup>6</sup> Olivia Laing, writes, “[her struggles with the patriarchy were] shared and culturally ordained. It was the central revelation of her life that violence against women is political and therefore capable of being communally resisted and overturned. She wanted to be safe but she was also driven by a need to testify. To haul the ruined body into the light. It was as if she had come across evidence of a crime that was somehow simultaneously everywhere and completely invisible.”

of myself to the audience in the hopes of forming a practice of subverting an oppressive internal and external discourse.

## II. AN INFINITE GAZE

The quotidian concept of photography, in its ubiquitous form, boasts the ability to capture the moment and preserve memory. However, what I found embedded in my photographs as I combed through my archive during my research, was completely different than an experience of Déjà-vu. While the photographs did trigger my memories of the scenario in which they were made to flash momentarily in my mind's eye, they did more than perpetuate familiar sensations. It was like watching a familiar movie on pause. I knew what happened before and after, but started to notice more details that the camera recorded and my vision did not.

The piece most visible to the viewer when they enter *Everything and Nothing* is a wall-size enlargement of an photograph I made of a past lover laying in his bed and gazing into my lens. The light shimmering in the pores on his skin, reflections of his eyelashes in the irises of his eye, flecks of skin peeling from his healed acne and casting their shadowed silhouettes onto an illumined peach fuzz at the edge his cheek, were just a few of the details that I encountered for the first time in my photograph of him. An expanse of intricate formations of dye lay embedded in the photographic emulsion that spans eight inches by ten inches on a piece of negative sheet film. The patterns are remnants of the light that radiated from his skin that permeated the surface of the emulsion causing particles of dye to harden and become visible during chemical development. The detail of their intricate suspension far-surpassed the images I could conjure

from the nebulous memory I have of him in that moment. Vague, symphonic recollections of lived sensations punctuated the route my eyes traveled within the implied dimensions of the rendered image. Instead of gliding through a perfect reenactment of my lived moment behind the camera, asking my lover to look in a certain direction, I found myself there in his room again, lying next to him in bed and looking into his eyes for as long as I wanted. He presents himself to me infinitely with an eternal remnant of his presence. I guess a picture really does last longer.

I printed the photograph of my past lover, *Cody*, which shares his name, on a densely woven synthetic fabric that shimmers when light hits its threads from a forty-five degree angle. The matrix of pixels rendered by the printer in ink conflates the shadows of the fabric with the shadows of skin, while the sheen of the fabric imitates a sensation of skin that sublimates the printed image's rendering of highlights. The viewer is immersed in a multisensory projection of *Cody's* gaze. As the viewer approaches *Cody*, the special relationship between the viewer's body and the rendered figure shifts dramatically, which puts the viewer's perception of their body in a state of flux. The viewer experiences *Cody* in a state of virtual reality without a headset. While the image is static on the textile that carries it, its form fluctuates in the viewer's perception as they move.

Photography and all forms of documentation that subject abstraction to processes of ecstatic metastasis via translation produce alternate simulacra that sublimate in form when they are conceived within the consciousness of their audience. I diverge from Baudrillard's staunch position on the absence of meaning in the content of communication<sup>7</sup>, as I propose that the

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<sup>7</sup> Boudrillard believes

presentation of communicative media does indeed communicate something other than its own form. I believe that especially now during an age of doubt and uncertainty, the collective awareness of the tendency to sensationalize communicative media allows one to avoid a fraught search for truth and observe happenings in their full complexity. There is power in a shared sense of doubt from similar proximity. By inviting my audience into an approximation of my experience through mediated interactions with my archive, I lay a foundational perspective for which to restructure a new collective ontology. Together, we create systems of signification in favor abstraction and possibility. When does the act of signification end? And is our perception itself not inherently a form of lossy, translational communication? It is this contradiction that creates the *Everything and Nothing* paradox.



*Figure 2.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing - installation view, Digital Photograph. 2021.*

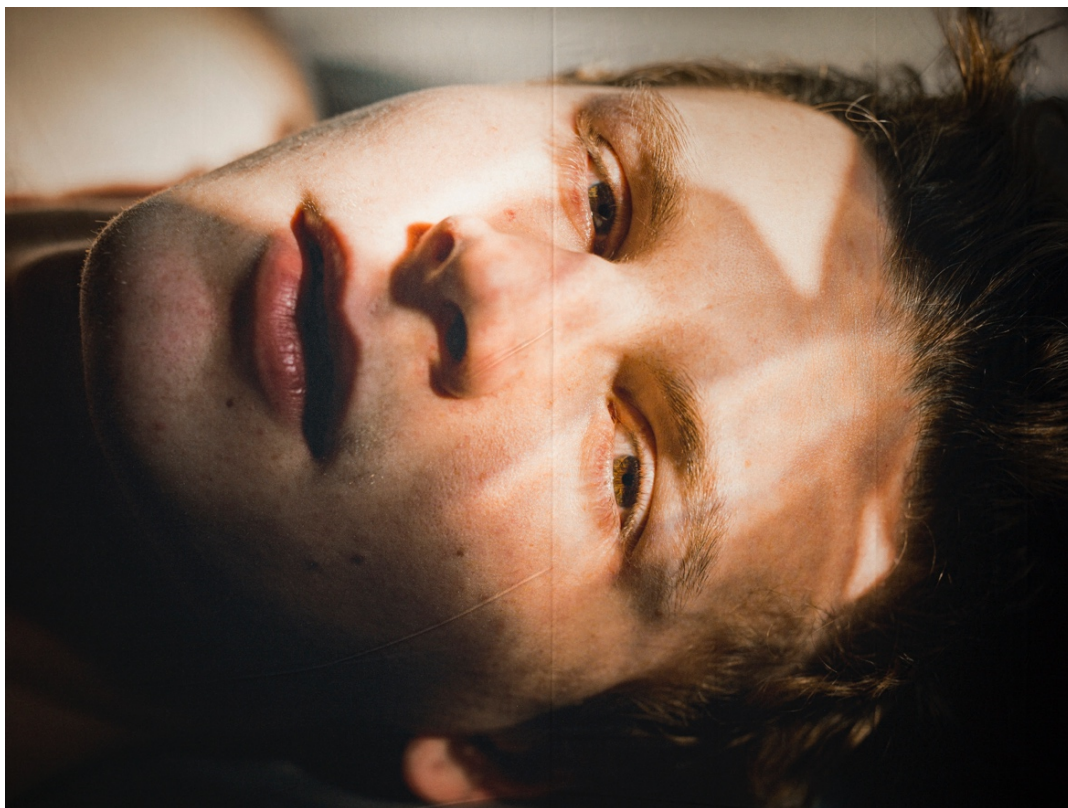


Figure 2.2 Andrew Lyman. *Cody*, detail view, dye-sublimation print on fabric, 80"x120".  
2021.





*Figure 2.3 Andrew Lyman. Cody, detail view, dye-sublimation print on fabric, 80"x120".  
2021.*

### III.LOVE IN A HOTEL ROOM AT 4:30 IN THE MORNING



*Figure 3.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – Skylar 4:30am at the Marriot Residence Inn Downtown Atlanta, Collage. 2021.*





*Figure 3.2 Andrew Lyman. Skylar Laying on a Couch – detail, Pen, Ink and Wet® Platinum® Silicone Lubricant. 2021.*



*Figure 3.3 Andrew Lyman. Skylar Face-down On the Couch, Pen, Ink and Wet® Platinum® Silicone Lubricant. 2021.*



*Figure 3.4 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view detail – Skylar 4:30am at the Marriot Residence Inn Downtown Atlanta, Collage. 2021.*





Figure 3.5 Andrew Lyman. *Everything and Nothing* installation view detail – *Skylar* 4:30am at the Marriot Residence Inn Downtown Atlanta, Collage. 2021.

I titled the earliest assemblage I made in this body of work with the name of a boy from a Grindr-hookup that the piece recalls. *Skylar*, is an arranged collection of photographs from our encounter that I made with a 35mm film camera, prints of digital screenshots I made of photographs and messages Skylar sent to me on Grindr<sup>8</sup>, pen and ink drawings on transparent vellum paper, a letter with photographs I sent to Skylar in jail

<sup>8</sup> Grindr is world's largest geosocial app for LGBTQIA(Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) dating and cruising. It is a ubiquitous means for the LGBTQ community to find others are within relative geographical distance.

that was denied and sent back to me, and narrative accounts of the hookup written afterwards with pen on transparency paper. The collection of materials articulates a speculative perspective of the event in the arrangement of the hookup on the chat thread between he and I on Grindr, a present perspective in the photographs made during the event, and a post-perspective in the written accounts, prison letter, drawings, and screenshots of a chat on Facebook. Each account alludes to the event in a different way. The disparities between the information they carry foster uncertainty regarding a comprehensive and omniscient perspective of the happening, which embeds doubt in each element of the assemblage. The doubt and uncertainty within the narrative contradictions calls to the fore, a phenomenon that is present throughout *Everything and Nothing*. Events in which physical and virtual identities converge, while simultaneous cognitive awareness reach a heightened pitch of dissonance. *Skylar* is an arrangement of objects that portray the complexity within the process of hooking up.

Grindr creates a virtual space integrated with the physical landscape for people who subvert heteronormativity in their identity to navigate heteronormative space with discretion for safety in their aesthetic presentation of gender and sexuality, profile on Grindr follows them based on the GPS location of their phone. A Grindr profile displays chosen aspects of a person's identity that provide a means of connection to others according to Gender Identity, physical appearance, Sexual Identity, and HIV infection status. While advocating for the safety of people with a subversive lifestyle within an oppressive physical landscape, it perpetuates the separation between physical and mental

awareness of self. Those who possess an omnipresence when they traverse space create a schism between physical and virtual realities.

When viewers walk beyond *Cody*, they enter the back section of the exhibition space through a five-foot gap between perpendicular walls. The narrow passageway brings viewers about four feet away from the wall-mounted assemblage of drawings, photographs and ephemera, *Skylar*, seen in its entirety in *figure 3.1*. The audience waxes and wanes between awareness of physical space and virtual space as their focus shifts from the empathizing with gestural mark-making in large, detailed pen and ink drawings (*figures 3.8 - 3.9*) to interpreting verbally communicative documents like written text and chat conversations, and then returning to an awareness of their body's alignment within the projected space the photograph conjures. (*figures 3.2 - 3.3*)

At the furthest most point the viewer steps back from the mural sized print, the proportions of the print are the same as the smaller prints from three feet away. The viewer acquires several indexical and vivid moments that portray the event, that in synthesis create a perplexing, unsolvable question of the happening and the fallible interpretations of the photographer, writer, draftsman, sender, denier, sexual participant, and audience. Each element comes together to form a script for the interpretive and speculative reenactment of the event to which they allude. In the process of speculation, the viewer uses sensory memory to conjure the approximation of what could have happened.



Because the role of memory is a constant between my experience and the viewer, I utilized this to unify our shared experience. Moments in the experience of the Everything and Nothing recall familiar and ubiquitous phenomena through both materiality, which I will cover in section 2. In Spite of Fear, and colloquial allusions that apply to the immediate audience of Everything and Nothing.

The silhouette of the W Hotel in downtown Atlanta glows in the dark sky beyond the hotel window in the mural photograph in FIGURE. The purple W Hotel building top is a common icon to Atlanta residents and geographically stood a third of a mile behind its photographic counterpart in the gallery. As the viewer looked up at the mural print, their gaze aligned with the actual building. This synchronicity gives the viewer a projective, macroscopic empathy for my experience in consideration of geo-political statehood and relative distance to the historical site. Implied geographically specific spatial projections within the gallery come into play again in Section 10: After Death.

In the collage, I included a tracing of the conversation I had with Skylar on Facebook 3 years after our encounter. I learned that he had no recollection of what happened between us and realized that the only corroboration of my experience came from the photographs I made of him and the screenshots of our correspondence on Grindr. The details of my account could neither be fully denied or corroborated. I had the

power to lie and embellish details. To read my account as truthful, the audience must exercise trust for my honesty in its retelling and the faithfulness of my memory and state of mind. By acknowledging the fact that I am the only one who can retell the events of that night, I invite distrust and foster a realm of uncertainty that I believe should be maintained in the reading of all narratives. The intent of my work is not to claim facticity or create infallible evidence. Its intent is to openly perform acts of signification of my experience.

Access by assuming another identity. A desirable identity. My profile. Exchange, transactional fantasy. The creation of a scene. In this assemblage the audience can observe both the scene, and the details beyond it that compromise its integrity. By reintegration the disassociated states awareness, I ask the viewer to confront the traumatic collisions my adaptive brain has learned to sequester.

#### **IV. I LIKE CANDY**

*I Like Candy* brings emphasis to the points of conflict in my experience with a stranger who held played the archetype of an older man in my psyche. Perversions of childhood and adulthood converged in our shared idiosyncrasies. This section and the work it will describe are titled with a poem derived from the preemptive small talk before our brief, intimate encounter. In response to my inquiry about an empty a package of sour gummy-worms on his carpeted floor, he smirked and through gritted, stained teeth, he growled, "I like Candy."

*I like Candy*, figure blah, is a dioramic recreation of the moment when I heard him utter those words. The only direct record I have of our interaction that day was a screen shot from his profile of an anonymous picture he made of himself in shadow standing in front of a bright window covered by blinds. Upon the discovery of this screen shot in my archive, I was stricken by my inability to remember what his face looked like. I used the diorama as a way to re-enter that moment in situ. Small details stuck with me from that experience. I remembered that he lived across the street from the Tanger Outlets in Savannah, GA. To supplant my lack of documentation, I used the information I did remember to gather images from google earth and screenshots from a virtual tour platform hosted on the website of his housing community. I traversed the interactive map on google earth to identify the layout of the place he said he shared with his mom. I found the room on their website and made a composite of it in photoshop using textures I sampled and transformed surface textures from the virtual reality walkthrough to remake his bedroom. I bought a roll of beige shag carpet that felt like the one he left his candy wrapper on and affixed it to an inkjet print of the digital composite.

In the scene we played out, our implicit character roles subverted each other and overlapped. The viewer is placed in a climactic moment of horror, where they face the narrative archetype of a pedophilic boogeyman who offers children candy from a van by their own volition. Stepping foot into the room of a large man silhouetted by the closed blinds of a window posing to display an erotic dominance for a camera phone, the viewer confronts both an encounter these images portend, and the encounter they evidence to have happened.

Without knowing who likes candy until close inspection of the writing adhered to a sweeping beige carpet placed to look as if it is immersing from the photograph, they apply the titular dialogue to the voice of both characters. “I like candy,” spoken by the narrator implies that willingness of the author to subject themselves to the ominous erotic encounter and metaphorically step into the predator’s van. “I like candy,” spoken by the silhouetted older man, perverts the body and expectations of maturity. A child in a man’s heavily endowed body grits his yellowing teeth to growl an exclamation of his childish obsession with sugar. A reckless, irresponsible hunger for candy in the eyes of a man past the age of 40 sparks fear to his submissive counterpart, who stands trapped in front of him, coming to terms with the subsequent events rot with danger and the threat of pain, and infection.

I saw in him an uncanny worst-case scenario of myself. Is this my future? Skipping class to get fucked by a man twice my age who wears a cock ring and buys his food from the gas station across the street from his housing complex? Am I doomed for beige carpets and white walls, sheets stained with lubricant and the lining of my colon in the dull light coming from behind the blinds. Naked and helpless, I pretended like I enjoyed to it so it would end sooner. I pretended that he wasn’t pushing himself so far into me that it hurt. I signed up for this. I chose to be here. And this is what I get. My innocence, my aspirations, were abused by choice. I didn’t know to deny my consent. I was stoned, and I wanted to be loved, intimate with someone, so made myself into the cum rag that he wanted. I was his candy. I enabled him to writhe with violent pleasure.

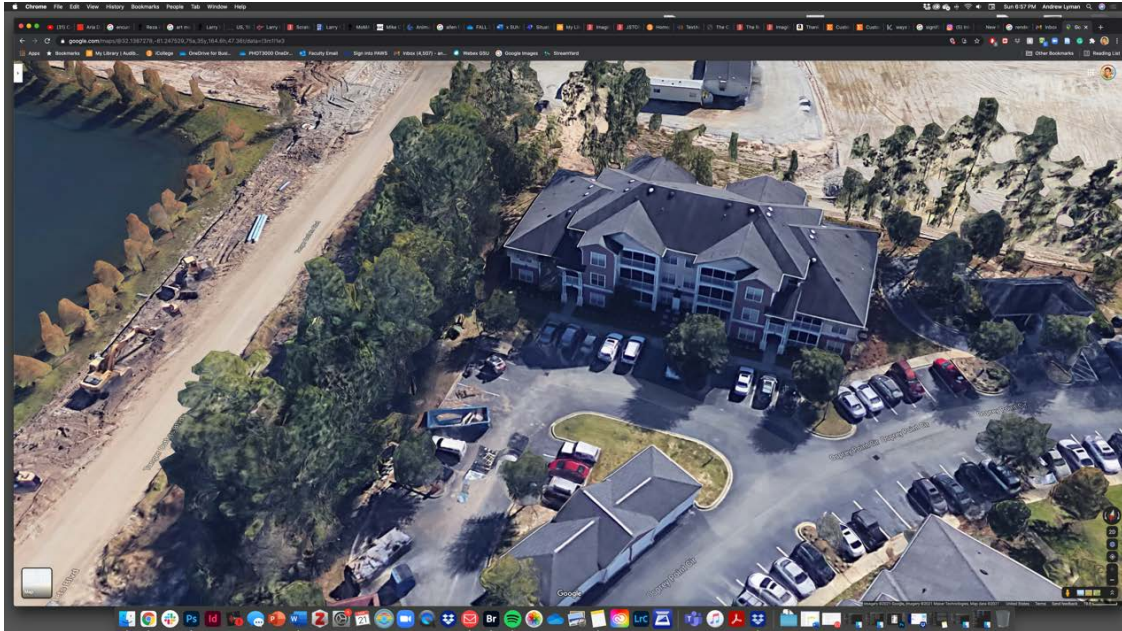


*Figure 5.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – I Like Candy, Digital Composites from found images, Polaroids, Pen Drawing, Dye Sublimation prints on Transparency, Metal Cock Ring, Beige Carpet. 2021.*

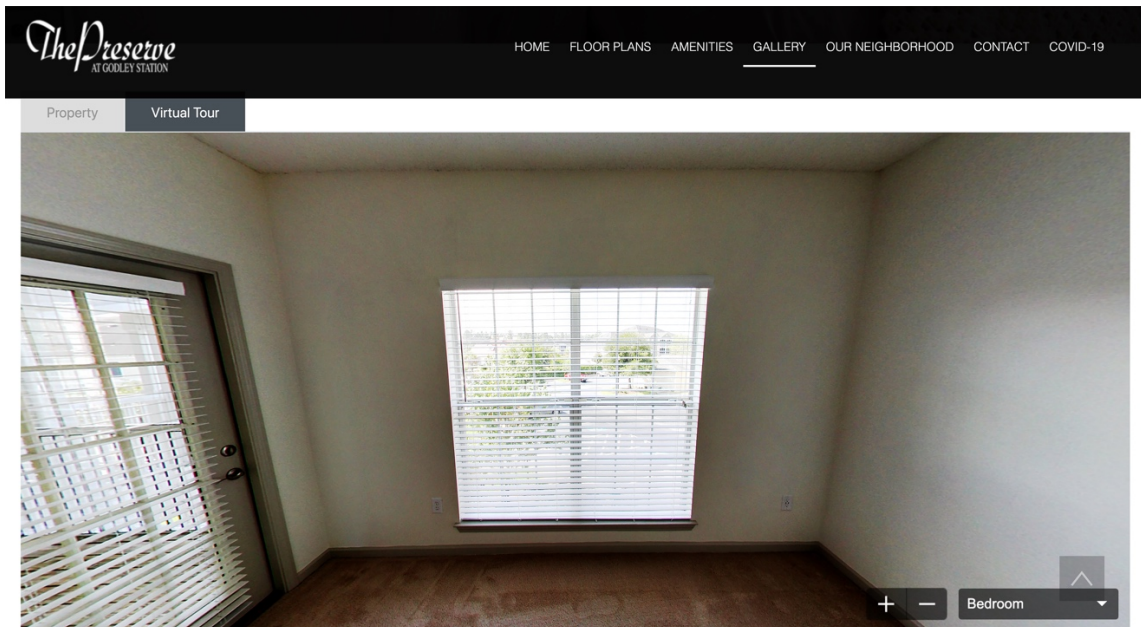


*Figure 5.2 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view detail – I Like Candy, Digital Composites from found images, Polaroids, Pen Drawing, Dye Sublimation prints on Transparency, Metal Cock Ring, Beige Carpet. 2021.*





*Figure 5.3 Andrew Lyman. Satellite rendering of the driveway where he waited for me in flip-flops, basketball shorts, and a tank-top, Digital Screenshot. 2021.*



*Figure 5.4 Andrew Lyman. Still from a Virtual tour of The Preserve Condominiums in Savannah, Georgia, Digital Screenshot. 2021.*



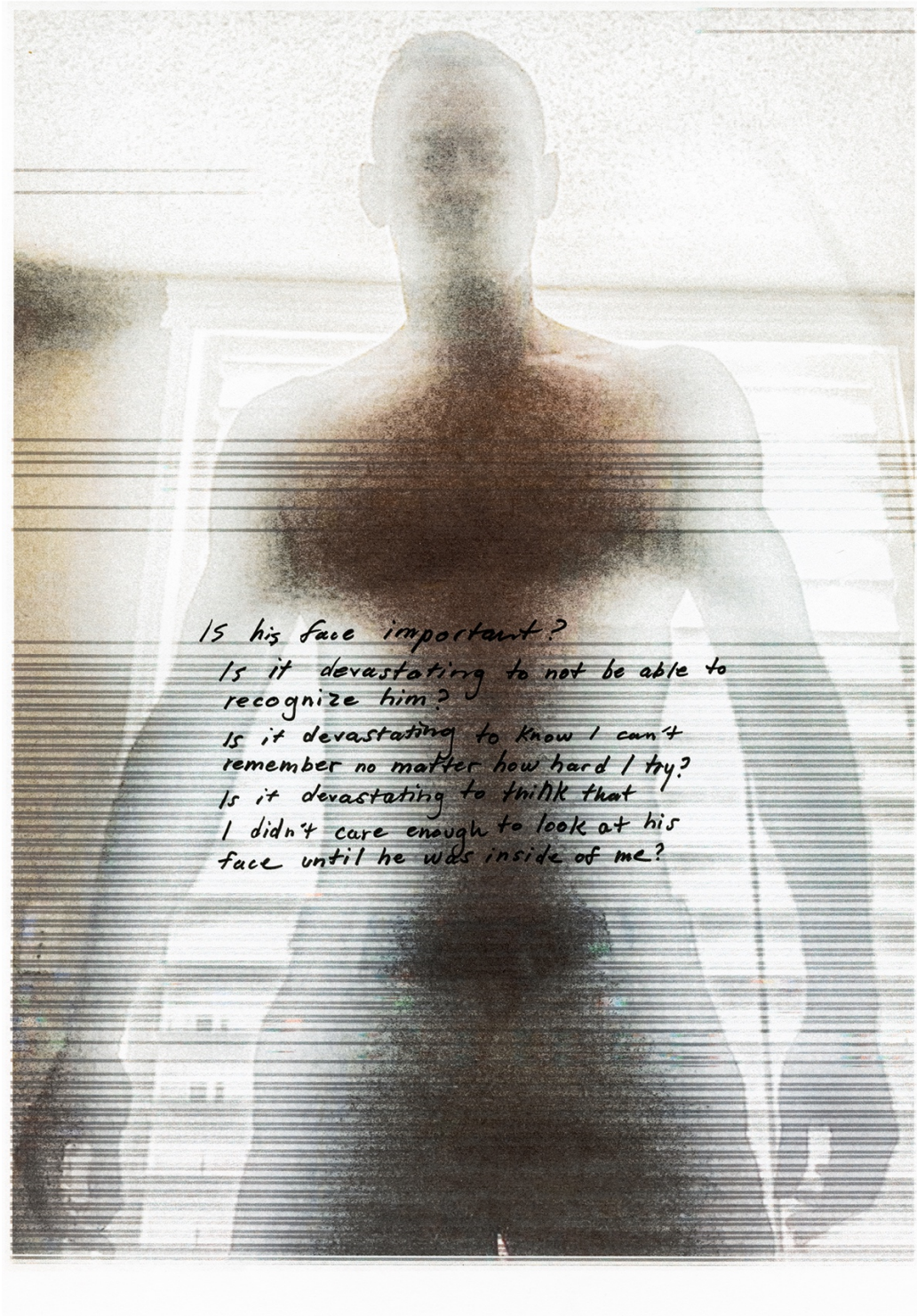


Figure 5.5 Andrew Lyman. *Note on Misprint, Pen on Inkjet Photocopy*. 2021.





*Figure 5.6 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – I Like Candy, Digital Photograph. 2021.*

**V. IN ROME, DO WHAT THE STRAIGHT BOYS DO**



*Figure 6.1 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – Rome, G.A., Digital Photograph. 2021.*



*Figure 6.2 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – Rome, G.A., Digital Photograph. 2021.*



*Figure 6.3 Andrew Lyman. A Day in December in Rome, G.A., 10"x15" Collage, 2021.*

What began as a small collage (figure 6.3) I made with photographs of a day I spent with a boy in Rome, Georgia, became a repetitive practice of recollection. I wanted to narrate the events of that day, but when I wrote them down on paper and compared it to the photographs from that day for the first time, I realized that the two accounts contradicted each other. I omitted important details and mixed up the sequence of events surrounding a dissociative traumatic occurrence we experienced amidst the oppressive public order of the space we were in. To rectify my recollection and defragment my knowledge of the experience, I cross examined every document I had of that day with my writings and rewritings of the events. In every version of four dialogical reenactments that I hand wrote, I unearthed a new detail in my recollection that dramatically shifted my understanding the dynamics of the happening. My full hand-written account can be found in Appendix C.

*Rome, G.A.* (figure 6.1 - 6.2) is an assemblage of collaged photographs that accompanies a stack of my handwritten iterations of the narrative on a pedestal that were available for viewers to pick up and read. With the direction of each diverging narrative, viewers trace a new path within the non-linear structure of the photographic collage. The photographs propel each narrative and make them more vivid, which becomes problematic when the viewer reads through each account and inherits my challenge of finding certainty in the synergy of dialectical memory and photographic evidence.

The events in *Rome, G.A.* revolve around a moment of heightened suspense when my companion and I had to evade a threat of violence targeted towards our public representation of queerness. Detailed specifically in Appendix C, our methods of evasion involved forms of dissociation that catered to the public social contract of the conservative political state that interceded upon the safe space we created between the two of us to openly express our queer identities. The work introduces the role of the state in the interpretation of representation, and the malleability of narrative that provides safety while simultaneously propelling maladaptive pathological tendencies in the recollection and encoding of memory.

According to common protocol, the first action taken after experiencing a traumatic event is to alert an authority figure. The first question the figure will ask the person who claims their trauma is, "What happened?" This immediate engagement in the narration of the event amid panic and shock will become a concrete foundation for a trauma narrative that must withstand affray in which the demands of the justice system have the upper hand.

Public dispute instigates the conflation of personal narrative and legal testimony. The goal of testimony is to favor aspects of the narrative that effectively establish a victim and perpetrator. The testifier must endure repeated reenactments of their testimony, which shapes their neural pathology. A narrative that relies on hyperbole and elaboration of the worst aspects of trauma to determine a binary relationship between the guilty and innocent parties reinforces mal-adaptive behavior.

The defendant is required to retell their account of the traumatic event with emphasis on the most disturbing details. The outcome of the court case will often highly affect the safety of all parties. The threat to safety in a traumatic event is prolonged through the constant retelling of a tragic narrative, in and outside the courtroom. Once released, a narrative no longer belongs solely to the sufferer of trauma. This process is commonplace and widely unquestioned. It is deeply embedded within the implicit social contract between those who depend on the structure of society and its government. The illusory ability to choose binds society to the politics of its government and systemizes subservience to its regimes. This makes claiming one's own narrative a radical act. Reshaping the brain involves a rejection of the structures of testimony that the law dictates.

Regarding legal testimony, Leigh Gilmore describes truth's lack of transference between mediums and its firm situation within testimony when she writes, "[...] not all documents in a testimonial network have the same truth-value of facticity. They are not interchangeable across

contexts. Nor can literary accounts supplant documentary records. What is needed is a more acute sense of how trauma speaks.”<sup>9</sup>

In response to this statement’s naming an inability for two mediums to convey the same truth, which I firmly agree with, I want to call to attention some of the ways that two coeval contexts, or mediums, when practiced at the same time, can invigorate memory in their intersections of stimuli. Synergy between photography, writing, and memory surpasses the ability of the mind alone to form a comprehensive account of past events.

“Testimony possesses vitality and agency and may find new life even in bleak circumstances, but judgment moves, too. It sticks to testimony and weighs it down. Judgment has a bodily connotation of viscosity and is couched in a rhetoric of animate gunk: reputations are tarnished or smeared, critics sling mud and throw dirt, shit hits the fan. Scholars working to theorize the norms through which identities are produced in relation to bias and stigma.”<sup>10</sup>

An enduring example of Southern attitudes towards homosexuality that are still alive and well in certain pockets of the South is *Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida; a Report of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee*.<sup>11</sup> In its text, the report provided an amount of detail that easily surpassed any previous knowledge of the homosexual lifestyle. Its comprehensive

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<sup>9</sup> Quotation by Sarah Ahmed in Gilmore, Leigh. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Gilmore, Leigh. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> a pamphlet distributed throughout Florida in the 1960’s that provided the public with a thorough, unscrupulous typology of the homosexual lifestyle.

appropriation of colloquial terminology erected scaffolding onto the infrastructure of the state to promote condemnation.

The interwovenness of coercive public opinion and statehood, which is epitomized in *Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida*, rings loudly in the echo chamber where Queerness is actively and adamantly erased to this day. With the contemporary iterations of the commodified Queer identity in modern discourse and public opinion, there is now, instead of an absence, an excess of noise that boasts the characteristics of progressiveness and drowns out the essence of articulating an existence that lies outside of the state.

In *Everything and Nothing*, and my practice of art, I exhaustively detail the intricacies of my experience to create a comprehensive record that simultaneously gives light to and emboldens my subjective interpretations of life's sensations and puts into question the act of determining it as right or wrong from the perspective of societal order.

“Through the notion of trauma, I will argue, we can understand that a re- thinking of reference is not aimed at eliminating history, but at resituating it in our understanding.”<sup>12</sup>

## VI. BOUNDARIES AND TRESPASSES

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<sup>12</sup> Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.



*Figure 7.1 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange Installation View, Digital Photograph. 2021.*





*Figure 7.2 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange Installation View, Digital Photograph. 2021.*



*Figure 7.3 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange, Photographic Collage, Oranges. 2021.*

I bought drugstore-darkroom prints of the photographs I made of him on the night we met up. Allusions to his reality were imbedded within their surface. I used bleach to dissociate the form of his body from indexical fact. The dual halves of each photograph, one of which is in reverse, deny each other's reliability. The original photograph's semblance to reality is obliterated as it is split into two fictions, which makes fraught, the inherent search for grounding context while observing an image. This work presents an inability to find order in the records of the event it describes. I enlarged photographs of the architectural structures that surrounded his apartment building onto mural-size, 40x60" paper in verbatim to their original form and situated them around the montage. The close proximity of the mural size prints to fact dramatizes the blaring chaos and abrasive uncertainty within the composition of collaged images.

I made this piece to observe the narrative of the event it resembles in a way that would evoke for the viewer and myself, a state of disorientation in the intersection of sensations with varying degrees of fixedness. Real oranges rested on the edge of the black frame that housed the fragmented depictions of intimacy while the larger objective landscape photographs curve along the corner of the room to create an immersive panorama that viewers could align themselves within. Gallery lights shone through chromatic filters of reds and oranges that matched the tones of light sources within the photographs. A lustrous photograph of a piano-shaped, red, neon sign in the top right of installation glimmered under a bright red spotlight that bathed the gallery walls and viewers in its vibrant glow.

I used bleach to lift the layers of pigment that coated the face of the prints. The bleach disintegrates the emulsion of the paper which then becomes a liquid suspension of pigment. The process is incredibly time sensitive. Each layer of pigment remains intact for about three seconds until its tension breaks, and it begins to float. Without removing the bleach mixture, the emulsion would completely melt away and leave behind a blank, white sheet of plastic.

I placed I sheet of transparency paper on which I wrote a poem on top of the montage of bleached prints and lifts (figure 7.4). I describe the man's voice to have the nature of, "a bubble scraping against gravel in the moment before it melts around the globe of air that escapes the spectral, spit-like soap." I tied moments together by a sensation they shared of a swelling, suffocating tension that bursts through a membrane and leaves a sticky residue. Remnants of the images evidenced the process in their chemical burns and dried pools of pigment that attracted dust particles. I channeled waves of violent remorse into a cathartic process that made the photographs, which retained the intricacies of my memory of him, vulnerable to chemical destruction.

## **VII. SEPARATED BY A DOOR AJAR**



Figure 8.1 Andrew Lyman. *Garden of Ridván* installation view detail, Collage. 2021.



Figure 8.2 Andrew Lyman. *Garden of Ridván* installation view detail, Collage. 2021.





*Figure 8.3 Andrew Lyman. First Collage, Drugstore C-Prints. Circa 2002.*

Figure 8.1 illustrates a top view of *Garden of Ridván*, which I made using the same wooden box that housed the wall collages, but acts now as a pseudo-garden box as it rests on two metal saw horses as shown in figure 8.2.

I am a first-generation Luxembourgish-American on my mom's side and the first generation of permanent residents in the United States on my dad's side. My parents shared an experience of belonging to nowhere. Lead by my Boma's neurotic impulses and psychotic episodes, my mom lived in Luxembourg, Chicago, Montego Bay, and Miami. Flown by

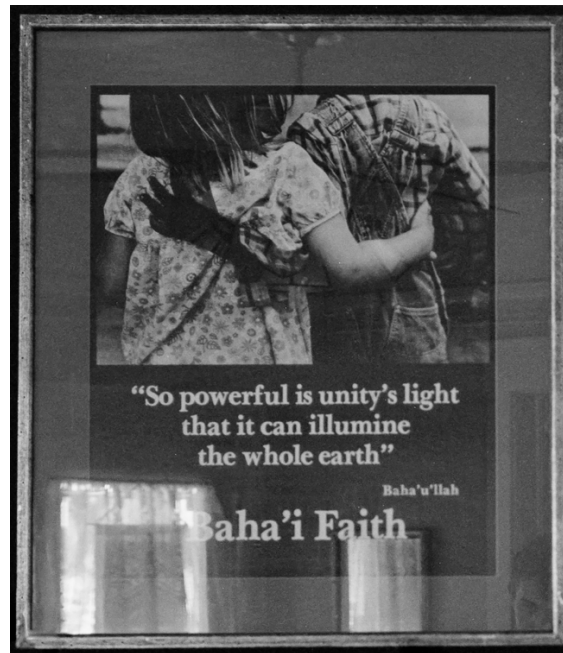
grandfather's career as a pilot in the Air Force, my dad lived on army bases in Montgomery, Japan, Australia, and eventually Florida where my grandfather died of cancer when my dad was 20. Our family home was the first place they'd lived for more than 6 years and where we formed a new culture based on an amalgamation of cross-cultural ideologies.

We had family ritual each time my dad came back with paper envelopes of photographs from the 1-hour photo lab at the Eckerd's drug store his firm designed. We'd all sit at the dinner table and pass around 4x6 prints and recount the events my dad documented. In those moments, we created a collaborative narrative that defined our family identity. It was a practice of articulating our values and significance of our experience of life. Storytelling shaped my understanding of how I am situated within the greater context of humanity.

I was born in 1993 in Atlanta, during the genesis of the internet and the massive restructuring of the social community. I invented my way of life from a fragmented lineage. I was in a void. An age of restructuring. I grew up observing the world behind my mother's legs. I was shy, attached, and loving. I am my mom and dad's son that came 9 years after my middle sister and 11 years after my oldest sister. I had to invent my own conventions of family on a fundamental level. I didn't have access during my upbringing to records of people whose identity and predispositions resemble mine. My sense of self was composed of fragments removed from exclusionary and problematic contexts. I assembled an identity with google searches of gay slurs that were shouted at me which led to gay porn and penis enlargement pop-up advertisements. I learned about the nature of queerness from laws and regulations prohibiting it, which conflated queerness with criminal perversion.

In 2018, I went to the community library in the neighborhood where I grew up and looked for books on queer art. Not one book on Andy Warhol mentioned studio 54 or any of his polaroids which loudly featured and celebrated gay sex. The only work I found was an illustration of a man embracing his wife while he reached behind his back to the groin of a boy with angel wings and a halo. And only upon writing this did I realize that the illustration wasn't about me, a gay angel, but a married man who preyed on innocent boys. I knew love and happiness had to be possible for me. I made it exist for myself in spaces that could safely contain my imagination. This drove an obsession to use my camera to find and create the life I wanted. I used the camera and my work to meet others like me, build an archive of our world, and make it visible to those looking for it.

They hide behind interpretations of archaic, florid religious texts. A reader of religious text projects their prior knowledge and desired beliefs onto the words. This is true of the way my grandparents practiced their beliefs the Bahà'i faith, which deeply informed my intersectional upbringing. In "The Garden of Ridván" (pronounced riz-ván) I include a cutout image of a poster that hung over the mantle in my grandparents' living room (figure 8.7) On it was a photograph of two children from behind with their arms around each other; the one on the left in a dress with fair skin and the one on the right in a flannel with overalls and dark skin. In bold white letters on a black background, it read "The power of unity's light will illumine the earth. - Bahá'u'lláh" I based my understanding of my grandparents on this poster.



*Figure 8.4 Andrew Lyman. Bahá'í Poster - detail of the Garden of Ridván, Collage. 2021.*

I mined my hard drive and the bins in our laundry room to collect every photograph I ever made of my grandparents' garden. Their garden fed me grapefruits, kumquats, navel oranges, lemons, persimmons, grapes, lettuce, tomatoes, and green beans. It was a deeply significant place to my family. The half-hour we'd spend in the garden each trip was my utopia.

When I was in college getting my undergraduate degree, I lived with my grandparents in their attic. Two times during my coming of age, in the dark of night, I would sneak boys past my grandmother's cracked door that revealed a sliver of her sleeping body in a lazy boy chair aglow with blue light from her television on the way the stairs to my room in the attic. In those moments, he and I both were strangers to their house. In the second-floor landing, my worlds pressed against each other, separated by a thin and fragile membrane. A screech of a floorboard



could have caused a combustion that would result in the death of my identity as a grandson and a *good boy*. I confronted this tension in “The Garden of Ridván” by collaging photographs from my encounters with boys in my room beside my photographs of my grandparents in the rest of the house.

In Bahá'í teachings, the garden of Ridván is a field of Roses where the prophet, Baha'u'llah, found refuge after being banished by the Muslim faith for his progressive ideas of religion based on innovation and science. Surrounded by roses, he formed the Bahá'í faith. I placed a photographic cutout of the sign on the edge of the collage to create an interpretation of enlightenment that included my sexual awakening. I placed a brightly lit pedestal for the audience to stand on and look down on the collage which laid horizontally on two cheap metal sawhorses. They step into the role of a prophet facing ideological contradictions that present themselves in the proximity of wrinkled flesh and erect genitalia obscured by banana leaves.

A rigid traumatic narrative confines the mind of the individual who suffers in trauma's aftermath through narrow ideations of the self. The initial coaxed and incomplete iteration of one's story is ever-present. The public opinion on a person's personal account dictates ways in which they navigate society. Like an intrusive thought, the public calls remnants of trauma to the mind's fore.



*Figure 8.5 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view – back room, Digital Photograph. 2021.*



Figure 8.6 Andrew Lyman. *Grave Altars, day 1: Lemon Tree, Digital Photograph. 2021.*



Figure 8.7 Andrew Lyman. *Grave Altars, day 5: Live-Burial Zoom-Recording, Digital Photograph. 2021.*





*Figure 8.8 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view- sun setting behind the graves, Digital Photograph. 2021.*



*Figure 8.9 Andrew Lyman. Everything and Nothing installation view- sun setting behind the graves, Digital Photograph. 2021.*

The only way that I've visited my deceased family's graves is through cell phone photographs. In the aftermath of the death of my Boma<sup>13</sup> in 2020, Bopa<sup>14</sup> in 2017, and Tata<sup>15</sup> in 2012, whose graves I have never been able to visit, I materialized their presence in the context of my assemblages by printing picture messages sent to me of their head stones sent from other family members or the funeral company. I printed them life size, based on the size of the roses placed on their headstones. I placed them on the ground to imitate where I thought they might lay based on the geometrical perspective, so that the audience and I could kneel next to them and pretend they were real.

Introduced in Section 1: Love in a Hotel Room at 4:30 in the Morning, implied spatial relationships between the pieces in the exhibition reveal themselves when the viewer stands on the lit pedestal placed on the floor in the middle of the gallery's furthestmost wall (figure 8.8). I arranged the exhibition based on the geographical location of the gallery and the traditional burial methods of Bahá'í Faith.<sup>16</sup> I angled the prints of the head stones to face the East corner of the gallery towards the rising sun, which I supplanted with an UV gardening lamp. The lamp pointed at the box of dirt underneath Bopa's grave where I planted a young lemon tree that sprouted from one of my Bopa's lemons from his tree. I visited the graves every day of the exhibition to water the lemon tree, and leave something new there, as seen in figure 8.10 where I buried an iPad surrounded by fresh roses from my garden playing a video recording on loop of my Boma's burial held on zoom.

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<sup>13</sup> The Luxembourgish word for "Grandmother"

<sup>14</sup> The Luxembourgish word for "Grandfather"

<sup>15</sup> The Luxembourgish word for "Auntie"

<sup>16</sup> In the Book of Burial, a translation of the writings of the prophet, Bahá'u'lláh, from Arabic into English, Bahá'u'lláh outlines that within 24 hours from the time of passing, deceased members of the Bahá'í faith must be wrapped in blessed raw silk, placed in an inexpensive wooden coffin, and buried with the deceased's feet facing the rising sun no more than one hour's distance from the place of death.

From the viewpoint of the pedestal in the back of the gallery, the viewer sees the exhibition in gestalt as it aligns and forms a macrocosmic narrative tableau. The installations form a *mise en scène* for the infinite interpretative iterations of my archive's complexities.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

It's kind of strange and emotional for me to be standing in a room filled with artifacts of my life. Each painting, photograph, and sculpture has built into it a particular frame of mind that only I can know, given I've always felt alien in this country called America. If I say I'm homosexual, is that something new to you? Does that make you nervous? Do you think it would be a crime if the denial of information only killed people that you didn't feel comfortable with? Do you stop to get to know the person you sit or walk next to in this school? Do you make it comfortable for that person to express ideas that might change your ideas? I wake up every morning in this killing machine called America and I'm carrying this rage like a blood-filled egg as each t-cell disappears from my body it is replaced by ten pounds of pressure, ten pounds of rage, and I focus that rage into non-violent resistance, but the focus is starting to slip, and the egg is starting to crack.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The conclusion to David Wojnarowicz's public lecture at his retrospective, *Tongues of Flame*, at Illinois University, January 23, 1990

Everything and Nothing is not a self-indulgent tell all, and certainly not an act of bravery for the sake of showmanship. My relentless exposition of information and exhaustion of access to memory is necessary to be able to see beyond it. The archive, pushed to its furthest extent, makes absence observable. A phantom-limb suspicion catalyzed an excavation of selfhood and being, done in the hopes of generating what my observable absence articulates with its abstraction. The work defies social conservatism and appropriateness to give form to unknowable abstraction.

My art practice, as outlined in my thesis exposes and subverts sinister hegemonic structures that stands obscured by the dark smoke of a nation on fire. Through nuanced engagement with media, personal accounts, vision, interpretation and memory, I embolden the route I took to find a radical futurity and significance in my experience that can transcend forces of opposition.

Because my presence is in a constant state of flux, contingent upon the threat of violence and condemnation or hope for safety and acceptance within the fabric of society, I present my elements of my archive in their most expansive state. It is an invitation to experience what I have in the fringes of social infrastructure. I want to acknowledge an experience that is indescribable in the terms of language. I want to create a space of shared vulnerability and honesty that can instill nourishing communal practices of care and reverence. *Everything and Nothing* is a prism that projects a spectral image of my experience in its vast complexity. The work is a declaration of relentless and continuously unfolding mystery. It is evidence of a life spent learning how to feel alive.



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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Screenshots of Image Usage Consent

Active 1h ago

Facebook  
You're friends on Facebook  
Lives in [redacted]

Mar 17, 2021, 6:07 PM

Hi [redacted] I'dk if you remember, but we hooked up a couple years ago and I made photographs of you with my film camera. I want put some of them in an exhibition I have opening later in April. Before I use them, I want to get your permission. I can send you the images I am considering. I can also offer some compensation for letting me make and use the photographs. Let me know if you're interested 😊

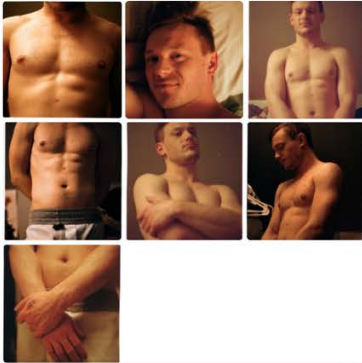
-Andrew

Hey Andrew, of course I remember you! I saw your Facebook and I was like aww I remember him I wonder how he's doing, I'm sure I don't mind can you just show me what you have? 😊

Awe oh my gosh 😊 That is so wonderful!

Here, I'll send you screen shots, one sec~

Ok!



Here they are~ some aren't edited yet/ I'm still choosing which ones I will use

And of course, if you aren't comfortable with them being shown, I can totally leave them out of my show

Yeah that's totally cool 😊

Ah great. Thank you so much, Jordan. This is so cool. I'm happy to send you a print of one you might want.

That's so cool! I would love to see one if you decide to use one! Just let me know 😊

Are you still in ATL

I'll keep you in the loop - and I'll send you a flyer for the exhibition once it's made

Maybe we could make some (more tame) portraits when everyone is more widely vaccinated haha

I am still in Atlanta, yes

quarantined in dunwoody haha

You? How are you doing?

Definitely would be down! Yea I'm in [redacted] now

Apr 12, 2021, 1:12 PM

Active 7m ago

Facebook  
You're friends on Facebook  
Lives in [redacted]  
Mar 8, 2021, 3:59 PM

Yo!

What's up? Are you around?

I don't know if you remember me - we got together in Atlanta sometime in 2018. You were staying at the Regency Hotel and let me come hang out and take pictures of you with my film camera.

I wanted to ask your permission to show the photographs in an exhibition that's opening in April. The they are really beautiful

Hmm

Can I see them


I can show you

yes


one sec, want me to send them on here?

Sure

okay cool-



I'm finding them on my hard drive, there's a few  
Here are ones that I'm considering-



You have my permission to use them and you can Keep all the money unless you become millionaire of it than coarse gotta Break me off


😊

Hahaha tight

Thank you!

How are you doing?


Looks like we had a good time



Haha yeah we did

Do you remember?

I'm doing really well how about you



I unfortunately have the worst God Damm memory

Ha I feel you

Sorry

No for real, we were out of it

Its all good

Your a fucking cutie tho

I'd definitely hit it

Lol

But yeah I'm doing pretty well, doing a lot of planning for this exhibition for grad school

hahaha

Thanks 🤔

I'll take it

I bet you did

Lol

Jkjk

lolol

Where are you living rn?

I have a boyfriend, but maybe I could make your portrait again

Sounds super fuckin hot

But I live in [REDACTED]

Heyy

No my number changed

What's up

Oh okay! Yeah! So, I know it has been forever since we spoke. I have a photograph of you we took together that I would like to include in my thesis exhibition. I wanted to make sure that you would be comfortable with me showing it

Let me know if you'd like to talk on the phone about it sometime. It would also be really nice to know how you're doing.

Which photo. I'm standing or in the bed

May I send it in a message?

Okay

Disappearing Message  
Use the Instagram app to see this type of message.

There are a couple more I'm considering that I will send

One sec

Disappearing Message  
Use the Instagram app to see this type of message.

Those 2 are fine

Disappearing Message  
Use the Instagram app to see this type of message.

And then this one

Great :)

Damn I was biggish

Yeah that's fine lol

Do you want to see more? I can send you a few of my favorites

Yeah you were! Each physique you had when I saw you were striking

Beautiful





Lol thanks. You're fine to use those.

Thank you, it means a lot for me to have your permission

How are you doing?

The world has changed so much since we last spoke

And I was never able to tell you why I went silent



It's okay. I'm doing good thanks. Hope you've been well.

Cool. Good, good. I've been well, yes.



Do let me know if you'd ever like to talk on the phone and catch up. I'd be open to it. Thank you for messaging me

January 25, 2021 9:57 pm



Why did u go silent tho

January 25, 2021 11:26 pm

Well, I was too afraid to ask you about ~~my feelings for you~~. Frankly, I developed feelings for you and was afraid that if we got in a disagreement about politics, it would cause more of a problem than just disappearing. I didn't have the capacity to bridge a gap like that in my head at that time.

Aw that's understandable

I thought you just got a squeeze lol



All good tho

I wish I had been able to explain that to you. I'm sorry that I didn't know how to talk about that

Oh!

No not really

No squeeze

Cool. I still treasure how kind you were to me. Those times were very special to me.

Thank you for that

Yeah same. I enjoyed you and thought u were dope even if we are different




All ❤️ here

*Appendix B: Additional Exhibition Views*

**1. *Love In A Hotel Room at 4:30 in the Morning***

Hope you enjoy your photos!

**Order Details: #521766** 3/4/21 6:42AM



Envelope 1 of 1  
Photos: 3

Special Note:

Here are some of the photos we took the night we hung out

**\$100 Freebie**

Send a handwritten letter  
Answering the 3 questions below:

1. Tell us about yourself.
2. How communication with loved ones on the outside impacts your life.
3. Why you should be considered.


Must be at least 1 full-page.

Mail letter to:  
Pigeonly Inc  
701 Bridger, Suite 690.  
Las Vegas, NV 89101

We'll select 4 winning letters a month  
if you win you can tell up to 5 people to claim  
A \$20 credit to stay in touch with you.

Good Luck,  
Pigeonly

458901



Contact Us:  
530.377.3686  
inmate@fotopigeon.com









Pigeon only | Corrections



Andrew Lyman



RA254XVA

Parcel Code

CHECKED MAR 09 2021  
**RETURN TO SENDER**



\$0.51 US POSTAGE  
FIRST-CLASS  
MAR 5 2021  
Mailed from ZIP 89101



stamps  
endicia OAJP00000001



Osceola County FL Correctional Facility

400 SIMPSON RD

Kissimmee FL 34744-4158



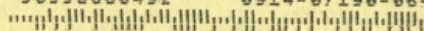
MIXIE 330 DC 1 0003/1A/21

RETURN TO SENDER  
REFUSED  
UNABLE TO FORWARD

9326010701375872

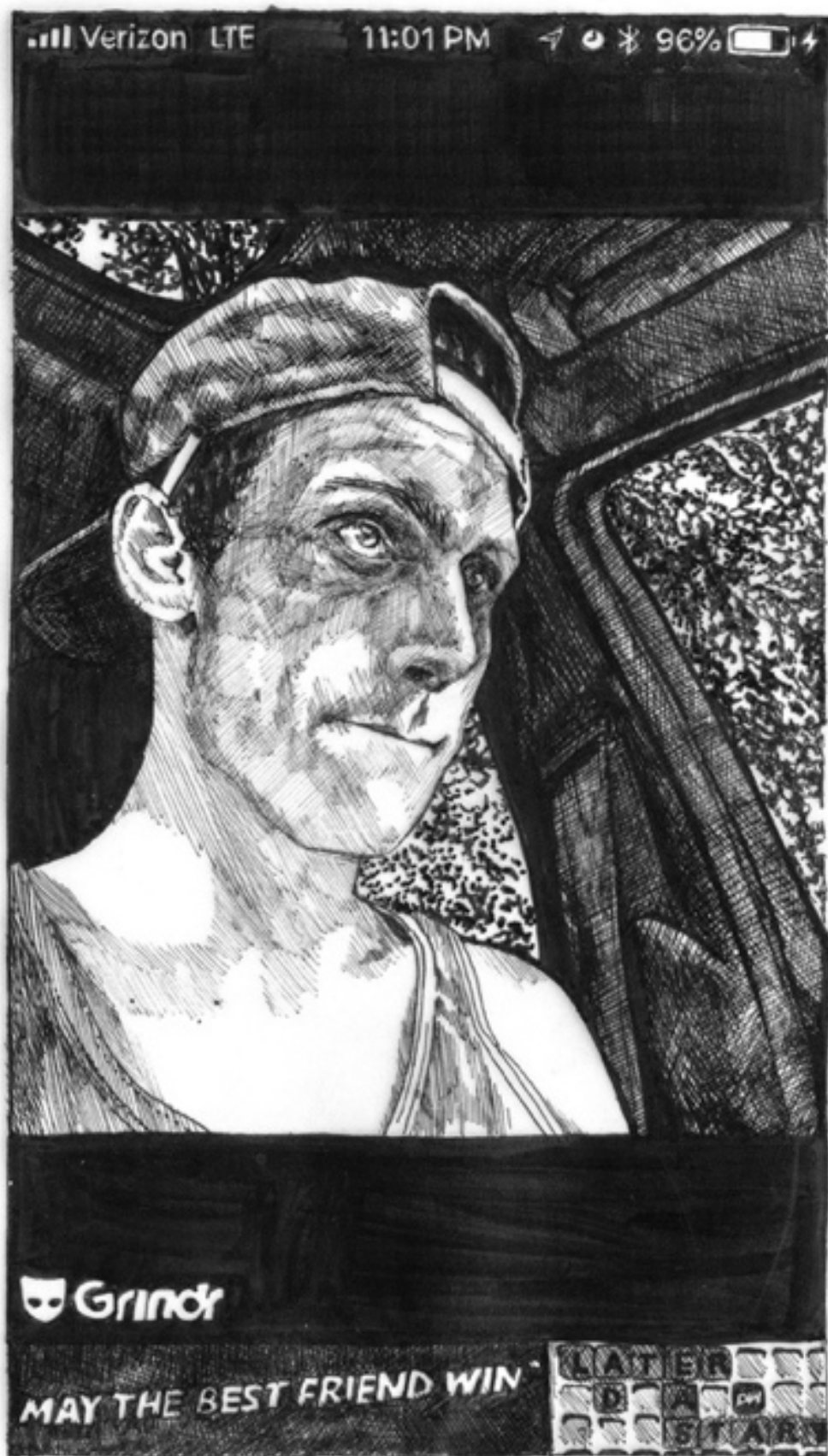
REF 30338>6604

BC: 30338660492 \*0914-07190-06-42









 Grindr

MAY THE BEST FRIEND WIN

LATER  
START



2. *In Spite of Fear*











Not knowing...  
The realization  
that "bad" things  
or... is more complicated.  
challenging boundaries  
between... childish innocence and  
adultish corruption?

"virtual"  
"virtuality"  
"virtue"

"epigenetics  
of trauma"  
parents' trauma  
marks on genes

Fall from  
grace...  
with  
everything...  
all the time.  
Imagination makes me  
painted & terrified.  
Amorphous... Magic School  
bus dinosaur

Revisit and again.  
Revisit the fiction  
and it changes every time  
the truth is in the texture.  
The hand they at the impression  
operate... mind's eye shifts  
in and out of senses.  
Ghost sense.  
The 18 senses?

2nd  
generation  
students  
5th generation lol lol

Photo artists  
in the past perfect  
house, eternal sunset,  
eternal sunrise

Chaffers  
episodes  
parables parabola



"Loosing  
Ground"

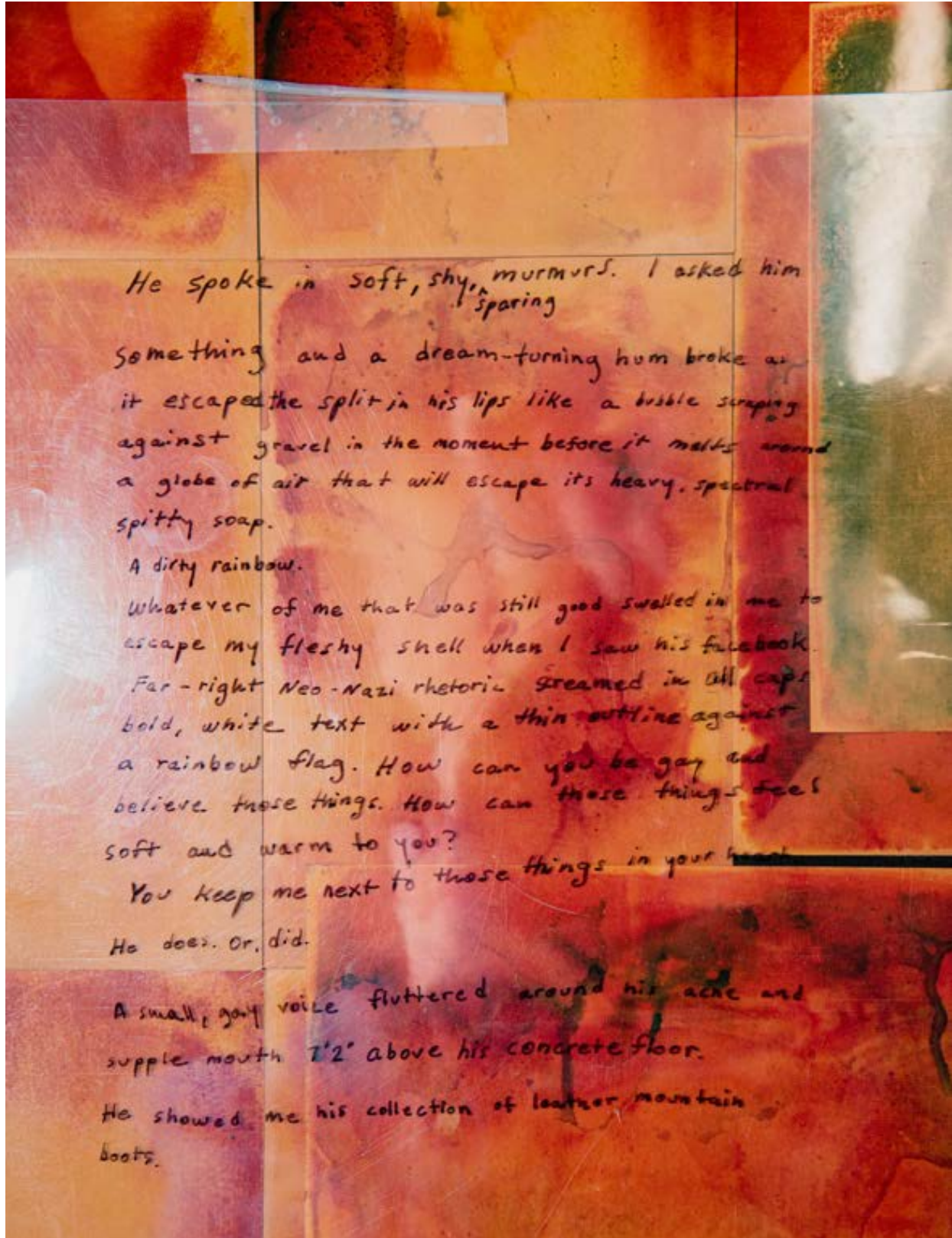








### 3. *Boundaries and Trespasses*





*Figure 7.1 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange, Chrome Photographic Prints, Bleach lifts. 2021.*



*Figure 7.2 Andrew Lyman. Red Orange, Chrome Photographic Prints, Bleach lifts. 2021.*





4. *Garden of Ridván*















It was a cold day. I drove an hour to meet him at a park. We didn't meet at his mom's house because she didn't know about me and wouldn't approve. We met on Tinder. It was his Winter Break back home from SCAD in Savannah. He probably still goes there. He was the only person online who I could see myself with. We talked on Tinder and messaged back to each other consistently within a few minutes. We moved to texting. He was funny. We gave him the nickname, "Cunty Boy" before we met in person, in a conversation that lasted until late. We decided to meet the next day. Within 24 hours of matching on Tinder, he drove down to Atlanta to have coffee with me for an hour in East Atlanta Village before having to drive back. He drove two hours to spend an hour with me, but I couldn't tell if he liked me. The next time we saw each other was this cold day.

~~He had an adderall prescription and he took it~~

He had a prescription for Adderall and he took it on all the days that I saw him. He waited for me at a park picnic table.

He told me to wait for a minute for him to finish a chapter of some cheesy young-adult southern Gothic ~~Book~~ Novel about a girl who poisoned her family with tainted sugar, which he explained to me in great detail. He smoked two cigarettes from when I got there to the end of his explanation.

I could tell he was skinny because he lost weight from the amphetamine salts and smoking ~~and could see his impressions~~  
~~his I could see his frame~~ cigarettes, Marlboro Lights.

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~~His I could see his frame~~ cigarettes, Marlboro Lights.



He was never very hungry. His round face was cut by two sharp, bright blue eyes, and his cheeks flushed with pink. He was a county Country Boy. He was happy to let me smoke his cigarettes. I was comforted by this gesture of togetherness. We were both wearing coats. I had a mullett, a silver earring, some painted nails, a red checkered sweater and ~~elastic~~ ~~skinny~~ ~~Banana Republic Chinos I had gotten on sale.~~ black skinny skinny Jeans. They were too tight.

He planned our afternoon/evening based on the sunset. After walking through the park and then he drove us to a lake. I asked him after we pulled out into the street to go back to the park parking lot so I could make sure my car was locked. I was scared of getting stranded and needing help from him. I was even uncomfortable with asking him to turn around, so much that I waited until my nerves pulled hard enough. He did though, and it was totally fine. That made me feel better, safer.

The music he played in the car was amazing and completely new to me. His hand moved like a leaf caught in the wind as he swayed it gracefully to an album recorded by an Australian Nun, Sister Irene O'Conner. She recorded the album alone in her monastery because she was so moved by the beauty of nature. The sky turned a dark blue and light orange on the horizon. He was beautiful. I couldn't believe how happy I felt. We held hands. It was all new. Everything, and it was astounding.

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We held hands. It was all new. Everything. And it was astounding.



We walked along an embankment that jutted out into the middle of the water, bordered by tall trees and mountains. Everything turned gold. We hugged and kissed on the mouth for a moment. He looked around us and said we should go to the next place he wanted to show me. There was one other car in the parking lot by the lake. It was a white 4 door sedan. He had a tan Honda civic that was just as beat up as my Jeep, but his stereo worked. He drove us through wooded neighborhoods where the houses were really far apart. Like a mile apart. We were holding hands again. He lifted his hand to point out a sign that I was already looking at on a wooden fence next to someone's front yard that had a red swastika on it. ~~Now~~ Then it made sense why he was looking around us. It made sense why he smoked cigarettes and needed to see a psychiatrist. It made sense that his face looked ~~both rosy and waxy~~ hollowed despite his <sup>blushing</sup> cheeks. We were both lit by ~~fear and its surrounding presence like it was calmly sitting in the back seat.~~ fear of possible violence and confrontation. We already knew where we were though. Anywhere that's 20 minutes outside of the city has an inherent social agreement that our safety ~~is~~ is compromised. Still, it was a shocking reminder of ~~the~~ the targets on our backs and how inappropriately I was dressed.

~~He drove us past the sign. Far past it.~~ He drove us ~~into the~~ ~~deep blue~~ to the top of a mountain.

Wait, he drove us to the mountain before the lake so that we could look down and see the lake. We could see all of Rome from up there.



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Wait, he drove us to the mountain before the lake so that we could look down and see the lake. We could see all of Rome from up there.

It was gorgeous. I hadn't seen things so far off into the distance in a long time. I didn't know exactly what was down there yet.

We went back to the mountain top. There were houses all along the way up. It was that kind of mountain. He parked the car and we got out to look at the stars. It was dark by then and all I could see was the moon and the end of his cigarette.

We found solace in the dark, sort of. We pressed against each other next to the car and held hands again. ~~It was so dark that my pupils~~ It was almost pitch black, <sup>now</sup> my pupils dilated and all I could see was a swirling, undulating pattern of silver dots, and maybe his silhouette but I ~~may have~~ think I just imagined it.

We immediately separated when we heard an engine of a truck and oversized tires coming up the road. Its head lights ~~shined~~ shined through the trees until it emerged at the top and pulled up next to a house about 100ft away.

The lights hit us and we pulled away from each other. We froze for a minute before the ~~car~~ <sup>truck</sup> moved to shine its lights directly at his car and us.

~~Before I fully turned my head, I felt knuckles graze my chin and a cigarette between my lips, then the heat from a lighter singe ~~me~~ the tip of my nose. ~~One~~ <sup>mine</sup> One of his hands was holding the lighter and the other was blocking ~~the~~ wind that wasn't there from blowing out the flame.~~

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~~I turned towards him from my head and saw him lighting~~ Before I fully turned my head, I felt knuckles graze my chin and a cigarette ~~in~~ between my lips, then the heat from a lighter singe ~~my no~~ the tip of my nose. ~~His~~

~~Once mine~~ One of his hands was holding the lighter and the other was blocking ~~the~~ wind that wasn't there from blowing out the flame.



I did the same for him, but it took me a second to stop fumbling the lighter. ~~My hands were cold and~~ I could explain it by saying my hands were cold, but what about my skinny jeans, earring, and incredibly gay hair...

We dared to look back at the car as we stepped back from each other ~~as if we were holding beers~~ feigning the confidence of two young guys blowing off steam, drinking beers, smoking cigarettes, toting pistols in ~~our~~ the waistlines of our jeans. We were just waiting for our girlfriends to ~~get~~ get there.

feigning the confidence of two young bad boys toting pistols in ~~our belt loops~~ in the waistlines of our jeans, cigarette ~~in~~ in one hand, beer can in the other, waiting for our girlfriends to get there so we could make out or something.

There were two men in the front seat. They ~~turned~~ were sitting in the car turned their lights off and were just sitting in the track. I couldn't tell if they were looking our way since there car was dark now.

I couldn't see them and they probably couldn't see us.

~~No one could see any of us. If anyone else were around~~

No one could see any of us. We could be shot dead. ~~We could~~

They could beat our faces in and we wouldn't ever know who did it.

I don't know if I would have felt it because ~~my body was so rigid~~ it was like I turned into stone. it was like I jumped out of my

body and it was standing there completely still.

Next thing I know, we're ~~is~~ back in the car with our cigarettes and the windows still up. We were so suddenly not holding hands looking into our shared abyss.

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The truck turned its lights back on and headed towards where we were on the end of the road while ~~the~~ cunty boy ~~grabbed the~~ whipped the car around and down the mountain. Our cover was blown then if it wasn't ~~the~~ already.

There was no way to know though if we even needed one. The truck could have been doing anything. But it could have also been the truck of two men who have swastikas on their front porch and a violent belief that god doesn't want us to exist.

I was reminded again of my powerlessness. My parents would never find me. I really would have left my body on that mountain. I felt like a little kid scared of a branch making noise outside his window. A piece of wood with paint on it, a white truck, and two strangers I couldn't see made me fear for my life.

It made sense then why I was seeing a psychiatrist, and why I lived an hour away.

we drove back to my car in the park parking lot, which was now long closed.

We both were actually doing well at that point. Our conversations all day were exciting, full of care, and expansive. we talked about every thing. And then made fun of it. We indulged in our irreverence. We ended up making out in my Jeep and listening to Beach House. I felt love in that moment. Some kind of it. ~~I felt our steam and smell~~ I rolled down my windows on the way home. Our steam and smell drifting onto the highway. I played Sister Irene O'connor's album on ~~my~~ youtube on my phone and moved my hand in the wind. I texted cunty boy that I got home safe.

The truck turned its lights back on and headed towards where we were on the end of the road while we c\*\*\*y boy grabbed the wheel and whipped the car around and down the mountain. Our cover was blown then if it wasn't already.

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Andrew Lyman 2020 – Story from December