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THREE TRIES

by

EM GETSAY

Under the Direction of Jill Frank, MFA

ABSTRACT

Three Tries is an interdisciplinary exhibition featuring installation, sculpture, and performance that explores the experiences of a Queer nonbinary individual growing up in the Baptist Christian South. The exhibition centers around the reclamation of the body, identity, and space, drawing parallels between the baptist christian holy trinity of father, son, and the holy ghost and Sigmund Freud's Trinity of id, ego, and superego. By returning to the developmental stages of one's life, the exhibition serves as a revolutionary attempt to isolate the id and disentangle the workings of the id, ego, and superego. *Three Tries* represents a visual framework for discovering the deepest parts of oneself and transforming into something greater than one's past.

INDEX WORDS: Identity, Queer, Body, Nonbinary, Performance, installation, Living Sculpture, Sculpture, Queer ontology, Memoir, Loss, Photography, Performance art, Intimacy, Love, Trauma, Adaptive memory, Mental illness, Queer theory, Freud, Durational performance, Queer performance, Autoethnography, Suicide

THREE TRIES

by

EM GETSAY

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

2023

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Emily Miranda Getsay
2023

THREE TRIES

by

EM GETSAY

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College of the Arts

Georgia State University

May 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the people who have carried and loved me throughout my life.

I dedicate this to all the people that have given me the strength to live my truth and every Queer that stumbles across this work.

I see you; I made this for us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I know I'm hard-headed, opinionated but oh so motivated.

I cherish each of you for your support and conversations through this journey.

Thank you for entertaining my crazy and believing in me when others said I was too much.

My Supporters and heart warmers:

Coleen Asper	Jessica E. Blinkhorn	A.K. Burns
CASSILS	Daniel Clauson	Tracy Crocker
Leah DeVun	Craig Drennen	Brittany Garner
Kayla "Kiki" Gold	Jordan Gum	Jessica Helfrecht
Sarah Higgins	Kelly Ivey	Jessica Jacobs
Uncle Jimmy Jay	Katie Kearns	Helen Kim
Emily Lew	Pam Longobardi	Julie Marateck
Brittany Matthews	Magdalena O'Connor	Kyra Reed
Malina Rodriguez	Lisa Schnellinger	Gabriella Schuett
Louis Arthur Ruprecht Jr.	Christina Teruel	AJ Thompson
Theo Tyson	José Villalobos	and Atlanta Green Theatre Alliance

Media Team for *The Beginning* and *The End*:

Tyler Brantley	Felicia Castro	Lorin Dent
Coorain Devin	Travis Dodd	Ross Landenberger
Lana Nguyen	Savannah O'Leary	Markiesha Thornton
Rachel Warren	Audrey White	

Build Crew for *The End*:

Duncan Allen	Akangkha Bezbaruah	Sally Branscomb
Chris Haston	Yann Jean-Louis	Destinie Johnson
Leighton Katz	Julian Mancini	Phil Oliver
Sarah Rakestraw	Parker Thornton	Ashton Utley

My Lovely Thesis Committee

Last but not least- the ones who were there from the VERY Beginning:

Mom and Dad

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1 INTRODUCTION

When your heart has subsided
and
you finally know
the places you've been and where you want to go,
you go back to the start; where you've always been told.
Back to the one you first wanted to hold.
Tell yourself a million times this story is old.
You'll do it all over; you can't restart this soul.
Get to the place where you find your past,
And you hope for goodness, this time it will last.

Back over by eleven-year-old GETSAY¹

Growing up as a closeted nonbinary queer wasn't easy. I was confused, resentful, and had a lot of questions. When my parents couldn't answer my questions, I turned to the church. When the church couldn't answer my questions, I turned to my father's bookshelf. It punctured my solitude. The book that began to answer my questions was Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.² I was fascinated that another human had the ability or even the audacity to explain my feelings. I was enamored by his eloquence and god-like writing. I felt that if I could understand Freud's ideas, I would, in turn, understand myself and eventually play god.³

The Interpretation of Dreams went with me everywhere. I bookmarked it, folded it, and even shared it with those who asked. It became a part of me.

Before proceeding further, I would like to provide a *content warning*. My thesis will contain references to topics such as trauma, assault, and suicide. While trauma is a recurring theme throughout my practice, I also want to be considerate of those who may be impacted by these subjects. As such, I will include a warning before particularly difficult sections.

¹ GETSAY. "Back Over." Georgia, 2003.

² Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. 4th ed., The Macmillan Company, 1913.

³ *God*, as well as other religious terminologies, will appear in lowercase throughout the text. I do not believe in religion as baptist christians do, nor do I believe in the monotheistic version of god or goddesses in the way baptists believe; god is a common noun because it is a concept.

As I grew older more questions remained unanswered. The depression pit grew and so did the amount of church I was forced to attend. As the child of two deeply religious individuals, I was expected to follow their same path. I had my first sexual awakening, attempted suicide several times, lost my first love, and was institutionalized before age eleven. The holy trinity (father, son of god, and the holy ghost) became a blanket response, a source of punishment, and an act of repentance.

At twelve I was forced into a religious mentorship program. I met with the deacon every other week to discuss scripture and what it meant to devote my life to jesus christ. It was predetermined that I would present a sermon at the end of the mentorship program and then be baptized before the congregation. I presented the sermon but refused to be baptized. My rejection of christianity in this way became a pivotal point in my upbringing.



Figure 1.1 Broadzillajones. "I Disagree with the Representation of Id as Bad and Superego as Good, but Every Time I See It I Have the Urge to Add a Plumbob to It." Reddit.com, 2020, https://www.reddit.com/r/thesims/comments/jhawty/i_disagree_with_the_representation

When these events took place, I turned to Freud for the second time. I started analyzing his trinity: id, ego, and superego, and how they form within our psychosexual development stages⁴ according to Freud.⁵ I was fascinated that he claimed our basic instincts were inherently a part of us, and the outside world tried to control the principles rooted in humanity: the id.⁶ After comparing this relationship to my personal experiences with the church, I noticed several similarities. I also drew a parallel to the video game SIMS, where the primary objective is for characters to simply exist and survive. However, when unexpected factors such as the superego are introduced, it can create tension and turmoil for the character.

As an attempt to unearth the most epicurean portion of my id, I pick up Freud's work for the third time, this time using his ideas as a framework to travel through my psychosexual stages⁷, utilizing art as a mechanism for contemplation. I stop at each stage on my autoethnographic journey to identify the introduction of my ego and superego, concluding where the most significant parts of my id were shadowed. Along the path, I'm confronted with the pain that compelled me to pick up Freud the first time.

As a reference point for the viewer and self I intertwine each psychosexual development stage with my personal narrative highlighting the *memories*⁸ most relevant to the rise of my psyche. Much like fragments of memory, the understanding of the past alongside present is not always completely linear. On my journey, my knowledge of consciousness evolves past Freud as I discover reformed approaches to Psychoanalysis through queer community and research.

⁴ Sigmund Freud's psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital.

⁵ Freud, Sigmund. *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*. 1905. Translated by A. A. Brill, Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing, 1920.

⁶ Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XIX (1923–26) The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, edited by James Strachey et al., Scientific Literature Corporation, 1978, p. 19.

⁷ Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition*, vol. 19. Scientific Literature Corporation, 1978, pp. 139–146.

⁸ All memories will be *italicized*.

In *The Beginning*, the journey through my psychosexual stages are conveyed by installation and sculpture. As the installation progresses through each stage, both the viewer and I unravel the layers of my id, ego, and superego. The final stage, the Genital Stage⁹, is a crucial moment in which I come to understand my psyche and what is necessary for its survival. This realization leads me to commit a revolutionary act: isolating my id and reforming my sense of self. Through this act, I am able to redefine what it truly means to be me.

When the narrative and accompanying works in *The Beginning* reach the moment of my history when my superego is most in control, I reflect on the stages like the stations of my metaphorical cross and surface the deepest part of myself through performance. Utilizing the core concept of autoethnography, I ask viewers to look past the mechanical representation of art and reflect on the inner workings of self—alongside my own. By turning my catharsis into a healing space for others, I hope the work becomes a place that activates transfiguration, personal acceptance, and liberation.

Ultimately the exploration of self becomes the knowing of more. The enactment of the body and psyche in a queering of autoethnography develops into a way forward in which. “the story of the self, suddenly becomes the story of us, and the story of the least of us becomes— at long last—our own.”¹⁰

2 THE BEGINNING: CONSCIOUSNESS ACCORDING TO FREUD AND THE BAPTIST INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

I picked up Freud for the first time at a young age, and his writing quickly became my bible. I was most fascinated with his understanding of our minds, and his ideas became how I

⁹ The final stage of Freud’s Psychosexual Development Stages – from puberty to adulthood

¹⁰ Jones, Stacy Holman, and Anne M. Harris. *Queering Autoethnography*. Routledge, 2018, p. 5.

thought about my own. According to Freud, the mind is divided into three levels of consciousness: the Conscious level, the Preconscious level, and the Unconscious level.¹¹ Within our levels of consciousness lie our id, ego, and superego. Freud describes the mind as an iceberg and uses archeology as a metaphor for psychoanalysis.¹² The Conscious level is the tip containing a portion of the ego and majority of the superego; where logic, thoughts, and perceptions reside. The Preconscious level scratches the surface of our ego and holds the largest part of our superego; it is where our memories, morals, and ideas exist. The Unconscious is the bottom of the iceberg, the base of our minds where most of our id sits. This level is where the deep parts of us lie avoidant tendencies, violence, fears, the need for self-love, and selfish wants.

¹¹ Freud, Sigmund. "The Unconscious." *The Interpretation of Dreams*, edited by James Strachey, vol. 14, Hogarth Press, 1915, pp. 159-204.

¹² Freud, S. (1923). *The Relation of the Ego to the Unconscious*. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 19, pp. 12-66). Hogarth Press.

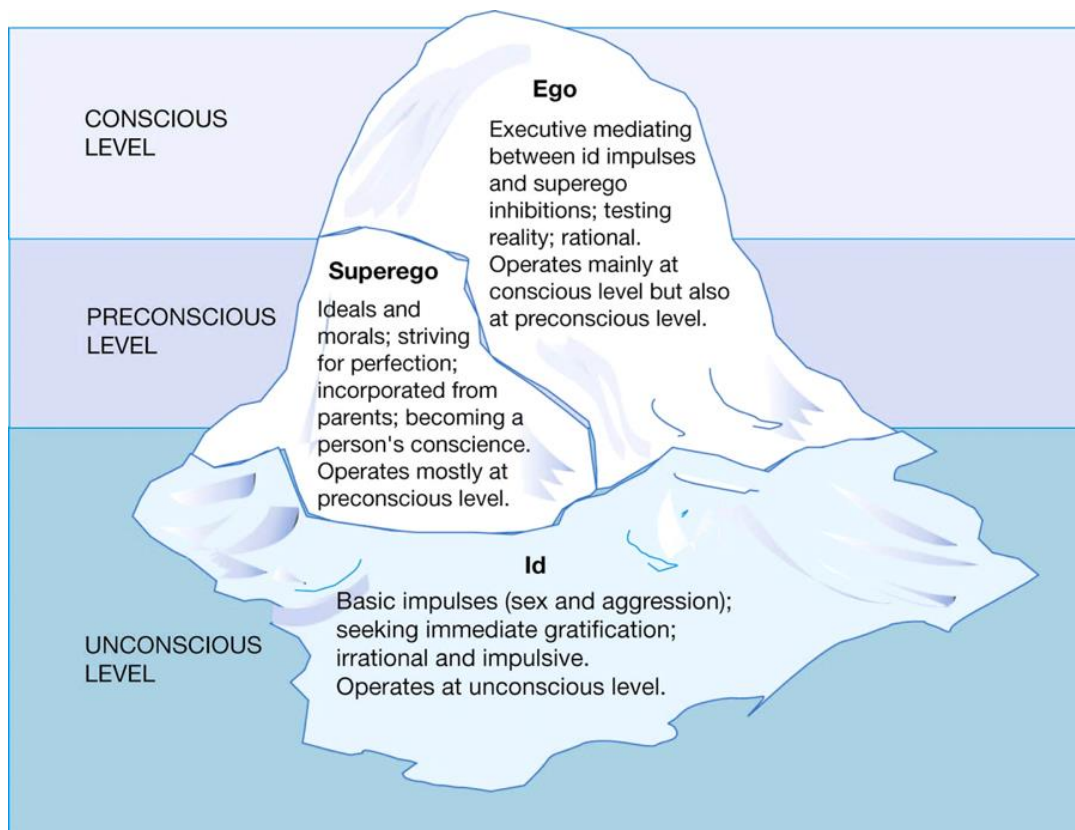


Figure 2.1 American Nurses Credentialing Center. "Sigmund Freud Psychoanalytic Theory." Psych-Mental Health Hub, 2020, <https://pmhealthnp.com/sigmund-freud-psychoanalytic-theory/>. Accessed 2022.

The id is the most primordial piece of our mind, containing our deepest urges and wants; the superego operates as our moral governance; and the ego acts as a mediator between the two.

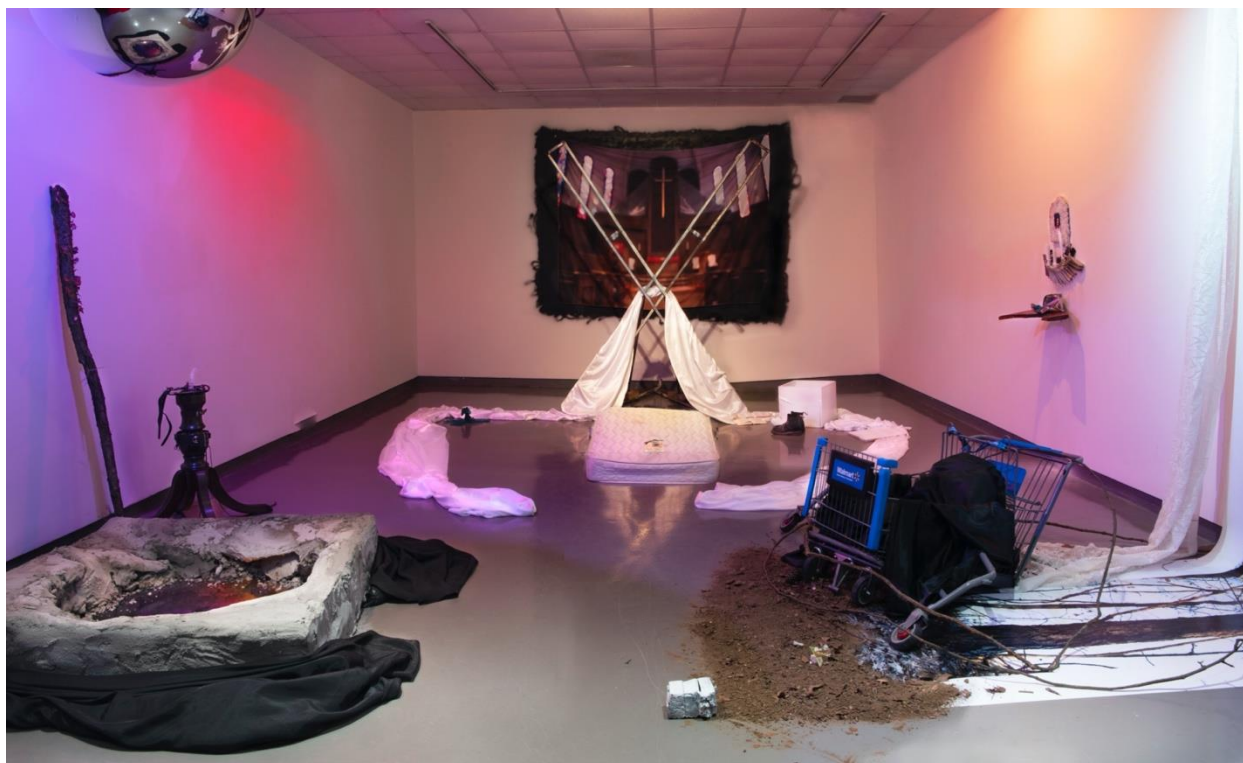


Figure 2.2 GETSAY. Three Tries: The Beginning. Installation view. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America. Photograph by GETSAY.

As a third¹³ attempt to fully understand my mind through the eyes of Freudian theory I found myself asking more questions and turning to even more resources to which I now have access. I now realize the similarities between Freud's trinity and the southern baptist holy trinity and now question my infatuation with Freud as a child. *Was I simply looking for another iteration of the idea ingrained in me for most of my existence?*

As a place of departure, *The Beginning* unfolds with my own Act One—the most psyche charged element from my childhood still in my possession: the bed I laid upon from ages two to eighteen. Walking into the gallery, the viewer is unavoidably confronted with *The Dawn of...(genesis)* (fig.2.3), my Freudian iceberg, the embodiment of my consciousness.

¹³ The first time picking up *The Interpretation of Dreams* from my father's bookshelf. The second time when I was admitted into the institution. And now, the third time recontextualizing my history and walking through my psyche.



Figure 2.3 GETSAY. Dawn Of...(genesis). salvaged one inch steel tubes mangle welded, twin bed used by the artist from age two to eighteen, rocks from The End faux silk tapestry of the sanctuary from the church the artist grew up in, twenty yards of Charmeuse Satin

The Dawn of...(genesis), is the pillar of Act One and the vantage point for all works in the exhibition. In this work, my childhood bed reclines nude over a bundle of rocks and hidden queer literature. Straddling above the mattress is a steel-fabricated st. andrew's cross with a white satin cloth that wraps around the neck of the structure like the cloth placed on jesus' body as he was transferred from the cross to the tomb. Referencing a pivotal event in christian storytelling: the aftermath of jesus's crucifixion. The crosses of st. andrew and jesus's crucifixion cross have become ubiquitous religious symbols in the church and art history, as demonstrated in notable works such as Velázquez's *The Crucified Christ* (fig. 2.5) and Frans Francken II's *The Crucifixion of St. Andrew* (fig.2.6).



Figure 2.4 GETSAY. Dawn Of...(genesis), Left side view. 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY



Figure 2.5 Velázquez, Diego Rodríguez de Silva y. *The Crucified Christ* (1631-1632). Oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

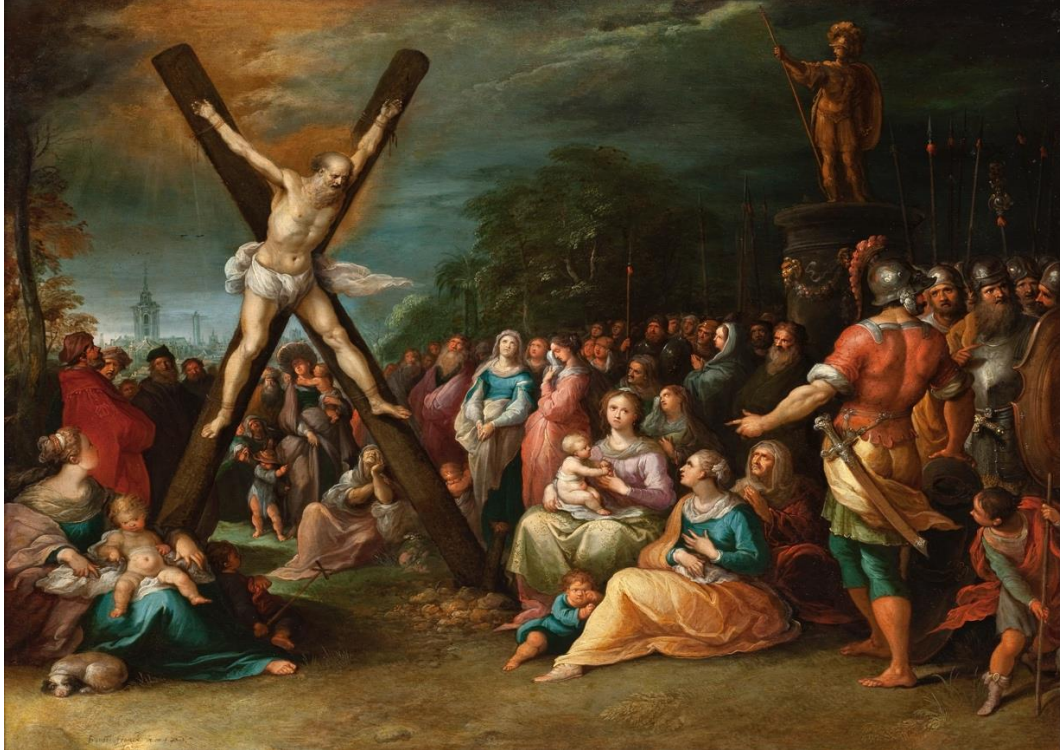


Figure 2.6 Francken II, Frans. The Crucifixion of St. Andrew. Oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., United States.

The silk cloth cascades down the sides of the mattress, stretching into a circular shape that unites all the pieces in the exhibit. The circle alludes to the duality of two trinities, the symbolism of the ouroboros¹⁴, and the perpetual cycle of reliving memories. As the viewer walks along the right side of the cloth, they are met with a fractured inspection mirror facing upwards, as if someone had utilized it while lying on the mattress.

¹⁴ "Ouroboros is a gnostic and alchemical symbol that expresses the unity of all things, material and spiritual, which never disappear but perpetually change form in an eternal cycle of destruction and re-creation."- "Ouroboros." Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 14 Jan. 2021, www.britannica.com/topic/Ouroboros.

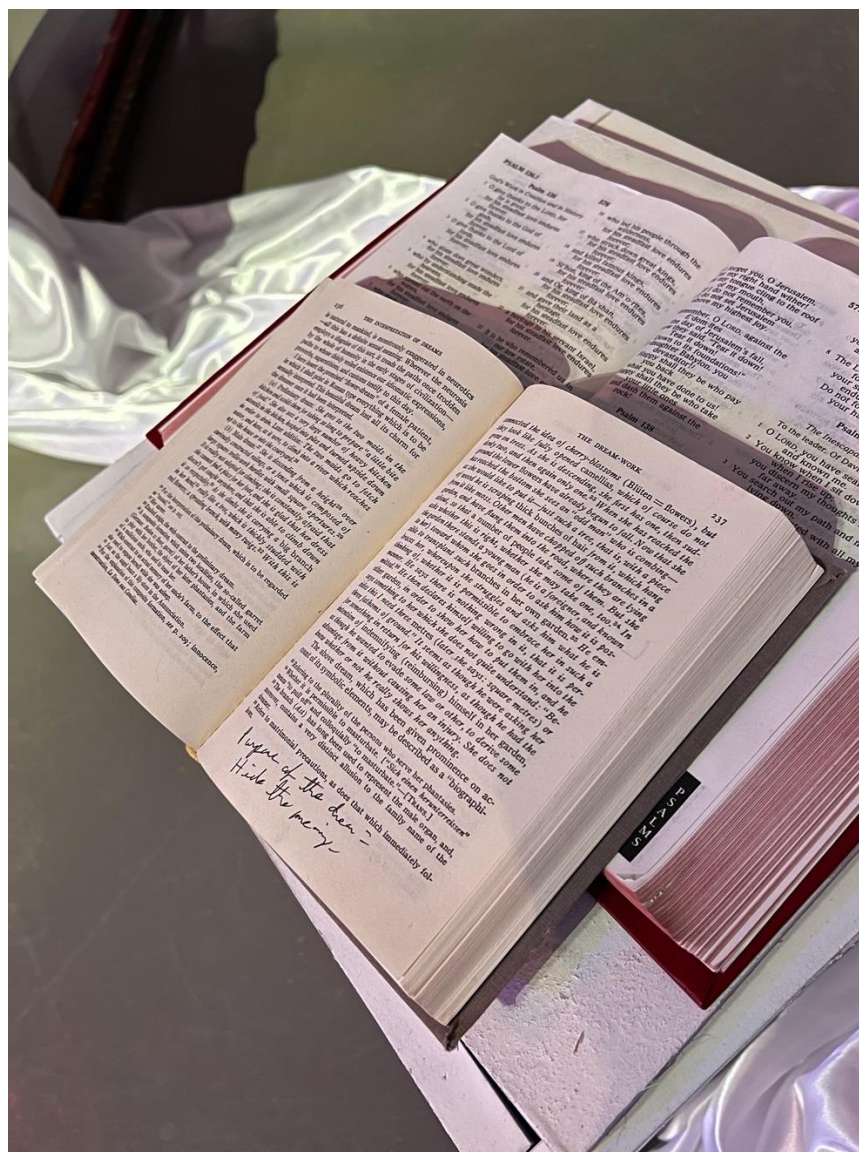


Figure 2.7 GETSAY. *Always present. Good news bible: old and new testament from the church the artist grew up in, The first Sigmund Freud book the artist ever read: The Interpretation of Dreams, Artist's diary from age eleven, faux wood side table., 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Katie Kearns.*

Continuing down the right side of the cloth is *Always present* (fig.2.7) a bedside table that holds my holy trinity: Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*: actual copy of the first Freud book I ever read, the bible I was taught from growing up in the church, and the diary I

used while I was institutionalized. This trinity became the source for my ego and the formation of my identity.



Figure 2.8 *GETSAY. Dawn Of...(genesis). Tapestry view 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY.*

Suspended at the center of the st. andrew's cross of *The Dawn of... (genesis)*, against the gallery wall, is a mural photograph on faux silk fabric of the sanctuary I grew up in. A photograph intentionally blurred in a disturbing manner mimicking the unsettling vision I witnessed every Sunday morning during my adolescence as I entered the sanctuary for service.



Figure 2.9 GETSAY. Dawn Of...(genesis). Bed detail, 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY.

Nestled at the foot of *The Dawn of... (genesis)* reclines my childhood bed (fig. 2.9). Upon the bed, there is a stain from my first period, a gentle, primitive nod to the relationship between my body, the id, and ego. The bed has been an extended self-portrait¹⁵ throughout art history because of its intimacy, representation of the personal, and ability to forge a connection between the viewer and the artist.

¹⁵ A Self-Portrait that extends past the artist and to the viewer as a representation of every self



Figure 2.10 Emin, Tracey. My Bed. Box frame, mattress, linens, pillows, and various objects. 1998. Overall display dimensions variable. Tate, The Duerckheim Collection, 2015.

From Titian's iconic *Venus Urbino* to Manet's *Olympia* that caused a stir at the Paris Salon in 1865, and contemporary autobiographical pieces like Emma Sulkowicz's *Blue Room* and Tracey Emin's *My Bed*, the bed has been a recurring motif in art history. Tracey Emin's *My Bed* stands as a poignant self-portrait, capturing the artist at one of the most vulnerable and raw moments of her life. In a 2006 interview, Emin explains the progression of the piece:

I had a kind of mini nervous breakdown in my very small flat and didn't get out of bed for four days ... And I thought, this wouldn't be the worst place for me to die; this is a beautiful place that's kept me alive ... when I put it into the white space, for some people

it became quite shocking. But I just thought it looked like a damsel in distress, like a woman fainting or something, needing to be helped.¹⁶

The Dawn of... (genesis)'s purpose was to convey a similar sense of vulnerability to the viewer, akin to my experience. A sculptural depiction of my adolescent ego reclining nude, offering an exploration of consciousness, inviting the viewer to dissect and reflect upon their introspective journey.

3 GENESIS OF THE ID: THE FATHER AND THE BODY

In the beginning, there is only the id. In christianity, there is only one god. The genesis of our body and mind commences with the primordial force of the id.

When my id was first developing, I was simultaneously being indoctrinated into baptist christianity. My dad was a pastor and a chaplain. My mother was the children's director of a local baptist church and sang in the choir every Sunday. I went to church every Wednesday and Sunday, and from birth to age six, I attended bible Day School where my mother was the Director. I was very much a child of the lord. Two things existed in my world at this time: god and my id.

The id lacks discernment between good and evil, operating solely on the Pleasure Principle. It relentlessly seeks instant gratification of all its needs, wants, and urges. Freud defined our desires as our libido¹⁷. The id comprises two biological drives, which Freud named Eros and Thanatos.¹⁸ Eros, referred to as the life instinct, keeps the individual alive by eating, having sex,

¹⁶ Schnabel, Julian. "Interview June 2006 p. 102-109 – Lehmann Maupin." www.lehmannmaupin.com, Lehmann Maupin, 2006, <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/attachment/en/5b363dcb6aa72c840f8e552f/News/5b364ddda09a72437d8ba45e>.

¹⁷ Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Norton, 1905, p. 85.

¹⁸ Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated by James Strachey, W.W. Norton, 1961.

and breathing. On the other side is the death instinct, which Freud named Thanatos, the destructive force embedded in all human beings.¹⁹ When the energy from Thanatos is directed outward onto others, it is categorized as violence and aggression. Freud believed that Eros was stronger than Thanatos, enabling people to survive versus destroy.

Freud proclaimed that the id is heavily influenced by pleasure from birth to adulthood, and the evolution of the id is determined by the psychosexual development stages. Psychosexual development occurs in five stages for everyone.^{20,21}

1. The Oral Stage (birth to one year old)
2. The Anal Stage (one to three years old)
3. The Phallic Stage (three to six years old)
4. The Latency Stage (six years to puberty)
5. The Genital Stage (from puberty to adult)

3.1 The Oral Stage: Birth to One Year Old

In Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the Oral Stage is when most actions orient around the mouth and when the child is hyper-focused on sucking, biting, and breastfeeding: actions essential for survival.²² My experience with the Oral Stage extended beyond the typical age of one, likely because I stopped breastfeeding at only three weeks old. As I was not gaining enough weight, I transitioned to formula feeding. Around the same time, my mother returned to work at the baptist church, and I developed colic,²³ which persisted for over a month.

¹⁹ Freud, Sigmund. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. 1933. New York, p. 120.

²⁰ Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Norton, 1905, p. 85.

²¹ This scientific universal claim, which was once widely accepted, is now subject to intense criticism.

²² Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Norton, 1905, p. 17-18.

²³ Colic is diagnosable, but the causes are hard to determine. A Colic baby cries uncontrollably and cannot be consoled for more than three hours of the day for more than three days of the week.

As a young child, my id revealed itself in several ways. I sucked my thumb and carried around a blue bunny blanket from birth to age eight. The sucking would have continued past eight years old if I hadn't burned my thumb.

My parents were very concerned for my well-being at a young age. They were aware of the outside world, experienced my persistent unhappiness at three weeks old, and as children of god they had several fears. Early on, my parents learned that pain came with pleasure; succeeding and exploring meant there would be consequences, and most choices sit on an altar of compromise.

Within christianity, god exists in three persons: the father, the son, and the holy ghost.²⁴ After my inference and research, I found that of the trinity, the father aligns with the id. The depiction of god as the father is strongly influenced by powerful ideologies, such as being the creator of heaven and earth, omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipresent (ever-present). These attributes are like the id's characteristics, which also emerges in the early stages, possesses all-knowing qualities, and exists in a primal state. Both the father and the id are unwavering in their demands (merciless), and there are consequences if their desires are unmet. For instance, a crying baby who persists until their diaper is changed or an individual running late for work who becomes so frustrated, they cut off another driver in anger. The tension of god the father is evident in the old testament when Adam and Eve are disobedient, resulting in their banishment from of the garden of Eden²⁵, the great flood as a means to cleanse

²⁴ "God in three persons" is "Θεός σε τρεις προσώπους" (Theos se treis prosopous), which literally means "God in three faces." However, the concept of the Trinity is often referred to as "Τριάς" (Trias), which means "triad" or "trinity." : Λεξικό της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής [Dictionary of Modern Greek]. (1998). Athens: Ίδρυμα Μανόλη Τριανταφυλλίδη.

²⁵ According to the bible, after Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree in the garden of eden, they were banished from the garden because of their disobedience, and god placed cherubim with a flaming sword at the entrance to guard it and prevent their return (genesis 3:23-24, New International Version).

the world of wickedness,²⁶ and the burning of the defiant cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁷

Similarly, as individuals, we all have inner thoughts and desires that we may not openly exhibit, as they are driven by our id. However, as we grow into adulthood, the id becomes more repressed and manifests differently with the introduction of the superego in our lives. The ego then acts as the balance between these two internal forces.

Moving through the first stage of my consciousness, I remembered the first physical and simultaneously emotional representation of my id. The first time I experienced object identification.^{28,29} *It was the small blue bunny I was given the day I was born. The piece of existence I comprehended first.* The first entity I touched after my parents.

My Blue Bunny became the first portrayal of satisfying my id. Freud describes the process of object identification as the act of placing an attachment like the one you have for your mother on another entity or item. In those beginning years, the bunny was my god.

²⁶ According to the bible, the story of the great Flood to cleanse the world of wickedness is described in the book of genesis, specifically in genesis 6-9. The narrative tells of how god, seeing that humanity had become wicked and corrupt, decided to bring a flood to destroy all living creatures on earth, except for Noah and his family, who were considered righteous. god told Noah to build an ark and take pairs of animals with him to preserve their species during the flood. The floodwaters covered the entire earth for 40 days and 40 nights and eventually receded, allowing Noah and his family to repopulate the earth after leaving the ark.

²⁷ The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the bible's book of genesis (chapters 18- 19) is often cited as a condemnation of homosexuality. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were said to be destroyed by god due to the wickedness of their inhabitants, which included homosexuality. In the narrative, two angels arrive in Sodom and are welcomed into the home of Lot, a righteous man, but the men of the city demand that Lot send the angels out so that they can have sexual relations with them. Lot refuses and offers his two virgin daughters instead, but the city's men persist in their desires. As a result, god rains fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying the cities and their inhabitants. Religious and Anti-LGBTQIA+ groups have used this story as evidence of the condemnation of homosexuality in christianity and Judaism, contributing to the ill justification for homophobia. There are several issues with this story - however, there is no definitive account of homosexuality in the text.

²⁸ Object identification refers to the process when children develop emotional attachments to external objects or people in their environment and internalize them as part of their psychological development. For some children, a stuffed animal may serve as a transitional or security object, providing comfort, security, and a sense of familiarity. The child may form an emotional bond with the stuffed animal, seeing it as a source of comfort and attachment, and may incorporate it into their internal mental world through the process of object identification.

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," trans. Joan Riviere, Norton Critical Edition, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 25-43 (p. 25).



Figure 3.1 GETSAY. My Blue Bunny. Kiln-formed cast glass of the artist's recreation of their first possession, 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Ross Landenberger.

While rummaging through my mother's storage, I searched for the original Blue Bunny and never found it. However, I did stumble upon a photograph of myself at the age of three, clutching my first object as I posed in front of a nativity scene at church. The Bunny was attached to a blanket and had distinct features such as ears, a tail, and a nose. The photograph only captured the blanket and ears. Despite the photograph's lack of detail, an image would not portray how it felt to hold my first object. I knew *My Blue Bunny* had to be purely sculptural, and I was left with only my memory to imagine its authentic form.

I scoured the internet for a bunny resembling my memory and eventually found a pair of white bunny blankets. However, since my memory was clear that the bunny was blue, I realized there was another step I had to take. As an action to preserve the memory of the object and acknowledge my fragility at this age, I cast the figure in glass. Because I wanted *My Blue Bunny*

(*fig.3.1*) to resemble the bunny I'd known for most of my childhood, I tattered and tore the soft sculpture until it suited my faded memory. When the small plush was finely worn to my standard, I created a mold and cast the figure in glass with the help of my friend Lisa Schnellinger, a glass artist and owner of Fused Light Studio.

4 FORMING OF THE EGO: THE SON OF GOD, IDENTITY AND THE IMAGE

The emergence of the ego and the son of god share a similar pattern; in a coexisting relationship, with one following the other. The ego arises when consciousness must strike a balance between the demands of the id and the moral standards of the superego. Similarly, the son of god is manifested when god chooses to represent himself in human form. The concept of christ is present in the old testament,³⁰ but there is no physical representation of him yet. It is only in the new testament, with the story of the virgin birth, that we are introduced to jesus as the son of god.³¹ The emergence of the ego follows a comparable trajectory, as it is not present at birth but develops and evolves over time as consciousness begins to form a sense of self. We are born with only the id (god), and through the id (father's image) comes the ego (the son of god, jesus christ).^{32,33}

When I was forced to introduce my id to the outside world, I encountered turmoil and restraint. Growing up meant fulfilling certain expectations. My parents had an image of who they wanted their child to be. I was adamant about getting to the bottom of everything, and sometimes, that meant defying my parents' authority and faith. I often had to compromise

³⁰ Within christianity the new testament, with the gospel of Matthew. This is debated in other religions.

³¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version. Zondervan, 2011. Luke 1:14.

³² Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. XIX (1923-26): The Ego and the Id and Other Works, ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Carrie Lee Rothgeb, and Angela Richards (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), 19.

³³ The Holy Bible, New International Version. Zondervan, 2011. Genesis 1:1.

between my id and my parents' expectations. As a result, my ego started to become a part of my identity.

The ego is controlled by the reality principle, a concept Freud used to describe how behaviors adjust in relation to how things exist instead of according to wishful thinking.³⁴ For example, a baby putting anything and everything in its mouth to fulfill hunger will soon realize that not everything is food. The id, based on primitive nature and survival, does not lie within a state of reality. When the id must confront reality, the formation of the ego begins.

Instead of an image and the real object being regarded as identities, a separation between the two takes place. A result of this differentiation, the purely subjective, internal world of the id becomes divided into a subjective inner world (the mind) and an objective outer world (the environment).³⁵

The ego is the part of the mind that represents consciousness. It employs the secondary processes: reason, common sense, and the power to delay immediate responses to impulses and wants. The primary function of the ego is self-preservation. The ego, therefore, is uneasily poised between three agencies: the external world, the id, and the superego, each of which may be urging different courses. Freud states that the development of the ego happens in the first three years of our lives and continues to mature as we grow older.³⁶

Just like the son of god, there are clues and references to the ego, but the representation of it is not fully visible until much later in life, around puberty. The formation of the id, ego, and superego are not linear. Each piece does not exist without the other. They are in constant

³⁴ Freud, Sigmund. "The Ego and the Super-Ego." *The Ego and the Id*, Standard Edition, W.W. Norton Company, Inc., 1960, pp. 28.

³⁵ Hall, Calvin S. "The Dynamics of Personality." *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*, World Publishing Company, 1954, pp. 41.

³⁶ Freud, Sigmund. "The Ego and the Id." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIX (1923-26), edited by James Strachey et al., Hogarth Press, 1961, pp. 3-66.

communication, just like the father, son, and holy ghost.³⁷ Both the ego and the son of god are bound within the confines of reality, whereas the id, superego, the father, and the holy spirit exist in their own realms.

4.1 Anal stage: 1 to 3 years old

The Anal Stage is when the body becomes familiar with the satisfaction of releasing bowels.³⁸ I do not recall my potty-training days, but I started around eighteen months, according to my mother. *My mother also made me aware that I was often constipated, an apparent reference to the amount of control I held over my body. My bodily ego developed even more during this stage. I began to see my body as a separate entity.* Freud believed that the libido was defined and pleased through the regulation and control over the bowels during this time. Thus, according to my mother, I could control the way I acted out the needs of my libido.

³⁷ Christians have been concerned about the tendency to think of one part of the Trinity as more important or influential than the others, which could lead to an imbalanced or hierarchical view of the relationship between the three persons. To prevent this thinking, Christians have emphasized the idea of the Trinity as an equal and indivisible union of three persons, with each person being fully God and having equal status and importance. Theologians have used terms such as "perichoresis" (mutual indwelling) and "circumincession" (mutual interpenetration) to describe the relationship between the three persons, emphasizing their unity and equality. This helps to prevent a hierarchical view of the Trinity and ensure that each person is given equal emphasis and importance in Christian theology. :

Smith, John. "Understanding the Athanasian Creed." ChristianHistory.com, Christianity Today, 7 Apr. 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2020/april/athanasian-creed.html>.

³⁸ Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. W. Norton, 1905, pp. 85.

5 APPEASING THE SUPEREGO: THE HOLY SPIRIT, UNEARTHLY EXPECTATIONS AND QUEER ABUNDANCE

5.1 Phallic Stage: 3 to 6 Years Old

Several events informed my Phallic Stage: during this stage, the id finds desire and value in the body and genitals.³⁹ I remember two specific pieces about this time in my history: my grandfather's death and the first steps into exploring my body.

Acknowledging one's genitals eventually turns into observing others' bodies. The first time, I recall feeling physical pleasure was sliding down the fireman's pole at my elementary school playground. The next few times I confronted the human body were unintentionally catching my parents having sex, my mother showering, and my father peeing. These experiences left me feeling embarrassed and ashamed but curious and intrigued by the human body and sexuality.

I experienced both sides of Freud's Oedipal Complex.⁴⁰ According to Freud, those born with a penis develop a sexual desire for their mother.⁴¹ Freud's psychoanalytic theory proposes that the male child goes through a phase where he experiences the Oedipus complex, which involves feelings of desire towards his mother and jealousy towards his father. This desire for the mother creates anxiety in the child, as he fears that his father will punish him for his desires by castrating him. This anxiety is known as castration anxiety, and it leads the child to identify with the father and adopt societal norms of masculinity and manhood. As the child adopts these gender roles and societal values, the id becomes repressed, and the superego begins to emerge.

³⁹ Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. W. Norton, 1905, pp. 85.

⁴⁰ Freud, Sigmund. *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*. Penguin Books, Limited, 1991.

⁴¹ Freud, Sigmund. "A Special Type of Choice of Object made by Men." *Contributions to the Psychology of Love*, 170. PDF.

The superego represents the internalization of societal and cultural values, which becomes a part of the individual's moral compass. This internalization is the result of the child's desire to avoid punishment and gain acceptance from authority figures, such as parents or societal norms.

In this way, the individual's superego becomes a reflection of the societal norms and ideologies that surround them, shaping their behavior and attitudes towards themselves and others.

Freud believed that the psychosexual development of females is characterized by the Electra complex, which involves a female's desire for her father and her jealousy of her mother. This desire is linked to the child's perception of the father as having the desirable phallus, which the girl lacks. As a result, the girl develops penis envy, a feeling of wanting a penis and feeling incomplete without one.

Turns out, I was a mix of these two frames. *Around the age of three, I became more and more infatuated with my father, which translated into an infatuation with my grandfather. I found their stern, unwavering emotions to be heroic. Also, at the same age I was repulsed when I accidentally walked in on my mother shaving her legs. That was the first time I witnessed a body like my own, and I was uncomfortable with it. I could finally identify the discomfort I felt when looking at my own body.*

Trigger Warning

My grandfather passed when I was four; he was a pivotal piece of the family and held my mother's side together. I remember being confused when he died, which resulted in a depressive state I hadn't experienced prior to this moment. I now realized what it meant to lose a family member and to never be able to see them again.

After several awkward encounters with my parents and the death of my Papa, I became more reserved, refused to wear dresses, and pulled away from my mother. I turned to my father and found comfort in acting as he did. I hid my emotions and began self-mutilating as a coping

mechanism. As a child, I had no idea what I was doing. Looking back, I now realize that I was attempting to rid myself of the pain I felt from never being able to obtain the body I desired, combined with mourning a loved one I'd never see again. As an affirmation of my ability to be masculine and restrain my pain from the rest of the world, I'd steal my father's razors, cut up my knees and pretend I'd fallen off a skateboard when anyone asked about my scrapes. I did this from age five to age eight, I later progressed to other forms of self-harm.

This time marks the first moment I recognized what it meant to be bound to the body into which you are born. The first time I acknowledged I could attempt to manipulate my flesh, but I'd never fulfill my unearthly expectations—the first time I consciously realized the effect the outside world (my superego) had on my id. I knew I was nonbinary and was in pain because I would never meet the bodily standards I had hoped for; I just didn't have the words for it yet.⁴²

Before this stage, my body was only an instrument for survival. I had no intentions beyond eating and fulfilling my libido. As I was introduced to reality and forced to navigate and operate on my own, my id was introduced to what I later define as my superego: the outside world and the bounds within which I lay.

⁴² One of the first time I fully acknowledged the ego in the physical world.



Figure 5.1 GETSAY. The Body is an object caught in between. glass cast of the artist's vaginal cavity, dismantled table, two-way mirror, faux leather, silver plated rings, silver plated grommets., 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY.

Tucked in the furthest left corner of the exhibition stands *The Body is an object caught in between (Fig 5.1)*, like a hidden relic waiting to be discovered. Built from glass and faux leather, it is a testament to my journey to find my identity in this binary world.

I began by casting the inside of my vaginal cavity with alginate, capturing the very essence of my being. A shadow of my vessel. A plaster appendage emerges from this mold, taking on a phallic form - a symbol of desire and empowerment. In this act, I transform my body into the appendage I have always longed for, reclaiming my sexuality and identity through this new sculptural form.

Simultaneously, by cherishing the body that was once a source of discomfort, I now see it through a new understanding and reverence for self. The faux leather and glass details speak to the complexities and fragility of the human body, gender, identity, and sexuality.



Figure 5.2GETSAY. The Body is an object caught in between, detail. glass cast of the artist's vaginal cavity, dismantled table, two-way mirror, faux leather, silver plated rings, silver plated grommets., 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta. Photograph by Getsay.

The Body is an object caught in between represents my journey through obstacles, setbacks, and moments of self-doubt to ultimately find self-acceptance in a world that does not validate my body and mind. I invite the viewer to contemplate the multifaceted nature of the human form and the significance of reclaiming and redefining one's own body in the process of self-discovery.

There was a lot of confusion growing up queer. I had no idea what it meant to be nonbinary. The only references I had were commentaries or documentaries on what it meant to be intersex. I had a lot of questions that I knew my parents had no knowledge of, so I never brought it up. All I knew and lived within was the Gender Binary.

The Gender Binary is a social construct ingrained in our lives from an early age. We are taught to view gender as a binary system, where individuals are categorized as either male or female based on their physical characteristics. This rigid binary framework is deeply embedded in language, culture, and institutions, shaping our perceptions and expectations of gender roles and expressions. However, the gender binary is not a universal or natural truth, but rather a social construct that has been imposed upon us. It limits our understanding of gender diversity and perpetuates harmful norms and expectations.

Gender diversity has existed for millennia, predating Western science. Imposing requirements like hormone therapy or surgery on transgender individuals to validate their gender identity erases cultural diversity and links back to the beginning of racism.

The notion of gender as natural and universal is a racialized aesthetic based on white masculinity and white femininity, and it does not hold true for all cultures and communities. White cis "womanhood" and cis "manhood" are often treated as the norm, while those who do not conform to these racial and gender norms are labeled as "non-conforming." The concept of "gender non-conformity" only exists because our bodies are evaluated and surveilled through a white gender and sex binary, a limited and narrow cultural definition of masculinity and femininity associated with whiteness.⁴³ I am white. I am trans. I have privilege. It is important to dissect our own histories, our ancestors, and the ways in which they have harmed generations of

⁴³ Alok. "Nonbinary Isn't New." Alok V. Menon, 5 July 2019, <https://www.alokvmenon.com/blog/2019/7/5/non-binary-isnt-new>.

people directly and indirectly. The classification of gender is only one of the many many ways white people have hurt other communities.

5.2 Latency Stage: Six Years Old to Puberty

Following the Phallic Stage comes the Latency Stage: between the ages of six and puberty. *This portion of my life was about sports, friends, and getting out of the house, a time when I suppressed the depression and anxiety I was feeling. Instead of vocalizing my pain, I internalized it by self-mutilating.*

Elementary school was a blur after my grandfather died. It wasn't until fifth grade that I came out of the fog and started searching for the new me. This venture began, as all creative awakenings do, with music and making art. I started singing, writing my feelings on anything I could get my hands on, and painting. I listened to music to which my parents objected and frequented the goth dream store at the mall: Hot Topic. I wore black clothes, listened to heavier music, and hid the self I was discovering. I made friends with several people around the neighborhood and even had a best friend. My ego was forming around my discoveries of self (returning to my id) and the limitations my parents created.

At this time, I searched for ways of coping. I navigated toward others who felt as I did. To keep up my appearance for my parents, I made friends with the girls in the neighborhood. They were everything my parents wanted me to be hyper-feminine, active at school, and they even worshiped Jesus.

Then there was my best friend. She was gorgeous, and I thought she held the sky. She wore black nail polish, Hollister camis, and at least two studded belts at-all-times. I was obsessed with her "I don't give a fuck" attitude juxtaposed with her bashful femininity. I wanted

that. She was on the cusp of the alternative scene, and I was slowly submerging myself into this new culture. I hadn't ever experienced anything like it. For the sake of privacy, I'll call her Sky.

Sky lived in the neighborhood one street over from mine, so close my parents would often let me walk there.

Sky had two parents who loved each other, four grandparents, a younger sister, and several cats. Her parents respected her boundaries, she saw her grandparents weekly, and her sister looked up to her. She had everything I wanted and more. We were close, I was at her house every few days and slept over almost every week. We slept in the same bed, cuddled, and told each other how much we meant to the other. I had never experienced that level of intimacy with anyone before and the confusion consumed me. Alongside these feelings, we talked about boys, and imagined how our first sexual experiences with boys would be. We pictured the families we would have when we were older. We even planned to have kids close in age so our lives would be completely aligned: we'd never have a reason to be apart.

I loved her, but I couldn't understand anything past that. The only relationships I knew about were heterosexual. I was a child of god, and so was she. All I wanted was to be with her. If I couldn't be with Sky, I'd settle for a guy who would attempt to love me half as much as she did. We were young and looking for new experiences. Sky and I started attending bible concerts, the alt-christian teen thing to do at that time. My parents were all for the concerts; I was still dressing in all black, but at least I was worshiping god.

My tenth birthday happened and puberty slowly crept in. As Sky and I spent more and more time at the church concerts, we started to meet people. While my curiosity and excitement were piqued by these new encounters, I still longed to always have Sky beside me.

Then the Sunday night concert happened. It wasn't exceptional in any way except for the fact that it was the first time I laid eyes on Billy. He was 6'4", fifteen, a christian, and goth. I was instantly rendered speechless, yet somehow Billy saw beyond my awkwardness. He told me everything I'd ever hoped to hear from a crush. He saw me for who I was then: a lost preteen with no direction, simply wanting to be loved. This encounter progressed into what I later identified as my first "romantic" relationship. Billy was fifteen, and I was ten. I didn't see anything wrong with the age difference, and I was happy to be with someone who accepted me.

As I got to know this boy, we exchanged poems, music, and talked about our plans to be together. As things progressed with Billy, my relationship with Sky suffered. I still saw her, but it felt uneasy. She stopped being affectionate towards me and often made me feel ashamed of my relationship with Billy. In hindsight, I see she was being a friend and concerned for my well-being.

Every person has a picture of what their "first time" will be like. In the southern baptist christian world, sex does not exist before marriage, sex is not for pleasing the female body, and sex only happens for reproductive purposes. Romance films portray the first time as a fairy-tale: flower petals on satin sheets and both participants as innocent virgins. Pornography made sex seem transactional only one objective —make the penis cum. My preteen brain was confused by each of these depictions and had so many questions. But because I was a christian child and sex was seen as a sin outside of marriage, I kept my thoughts and questions to myself.

I started researching porn on my parents' computer, determining what role I would play. Then Billy and I made a plan: I'd pretend to sleep over at Sky's house, he'd come to pick me up, we'd drive to the spot, and it would happen.

Trigger Warning

That plan was never executed. My parents soon found out about this newly sixteen-year-old boy pursuing an eleven-year-old and immediately forbade me from seeing him. At the time, I resented them for keeping me from Billy. I did everything I could to defy them, and I saw him despite their wishes. They'd always attempted to control who I was and what I did, and now they had a valid reason to do so.

Then it happened. Burned into my memory like a bad dream that plays over and over but makes even less sense than the time before. It was a cold day. I came home from school, told my parents I was going to Sky's house, and hurried out the door. Instead, I detoured to the woods behind Sky's house. A Wal-Mart occupied the adjacent property.

Wandering through the woods, I saw Billy in the distance. Stepping through the overgrown grass, I barely noticed I was walking over food wrappers and piles of clothing. As I continued, I realized I was trampling through a person's home; someone was living in those woods. I started to feel uneasy with the situation but accepted it as okay because Billy told me he loved me. It was okay because he told me he loved me.

When I finally approached Billy, he was lying on a small comforter against a tree. With a big smile, he asked if I wanted to lie down beside him.

I remember my internal monologue fighting against itself and ultimately concluding that my first time didn't have to be perfect, but at this point, it was inevitable.

I remember it hurt, and I remember at the end being concerned that I'd get pregnant or, even worse, be forced to do it again. After that moment, everything seemed to spiral out of control. I'd entered a new realm and wasn't sure if I'd ever be able to leave it.



Figure 5.3 GETSAY. A monument for the boy I lost my virginity to. Lustre print of location where artist lost their virginity, Walmart cart from same location, dirt from same location, rubbish from same location, satin linens, lace accented materials., 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Ross Landenberg.

I glorified Billy. At age eleven, I glorified the ideology around what it meant to have sex for the first time.

A monument for the boy I lost my virginity to (Fig.5.2), is an altar to this moment in my personal history. My intention for this piece was to convey to the viewer the sensation of reflecting and analyzing the choices made by my younger self.

There was no better way to juxtapose my infatuation with a boy I hardly knew than to contrast it with the love my parents always hoped I'd have for Jesus Christ.

With a stolen Walmart cart and dirt from the spot where I first had sex, I constructed a shrine in honor of the boy who took my virginity. The memory of the person who takes your virginity leaves an indelible mark, like a painful pedestal that forever sits in the back of your mind.

As the viewer approaches the installation, the first thing they encounter is the soil from the exact spot where I lost my virginity. To access the work, one must traverse over scattered objects that seem to be frozen in time, capturing the moments that preceded my loss of virginity like artifacts in a time capsule. Amidst the scattered debris, a meticulously reconstructed stolen Walmart cart occupies the center, drawing the viewer's attention like a magnet. It serves as a reference to the iconic Walmart sign, with its bold letters and familiar blue and yellow colors. The moment I lost my virginity is an inescapable memory that lingers with me to this day. Every time I come across a shopping cart, see a bag, or hear someone mention Walmart, I am reminded of that day and all the weight it carries.

Inside the Walmart cart lay satin sheets, symbolizing Billy's awkward attempt to make the occasion feel romantic. As one's gaze travels upwards from the base of the cart, they will come face to face with a hauntingly beautiful six-foot-four Lustre photographic print of the very

tree against which I was propped up during my first sexual encounter. The print is artificially enhanced, with vivid colors that make it stand out, and it is the same height Billy was when I lost my virginity. Draped over the massive print are white lace curtains, serving as a reminder of my loss of innocence and the veil of uncertainty that surrounded it.

The draped lace curtains surrounding the photographic print not only symbolize the loss of innocence but also reference the veil draped over Jesus Christ by Mary Magdalene after his crucifixion. The print of the tree is rolled on a scroll to represent the unfolding and folding of memory, narrative, and the passage of time.

In addition to the deeply personal and conceptual meaning behind the piece, it also serves as a direct reference to the Washington Monument. The towering size of the six-foot-four photographic print, coupled with the use of a monumental print alludes to the iconic national monument.



Figure 5.4 “Washington Monument Reopens After 2011 Earthquake.” BostonGlobe.com, 12 May 2014, www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2014/05/12/washington-monument-reopens-after-earthquake/7FWbZpx8fY8QVfYfmSFseO/story.html.

The Washington Monument (fig. 5.3) was the first artistic representation of a phallic object I encountered outside of the depiction of an actual penis. The structure is made of marble, granite and blue stoneogenesis. It is the world’s tallest stone structure and the world’s tallest obelisk, standing at 555 inches.⁴⁴ I built *A monument for the boy I lost my virginity to*, to reflect my skewed understanding of love, and the impact a portion of my superego (Billy) had on the decisions of my ego.

⁴⁴ National Park Service. "Washington Monument: History and Culture." National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/wamo/learn/historyculture/index.htm>.

Most people decide at some point that it is better... 'to be enthralled with what is impoverished or abusive than not to be enthralled at all and so to lose the condition of one's being and becoming.' I'm glad not to be there right now, but I'm also glad to have been there, to know how it is.⁴⁵

We've all had these moments, and that moment was mine.

5.3 Genital Stage: Puberty to Adulthood

Losing my virginity sparked my Genital Stage. Freud argues this time is one of experimentation, heterosexual pleasure through intercourse, and sexual perversions.⁴⁶ I was just entering puberty when I experienced each of these for the first time.

I was twelve years old when I had my first period. I was terrified. I remember thinking: if I have sex, am I going to bleed on the penis? It was a weird moment to realize that my body could do things out of my control, and I wasn't okay with it. I began shaving my legs and wearing more makeup, preventing anyone who looked at me from seeing me as anything but hyper-feminine. I still wore all black, but now my clothes accentuated my chest and made my waist smaller. I was obsessed with having the "perfect body," or at least the one my parents and Billy wanted me to have.

I was becoming someone else. I wanted to live up to the expectations of my superego, which consisted of my parent's ideals, god's image, and the lustful standards of the teen boy with whom I was infatuated. I became needy and confused and internalized my feelings. The depression spiral started again.

****Trigger Warning****

⁴⁵ Nelson, Maggie. *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press, 2015, p. 102.

⁴⁶ Freud, Sigmund. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." *Standard Edition*, vol. 7, 1905, pp. 123-246.

When this happened, I turned to my old ways of coping; I started harming different parts of my body; bingeing and purging, taking pills, and attempting suicide a few times.

The pit of depression grew deeper until, one night, I'd had enough. I'd thought about suicide and attempted it, but this time was different. I took a fresh razor from my father's drawer, cut out the small blades inside, and began carving into my skin. I didn't stop until there was blood everywhere, so much I was nervous that I'd make a mess. I began wiping up my arms and body, and as I was doing this, I came back to consciousness. I started thinking about my best friend, Sky. I started thinking about how devastating it would be for her if I died, and I remembered that her cousin had killed himself. I couldn't do that to her. I snapped out of it, but I feared what I had done. Was this the end? I put on a long sleeve shirt, balled up the pain-soaked towels, hid them inside of the cabinet under the sink, walked down the stairs outside, and yelled that I was taking the dog to pee. When I reached the bottom of the deck outside, I started running until I was out of breath. As I caught my breath, I knew where I had to go.



Figure 5.5 GETSAY. Split to the bone. Cast glass of a synthetic fibered towel cut in two, red velvet, salvaged mid-century cupboard., 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Ross Landenberg.

More than a decade later, I remember the details vividly — the color of the bathroom floor as my DNA stained it, the towels I used to mop it up, and the cupboard where I tried to hide the evidence of the act. These fragments serve as a reminder of the intensity of that moment, and the lasting impact it has had on me. By bringing these details to life through the work, I capture the essence of the experience and communicate it in a way that is both personal and universal. As a reclamation of the body, I wanted to destroy that night, I built *Split to the bone* (fig.5.4). When I first approached this piece, I wanted to show the emotional pain behind the act of harming yourself without relying on a representation of the body. I wasn't interested in what that looked like on the flesh, but rather how it felt in my experience. I searched for what that meant because the version of myself I was now attempting to make work about no longer existed. I am a completely different person. However, the darkness will always exist.

Approaching this artwork, I couldn't help but reflect on my earlier work and its relationship to Catherine Opie's piece *Self-Portrait/Cutting* from 1993 (fig.5.5). Opie's work had a profound impact on my perspective of self and art as separate entities. The pain and respect I felt for her piece resonated with me deeply, and I began to understand how a single act —an act that could never be recreated —could become a work of art in itself.

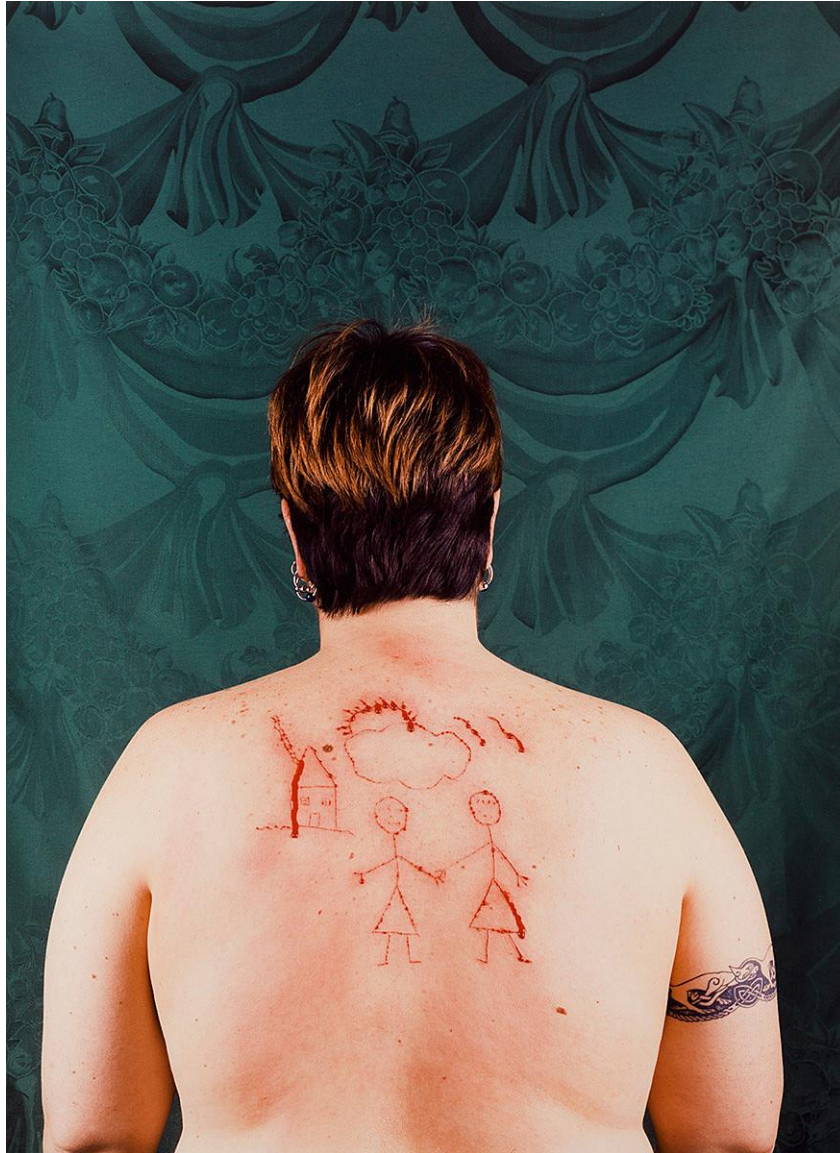


Figure 5.6 Opie, Catherine. Self-Portrait/Cutting. 1993, Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Opie's piece challenged traditional notions of self-portraiture, as well as the boundaries between art and life. Similarly, my own artwork seeks to blur these boundaries, using personal experience as a way to explore broader cultural and societal themes. Through this process, I hope to create a deeper connection with my audience, as well as a greater understanding of the world around me.

Split to the bone embodies the mortality I felt in that moment, as well as the immortality I now feel after surviving it. This contradiction is a central theme in my work, as I seek to grapple with the complex emotions and experiences that arise from traumatic events.

Through art, I challenge conventional morality and explore how our personal encounters shape our perception of the world. Using my own experiences as a lens to examine societal issues, I aim to foster empathy and understanding in my audience, encouraging them to engage with these matters in a profound and meaningful manner.

I think a lot in snapshots of existence, fragments of memory or scenes. I wanted to create a physical representation and stand-in for this moment in time. When I think about this moment, I often blur out details past the pile and the more triggering images. Like Pandora's box I channel the memory into the base of this sculpture. A real body evokes the thought of mortality and a suicidal reference even more, becoming a picture of transience. The imprint of such a traumatic event creates a wedge between the body's physical manifestation and the spiritual unconscious. The body becomes recognized as that alone so strongly when mortality seems inevitable.

I thought about what was more beautiful, more mortal, than anything else I've experienced within this life so far. I thought about the ball of towels holding the puddle of blood I wiped from my limbs. That was the very moment I felt the most mortal, bound to the body, and as my ego.



Figure 5.7 Split to the bone, detail. Cast glass of a synthetic fibered towel cut in two, red velvet, salvaged mid-century cupboard., 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY.

The use of glass has become a significant element in my work. I have developed a deep affinity for this material and its properties, as it can break and reform through heat, much like the fragility and resilience of the human experience.

Although I don't possess any physical elements from that fateful day, I used the image of a towel as a symbol of the moment. I worked with glass artist Lisa Schnellinger, to create a mold of a small towel in plaster, which we then split in half to represent the pain and fragmentation of the memory. Finally, we cast the structure in clear glass, giving it a transparent and ephemeral quality.

The glass structure was then placed inside a wooden cupboard, with the doors ajar and on a long velvet drape like the textiles placed on the pulpit during communion Sunday, symbolizing the son of god and the parallel relationship between my ego and my body.



Figure 5.8 Baldaccini, César. "César Masquee XXIII." 1968, cloth, polyurethane, 45.5 x 45.5 x 10.5 cm.

Sculptor César Baldaccini's work has always captivated me, evoking admiration, and annoyance with his penchant for crushing items and folding works. However, *Masque XIII* (fig. 5.6) holds a certain level of respect for me and has become a gesture toward it in *Split to the bone*. In 1968, César created imprints of his face that he later molded in sheets of plastic, distorting them before casting them in bronze.

At the opening of the *'Tete-a-tetes'* exhibition at Galerie Creuzevault in Paris in 1973, he cast loaves of bread from the original mold and fed them to the visitors.⁴⁷ This display drew a direct comparison between the body of the artist and the body of christ, highlighting how both become sacrificial offerings.

Combined with the simplicity of Tulio pinto complicity vector #04, creating the link between the ego, the son of god, and the body.

Finally, I reached Sky's door and rang the doorbell several times. Her younger sister answered, and I asked her where Sky was. "In her room," she replied. I ran up the stairs and began sobbing in Sky's arms. Her arms were all I needed. Sky's mother interrupted and asked me to come to her bedroom. When I walked in, she immediately asked me to roll up my sleeves. "You already know what is there," I replied. Right after saying this, the phone began to ring. It was my mother: she realized I'd run away and knew I'd be with Sky. I was anxious and nervous about what she was going to say.

Sky's mom let her know that I was there and that it was in my best interest that I be seen by a doctor as soon as possible. My mother replied, "Our insurance won't cover it." Our insurance won't cover it. Sky's mom didn't accept that answer and told my mom that she would drive me to the ER herself.

I climbed into the back of their minivan and held onto Sky's lap as we rode to the closest hospital. I entered the waiting room and sat down against a wall, hoping to be invisible as my parents walked in the door and approached the counter. I overheard them frantically asking to see me, and when they realized I was sitting just behind them, I told them I didn't want to be

⁴⁷ Warr, Tracey and Amelia Jones. *The Artist's Body*. Phaidon Press Ltd, 2000, p. 6.

anywhere near them. The only person I wanted was Sky. The nurse admitted me to a room; it was just Sky and me. I was okay as long as she held my hand.

*The Doctor poured iodine into my arm,
and Sky kept holding my hand.*

*The Doctor bandaged me up,
and Sky kept holding my hand.*

*The Doctor recited the suicide survey,
and Sky kept holding my hand.*

I had her comfort, but my heart was racing. I'd attempted to kill myself before, but this time I had to confront my parents.

After the survey, the doctor left the room and spoke with my parents. When he returned, my parents were with him. As I held onto Sky's hand, they presented me with a choice: either be admitted to an institution that night or go to Riverfront⁴⁸ the following day for an in-depth evaluation. I exclaimed that all I wanted was to sleep at Sky's house; I'd do whatever they asked in the morning. They promised I could at least have that. With the promise sitting in the back of my head, Sky's hand securely gripped, we all left the hospital together. Then the truth emerged: I was forced to go home with my parents instead of Sky. I felt betrayed.

She let go of my hand, and the rest of the night was a blur. I remember closing my eyes and then waking up with an overwhelming sense of dread as my father told me it was time to get up and meet the day.

⁴⁸ For privacy I will refer to "The Behavioral Healthcare Institution" as Riverfront



Figure 5.9 GETSAY. Ode to Sky. color transparency positive of the sky above the artist's first queer love, glass mirror, cement, resin, water, surveillance mirror, 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Ross Landenberg.

Pacing through this memory I immediately realized Sky would have to be a part of the show. She was my first queer love.

Ode to Sky took a long time to create; I was nervous about its meaning and how to execute it. I knew that by creating this piece, I was immortalizing the love I once had for Sky,

which became more daunting than saying it in words. If expressed physically, I'd be bound to that representation for life. I was scared. A piece of art couldn't do everything I wanted it to—it needed to be beautiful but agonizing in the simplest of ways. Sky was my first love, and that moment gave me a great understanding of what true love was and could be. Relationships don't always exist in a traditional, heterosexual, patriarchal way. Not all relationships need physical touch or even verbal acknowledgment of their existence. Sometimes relationships exist inside of an unspoken promise between two people.

The sky is a common subject in art, portrayed in paintings, drawings, and photographs. However, none of these medias alone could capture the depth of emotion she brought me or what it meant to hold her hand in the ER and let go as I entered one of the most frightening periods of my life.

Sky's love cleansed me. She had a way of filling me completely while never even saying a word. I wanted that to show in this work.

Directly across from *A monument for the boy I lost my virginity to* sits *Ode to Sky*, an intentional placement referencing their proximity in physical location and their duality in my memory. Behind Sky's childhood home are woods, and within those woods is the tree where I lost my virginity.

As the viewer walks through the dirt of *A monument for the boy, I lost my virginity to*, they approach a large cement vessel weighing over two hundred pounds, resembling a sidewalk puddle combined with a wishing well, and sized to my body. Looking down into the structure, the viewer sees a reflectively iridescent photograph of the sky above Sky's childhood home. The reflective quality allows the viewer to see themselves within the sky. When they look up, they

see their reflection in a domed surveillance mirror, creating a separation between their body and the sky in the image.

This reflection alludes to when I ran away, stopped, and gazed up at the sky while escaping from a suicide attempt, as mentioned in *Split to the bone*. It also symbolizes the profound love and admiration I felt simply by being in Sky's presence. The surveillance mirror encircling the structure serves as a poignant reminder of the superego that once told me my actions were wrong as a young queer and the devastating moment when I had to let go of Sky's hand at the ER.



Figure 5.10 GETSAY. Still from Ode to Sky Performance, 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga.

The vessel transformed into a performative sculpture as I poured water into it during the second day of the exhibition in front of an audience. Its original intention was to exist in solitude. However, I felt compelled to activate it to express my gratitude to Sky for everything she had

given me, particularly the cherished memory that had helped me endure that moment and all the years that followed.

The relationship with Sky was my first experience with unearthly expectations, Queer abundance, and it illuminated a previously unnoticed portion of my superego. Ode to Sky, symbolizes the validity and vulnerability of Queer love and admiration and the unwavering presence of the holy spirit during that period of my life.

I thought the running away, the attempt, and the ER were all part of a nightmare, but I was sorely mistaken. My parents rushed me out the door and into the car. I'd forgotten the promise I'd made the night before. But because they broke theirs, I thought I could also break mine. That wasn't the case. We were on our way to the state psychiatric institution.

We arrived at the stale hospice-esque facility. I entered the main room, which I'd later understand to be the presentation room; the only area the guests were allowed to see. When I arrived, the nurse practitioners asked me the standard questions for a person admitted due to a suicide attempt. Shortly after the interrogation, my parents left and told me I'd be spending my afternoon at the facility. I was unexpectedly okay with this decision. The day was easy; I joined a group talk, hung out in the gym, and spoke with the psychologist. I didn't realize that the conversation I had with the doctor would determine the next course of events. As the day progressed, I asked when I'd be leaving, and the staff told me "later" each time.

As night approached and outpatient clients were leaving for the day, I looked around and asked when my parents were coming to pick me up. My stomach sank as the words left my mouth. The room became fuzzy, and I felt like cotton balls were deep inside my ears. The staff member replied, "You will stay the night with us."

I was frantic but able to calm myself down. Immediately after breaking the news, the staff declared that I needed to remove certain clothing items because they didn't align with the institution's policies. My clothes were a suicide risk. I couldn't wear my shoes because they had shoelaces. I couldn't wear my belt because I might hang myself with it. I couldn't wear my jacket because I might cut myself with the zipper. I couldn't wear my shirt because it had a graphic that was forbidden by their regulations. I was left with only a pair of baggy jeans that fell off my body. They had temporary clothes for me: a white long-sleeve shirt and a pair of sweatpants without a drawstring. I was living my actual nightmare. First stripped of my autonomy and then the last morsel of my identity, my clothing.

Riverfront became the next piece of my superego.

I spiraled. I couldn't control my emotions, and I blacked out. I woke up with a scream-scorched throat in a white room. It felt like the depictions of heaven from films: eye-piercingly bright, iridescent, all-consuming but simultaneously ominous light. They'd placed me in solitary confinement. I spent what felt like forever in there, so I became extremely familiar with the space. Touch and smell became critical senses because of the blinding light. The walls felt like they were completely connected to the floor; there was no differentiation between the two. They were padded but firm in an unsettling way, and the room smelled sweet with a hint of rust. Was this how Jesus felt being carried from the cross into the tomb? Woken from a slumber in unexplainable pain and confusion, greeted with an unfamiliar space that encompassed all vision?

I was finally released from the room after what felt like three days. When I returned to the common area, I was notified that I'd be forced to remain in the program until the doctor felt I was fit to leave.

I was put on a strict schedule: wake up, eat breakfast with the other patients in the common room, attend the first meeting of the day, have physical activity hours, lunch, and then if it was my day to meet with the psychologist, I'd have my appointment with him. I always looked forward to that day. I wanted to pick the brain of the person who held power over me. I believed I could trick them into letting me out.

Every meeting turned out the same. I left thinking it went well, I told the complete truth, and in my mind, that meant I was destined to leave. I'd wait for their verdict, and then come nightfall, I was gifted a new medication and sent back to sleep on the same mattress.

Sleeping was weird and uncomfortable. My whole time at Riverfront, I never slept in a bedroom. It was always the goal, but it never happened. I remained on suicide watch the entire time. "Suicide watch" had different levels, but all revolved around the placement of your mattress. The first level is the one you enter in with and the most severe, meaning you are at the most risk for attempting to kill yourself. The room is filled with several levels but sectioned off according to the distance from the desk where four-night nurses sat. As you are confirmed by the doctor to be less of a suicide risk, you move to the next level further and further from the watcher's desk. The final level is a bedroom with one other person, lights turned off, and a monitor checking if you are breathing every four hours.

I never graduated from the first three levels of suicide watch. I'm not sure how long it would've taken me to get to the final level. My time at Riverview was cut short because my parents couldn't afford my treatment. My mother was right, our insurance didn't cover it. I left with a new diagnosis and an understanding that money can attempt to stabilize your mental health but that doesn't repair the relationship you have with your parents.

As I retreated into the real world, I reconnected with the foundation of my superego. My parents, the church, and a new form of schooling. Leaving Riverfront, my parents placed me in a homeschooling program with other students. Sky attended the homeschool with me, and we were kicked out within the first two weeks. We spoke a lot about free thought and different religions and brought a Satanic Bible in one day. We brought the book in on a Friday and were released from the program that Monday.

After this, I was told I could never see Sky again. We were too much for the rest of the world. I knew one day I'd lose her but didn't realize it'd be so soon. The loss of her caused me to completely dismiss Billy. I had no reason to care for him anymore. He was a placeholder for the physical intimacy I longed for from Sky. Now that I acknowledged this, I didn't want to perform this act of fallacy with him.

Then, I entered a mentorship program.

6 ANAMNESIS (WALKING THROUGH MEMORY)

Sculpturally *The Beginning* ends here. However, the work continues before the audience can witness the second act of the exhibition: *The End*.

Reflecting on the purpose of my passage through my psychosexual development stages, I am reminded of the labor and heartache that led me to create *Split to the bone*. I acknowledge the relationships, the challenges, and the perseverance that shaped me into the person I am today and enabled me to embody myself fully. While I do this in reverberated tones, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's definition of what it means to be *Queer* plays in my ear:

Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive - recurrent, eddying, troublant.
what it takes - all it takes - to make the description "queer" a true one is the impulsion to

use it in the first person.,” and that the use of “queer” about oneself carries a different meaning than when used to describe someone else.⁴⁹

These words resonate deeply with me as I realize that my identity has always been present but constantly evolving. Understanding the origin of my development and the role that queerness has played in my life has allowed me to decipher the inner workings of my psyche. The concept of unapologetically existing as yourself seems simple, but it is a challenge that some people spend their whole life working towards or never even reaching. I feel empowered and privileged to embrace my identity and journey for all that it is.

I found that within Freud's lens of psychoanalysis, my development stages were ultimately guided by my superego: which consisted of the church and the expectations of my parents and society. As a result, I became a stifled version of the person I was always destined to be. I discovered that my id is rooted in pleasure and the impulse to fulfill my wants and needs and, more specifically, survive daily while I submit to a subconscious erotic intuition.

I now understand that I am undoubtedly connected to religion and ritual, and this connection may be a product of conditioning or a natural inclination to seek meaning in adversity. As someone who has always been drawn to romance and the performing arts, the story of Jesus' crucifixion has always felt theatrical and deeply emotional.

Growing up in the church I witnessed a ritualistic performance every week during the service. I remember being mesmerized by the choir gowns, the call and response chant, and the days of holy communion. A space for the community to act out some of the deepest desires and affirmations of their soul. I was intrigued that the original context of religion was “made up of a series of acts and observances... [it] did not exist for the sake of saving souls but for the

⁴⁹ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press, 1990.

preservation and welfare of society.”⁵⁰ The church I grew up in along with several others deviated from that origin and became a product of the human mind and a primitive way of reasoning.⁵¹

7 THE ARTIST AND PERFORMANCE: MY FOUNDATION

For centuries, performance and the act of performing have been present in various forms, such as religion, ritual, theatre, and dance. However, it was in the 1960s that performance gained recognition as a subject of theoretical study.⁵² Boris Nieslony has gathered over 130 definitions of performance encompassing many elements of human existence, such as ethnography, cultural narratives, political statements, autobiography, consciousness, psychoanalysis, and identity.⁵³ During the inaugural Performance Studies conference in New York, Dwight Conquergood characterized performance as "existing in the borders and margins of life."⁵⁴

The terms performative and performativity were developed by philosophers such as J.L. Austin⁵⁵ and Judith Butler. Butler defined "performative" within *speech act theory* a discursive practice that enacts or produces what it names.⁵⁶ One of the earliest instances of performance art

⁵⁰ Smith, William Robertson. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*. 1889. KTAV Publishing House, 1969, pp. 28-29.

⁵¹ Ackermann, Robert. "Frazer on Myth and Ritual." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1975, pp. 117-130. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2708898. Accessed 2 April 2023.

⁵² Goldberg, Roselle. "Performance Art from Futurism to the Present." PACI, p. 92.

⁵³ Nieslony, Boris. "Performance and Chaos." Inaugural Performance Conference New York 1995, organized by Franklin Furnace Archive, 1995.

⁵⁴ Conquered, Dwight. "The Institutional Future of the Field." *Performance Art Conference of the Institute*, 1st Annual, p. 15. PACI.

⁵⁵ Austin believed language is a way of performing actions and exerting power, not just describing the world. He introduced "performative utterances" to describe statements that bring about an occurrence through speaking, such as a judge pronouncing a couple married. Austin saw language as having the power to transform the world and sought to show how it shapes our understanding and ability to act.

⁵⁶ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

discussed in print was Jacques Donguy's article about Vito Aconci titled "Art and the Artist, May 1970."⁵⁷

My performance foundation is rooted in the core concepts of the First Surrealist Manifesto by André Breton, which highlights the importance of exploring what goes on in the mind without conscious control, moral or aesthetic goals.⁵⁸ This approach allows for improvisation and free association, as modernized by John Cage with works such as *4'33"*. This piece featured a pianist sitting at a piano and instructed not to play, and whatever the audience hears is still categorized as music.⁵⁹

As I delved deeper into the realm of art, I found myself drawn to performance art that diverged from the principles of Conceptual art. While conceptual art, epitomized by Allan Kaprow's happenings⁶⁰ and Joseph Beuys' ideas of "extended definition of art"⁶¹ and "social sculpture," sought to shape society and politics, my interests took a different direction. I was captivated by transgressive art, which had the power to shock, challenge societal norms, and completely upend conventional ideas.

One example that left a lasting impression on me was Vito Acconci's 1971 piece: *Seedbed*.⁶² In this performance, Acconci lay hidden beneath the floorboards of a gallery, engaging in sexual fantasies and vocalizing them to the visitors above. It was a provocative exploration of

⁵⁷ "Art and the Artist." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 28, no. 3, Spring 1970, pp. 399-405.

⁵⁸ The core concepts of the First Surrealist Manifesto, written by André Breton and published in 1924, include: Surrealism is a means of reuniting the conscious and unconscious realms of experience to create a higher reality, which Breton calls "sur-reality." "Imagination is central to this process, and Surrealism seeks to tap into the unconscious mind to reveal new ways of seeing and experiencing the world. The power of language and literature is critical to the Surrealist project, as it can unlock the potential of the imagination and reveal hidden truths about us and society.

Surrealism seeks to challenge conventional morality and social norms and liberate individuals from the constraints of society and rational thought. The Surrealist project is ongoing and open-ended and seeks to create a new way of life that is more authentic and creative than existing norms and structures.

⁵⁹ Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2013.

⁶⁰ Kaprow, Allan. *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*. Harry N. Abrams, 1966.

⁶¹ Beuys' "extended definition of art" is outlined in his 1967 essay "I Am Searching for Field Character."

⁶² Morris, Catherine. *Seedbed: The Art of Vito Acconci*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

sexuality, voyeurism, and the boundaries of art, pushing the envelope of what was considered acceptable in a gallery setting.

Another artist who profoundly influenced my performance path was Gina Pane and her 1973 work *The Conditioning*.⁶³ In this performance, Pane positioned herself on a steel frame suspended above multiple burning flames, enduring physical pain as she challenged the limits of her body and the audience's perception of art. It was a bold statement on endurance, sacrifice, and the relationship between the artist's body and the artwork.

Each of these artists sparked a sense of courage and rebellion in me. They made me realize art's potential to disrupt and reshape societal conventions.

7.1 Freud and the Performative

Freud did not specifically write about performance art, as it emerged after his lifetime. However, his theories of the unconscious and the artist's role in exploring and expressing the unconscious can be applied to understanding the role of performance art in contemporary culture.⁶⁴

One of Freud's key ideas was that the unconscious mind is a reservoir of repressed desires, fears, and conflicts inaccessible to conscious awareness. From this perspective, the artist's role is to access and explore these unconscious impulses and bring them to the surface through creative expression.

Performance art, emphasizing embodied experience and the immediacy of the present moment, is a particularly effective way to access and express these unconscious impulses. Through performance, artists can create a space for themselves and their audiences to explore the

⁶³ Goldberg, RoseLee. *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*. Revised and expanded edition, Thames & Hudson, 2011.

⁶⁴ Freud, Sigmund. "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Strachey, vol. 9, Hogarth Press, 1959, pp. 141-153.

darker aspects of the human experience, including subjects related to sexuality, violence, and death. According to Freud, the artist serves as a cultural mediator, translating unconscious desires and conflicts into socially acceptable forms of expression.

Art has always pushed limits, but I was interested in pushing the limits of my psyche. I was interested in finding ways for my desires to manifest more prominently in my life.

I knew I had to come as close to reality as possible to achieve this. That meant to create change; I had to commit to the uncomfortable. For my id to dominate the realm, I had to get so close to reality that the lines between performance and actuality blurred.

I questioned this ability. *Is it possible to fully integrate one's mind so the id takes full consciousness, dominates the superego, and supersedes the ego? Is there a method to get to the core of the id?* I've tapped into pieces of my id through my art journey and performance before. Though I did not always acknowledge it – my id has always hoped for complete dominance and has shown itself throughout my work. Through unconscious ritual, sexual autonomy, and dominance, I explore the actual wants of my id. By re-contextualizing my trauma, violence, and disobedience, I explore what happens when there is id tension. When I tap into an entirely unconscious state within performance and allow my id to take total control, I become my own God.

7.2 Performance becomes the manifestation of actuality

I am heavily influenced by the origins of performance work while simultaneously acknowledging that all things grow from a vantage point. As I delved deeper into the works of artists who pushed beyond societal norms and tested their limits, my fascination with transgressive performance art grew. Interestingly, I had been creating performance work before knowing who Marina Abramović was; prior to grad school, I had never heard performance in an

academic setting. My understanding of performance art grew significantly during grad school, and I was introduced to transgression. Developed in postmodernism by authors such as G. Bataille, M. Blanchot, and M. Foucault, transgression refers to breaking the law or moral rule. It involves transcending the limits of what is considered normal or acceptable, and as Foucault notes, it is "a gesture that addresses itself to the limit."⁶⁵⁶⁶This newfound understanding enabled me to cultivate a deep appreciation for transgressive art and the works of artists like Hannah Wilke, Tracey Rose, Ana Mendieta, and CASSILS. Their provocative pieces challenged my preconceived notions of what art could entail and compelled me to probe the limits of acceptability in my own work.

⁶⁵ "The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact. It does not touch anyone in particular. Almost everyone escapes. But we can no longer live in the world. At the bottom of the disaster, we remain as silent as we were before, because that silence is all our words. This is no longer an experience of the individual; it is that of human beings as such. A gesture that touches on the limit, an extreme tension, is needed to face such a paradox."

⁶⁶ Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster*. University of Nebraska Press, 1995.



Figure 7.1 Intra-Venus Series Triptych, 1992-3 Performalist Self-Portrait with Donald Goddard three chromagenic supergloss prints 26 x 39 1/2 inches each. Copyright Donald Goddard. Courtesy Donald and Helen Goddard and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

My first love in art was Hannah Wilke, known for her provocative sculptures, photographs, and performances. However, her series *"Intra-Venus"* (1991-93) truly captivated me. In this series, Wilke documented her body throughout her battle with lymphoma, offering a vulnerable and intimate glimpse into the life and death of a woman.

In contrast to her earlier nude photographs, which exuded youthful confidence and coy sexuality, this series was shot in color and depicted the harsh reality of chemotherapy. Wilke photographed her gauze, her IV drip, and the purple veins that ran through her skin. Even her once-luxurious hair was reduced to wisps by the treatment, and she eventually shaved it off and

photographed a lock of it. Even in the end, Wilke wanted to give all of herself to her work. I was stunned; that devotion was akin to what I had initially felt for art.



Figure 7.2 Rose, Tracey. Span II. 1997. Digital print in pigment inks on 100% cotton rag paper, 65x91cm. Private collection, Johannesburg. Image courtesy Dan Brown, United Kingdom, & the artist.

Tracey Rose was my second love. She opened my eyes to surveillance and sculptural performance. In 1997, Rose presented her performance art pieces, *Span I*, and *Span II*, at the

second Johannesburg Biennial.⁶⁷ These works featured Rose's naked body, with a shaved head, displayed in a locked glass case for viewers to observe. As she sat on a television set, Rose knitted her hair. The television showed a close-up view of a reclining nude woman, a common trope in classical art history where the painter's model offers up her body for public consumption. However, by presenting her body in this manner and sitting on a stereotypical representation of women in art, Rose offered a subversive and political alternative to the traditional portrayal of AFAB bodies.

Through this act, she reclaims control over her body and image, referencing Nelson Mandela's 1994 electoral victory and the end of apartheid in South Africa. Tracey Rose's performance in *Span I* and *Span II* can be interpreted as a ritual-based performance grounded in calendrical and commemorative rites by incorporating the act of knitting and alluding to South Africa's history.

Then came CASSILS. Growing up as a young queer artist in the South, there were few representations of trans art or performance art. During research for my undergraduate degree, I came across CASSILS for the first time. I was particularly drawn to their hijacking of Vanessa Beecroft's *VB46*, a durational piece that subjected multiple performers to harsh treatment and unfair pay.⁶⁸ Ultimately, the Toxic Titties successfully fought for fair wages and transformed the original concept of the piece. I was fascinated by the group's ability to do such a thing and make a living artwork out of it.

⁶⁷ Jones, Amelia. *Body Art: Performing the Subject*. University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

⁶⁸ Jones, Amelia. *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.



Figure 7.3 Schneemann, Carolee. Up to and Including Her Limits. 1973-1977. Courtesy Carolee Schneemann, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2017. e-flux, 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/136837/carolee-schneemannkinetic-painting/>.

Of all their performances, CASSILS' 2020 work *Up to and Including Their Limits* has impacted me the most. They pay homage to feminist icon Carolee Schneemann by reimagining her historical piece *Up to and Including her Limits* (fig. 7.3) through a trans-non-binary lens using clay, making a powerful statement about representation and inclusion in art.



Figure 7.4 Cassils. Up to and Including Their Limits. 2012, performance. Digital photograph, cassils.net.

In *Up to and Including Their Limits*, CASSILS suspends themselves from a harness inside a plexiglass box covered in thick raw clay. They use their body and balance to launch themselves back and forth, digging and swinging at the walls while pulling chunks of clay to the floor. The audience can observe the action through windows created as CASSILS removes mounds of clay. This deliberate act of voyeurism complicates the audience's gaze and questions the act of observation in performance art. CASSILS ingeniously engineers the concept of voyeurism into the work, forcing viewers to question their role as spectators and the power dynamics between the performer and the audience.

CASSILS' latest work, *Human Measure*, is a contemporary dance piece created in collaboration with choreographer Jasmine Albuquerque, composer Kadet Kuhne, lighting

designer Christopher Kuhl, and a team of five trans and nonbinary performers.⁶⁹ The central question explored in this piece is how we can manifest empowerment, sensuality, and self-actualization in a society that continuously tries to erase trans and nonbinary individuals. The result is a truly breathtaking work that celebrates the beauty and resilience of the queer community, my community, while challenging societal norms and expectations around gender and identity.

Because of my admiration and value in the work of each of these artists, I subconsciously began to associate performance work with activating the artist's id and defying the superego.

7.3 Before Now

Before this Exhibition, I had only experienced the afterthought of my id. Now, understanding and dissecting my id, ego, and superego, I can identify when my id was attempting to surface. I relied heavily on the suffering and tension between my id and superego to exemplify my space within this world as my ego.

In my work, the ego manifests in two significant ways: the body and the representation of space. As a nonbinary person, my nude body becomes a place of commentary, a vessel by which my gender is interpreted. As a reclamation of that bondage and an id reclamation of gender, I perform nude and procure imagery associated outside of the AFAB body. The confines we exist within often show up in the element of space and the bounds for which we are given. I explore this concept through immersive and multi-sensory installations. Another symbol that is a critical element in my work is the box, specifically the glass box. The box is the social construction of gender, identity, and compromise we live within to exist. We all live within this box, and we all see through this box, but at the end of the day, we still uphold the structure of the box.

⁶⁹ Cassils. "Human Measure." Cassils, www.cassils.net/cassils-artwork-human-measure.

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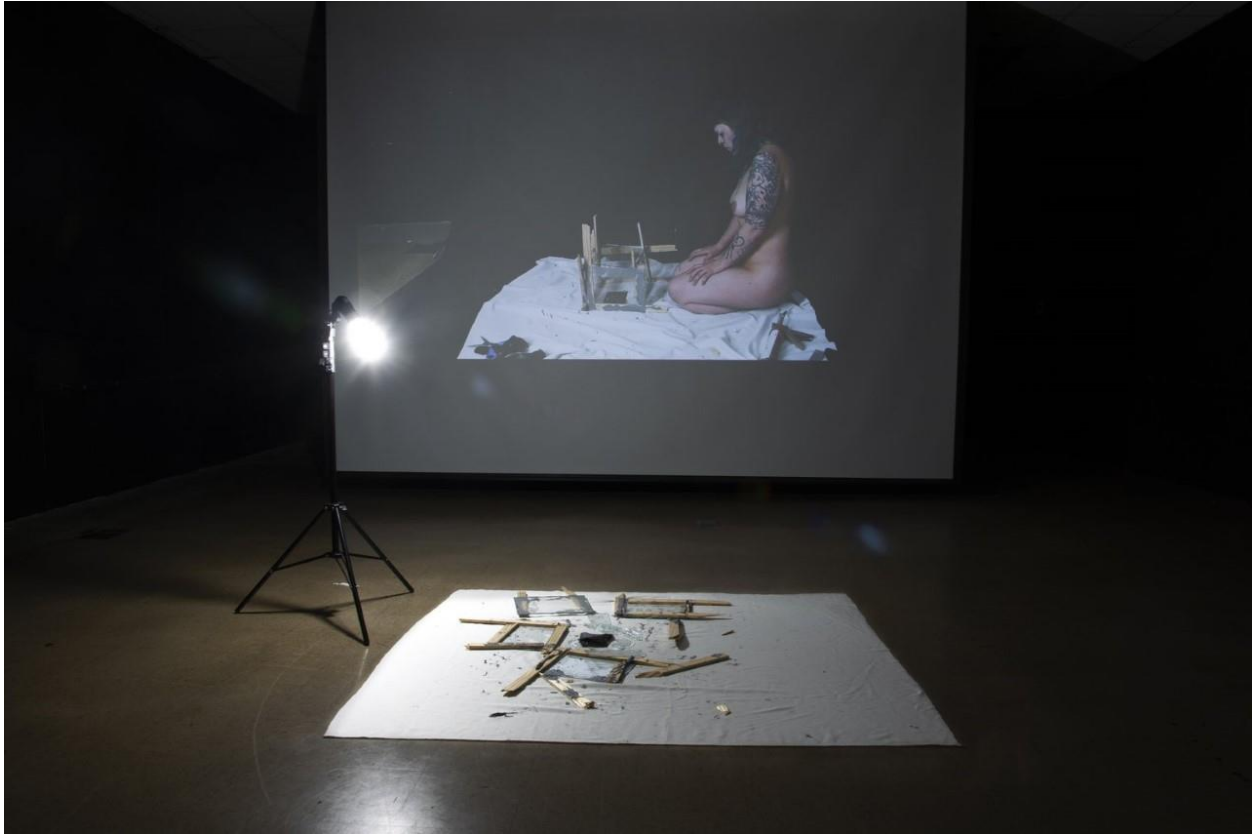


Figure 7.5 GETSAY. Untouched Performance #4. 2021. Dimensions Vary - single channel video projection, single halogen standing light, sixteen human-made sticks, glass, liquid nails, large damaged white sheet, mangled scissors, ruined gloves, art. Photograph by GETSAY.

Untouched Performance #4 is one of the first performances in which I allowed my id to take control through violence, tension, and the need for pleasure. It is a self-recorded, self-made, one-take, unedited performance installation. The self-portrait was made with a camera from 1947 and captured on aluminum tin using 1800s-originating wet-plate collodion processing. This process was the first form of (non-lethal) instant photography.⁷⁰ This photographic process marked the first mass exploitation of the viewer's interpretation of the body. During the performance, I hand-built a glass box with rudimentary tools and unconventional tactics. Once I

⁷⁰ Newhall, Beaumont. *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*. Museum of Modern Art, 1982.

assembled the box, I placed a hand-captured wet collodion tintype image of myself nude from the waist down inside and put a hand-bound glass lid on top.

I stared at the portrait of my clitoris, a symbol of how society exploits our body parts to define gender—ultimately becoming a combination between my id and my superego: my ego. The struggle between my id and superego surfaced as I destroyed the glass box and attempted to destroy the image within it. When I could not dismantle the photograph, I cut myself on the tin made of steel, contemplated the battle, gave in to my superego, and walked away. *Untouched Performance #4* reflects on the pressure of the outside world (aka superego) on the id. This tension results in the creation of the ego. In this work, my id is represented by my body, the ego by the indestructible tintype portrait, and the superego is the glass box and the frame we live in. When the id cannot win against the superego, tension, and destruction result in harm to the id. The id is forced to surrender to the superego in order to survive.



Figure 7.6 GETSAY. Within Me Without Me, performance still, 2022. The Burren College of art, Ct. Claire, Ireland. Photograph courtesy of Lisa Newman.

Within Me Without Me was a performance I created in 2022 that marked the completion of my three-week residency at the Burren College of Art. The work analyzes interpersonal, communal, and natural realms of humanity. Unraveling and honoring the parts we keep from the rest of the world while gifting to others.

The Performance begins at the base of a three-story Castle in Claire, Ireland. I open the door to the castle's bottom floor, approach a pile of large rocks (boulders), and carry all but a few to the third floor, where I am greeted with a well and a fire I built as a point of rest during the transformation. Traveling up and down the three flights of stairs takes over two hours, though I recall feeling like twenty minutes as if I were in a trance. At the last bit of my breath, I built a shrine using rubble and elements from the land of the Burren. With the construction of the

kneeling bench and a sip from the well, I reverently kneel before the sacred altar. I contemplate the efforts of my physical labor that embody the emotional labor I gifted to a lover that did not support me in turn. I wanted to honor the relationship I'm referencing in work for all that it was: the pain, the infatuation, and the hardship it took to be in it for so long. When I kneeled before the shrine, I released the weight I was carrying to make the failed relationship succeed. Happy endings are not always the purpose of a story; sometimes, there is so much more after.

Within Me Without Me marked a turning point in my work, demonstrating the potential for installation, sculpture, and performance to exist in the same space and amplify each other's impact. This was also my first foray into durational work, with the piece lasting much longer than any of my previous performances at thirty-five minutes. As an artist, there is always a sense of dissatisfaction with one's work, as there are always additional elements or improvements that could be made. However, I knew this piece was exceptional, as it encapsulated the aftermath of a failed relationship, my deep love for the Burren, and a high level of artistic commitment. Ultimately, *Within Me Without Me* emerged as my most intricate and enduring performance piece before *Three Tries*, and I was thrilled with its challenge and emotional depth.

Reflecting on these previous works heightened my desire to push boundaries and challenge myself to create a durational, transgressive performance for the Second Act: *The End*.

7.4 Numinous Experiences and the Divine

Because my work is rooted in an exuberant amount of research, I knew I could find someone who had accomplished this before or came close to it! This led me to Numinous Phenomena in the realm of performance art. Carl Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who coined the term "numinous" to describe experiences characterized by a sense

of awe, mystery, and transcendence.⁷¹ In his view, numinous encounters are experiences of the divine or transcendent that go beyond the ordinary and everyday aspects of human experience. Jung believed that numinous experiences could take many forms, including religious experiences, mystical experiences, and encounters with nature or art. He argued that these experiences have a transformative effect on the individual, leading to a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Bergs and Ramos-Zayas' argue that numinous encounters occur in the "in-between-ness," the liminal space between different affective states or experiences.⁷² This space can be unsettling and generative, disrupting dominant cultural norms and offering the potential for alternative modes of affective expression and social interaction. Overall, the concept highlights the dynamic and fluid nature of affective experience and its constant shaping by social and cultural contexts.

The *in-between-ness* is often seen as a site of numinous encounters. This is because the potential for new ways of thinking and emerging from this space can lead to transformative experiences often described as numinous. In this sense, the *in-betweenness* can be a generative space for experiencing the divine or the transcendent, as it disrupts everyday reality and opens up new possibilities for purpose and spiritual exploration.

A numinous encounter becomes a turning point, pulling apart, or awakening for a person. Many artists, philosophers, and theologians have claimed to have numinous experiences.

I would be a fool if I didn't begin with "the grandmother of performance," Marina Abramović.⁷³ Abramović is known for creating performances that explore spirituality,

⁷¹ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated by Willard R. Trask, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959.

⁷² Wilczek, Markus. *The In-Between of Writing: Experience and Experiment in Dr. Herta Müller's Prose*. Transcript Verlag, 2014.

⁷³ Stallabrass, Julian. *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

consciousness, and the human condition, and often seeks to create numinous experiences for herself and her audience. She has performed countless transgressive works, but I'm most interested in *The House with the Ocean View*, which happened in 2002 at the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York City.



Figure 7.7 "The House with the Ocean View" by Marina Abramović was performed in 2002 at the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York City. MoMA, www.moma.org/audio/playlist/243/3129. Accessed 2 April 2023.

Abramović said the performance "asks the world to confront our inner selves and to explore the infinite possibilities of the human mind." By living in the house without food or speaking for twelve days, she could strip away external distractions and focus entirely on her

inner world. In other words, she could abandon her superego to access her id. Abramović has said that the meditative atmosphere of the space allowed her to connect with her inner self and to find a sense of tranquility.⁷⁴ Living in the house gave her a renewed commitment to her art and exploring the human condition.

Another artist I cannot continue without mentioning is Ron Athey. Athey has used his own body throughout his works as a canvas to explore identity, religion, and spirituality. He uses physical endurance, religious iconography, and rituals to create transcendent works.

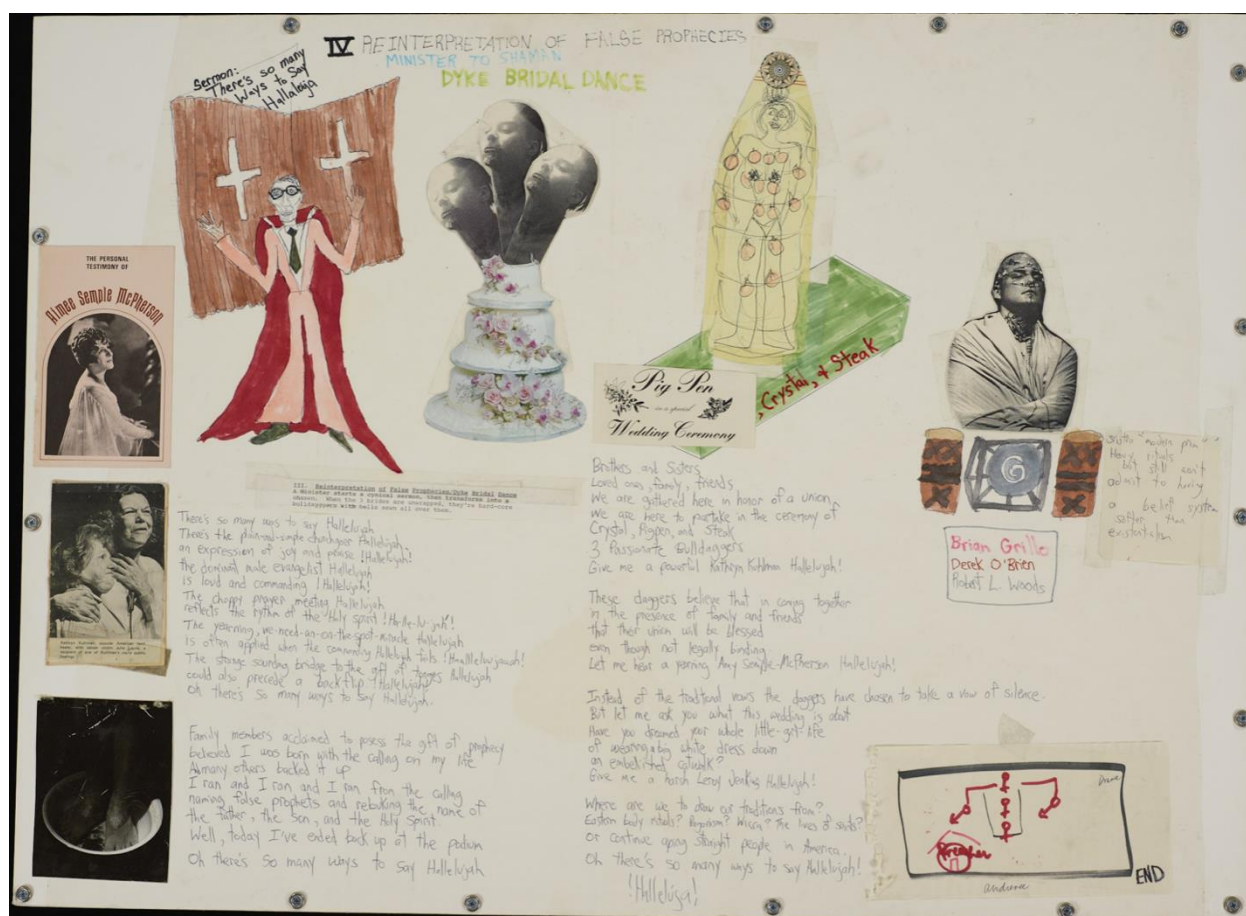


Figure 7.8 Athey, Ron. Storyboards for 4 Scenes in a Harsh Life. 1993-1995. Mixed media collage on board, 24 x 132-1/2 inches installed. Clinton and Della Walker Acquisition Fund, 2018. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

⁷⁴ Grosz, David. "The Legendary Marina Abramović on Her Greatest Moments in Art." artnet News, 30 Nov. 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/marina-abramovic-interview-746838>.

One of Athey's most notable performances is *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life* (1994), which incorporates Catholic imagery and explores themes of suffering, redemption, and transcendence. Through his use of the physical expression, religious symbolism, and formal elements, Athey creates a performance that is both visceral and spiritual, inviting audiences to confront their feelings and beliefs about the transformative power of art and performance. Athey has described *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life* as a deeply personal and autobiographical work inspired by his experiences growing up in a fundamentalist christian household, his struggles with addiction, illness, and trauma.⁷⁵ He states that each scene of the piece represents a different aspect of his journey, from his childhood physical and emotional pain to his eventual transformation and spiritual awakening. After reflecting on the piece, Athey emphasized the importance of the body and physical expression; his performances become a way to challenge perceptions of what the body can and cannot do.⁷⁶

Finally, I must make mention of Dr. Barbara Elizabeth Park's recent research and devotion to exploring numinous experiences. Dr. Park is a performance artist who recently graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Depth Psychology with an emphasis in Somatic Studies. Her dissertation: *Beyond the Edge: A Depth Psychological Study on Numinous Encounters* explores the numinous phenomena specifically in performances.⁷⁷ Dr. Parks and Otto have different definitions, but the foundation of what is numinous is presented as..."derived from

⁷⁵ Bailey, Doug. *Breaking the Surface: An Art/Archaeology of Prehistoric Architecture*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁷⁶ Soboleva, Ksenia M. "Ron Athey, Transgressive Performance Artist." *Hyperallergic*, 21 July 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/674282/ron-athey-transgressive-performance-artist/>. Accessed 2 May 2023.

⁷⁷ Park, Barbara Elizabeth. *Beyond the Edge: A Depth Psychological Study on Numinous Encounters*. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2021.

the Latin *Numen*: “divine power or spirit; a deity, esp. one presiding locally or believed to inhabit a particular object.”⁷⁸

Park draws on the insights of depth psychology, particularly the work of Carl Jung, to explore the psychological and spiritual significance of these experiences. Jung saw numinous experiences as transformative and not limited to religion or spirituality, but also found in art, music, and other forms of creative expression.⁷⁹ He believed that they were a way to access the deeper aspects of the psyche and develop a relationship with the unconscious.

Park's dissertation presents case studies from six performance artists, showcasing diverse manifestations of numinous experiences. These include mystical visions, religious experiences, encounters with nature, and the arts. The three major themes she discovered were that numinous experiences in performance could be transformative, are related to the performer's relationship with the unconscious, and can be facilitated by certain conditions. Park highlights that creating a safe and supportive environment, having a clear purpose, being open to the unknown, and incorporating symbolic elements can facilitate numinous experiences in performance. She proposes that tapping into numinous experiences involves embracing the unconscious, letting go of control, and allowing creative impulses and intuition to guide performance. One of the most important pieces I took away from the study:

...access to the expansive and collective experience of the numinous as a felt sense might be thoroughly inclusive across all cultural boundaries and despite and beyond the walls of

⁷⁸ "Numen." Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1989.

⁷⁹ Jung, Carl G. *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull, Princeton University Press, 1977.

the church, beyond and in spite of dogma and limiting reductive stasis, and deeply embedded within the generative work of creative artists and others.⁸⁰

While I read these case studies, I thought about the moments in the church, the moments leading up to the day I was institutionalized, and how it became a pivotal transition for my psyche. *Was that a numinous experience or just a performative transformation for my psyche - maybe they are one and the same? What I do know is that time in my life transformed the way I look at the world, and I began to say fuck the rest of the world following that moment.* I started focusing on myself rather than the external expectations.

Reflecting on my experience with the id/numinous encounter/uncovering of the unconscious – precisely, *Within Me and Without Me*'s purpose, I saw a growth beyond the original intention of the work. I recall entering the *in-between-ness*⁸¹ space described and that moment of dropping in when I had to choose whether I would go on as planned or allow the work to live as it exists.

⁸⁰ Park, Barbara Elizabeth. *Beyond the Edge: A Depth Psychological Study on Numinous Encounters*. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2021.

⁸¹ As described by Bergs and Ramos-Zayas' in the previous paragraphs



Figure 7.9 GETSAY. Within Me Without Me, performance still, 2022. The Burren College of art, Ct. Claire, Ireland. Photograph courtesy of Lisa Newman.

I remember the repetition of carrying the rocks up and down the stairs creating a trance-like state in my body. I felt like I could continue forever; two hours felt like two minutes, and my strength at that moment felt insurmountable to anything I'd ever done. I do not lift weights or work out, which makes me think about the strengthening effect of this small space; it was as if a separate consciousness existed there telling me I could do anything.

Maybe this was the effort I needed to make to access the deepest parts of myself.

7.5 But an illusion

Sigmund Freud did not write extensively about numinous experiences, but he did mention them briefly in his work. In his book *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud describes religious experiences as "illusions" that arise from the human need for a father figure and the fear

of the natural world.⁸² He argues that the feeling of awe or reverence often associated with religious experiences results from the displacement of infantile desires onto religious figures and symbols.

Freud did not believe the id could be isolated or separated from the rest of the psyche. He viewed the psyche as a dynamic system of conflicting forces, with the id in constant tension with the other parts of the psyche. Freud believed that the ego and the superego, responsible for mediating between the demands of the id and the external world, were necessary for mental health and functioning. He believed that people with schizophrenia had a weakened ego, which led to a fragmentation of the psyche and a loss of contact with reality. He argued that the primary cause of schizophrenia was a disturbance in the early development of the ego, which resulted in a weakened sense of identity and a lack of control over the instinctual drives of the id.

Through my sculptural journey in *The Beginning*, my reflection, and new psychoanalytical discoveries, I cannot help but question the existence of that day or even the performances themselves. *Which moments are more real? The ones we invite ourselves or the moments that become happenstance.* They inform each other, and our life's purpose is to find that part of ourselves that cannot survive without being fueled: the metaphorical id that keeps our flesh on this earth.

During my performances, I have unearthed fragments of this realization. By imposing greater structure, surpassing my own limitations, and prolonging the duration of my acts, I have gradually uncovered deeper insights into my psyche.

⁸² Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion*. Translated by W. D. Robson-Scott, Norton, 1989.

To attain self-resurrection, I must persevere and permit myself to dwell in my subconscious by overcoming my previous boundaries and immersing myself in an unexplored realm.

So, I will do this; I will go into the Second Act: *The End* with the knowledge carved from *The Beginning* and new revelations of my id, ego, and superego. I will completely pull my psyche apart by utilizing the core concepts in Dr. Barbara's case study and my newfound queer knowledge. I will isolate each portion of my mind and return to the rest of the world with an awakened version of self, my version of the divine.

8 QUEER AWAKENING BECOMES AN ACT OF KNOWING: DISCOVERING OTHERS BECOMES A MOMENT OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

But where was the provocation rooted? How was I to do something that seems revolutionary but also completely possible now that I know others have accessed similar experiences?

How deep could I go? What are the parameters I need to take to get there?

I came to the realization that, like eleven-year-old getsay who couldn't find answers from their parents, the church, or the people surrounding them, I resorted to conducting research.

It was queer studies that truly awakened me. It was the queer art that awakened me. The knowledge that another person had conquered something similar allowed me to express myself wholeheartedly. That was the purpose; that was the meaning of it all. I just wanted to explore and become the me that was ever-present.

It was the knowledge I had discovered when I was eleven: the knowledge that ultimately saved me.

The words of problematic Freud provided me with insights when nobody else could clarify my queries about my instincts and primal actions. I didn't know anything else. Before I had a library card and before I had access to the internet, the source of my knowledge came from my parent's bookshelf and the local thrift store.

It wasn't till much later that I found queer literature and even then, I didn't know it was queer. Among the first awakeners was Butler: Butler told me it was okay to live within the gender and performance of that which I chose.⁸³

Later, I found:

Epistemology of the Closet by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

The Queer Art of Failure by Jack Halberstam

Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde

The most recent wave of my awakening happened from the contributions of Paul B. Preciado, Adrienne Maree Brown, Alok Vaid-Menon, and Leah DeVun.

Preciado taught me that it was my authenticity that made me queer, rather than conforming to the limited version of queerness prescribed by the gender binary. I am inspired by Preciado's rejection of fear and refusal to adhere to the knowledge produced by cisgender men who will never intend to listen to or respect someone like me.

From Paul B. Preciado's Manifesto in *Can the Monster Speak?*

- First Law: which I considered self-evident during the whole process of my transition, was to do away with the fear of being abnormal that had been planted in my heart as a child. It is this fear that needs to be identified, quarantined, and eliminated from memory.

⁸³ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

- Second Law: be weary of all simplification. To cease to assume, as you do, that I know what a man is, what a woman is, what a homosexual or heterosexual is. To free my thinking from these shackles and experience, try to perceive, to feel, to name beyond sexual difference.⁸⁴

Adrienne Maree Brown introduced me to the queer version of the *Pleasure Principle*⁸⁵ and what it meant to be empathetic, genuine while simultaneously pleasing yourself.⁸⁶ The book I highly recommend this book to everyone I meet - it should be the next book you read! It changed my life.

Alok gave me a voice when I was voiceless, and the courage to write and embrace my authentic self through words, despite being told that I was too much for the world. They helped me realize that it wasn't that I was too much, but that the world just couldn't comprehend a person like me yet.⁸⁷

Leah DeVun's book, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance*, provided me with the foundation to acknowledge and validate the feelings that I had been experiencing.⁸⁸ It helped me realize that these feelings have been present throughout history and are even evident in various religions. This discovery inspired me to become more invested in learning about my community and raising awareness. This book validated my existence.

⁸⁴ Preciado, Paul B. *Can the Monster Speak? Anthropology, Politics, and the Uncanny*. Columbia University Press, 2019.

⁸⁵ Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1922.

⁸⁶ Brown, Adrienne Maree. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. AK Press, 2019.

⁸⁷ Man, Enough Podcast. "ALOK: The Urgent Need for Compassion." The Man Enough Podcast, season 2, episode 11, Wayfarer Studios, 1 June 2021, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3Nz7WjKw36TtT3n1TChhJD>.

⁸⁸ Devun, Leah. *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance*. Columbia University Press, 2019.

Freud was a crutch for me, it wasn't until discovering these individuals that I knew all that I was capable of. My Church and the outside world were the gatekeepers, and my queer awakeners became the keys to find myself.

I needed them to fully access the deepest parts of myself and transform my id. They formed the foundation of my self-discovery, enabling me to delve into the depths of my being and unearth my unconscious desires.

9 THE INBETWEEN

On the Opening night of the *Three Tries: The Beginning* performance became the movement of my body through each act. The bed from *The dawn of...(genesis)* became the transitional object between the exhibitions.

As the clock strikes 8pm, I slowly walk into the gallery passing several bodies without acknowledgement. The gallery is empty but for the few documenters, and the audience became voyeurs separated by a large window. As I enter the space I immediately walk to Altar for my ego. The piece that became a reflection of forever self to new self. A shrine for me at the age I was institutionalized.



Figure 9.1 GETSAY. Altar for my ego. 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY.

I kneel before the structure and look up to the image of self as I take a deep breath for our survival through that time. I look down at my hands and pull off the leather jacket I now wear as a shield from the binary world and lay it before the structure as final offering and unveiling of my vulnerability now and then. I undress and make my way to the St. Andrews cross, gazing up at the image of the church where I spent my childhood, as an immediate gesture of exposing myself to confront the full extent of the church's physical and psychological influence on my body.



Figure 9.2 GETSAY. Three Tries: The Beginning Performance, still, 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Rachel Warren.

I walk over to Always Present, lift the books from the table and pull out a pair of white sweatpants, a white sweatshirt, and a white undershirt (the clothes I was forced to wear when I was admitted). I place the suit on my naked body and pull-out restraints for my wrists and ankles

and strap them to my limbs. I pull out straps from the bottom of the bedside table and walk over to my childhood bed where I meticulously strap it down as a continuation of my body. I finally restrain the structure; I pull the bed from the pile of rocks and flip it so that I can attach my wrists to the straps. My wrists are bound. I lift the bed and place it on my back in the same way Jesus carried the cross through the town of Jerusalem. I lift the soft structure onto my back and slowly carry it from the St. Andrews cross; I stop at each sculpture as if walking back through each memory juxtaposed with the actual journey from my bathroom, to running away to Sky's house, to arriving at the ER, and then the psych wards the next day. As I cross back through this path a trail of rocks and awakening literature is revealed. Stopping one last time at Split to the bone before exiting I'm placed in the cold bathroom, mopping up the evidence of the act I'd hoped to never share with the rest of the world. I take a deep breath and exit the gallery into the lobby where there is no longer a boundary between me and the voyeurs. All eyes on me, complete silence, I'm placed in a trance of completing the journey. Without intention I remember the moment within the stations of the cross⁸⁹ where Jesus falls and I too fall to my knees. I lift myself up with struggling limbs.

⁸⁹ Moloney, Francis J. *The Way of the Cross*. Paulist Press, 1997.



Figure 9.3 GETSAY. Three Tries: The Beginning Performance, still, 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Savannah O'Leary.

I carry myself and the mattress out of the lobby into The End.

10 THE END: RECLAMATION OF THE ID

The Second Act of Three Tries: The End begins as I enter the gallery of Echo Contemporary Art. I am wearing the same sweatshirt and sweatpants from The Beginning, as if no time has passed between the two performances. With my childhood mattress strapped to my back I drag my body through the gallery.



Figure 10.1 Three Tries: The End Performance, still, 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Audrey White.

10.1 An edifice stands alone

As I move through the space, I approach a large ominous structure. An edifice combining a visual reference to the two places where Jesus is believed to have been buried paralleled the room I was placed in when I was institutionalized.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ "Exclusive: Explore Christ's Burial Place for First Time in Centuries." National Geographic, 30 Oct. 2016, www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2016/12/jesus-tomb-archaeology/



Figure 10.2 GETSAY. Edifice, 2023. 2x4s, particle boards, plaster, and god. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Audrey White.

The construction of the exterior is guided by two specific references: the church of the holy sepulchre in jerusalem and the garden tomb. The front face of the edifice bears a similarity to the garden tomb of jesus, featuring cave-like elements and the notable presence of the roll-away stone, which has become an iconic symbol associated with the tomb.



Figure 10.3 "Image of the Garden Tomb." CBN News, 2017, www2.cbn.com/sites/default/files/media/slider/images/gardentomb2017_hdv.jpg.

The story of mary magdalene visiting the garden tomb after jesus' crucifixion is a well-known biblical account. Magdalene peered into the tomb's opening in the story but did not find jesus inside. There is a parallel to this story in the physical layout of the garden tomb. To the right of the roll-away stone, a small opening allows visitors to look inside the tomb without entering.⁹¹ Like the garden tomb from mary's tomb, the edifice also has a window to the right of the roll-away stone.

⁹¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version. John, chapter 20, verses 1-18.



Figure 10.4 "Scientists Just Revealed Stunning Details About Jesus's Tomb." All That's Interesting, 21 Nov. 2017, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/jesus-tomb>.

The back half of the tomb's exterior echoes the Holy Sepulchre's distinctive architectural style, specifically during its construction phase. The parallel between the tomb's design and the creation of an illusion is intentional. Just as the tomb's design was crafted to evoke a sense of familiarity and connection to religious history, the way in which our perception of reality is shaped can similarly be influenced by external factors. This idea speaks to the power of presentation and how our understanding of the world can be shaped by how things are presented to us, like an illusion.

As I travel around the exterior of the enclosure, I arrive at the back, and lay down with the bed on my back. I unhinge the clasps from the straps of the bed and walk to the edge where I

am greeted with the roll away stone. I look into the side of the tomb, move the stone, and enter as if it were an inevitable fate.

The interior is divided into two parts: a true-to-size replica of Jesus's tomb (measured by the Maidan project, with ADA modifications) and the anti-burial chamber that functions as the entrance to the burial tomb. As visitors enter the tomb, they are led into the anti-burial room, which serves as an intermediate space, before reaching the burial room. The anti-burial room is a transitional space designed to prepare visitors for the solemnity and spiritual significance of the burial room.



Figure 10.5 GETSAY. Edifice: anti-burial room, 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Audrey White.

The anti-burial room is made of 2x4s, particle board, cardboard, paper mache and plaster to imply a faux rock structure. This alluding to the rock formation implies the reference to the

garden tomb being part of a cave. The hand-made quality of the faux structure reinforces the theme of altered reality and the construction of illusions, while also invoking the sense of magic that an 11-year-old might have felt upon seeing such a formation. As adults, we see the imperfections, but as children, we believe the stories we are told.

2x4s and particle boards connect the two rooms, while plaster rocks flow from the anti-burial chamber into the burial room, hinting at the separation between the spaces yet an inherent connection that intertwines them.



Figure 10.6 GETSAY. Edifice: Burial room, 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Audrey White.

The burial room is divided into three walls. At the base of each wall is a seat that wraps around the room creating a “U” shape that prevents any person entering the room to do anything but sit down. The 1ft x 1ft square foam pads cover the entirety of the walls, creating a completely

padded space except for two windows on the right. The room, structured this way, references when I was placed into solitary confinement at Riverfront. The cloth draped on the st. andrew's cross from *The Dawn of... (genesis)* covers the wrap-around seats. An aluminum mirror, the size of my body, hangs directly over the pads instead of a ceiling. The mirror's reflective nature serves two purposes: it expands the appearance of the padded walls to cover the ceiling, and it immerses the viewer into the exact moment I'm referencing. The presence of a mirror in the space creates an allusion to the idea that, despite being alone, there is a constant feeling of being observed. The reflection in the mirror serves as a reminder that one is not truly alone and that there is always a sense of self-awareness, even in moments of deep despair.

Screwed to the three walls of the burial room are security cameras, one pointing directly into the anti-burial room and the two others pointing into the burial in a way that captures the entirety of the room; every corner is seen through the lens. On the furthest wall of the tomb is a camera facing the door to the gallery so that any person entering is immediately captured and placed within the context of the structure—holding them accountable for even looking.

As I make my way through the anti-burial chamber, I find myself in an unfamiliar space with a structure reminiscent of stone. Nevertheless, I press on toward the burial room.

On a pedestal before me, there are three bottles of holy water, a loaf of bread, and an Israeli red wine, alongside the medication that I currently rely on to manage the disorder diagnosed during my stay at the institution.

Beside the consumable altar, I notice three books, including Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams" from "Always Present," the Bible from my childhood church, and a revised edition of the journal I kept while in the institution.

Adjacent to this pedestal is another supporting a crate filled with art supplies, and on top of it rests a book labeled "A Book for Self-Resurrection."

10.2 A Book for self-resurrection



Figure 10.7 GETSAY. A Book for self-resurrection. 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Travis Dodd.

A Book for self-resurrection is the guide I made for my reentry into the padded room with the intention of rewriting my memory. It is a culmination of all my research and the tactics I hoped would allow me to separate my id, ego, and superego and ultimately exist as my id for 24 hours.

The guide is broken down into these sections:

1. Define your id, ego, and superego
2. Extract your ego from your psyche – so you are left with only your id and superego

3. Exist as ½ id ½ ego, not simultaneously but separately
4. Take out superego and exist as id
5. Satisfy your id and exist purely as id for 24 hours
6. Reflect
7. Define what you want to bring back
8. Create a reentry plan

As I enter the burial room I am confronted with deep uncertainty. I begin to digest the space as memory alongside reality and then they become one. I walk over to the crate, pull out A book for self-resurrection, turn to page one and immediately start writing.

10.2.1 1. Define your id ego and superego

I break down each piece from *The Beginning* by categorizing them according to their id, ego, and superego components. In *Dawn of... (genesis)*, I associate the church with my superego, while the pleasure and confusion surrounding my sexual identity represent my id, and the bed symbolizes my ego, serving as a physical manifestation of my bodily self.

When it comes to *Always Present*, I consider my notebook as my ego, the bible as my superego, and I now realize that the Freud book, which I previously identified as my id, is actually a component of my superego.

My blue bunny embodies the longing of my id, as it was my initial source of pleasure. Meanwhile, the *Altar (for my ego)*, which is evidently tied to my eleven-year-old self, symbolizes my ego.

When *Ode to Sky* is interacted with, it encompasses all three components. The puddle with the transparency of the Sky above Sky's house embodies my id, reflecting the pleasure and attraction I felt toward queer existence. Meanwhile, the surveillance dome is my superego, an ever-present watchful eye. Lastly, the viewer becomes the ego caught in between when they reach the side of the piece—trapped between the reflection of the sky and the dome.

The Body is an object caught in between personifies my ego and id, as the glass vaginal cast represents the ego, while the straps and implications of a dildo symbolize the id. This work combines my struggle to confront my Body with the instinct of the vessel I was given and with the vessel I'd prefer.

A monument for the boy I lost my virginity to represents both my ego and superego, with the portrayal of Billy as a tree embodying my superego. At the same time, the cart symbolizes my ego and the loss of my virginity in an unwanted act.

Finally, *Split to the bone* represents my id as it embodies my flesh, blood, and earthly vessel.

Gathering from each of the works I conclude this:

My id: the pleasure I feel in soothing myself, my avoidance of pain, my sexuality and exploration of queer identity, my need for affection and affirmation.

My ego: is my flesh, the body I live within, compromise between the church and my parents, compromise of fulfilling others wants and not acknowledging my own, the representation of a “natural” AFAB body, my grappling with mortality and what it means to exist but only survive.

My superego: the church, my parents, heteronormativity, transphobia, Freudian theory (confining me to only one way of thinking) self-examination, moral and ethical boundaries, and the boundaries of space and time.

I analyze my works till I can't anymore.

10.2.2 *Extract your ego from your psyche – so you are left with only your id and superego*

What does it mean to pull apart your mind? Is that even possible, there is the subconscious? Maybe if I place all but a few things in there I can accomplish what is asked of me. Compartmentalizing, I've done this before, it's how I've survived and conquered so many things but this time I would be doing something entirely different. I would be doing this on purpose and to better myself. In order to do this, I take the representation of my id and my superego, and I begin addressing them directly. I start with free association: dedicate time, open my mind, and write down all my thoughts and feelings in the moment, then in the current body I am in, and then the eleven-year-old getsay. After doing this I dissect the patterns and reflect.

I then continue on to defining portions of my pleasure principle for my id: immediate gratification, the pursuit of sexual pleasure, avoiding discomfort, creativity without limitations.

10.2.3 *Exist as ½ Id ½ ego, not simultaneously but separately*

I begin to exist as my superego and my id. I separate them as their own identities as if two beings exist simultaneously inside of me.

The id starts to materialize as my creative actions, my need for sustenance, and the want to constantly sleep. I start with a small picture of an eye on the furthest border, and I don't stop until I begin to analyze myself and the superego sets back in.

I do this back and forth until I become tired, and I'm forced to fall asleep. The gallery is cold, white, and the lights never turn off. I can hear the people down the hall and surrounding the structure, but I become so worn out from the insertion into this space that I don't care. I wrap myself into the cloth and pull a pad from the wall, nuzzle in the corner and attempt to drift away.

Day 2:

I open my eyes to the bright white lights and an image of myself staring at myself above me. My head fucking hurts. Scratch my face and realize today is the id. I immediately fall back to sleep.

10.2.4 Take out superego and exist as id

Of course, going into this newfound frame I realize both still exist. I cannot fully move one out of my brain, but I can silence it for moments.

My id materializes like this:

Sleep

Eat

Create

Everything becomes about pleasure, and I can't seem to stop until I am faced with a debilitating headache. The focus shifts to relieving my pain.

10.2.5 Satisfy your id and exist purely as id for 24 hours

The act of creation knows no bounds. Starting from the pads in the burial room, I begin with the corner I have chosen as my resting place. As blue swirls take over, I am transported back to my very first sketchbook.



Figure 10.8 *Three Tries: The End* performance capture., 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Tyler Brantley.

When I was younger, I was fascinated with swirls and vines: the way they felt, the way they intertwined and how they made me feel free.

The vines have become my id's ultimate pleasure, and they're slowly taking over the space. But as their satisfaction wanes, I find myself drawn to the stickers.

As a child, I was warned against putting stickers on walls, car windows, or any surface that the residue could damage. Stickers were considered tacky, distracting from the perfect aesthetic, and implied a level of self-gratification. But now, the stickers have become a form of reward, a means of self-actualizing, and a way of acknowledging my success.



Figure 10.9 GETSAY. *Three Tries: The End* performance capture., 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Markiesha Thornton.

The pain becomes uncontrollable. I'm interrupted by what feels like a drill in the sides of my head and forced to sit down into a fetal position and address the pain. Throughout the day, this sensation comes and goes, and I find myself taking short naps to manage it. Sleep is the only relief that appeases this feeling and subsides once I've rested. Every time I wake up, the cycle begins again. I start with the swirls, then stickers. Then superego creeps back in. When this happens the marks change - I begin writing the statements of my superego on the walls.

*I acknowledge the take over and combat them by reading Alok's *Beyond the Gender Binary*.⁹² Education becomes the way to escape the superego, the way to justify my existence.*

⁹² Alok Vaid-Menon. *Beyond the Gender Binary*. Penguin Random House, 2020.

When I finally place the superego back at bay, I write a positive statement on the wall facing the negativity of my superego and start the free-flowing marks again.

The marks take over the padded room until I realize I have contained myself to one area.

The containment is an act of my superego - I must expand past this. I walk over to the bench inside of the anti-burial room and take over the full room with pastels, paints until I have nothing else



Figure 10.10 GETSAY. Three Tries: The End performance capture., 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Tyler Brantley.

The walls of the tomb are covered. I can see the white but now instead of its overpowering, encompassing feeling I am greeted with happiness and the inner workings of my pleasure and satisfaction.

I continue until nightfall. Or what seems to be sense at this point I have no idea of what time is.

10.2.6 Reflect

Day 3:

I wake up late. Or at least it feels like I've slept forever. The headache has now become a piercing sound throughout my temples and the pain is part of my existence. I break and consider asking for Tylenol. I write a note to the owner of the gallery asking for help and immediately crumple it up and throw it into the burial room. That's not why I'm here. I'm here to experience this for all that it is.

I begin writing, I write so much that I can hear the people in the gallery saying: "She's writing again." The misgendering doesn't entirely affect me but it does make me consider my superego and the lack of awareness the world outside of this room holds.

I ignore and continue.

*The first words I write: **Did it work?***

I'm not sure but I do know I accomplished something past the knowledge I had before entering. The reflection started with a dissection of my mind- placing my thoughts at bay was the hardest thing I had to do. The second was the limitations of my body and the pain caused by the encapsulated structure. The impenetrable, inescapable light and sound took a toll on my body. The migraine from food, caffeine and water withdrawal influenced the process and caused me to satisfy my pain more often than I'd hoped through the act of sleeping. I learned I can do almost anything. I learned I don't like white for a reason. The parallel to Jesus' crucifixion and my suicide attempt continues to enter my brain. I felt like I was a martyr when I attempted. I felt like

if I didn't exist the rest of the world would be happier. The thoughts continue as reality creeps in that I'm getting out today. Was this real, an action, or a memory or could it be all three.

10.2.7 Define what you want to bring back

I want to bring back the care and love I felt for myself in this space. When I needed to rest I did. When I needed to ignore the rest of the world I did. When I needed to simply exist in my pleasure I did. When I needed sustenance, I got it. And when I needed to express my anger, I did.

10.2.8 Create a reentry plan.

What did I want to accomplish now that I'd surfaced the portions of my id I'd placed at bay? I wanted to fully soothe and give my inner child a framework for existing past that space. I wanted a list of things I learned so when I fall off the path, I can look at this list and know how to conquer the superego again.

So I wrote: **A manifesto for my 11 year old ego:**

1. Educating yourself is the only way out, the way we justify our existence
2. Your art is your way to escape, don't stop making
3. There will always be someone watching you, you decide what they see
4. There is no way to ever know if you are doing it right, There is only doing what gives you purpose
5. The people who support you show up for you, fuck everyone else
6. The pain is temporary, the feeling is forever
7. Sometimes everyone needs to be held and told it will be okay
8. You can't always see the change in the moment often it appears much later
9. Be gentle with yourself - take moments to rest
10. Existing is Enough

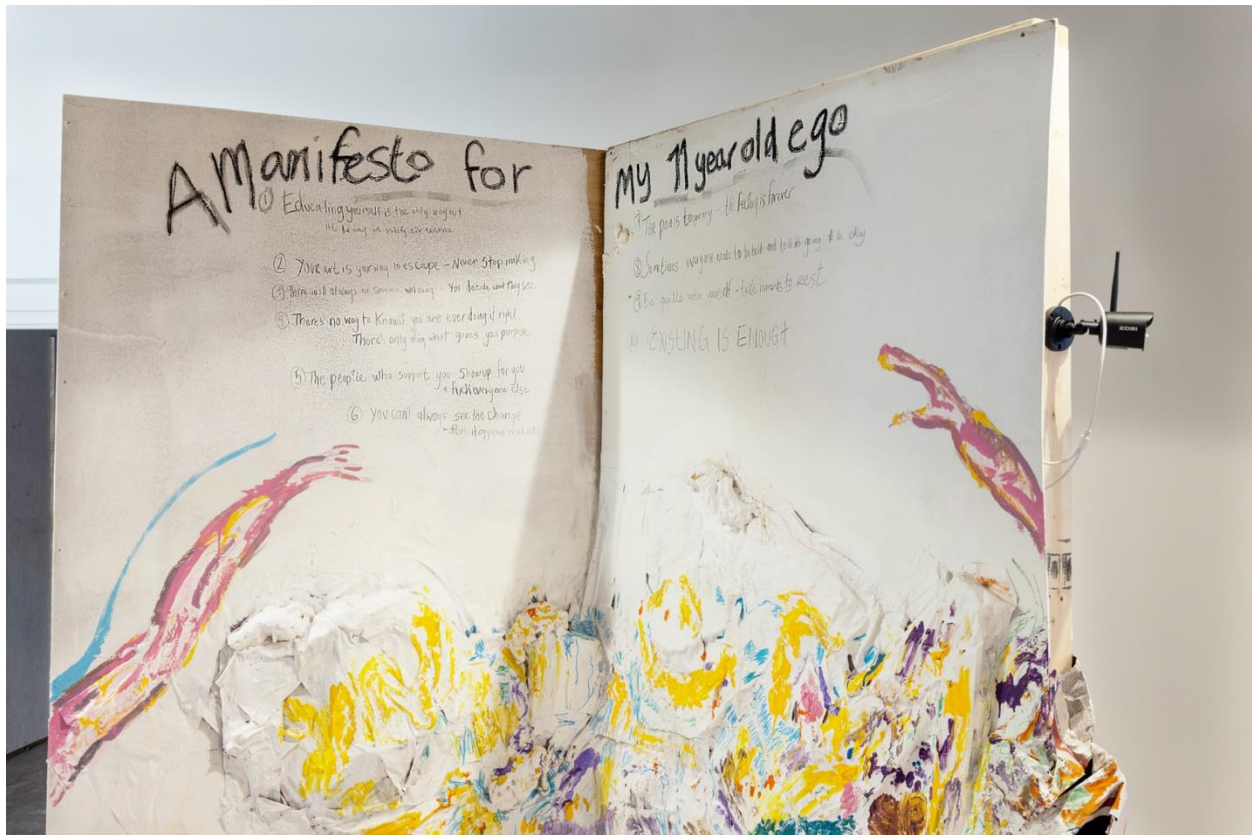


Figure 10.11 GETSAY. *A Manifesto for my 11-year-old ego*, 2023. *Echo Contemporary Art*, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Travis Dodd.

As I wrote these words on the last white area of the tomb the audience in the gallery began to crowd the scene. Viewers emerged and took photos of what I'd accomplished. With the last mark of my pencil, I walked back over to the padded room, sat down where I'd laid my head for the past few nights and looked up at all I'd accomplished in the days that passed.

Then the stone moved. Like the guardian angel Gabriel, my lover moved the door that kept me inside of the tomb. I walked to the opening where I was greeted by several familiar faces.⁹³

⁹³ "Matthew 28:1-7." *New Testament, English Standard Version*, Crossway, 2001.



Figure 10.12 GETSAY. Altar for my ego, offering. 2023. Ernest G. Welch School Of Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by GETSAY.

My lover gifted me with a pile containing the clothes I'd stripped from *The Beginning*, and the offering plate from *An altar for my ego*. I knelt with the pile, poured ink into the plate, and made an incision across three lines on my collar bone representing the *Three Tries* I'd made to please my super ego. Like a slash through a phrase, you'd hope to never exist, I draw a line through the marks, unable to erase or forget but able to understand they are wrong.

I strip off the institution suit and place the armor of my thirty-year-old being back onto my body and then I exit the tomb.

11 CLOSING SERVICE:

In the days that passed between leaving the tomb and the closing of the exhibition I realized I wanted to give something back. I wanted to give back to the community that supported me during all three tries. It was simple but perfect.

I invited my loved ones, supporters, and the community to visit the gallery one last time. We had a potluck, and I asked each person to color and right love notes and testaments of support to their younger self. The results were beautiful. The act I'd created on the inside now became the outside and the community was able to have a small piece of what I experienced during my time in the tomb. I was elated.



Figure 11.1 GETSAY. Edifice, after the Closing Service, 2023. Echo Contemporary Art, Atlanta, Ga. Photograph by Travis Dodd.

With the last paint stroke the deed was done. We walked around the work we'd completed and had conversations I didn't realize we all needed. Some people talked about their own struggles with suicide. Another spoke of their time in a similar institution that'd happened a few years prior. And others spoke of all the nuances of growing up without the tools to thrive. I was mesmerized by the conversation and how much this small act opened each of us up to each other in new way. I'm eternally grateful for these moments.

When the conversations seemed to be at bay, I announced the next step of the service. Most did not know but not only was this the last day of the exhibition it was also the last day this work would exist.

We tore it down until nothing was left but 2x4s, particle boards, pads, and small artifacts from the cave walls. When I looked at the discarded elements, like extensions of my own body, I was determined to make one last testament.

I decided to give the pads and artifacts to those present, those who've inspired me, and donate the rest to raise funds for The Trevor Project. A nonprofit organization I wish I'd known about when I was younger. The Trevor Project was established in 1998 following the tragic suicide of Trevor, a 13-year-old boy who grappled with his sexuality and didn't have a support system. The organization provides crisis care, suicide prevention, and affirming gender identity care to LGBTQIA+ youth.

It's a small gift, but I hope it ripples the community and shows how much this person cares. If you are experiencing despair or thinking about suicide, reach out to them or text a message to 988 and you will immediately be connected with a Suicide and Crisis Line in your area.

Know that this person cares about you.

12 CONCLUSION (NOT THE END)

As a final Reclamation of my being, I turn back to where this all started. My id. In a revolutionary attempt I underwent the most critical and rewarding performance to this moment. I laid within the tomb - padded room I once knew for three days to isolate the entirety of my id.

But whatever I am, or have since become, I know now that slipperiness isn't all of it. I know now that a studied evasiveness has its own limitations, its own ways of inhibiting certain forms of happiness and pleasure. The pleasure of abiding. The pleasure of insistence, of persistence. The pleasure of obligation, the pleasure of dependency. The pleasures of ordinary devotion. The pleasure of recognizing that one may have to undergo the same realizations, write the same notes in the margin, return to the same themes in one's work, relearn the same emotional truths, write the same book over and over again-not because one is stupid or obstinate or incapable of change, but because such revisitations constitute a life.⁹⁴

As a young queer I was confused and outraged. I was focused on surviving what felt like the end. As an older queer I now think about all the things I wished I'd been able to tell my younger self – to show my younger self. The evolution of self and more importantly how understanding goes way beyond theories created by a cis white man. How there are truths, some lives, and a lot of confusion within religion.

We fabricate realities to make our existence seem as though we have purpose. When we are extracted from those creations and leave the realm, we've always known we are faced with what remains - self. We are faced with investigating the parts of ourselves we hide so eloquently from the rest of the world.

⁹⁴ Nelson, Maggie. *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press, 2015.

Three Tries exposed me. It gave me room to navigate a space in my personal history I'd never accessed before while simultaneously confronting the demons of my younger self. I was able to pull apart everything I knew to discover the root of my existence and where I am in this moment. I am so fascinated with what's to come.

This investigation led me to a new space with my practice rooted in theorizing past ideas that already exist and what my body alone can do. Now I have a base to explore so much more.

I want to continue investigating numinous experiences/happenings and what that means in other community spaces, religions, and artistries. I want to explore the intersection of the divine and nonconformity. And more than anything I want to abide by the manifesto of my younger self and exist as my true self: become my own God.

Life is incredibly short and I'm so lucky to have been given so many chances.

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