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**Reversing The Weapons: Recuperating the marginalised body
with performative photography**

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<https://doi.org/10.34737/w4641>

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Reversing The Weapons: Recuperating the marginalised body with performative photography

Haley Morris-Cafiero

PhD by Published Works

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2022

Abstract

This thesis investigates the practice-based research connected with three photographic series produced over twelve years. *Wait Watchers*, *The Bully Pulpit*, and *Buoyant Force* have been exhibited in multiple solo and group exhibitions internationally and have been the subject of viral media activity and two monographs. The practice contributes to the discussions of performance, collaboration, and transgressive humour in photography. Supporting research involves theoretical discourses around the gaze, the invisibility of marginalised bodies, and social media as the 21st century panopticon. The work activates the disobedient female body defined as “grotesque” through wilful transgressions of the rules that try to control it. Performative self-portrait photography is employed to show the evolution of a marginalised body, first operating as the site of public attack, then as a figure with agency to enact revenge on Internet trolls and finally acting as a body empowered through performance.

This thesis analyses the three photographic series in relation to the following research questions: How can performative photographic methods be used to challenge Western society’s standards of beauty that regulate the idealised shape of the female body? How can photography bring into visibility Western society’s use of the gaze and humour as devices to maintain patriarchal female body standards? How can collaborative photographic methods be used to empower marginalised bodies and bring them into visibility in previously unimagined ways?

These questions are addressed in relation to these photographic series over six sections examining art historical, photographic, feminist, and sociological frameworks. Section 1 establishes the framework that positions my body as marginalised within society’s Western standards of idealised female beauty. Section 2 employs the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and Mary Russo to figure and celebrate my body that is the subject of this practice-based research as grotesque. Section 3 asserts a definition of performative photography within the practice-based research as a methodology based on the scholarship of Amelia Jones, Michel Poivert, and Philip Auslander. Section 4 employs the writings of Michel

Foucault and Jeannine A. Gailey to examine the marginalised female body as a site for social attack through the gaze as evidenced in *Wait Watchers* and bullying comments received through social media. Section 5 examines *The Bully Pulpit* in relation to theories of public shaming and the use of humour as a device for social control. Section 6 concludes this thesis by analysing *Buoyant Force*'s contribution to collaborative photography, tracing the development of performances and costumes produced in dialogue with collaborators who were inspired by *Wait Watchers*.

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List of Accompanying Material – Portfolios of Artworks and dissemination

Wait Watchers:

1. Morris-Cafiero, H. (2015). *The Watchers*. Toronto: The Magenta Foundation.
2. Installation photographs from solo exhibition “Wait Watchers” at UPI Gallery in New York, New York from 2 March to 21 April 2017.

The Bully Pulpit:

1. Morris-Cafiero, H. (2019). *The Bully Pulpit*. Atlanta: Fall Line Press.
2. Installation photographs of *The Bully Pulpit* exhibition at TJ Boulting Gallery from 12 February to 14 March 2020.
3. Installation photograph of *The Bully Pulpit* at GETXO Photo, Bilbao, Spain from 4 September to 29 September 2019.

Buoyant Force:

1. Digital portfolio with image list of the full set of *Buoyant Force* images.
2. Installation photograph of the *Buoyant Force* installed in *The Disobedient Body* exhibition at the Landskrona Museum, Sweden from 4 September to 16 October 2022.

Acknowledgements

This body of research and associated thesis have been made possible by the support of many people.

My sincere thanks go to the generous people who have assisted me with making the images over the past twelve years. Creating this work was a fun adventure because of your patience and dedication to delivering my vision. Thank you to the people who shared your stories with me and your openness to collaborate.

Thank you to the UrbanArt Commission and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for financial support in producing the images. A special thank you to John Sinclair, Dean for the Faculty of Arts, Science and Technology at the University of Northampton for supporting my doctoral study and production of *Buoyant Force*.

This thesis would not be possible without the support of my supervisor, Dr. Lucy Soutter. Thank you for being so patient with me and my writing. Thank you to Prof. Sian Bonnell, Dr. Cathy Wilson and Prof. Michael Opoku Agyeman for listening and your encouragement.

Finally, thank you to my husband, Catchita. I could not have done any of this work without you. I appreciate you staying home with the furkids for weeks at a time, surviving fireworks and acquisitions of new rescue dogs when I returned home. I care for you.

Author's declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Introduction

My photographic work challenges how contemporary Western society¹ has positioned the female body as the subject of a sustained campaign of historical and patriarchal body standards. Western society's body standards are perpetuated through a matrix of institutions and mechanisms that employ the public gaze² in the real and virtual worlds. These gazes render their recipients docile and position anyone who does not follow society's rules as disobedient (Foucault, 1977). Western society considers the overweight female body's image to be outside of the modern female body ideal. As a result, the overweight female body is considered hyper-invisible, i.e. a body that is marginalised beyond social and professional invisibility and treated as fair game by critics³. I will establish how my three photographic series, *Wait Watchers*, *The Bully Pulpit*, and *Buoyant Force*, employ performative self-portrait photography to visualise conceptual layers that challenge the mechanisms used by Western society to maintain its standards of female beauty. These mechanisms are undermined by my incorporating them into the images through subversive, disobedient performances and semiotic clues that recuperate my marginalised body from invisibility.

¹ Throughout this thesis, my use of the term "Western society" is one characterised by a "manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women" as defined by Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986). My use of this term also encompasses Diane Ponterotto's scholarly writings of Western culture of one that celebrates and perpetuates "normalized corporeality" or the "model for a human subject as male, white, heterosexual, middle class" and thin (2016). According to Jeannine A. Gailey, Western society perpetuates its patriarchal female body standards through mass media, medical, and political institutions that celebrate and give visibility to the ideal female body (2014). These institutions influence the citizens within the Western societies where the performative photographs and contextual research discussed in this these were produced.

² The context of the word gaze employed throughout this thesis is a hybridization of the disciplinary gaze described by Michel Foucault (1973) and Susan Bordo (1993) and the male gaze described in the scholarly writings of Laura Mulvey (1989). In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault uses the metaphor of a prison to explore disciplinary gaze employed by society to maintain its standards (1973). Foucault's theories provide the foundation for the gaze in research but are gender neutral. Bordo argues that Foucault's theories position the gazer as the person with power and male while the recipient of the gaze is subordinate and female (1993). In *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Mulvey theorises that patriarchal societal standards are perpetuated through the male gaze in cinema (1989). This male gaze positions women as passive and men as powerful. The hybridization of these theories is the foundation for how the gaze is used to attempt to regulate my body that is the subject of this practice-based research.

³ This will be established using the theoretic frameworks from the scholarly writings of Liz Frost (1999), Jeanine Gailey (2014), and Michelle R. Nario-Redmond (2010).

The recuperation of my marginalised body becomes evident in the examination of the three photographic series as a single extended project. The marginalised status of my body is evident in the images that capture my mundane performances intersecting with the public gaze in *Wait Watchers*. A second series entitled *The Bully Pulpit* are my revenge and visual response to bullies who employed an online, disciplinary gaze to punish me for transgressing Western society's rules for female beauty. By reversing the bullies' weaponization of humour and the internet as a mechanism to spread hate, I parody the twenty bullies' public profile images by costuming myself as humorous facsimiles and performances as the bully to position them as the subject of satire. *Buoyant Force* is the third series and depicts the empowerment found by people inspired after seeing *Wait Watchers* to overcome a lack of confidence in their own bodies. The images are collaborations that depict my performances in costumes informed by narratives from twenty people who contacted me to share their stories of inspiration. Overall the project depicts a disobedient, marginalised body that employs a range of methodologies to fight the pressure to become a docile body and is liberated through performance, humour, and collaboration.

Throughout my creative practice, I have utilised my body as a tool in my performances to confront Western society's female beauty standards. In a society that perpetuates these standards to maintain power for those with classical beauty, my corpulent, irregularly shaped body is marginalised from that power. After years of unsuccessfully attempting to follow Western society's beauty rules by torturing myself through disordered eating and self-hate exercises, I found empowerment through my fleshy body. I use my creative practice to defend bodies that exist in their original form from people who attack them.

This thesis analyses the three series through the frameworks of photography, feminist art history as well as sociology, psychoanalysis, disabilities studies and performance studies. My use of literature from a broad range of disciplines of study is intentional and aims to distil the conceptual layers that are informed by my lived experience.

Section 1. The Body as Marginalised by Society's Beauty Standards

The subject of the three self-portrait photographic series in this practice-based research is my body, one that is punished and marginalised from power because it does not exist within Western society's definition of the ideal feminine body. Through analysing the literature that discusses the patriarchal history of beauty standards and how they are maintained, the critical framework for Western society's treatment of my body will be established as a foundation for the three photographic series.

For the purposes of this thesis, the standards for the ideal female body are defined by Psychosociologist Liz Frost as a patriarchal system established in Western societies that aligned with Christianity, prioritise "men's gratification" and sought to alienate women from aligning with each other to overthrow male political, social, and economic power (1999, p122). Situated within that patriarchal system, the overweight female body is one that is described by Jeanine A. Gailey as "hyper-invisible" e.g. one that is simultaneously marginalised into both social and professional invisibility and criticism (2014, p12), Gailey, a professor of sociology at Texas Christian University who specialises in sociology of the body, argues that society uses hyper-invisibility as a weapon to "oppress women by bringing a tremendous amount of attention to women (and others) who transgress bodily and aesthetic norms - by being fat - while simultaneously erasing or dismissing these women in social situations" (2014, p32). This dynamic is evident in the three series through the depiction of strangers' gaze intersecting with my body, the content of the bullying comments I received, and the oppression experienced by those who were empowered by my photographs.

Gailey (2014) argues that the history of marginalising the overweight body started in the United States in the 1800s when the Industrial Revolution brought into the country an influx of Eastern European immigrants who had shorter, stockier bodies than earlier Western European immigrants. To differentiate themselves from these new immigrants, wealthy and privileged Americans celebrated thinness through trends in medicine, consumerism, and class status. "Thin became chic and

symbolized discipline and privilege – the modern woman – whereas fatness symbolized gluttony, immorality, and indulgence” (Gailey, 2014, p39).

Patriarchal beauty standards are shared through folk stories and fairy tales “whereby it is evident that a beautiful face confirms a good kind and generous nature; ugly is always evil, like Cinderella’s sister and all wicked witches” (Frost, 1999, p28). Beauty standards are perpetuated through contemporary media and the medical industry (Gailey, 2014). In the late 1990s and early twentieth century, obesity rates increased globally (Caballero, 2007). While the origin of the phrase “obesity epidemic” is not known, in 2000, the United States (US) Secretary of Health and Human Services “mobilized” health institutions and professionals to tackle what he called the “obesity epidemic” (Caballero, 2007). The incorporation of the terms “war on obesity” and “obesity epidemic” into the public vernacular have framed the overweight body as something that must be attacked. In war, a community unites to fight an enemy and remove it. An epidemic is defined as “an outbreak of disease that spreads quickly and affects many individuals at the same time” (Merriam-Webster online, no date). By describing obesity in terms of a war and epidemic, the media and medical establishment have positioned overweight people as enemies who should be attacked and forced to change or removed from public view as quickly possible.

Extensive research has proven that Western society aligns physical traits with personality characteristics. Overweight people are stereotyped as being lazy, unsuccessful, and unintelligent whereas people considered attractive are “kind, friendly and successful” (Gailey, 2014, Frost, 1999, p128). According to Michelle R. Nario-Redmond, professor of psychology and biomedical humanities, psychological research has focused on the stigma identified in disability studies that aligns visible “abominations” of the body with “blemishes of character” (2010, p473). Assumptions about the physical (disabled) body “spread across all aspects of a person’s identity, and are used to explain personality, motives, and behaviours” (Nario-Redmond, 2010, p474). While I am not defining obesity as a disability, the discrimination experienced by people with visible disabilities and obese people are aligned through this research. “Body size is similar to other non-

discursive appearances (race or ethnicity, sex, and gender) in that it is noticeable prior to any word utterances” (Gailey, 2014, p8). The overweight body and people with visible disabilities share the discrimination caused by constructed barriers of institutional policies and the medical establishment’s attempt to correct bodies that differ from the norm (Nario-Redmond, 2010). When society sees an obese person, they are confronted with the prospect of their body taking a similar shape and the potential of them being the subject of discrimination they witness and possibly deliver to others. This is the social lens through which my body is viewed when it is in public, physically or online and in this practice-based research.

While overweight and marginalised bodies have been included in an increasing number of advertising campaigns, I argue that fat shaming remains a socially acceptable form of discrimination. This statement is supported by a 2021 multi-national, sociological, and psychological study published in the *International Journal of Obesity* that found that over half (55.6 – 61.3%) of participants with a high body mass indicator experienced body shaming (Pulhl, R. et al., 2021). The highest reported sources of the body shaming were from family members (76 – 87.8%), classmates (72 – 80.9%), doctors (62.6 – 73.5%), co-workers (54.1 – 61.7%) and friends (48.8 – 66.2%) (Pulhl, R. et al., 2021). The results of this study and research discussed above, establishes my premise of how my body is viewed in the public sphere and provides context for this practice-based research.

Section 2. The Grotesque Body that Refuses to Conform

When I was a teenager, I was celebrated by those around me for my thin, muscular body. What those celebratory people didn’t know was that I was subjecting my body to an anorexic regimen of extreme calorie restriction and over-exercise to achieve and maintain my thinness. A result of my forcing my body to fit into Western female beauty standards was that I was perpetually mentally and physically exhausted and could not engage in any activities to enhance my mind. When I realised that I was at risk of not achieving my future goals over trying to maintain my body shape, I decided to accept my body, no matter its size, and

ceased my anorexic behaviour. My mind immediately changed from feeling hollow to excited with possibilities and my body changed its form to what it is today: irregular, overweight, and strong. Through this practice-based research, I claim the power of my irregular shaped, overweight body by deploying it as the subject of performative photographs that can be seen by everyone. The photographs have become catalysts for inspiring people whose body do not fit into Western society's definition of ideal body image to accept their body.

One of the theoretical points of connection for all three series is Mikhail Bakhtin's scholarship around the grotesque body as a source for freedom and power. As opposed to earlier writers on the grotesque body, Bakhtin argued that a body other than the symmetrical, idealised body should be celebrated for its subversive nature and refusal to be confined (1984). In his book, *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin states that the body of the "new canon" or the contemporary idealised body, is one that is "entirely finished, completed, strictly limited" and is contained in its physical and social form and aligned with power (Bakhtin, 1984, p320). Bakhtin (1984) states that the grotesque body, which is an opposite or negative pole of the finished body, is one that is allowed to outgrow its limits and transgress society's rules with freedom. Mary Russo's feminist scholarship on the grotesque suggests the overweight body changes, is asymmetrical, extends from its boundaries and is thus aligned with Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque body, one that I would employ in defining my body (Russo, 1997).

According to Russo, the female grotesque body is a spectacle because it is publicly transgressing society's rules of ideal beauty and is punished by being a "passive repository of all that is denied by the sleek and prosperous bourgeois" (Arthurs, 1999, p143). Russo expands on Bakhtin's theory by describing the grotesque body as "the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is 'monumental, static, closed, and sleek'" (Russo, 1997, p325). The spectacle that is associated with the overweight body establishes a pattern as described by Russo wherein any normal, everyday action undertaken by an overweight person will position that body as other and is expected to be lazy,

unsuccessful, and dumb (Russo, 1995). These ideas support Gailey's research as previously discussed and are the foundation for how my body is contextualised in the three series discussed herein (2014).

The mundane performances in my works aim to upend the corrective gaze that Western society has established for viewing and critiquing the female body. For each body of work, I position my performances in a location where my visibility traps me in a disciplinary gaze (Tynan, 2015). By presenting these performances to the world, I am wilfully transgressing the rules of Western society that govern my body and disobeying attempts to marginalise me and silence my voice.

Section 3. Performative Photography as Methodology

The three series that comprise this practice-based research are situated in the field of performative photography. My usage of this methodology varies from series to series but is crucial to my research practice and the project as a whole.

Throughout the history of photography, the terms photography and performance intersect to produce multiple meanings. The term performative photography that I am engaging within this practice-based research is the creation of an image depicting a constructed scene where a planned performance is being delivered for the purposes of the photograph. This form of performative photography has become more prominent over the last decade. I suggest that my particular uses of this practice-based research methodology are original within the field of contemporary photography.

In my creative practice, I employ performance as the tool to challenge standards for female beauty. I was initially and am still inspired by the work of the Mexican performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña. In his essay, *In Defense of Performance Art*, Gómez-Peña describes his use of performance as a tool to turn the "gaze inward" and question and dismantle "imposed structures" of authority (2004, p6). He also describes performance as mechanism for viewers to "experience, vicariously" through the performer "other possibilities" of freedom from political and social structures and enact change (Gómez-Peña, 2004, p5). The performative methodologies utilised in my three series allows viewers to

project themselves into my experience of receiving a possibly corrective gaze, being bullied, and empowered through graceful performances.

Performance documentation is a common instance of photography's intersection with performance. Philip Auslander defines two categories of performance documentation as documentary and theatrical (2006, p1). Auslander describes the documentary photograph of the performance documentation as an ontological "access point to the reality of the performance" (2006, p2). He provides an example of the documentary category of performance documentation in the photographs documenting Chris Burden's performance *Shoot* (Auslander, 2006). In 1971, Burden convened a small, selected audience in a gallery to witness a friend shoot him in the arm with a firearm as a performance art piece called *Shoot* (Auslander, 2006). Burden arranged for a photographer and a filmmaker to document the performance (O'Dell, 1997). When *Shoot* is discussed by historians and academics, it is contextualised as performance art with the images providing evidence of the performance event. The resulting images are not the work of art, but the photographic proof of the artistic event. My work places less emphasis on the importance of performance as a live event and therefore does not fit Auslander's definition of the documentary category within performance documentation [outside of some aspects of *Wait Watchers* which I will discuss later].

My work aligns with his definition of theatrical performance documentation as "cases in which performances were staged solely to be photographed or filmed and had no meaningful prior existence as autonomous events presented to audiences (2006, p2). The images in this practice-based research contain performances that were created for the camera.

The history of performative photography includes artists who have photographed their performances of extreme physical acts. These radical performances were intended to be a spectacle to activate the viewer and challenge the commodification of art. Artists such as Chris Burden and Marina Abramovich

positioned assaults on their bodies as the spectacle to activate the audience. Amelia Jones describes this work as:

the messy, deliberately obnoxious body of the avant-gardist was forced in the face of bourgeois audience members invited to witness their own humiliation and thus their own participation in the making of the work and its meanings and values (2012, p14).

Across my work, I employ performances that are less spectacular than those of the artists described above. I choose to deliver my message subversively through commonplace actions as non-spectacular performances in constructed, staged photographs. The normal actions within my performances allows viewers' gazes to be positioned on the subject of the photograph (i.e. my body in public, humorous pops, a graceful overweight body) rather than the spectacle of a performance event. Viewers are then confronted not only by my performance and the image, but their response to their analysis of both.

Auslander describes the experience of a viewer looking at a theatrical (rather than documentary) photograph of a performance as:

It may well be that our sense of presence, power and authenticity of these pieces derives not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event but from perceiving the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artistic, aesthetic project or sensibility and for what we are the present audience (2006, p9).

Images containing constructed performances allow the viewer to process the event and then create an experience around the various components of the performance and scene. Michel Poivert describes this as the harnessing of staged photography's dichotomy for the viewer to engage with the symbols within the photograph and the factual nature of the medium (Poivert, 2017).

The photographs in the *Wait Watchers* series are situated as a hybrid of constructed, theatrical performed photographs intersecting with documentary images. The photographs depict my performances of mundane acts, but they also serve as evidentiary documents of the stranger's gaze as they pass me performing in public. The constructed scene juxtaposed with a factual event within one frame provides an ambiguity that adds complexity to the images. Lucy Soutter describes the ambiguous use of fictive documentary and hybrid genres as strategies employed in contemporary photographic practices (2018).

Amelia Jones situates performance as a tool to highlight the marginalised body. Jones asserts that "the body/self as performative, as constituted through performative acts, points to the contingency of identity and social positionality not only on the context and effect of the performance itself but on the particularity for the other bodies/selves it engages" (2000, p12). Jones also describes performance as the grotesque body's "refusal of the containment of aesthetics" (2012, p14). Throughout this practice-based research, performance is employed as a tool to affix the viewers' gaze on to my body to highlight its size and shape. This tactic reinforces the visual difference of my body from its surroundings and asserts its position as a disobedient body.

Section 4. Reversing the Public Gaze through Performative Photography

In his 1977 book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, the French philosopher Michel Foucault defines the circulation of power of the gaze and its use as a tool for social control. One of his central examples is Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison design that controls prisoners by putting their every action on display to the staff and other prisoners to bear witness (Foucault, 1977). Foucault describes the disciplinary power of the gaze over the body and the gaze's ability to "manage(s) its movements and shape(s) its behaviours" (Tynan, 2015, p189). According to Foucault, bodies that are aware of being watched assume that they are under constant surveillance, becoming "docile bodies" (Gailey, 2014, p10). This normalising gaze ensures that people follow the rules set out by society; they are punished via the gaze if those rules are disobeyed.

The *Wait Watchers* images convey two forms of Foucault's panopticon corrective gaze: one delivered by the people in the photographs and the second through viewer comments and websites that criticised my body. While the space in which one occurs is physical and the other exists virtually, both are public and evidence the history of punishment by public display and the female body as a site for unsolicited criticism.

The initial image that launched the *Wait Watchers* series was produced serendipitously while I was creating performative photographs for a series called *Something to Weigh*. *Something to Weigh* is a series of self-portrait photographs that depict my performances in spaces where the shape and size of my body was socially magnified. These spaces included restaurants, swimming pools and other recreational places where food is advertised and/or the body is on display. An image from this series is "Willpower" (Fig. 1) where I occupy the space of a table at a restaurant while performing a posture that delivers an ambiguous narrative leaving the viewer to postulate that I am either in the hopeful position of anticipating a companion or realising that my guest will never meet me. The ambiguity of my performance invites the viewers' subconscious attitudes towards the non-ideal female body to inform their analyses of the events occurring in the photographs.

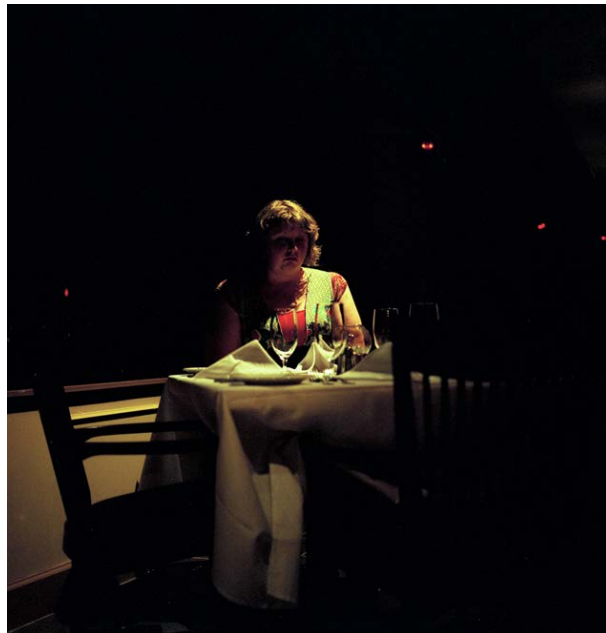


Figure 1 - Haley Morris-Cafiero, "Willpower" from the series *Something to Weigh*, 2010.

In March 2010, I travelled to New York City, New York with the aim of creating new images for the *Something to Weigh* series. I was working as a lecturer and administrator at a higher education institution and had little time to produce work. The short trip to New York City provided an abundant landscape of social settings for photographs that could be created within a two-day period. I decided to photograph my performances on the Coca Cola Steps in Times Square utilising the jumbo digital screens surrounding the steps as a backdrop. The streaming images on the screens rotated between advertisements for food and lingerie and provided a background with images of thin, female models and candy that would accentuate my marginalised body and the ambiguity of my performances. The camera settings were fixed, the camera was secured on a tripod, and three frames were captured.

One of the negatives depicted my performance with the commercials as a backdrop and included the back of a woman photographing a man in the frame. The man, who was meant to be posing for the woman to photograph, appears to be sneering at me behind my back. I did not know the man, nor the woman and the frame captured a moment where his seemingly critical gaze is frozen and fixated on me. This image, "Anonymity Isn't for Everyone" (Fig. 2), launched what would become the *Wait Watchers* series of photographs.



Figure 2 - Haley Morris-Cafiero, "Anonymity Isn't for Everyone" from the series *Wait Watchers*, 2010.

From 2010 to 2015 the *Wait Watchers* series was created by photographing the gaze of strangers in public as they passed me performing mundane acts⁴. The performances were photographed in short periods of time when I could take leave from my job and travel internationally. The international landscape provided a diverse population of strangers for the photographs and supported my intention for the images not to depict a specific demographic. The performances were photographed in the Czech Republic (2013), France (2014), Peru (2012), Spain (2011), and several cities in the United States (2010-2015). The trips were financially supported through my teaching professional practices classes in international locations over the summer holidays.

⁴ In order to maintain visual consistency in the images during the five year production period of *Wait Watchers*, a fixed method of creating the images was employed for each shoot. First, I found a location that was public and had a large number of people traversing the scene. Second, I set the camera settings for the exposure in the scene and set the focus on the lens for the location of the performance. I attached the camera to a strap that hung around an assistant's neck to position the camera in the middle of their torso. I then gave a pre-agreed signal to the assistant to push the camera's shutter release button when a large group of people was approaching my performance. The images were selected for the series based on the oblique nature of the stranger's gaze and the images that depicted the strangers making obvious and extreme gestures to criticise my body were not included in the series.

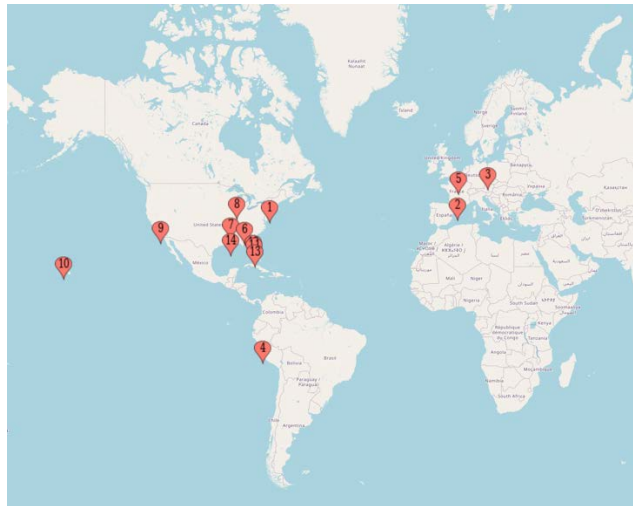


Figure 3- Map of the locations in chronological order where the Wait Watchers series was created.

The *Wait Watchers* series employs performative photography to illuminate the experience of my marginalised body engaging with what can be considered a disciplinary gaze in public. The series explores the gaze of strangers in the physical world depicted in the images and then later, in the online public space of social media comments and websites, when the images were the subject of a two-year viral media frenzy from 2013 to 2015. The publication of the images worldwide had the unforeseen effect of establishing a global platform for challenging the treatment of the marginalised female body.

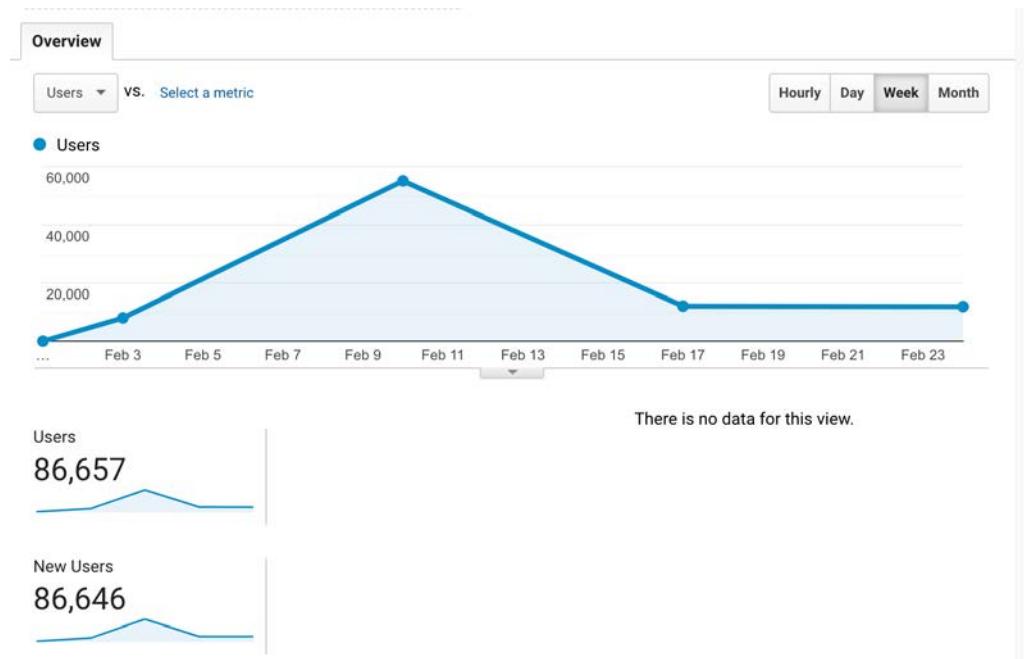


Figure 4 - Audience engagement data for www.haleymorriscafihero.com during the initial viral media episode. February 2013 via Google Analytics

To ensure a visual and conceptual consistency throughout the series, I employed the same methodology for each performance. Public locations where people would traverse the scene and foot traffic would not be obstructed were selected. The settings in the camera were fixed and the camera was positioned either around an assistant's neck or on a flat surface. I performed an action that would ordinarily occur within the public space while either giving the assistant a signal to push the shutter release button or activate the shutter remotely. The performances were designed to be guerrilla-style, i.e. unannounced, improvised and no more than two minutes in duration. My commitment to producing this long-term series was fuelled in part by the exhilarating feeling of my breaking Western society's rules by producing these rebellious performances of my marginalised body in a variety of cultures that do not accept it. Western society engrained in me that what I was doing was naughty, although protected by law.

After "Anonymity Isn't for Everyone" was created, I realised that by including the face of the stranger in the photographs, I needed legal advice on how I could speak about, publish, and exhibit the photographs. As I was then in the United States, I consulted with a local attorney who advised me that I can exhibit and publish the photographs as the images are my intellectual property. There is no

expectation of privacy as the images are taken in public using a camera that is not hidden. When discussing the photographs, I was advised that I should never say anything definitive about the thoughts of the people in the photographs. I do not know what the people in the photographs are thinking or reacting to in the frame and it would be dishonest for me to say otherwise. And indeed I didn't need to speculate what they were thinking because others chose to give their own unsolicited opinions.

During the creation of the series, on February 6, 2013, several of the images were published online on the *Lenscratch* blog (Smithson, 2013). On February 7, 2013, the images and related stories were published by *Huffington Post* and in the *Daily Mail UK* on February 8, 2013 (Figs. 5 and 6) (Bahadur, 2013 and Whitelocks, 2013). These two articles launched a two-year, international, viral media episode establishing the series as pioneering in its illumination on the experience of the marginalised female body in public. I contributed answers to and appeared in over two hundred and fifty interviews for online and print media outlets and television and radio shows in at least 30 countries with a readership/viewership of more than 275 million people. Additional unauthorised articles were published but were not tracked due to the high number and lack of engagement with the respective authors. The viral media attention touted me as a “brave” pioneer for creating a visual portrayal of the experience of people who have marginalised bodies (Glaviano, 2018). I declined offers to host my own reality show, be a panel member on a celebrity daytime talk show and produce a made for television movie based on my life and work.

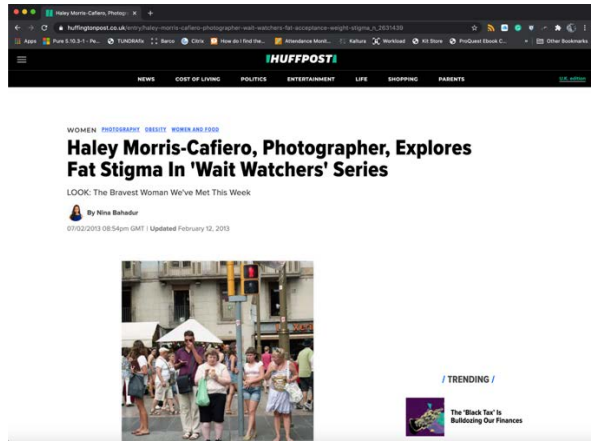


Figure 5 - Bahadur, N. (2013). Haley Morris-Cafiero, Photographer, Explores Fat Stigma in 'Wait Watchers' Series. Huffington Post, 7 February. Available from <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/haley-morris-cafiero-photographer-wait-watchers-fat-acceptance>

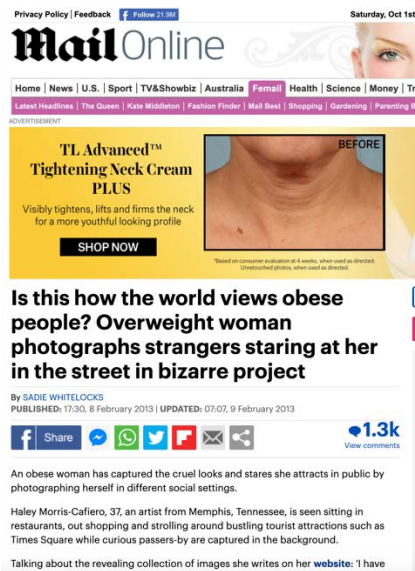


Figure 6 - Whitelocks, S. (2013). Is this how the world views obese people? Overweight woman photographs strangers staring at her in the street in bizarre project. The Daily Mail UK, 8 February. Available from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-227569>

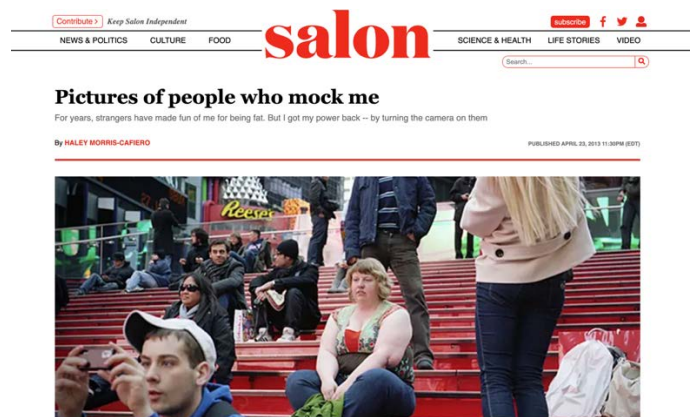


Figure 7 - Morris-Cafiero, H. (2013). Pictures of People Who Mock Me. Salon, 23 April. Available from https://www.salon.com/2013/04/23/pictures_of_people_who_mock_me/ [Accessed 01 October 2022].

In the *Wait Watchers* series, my use of photography has been described by the art critic Marvin Heiferman as “a process of critical looking” where I accentuate the ambiguity of what is happening in my photographs “to counteract what, to a large extent, photography itself so carefully harnessed to set in motion” (Heiferman, 2015, p12). Heiferman contextualises the activist impulse of *Wait Watchers* series within the work of the 1970’s women’s movement and specifically Laurie Anderson’s *Object/Objection/Objectivity (Fully Automated Nikon)* (Heiferman, 2015). In the series, Anderson photographs men immediately after they make a sexually suggestive comment to her while walking on the street. The images depict men in a variety of locations with bars across their eyes (Fig. 8). The images act as Anderson’s “objection to their objectification” while the white bars across their eyes render her catcallers anonymous and powerless (Google Arts and Culture, no date).



Figure 8 - Laurie Anderson “Object/Objection/Objectivity (Fully Automated Nikon) - Two Men in a Car,” 1973.

Whereas the faces of Anderson’s subjects are redacted through white bars across their eyes, I preserved the subjects’ faces as I do not make statements about their behaviour nor what is meant by their gaze in the photograph. The images represent an unmanipulated moment that is presented as a photograph to be analysed by the viewer.

While there are several feminist and self-portrait artists whose work could be contextualised with the *Wait Watchers* images, there is not another photographic

series that engages the unaltered public gaze through performative photography⁵. This is an important aspect of the originality of *Wait Watchers*. This disparity of comparable work is supported by the lack of commercial and institutional support for the project. My conversations with some gallerists and museum staff have confirmed that the project is considered ground-breaking, but they do not know how to sell or collect the series because it evokes difficult emotions in the viewer. These difficult emotions are indications of viewers' discomfort with their own responses to the work, as the images depict discriminatory acts they may have experienced, witnessed in others or delivered themselves.

It is not known what the people in the photographs are thinking or reacting to. However the gaze captured in the photographs can be interpreted as critical by one viewer and noncritical by another. For each image, I position my performances in a location where my visibility traps me in a disciplinary gaze (Tynan, 2015). In his lecture, "The Split Between the Eye and Gaze" Lacan describes how a viewer's response to an image is informed by their subjective gaze (1973). This theory supports my intention for the viewer to decode what is happening in the image for themselves. I do not communicate what I believe is the meaning behind the passerbys' actions in the image. I present the unaltered image for the viewer to determine what is meant behind the actions in the photograph. The viewer's subconscious beliefs are embedded in their analysis of the image, and they determine what is happening in the action they are witnessing.

Once the project was in the public domain, the online disciplinary gaze was directed at me in the form of approximately four thousand, five hundred emails, thousands of social media comments and blogs that criticised my body and overall appearance. The bullying messages and website can be divided into three categories: declarations of my overall unattractiveness, condemnations of my body weight or assumptions about my ableness based on the size of my body. The

⁵ My performative practice is heavily inspired by the work of Adrian Piper. *Wait Watchers* can be contextualised with the video documentation of Piper's performance as *The Mythic Being* 1973-1975 that captures the responses of strangers to her performance of walking down a busy sidewalk in costume while repeating phrases for the camera. Other work that prefigures *Wait Watchers* includes VALIE EXPORT's *Tapp und Tastkino* (1968-71).

messages were typically short, poorly written and contained words that were extremely abusive and reprimanding. The emails and social media comments were generally the same length, and the author of the email was generally anonymous while the social media comment connected to the online profile of its author.

The short phrasing and scathing tone of these messages situated them as fast-moving, piercing ammunition with the aim of pressuring me to change my body or be punished by receiving continued waves of weaponised comments if I continued my project and chose to live in an overweight body. The intention of the social media and website authors is to use their words to punish me into becoming what Foucault described as a docile body by using the social media as a contemporary panopticon space to assert their gaze, e.g. bullying comments (1977). My publishing the *Wait Watchers* images online empowered my marginalised body making it visible and in being disobedient to Western society's body standards, I provided an activist platform supporting the body positivity movement.

There is significant research published on the analysis of social media as a panopticon site for a gaze that is used to surveil people's opinions and locations. However, I identify a gap in the literature equating criticising content of bullying emails, derogatory social media comments and blog content as a form of the disciplinary gaze on bodies. I cite this thesis and practice-based research as a significant contribution to knowledge on this topic.

Section 5. Invoking Humour

Whereas the authors' aims for their bullying messages discussed in Section 4 was to instil shame in me, to stop my creative practice, and to silence my activist voice; their messages amused me. I was not amused by the hateful content of their messages, but by their vigorous and wasted effort to change my body and stop me from creating *Wait Watchers*. It should have been obvious to the bullies that, as they were seeing my body on international media outlets through a series of photographs that were created to challenge the standards that they were upholding, their words would not influence or stop me. The volume and

persistence of the online comments and emails confirmed that my goals for *Wait Watchers* were being met and inspired me to create more images for the series.

Inspired by my amused reaction, I archived thousands of the comments and emails to utilise in articulating a response to the bullies. I conceptualised several series that would deliver a creative response. Examples of these ideas include locating the bullies and conducting guerrilla-style performances near their workplaces and contacting them to create an artefact based on our interaction. These confrontational, in-person strategies were not pursued because I wanted to invoke humour as a methodology to counter its derogatory use as a social tool for marginalising bodies.

There is significant literature discussing the social function of humour. Humour is a tool that unites individuals within groups, promotes social affiliations among members of the group and helps increase the size of the group (Pérez, 2017). Along with these positive attributes, humour weakens the psychological defences of individuals making them “amenable to persuasion” (Hart, 2007). Humour has power over peoples’ perceptions aiming to maintain “existing social relations and dominant ways of perceiving social reality” (Powell, 1988). Sociologist Raúl Pérez describes humour as a powerful form of communication that is used to “correct undesired behaviour” and to “discipline (and) marginalise” people who society considers “other” (2017, p958). Powell states:

...humour operates to set apart and invalidate the behaviour and ideas of those “not like us” by creating and sustaining stereotypes and often projecting the practices of others to a presumed “logical” but of course “absurd conclusion (1988, p100).

When conceptualising my response to the bullies, I realised that I could incorporate humour into the series to subvert their weaponizing of the internet to spread their hateful comments. The internet has the potential to permanently damage someone emotionally, not only for its design as a public space where comments can be seen by anyone, but also for the fact that information can never

be permanently removed from the it. This is a result of the internet being a content delivery network, a network of computers that connects users to current and historical content, but its archive cannot be erased due to its complexity (Sunday Standard, 2009). By publishing the images online, I would ensure that my response would exist in perpetuity and provides an additional conceptual layer for the series.

My visual response to the people who tried to bully me is *The Bully Pulpit*, a series of performative self-portrait photographs that depict my performances of twenty-five people who tried to bully me through social media comments, blogs, and emails. Using their public profile photographs as an archive of their environments, mannerisms, and physical traits, I recreated a scene from their profile and costumed myself to mimic the bully while performing as them for a photograph. I then inserted the comment they made about me into the frame to connect their hateful words to their likeness. The conceptual circle was closed when the series was published on *The New York Times* in 2018 securing my response in perpetuity to a readership of approximately 8 million people worldwide (The New York Times Company, no date).

For each image in *The Bully Pulpit* series, I recreated the likeness of the bully by wearing the wig and clothing that matched their profile photograph. In instances when the bully was wearing an item of clothing with a specific graphic, I procured the identical item to wear in their photograph. As an example, for “Speedo Man,” I located the speedo the bully was wearing in his profile photograph and acquired it for the image (Fig. 9). The images in *The Bully Pulpit* series align with Auslander’s definition of a theatrical performance document as the performances were constructed to be photographed.



Figure 9 - Haley Morris-Caftero, "Speedo Man" from the series *The Bully Pulpit*, 2018.

When the bully was wearing a solid colour, I designed bespoke clothing items that incorporated their vicious comment into the fabric of the garment. This use of image and text branded the bully with their venomous comment as a metaphor for their hate speech that will be connected to them on the Internet indefinitely. An example of this use of text with image is "Slob," an image where I recreated the bully's tattoos and included her hateful comments as additional comments on the surface of her skin (Fig. 10).



Figure 10 - Haley Morris-Caftero, "Slob" from the series *The Bully Pulpit*, 2018.

I embodied humour by utilising absurdly unrealistic prosthetics with exaggerated features and poor props in each image. My goal was to create a likeness that was

very close to the bullies' profile but not an exact facsimile of their features. If I had created a facsimile of the bullies' profile photograph, the viewers' attention would be spent identifying the bullies. This would have taken away from my goal of reversing the weaponization of humour as a form of social control by making the bullies the subject of the joke.

Performative methodologies are essential to *The Bully Pulpit* series. In order to create a convincing representation of the bullies, I channelled the bullies through my performance. Each bully's performance was created from my study of their mannerisms and body language portrayed in their public profile. My channelling and performances of the bully's idiosyncrasies give authenticity to my "becoming" them for the photograph thus highlighting the humorous elements of the photograph⁶.

The activist theme of the series was highlighted by François Cheval, curator of the Lianzhou Museum of Photography, in his essay for my exhibition "The Visible Woman" at the museum in 2019 (Cheval, 2019). Cheval describes the reversal of power that gives the series its impact as "[she] imitates her detractors, flaunting their insults, and in doing so, turns their hatred around" (2019). Art historian Dr. Lu Auz expands on the activist theme by describing my performances in *The Bully Pulpit* series as "transforming them (bullies) into starable bodies" (2017, p69). Auz further characterises my work as "important in interrupting commonplace ideas and attitudes about the fat body and negative stereotypes that are often embedded within visual representations of fatness (2017, p70).

The conceptual layers of *The Bully Pulpit* support its contextualisation with several contemporary photographic artists. The series connects to the work of liu Susiraja who harnesses humour as a tool for empowerment of the overweight female body.

⁶ *The Bully Pulpit* images were conceptualised as individual scenes with props and locations referenced in each bully's profile. When the bully was wearing a solid piece of clothing in their profile photo, I had their bullying text printed on custom made clothing. When the bully's profile depicted them wearing a piece of clothing with an iconic image or pattern, a replica of the clothing item was procured for the image. For images where text could not be incorporated into the scene during the shoot, the text was added in postproduction. Strobe lighting was used for each image to ensure visual consistency.

(Snider, 2019). Susiraja poses with household items dissecting and framing sexualised parts of her body while staring at the camera holding a deadpan facial expression (Fig. 11). Susiraja's images employ humour through her ironic use of photography to document her body in a banal scene interacting with commonplace objects while harnessing our gaze to sexualise her body.



Figure 11 - Iiu Susiraja, "Broom" (detail), from *Good Behaviour Series*, 2008-10.

The Bully Pulpit employs performance to reverse the weaponization of humour as a tool for marginalising the female body by positioning the bullies as the subjects of the joke. Their bullying comments are framed by ridiculous props that are highlighted by my authentic performances that channel their personas. By positioning the bullies as the subjects of the joke, my goal of making their behaviour laughable is achieved.

Section 6. Empowerment Through Collaboration

As part of the same viral media episode when I received bullying comments, I received thousands of supportive messages from viewers who were inspired by the *Wait Watchers* series after seeing them online. The messages ranged from short notes of gratitude to detailed stories of how *Wait Watchers* inspired viewers to overcome a self-imposed barrier caused by the societal pressures that enforce ideal beauty standards. Some viewers shared stories with excruciating detail of the pain they experienced and described positive transformations from seeing my work. Some examples of these transformations include a person who felt safe to leave their house for the first time in twenty years, multiple people who accepted

their body after years of unhealthy dieting and self-harm episodes and some who found the confidence to leave a dangerous relationship. These stories were used to develop a new series entitled *Buoyant Force*. In this series, performances challenge the common belief that a corpulent body cannot be graceful. My performances of powerful and graceful gestures while underwater subvert the trope that a female underwater is frail and hollow. This disobedient act echoes the empowerment felt by the collaborators who overcame challenges with their body image.

One of the subversive tools I employed in the *Buoyant Force* series was the underwater setting for the images. I seized the trope of the female body in water away from the frail, submissive woman. This archetype appears in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the character Ophelia who descends into madness and drowns in a brook after Hamlet, her lover, verbally abuses her and kills her father by mistake (Chen, 2021). The image of Ophelia succumbing to water and melting like dew became the symbol for female weakness and delicacy in art and literature (Chen, 2021). One of the most famous paintings depicting the drowning of Ophelia is Sir John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* created from 1851-52 (Fig. 12).



Figure 12 - Sir John Everett Millais *Ophelia*, oil paint on canvas, 1851-52.

In the Pre-Raphaelite painting, we can see the figure of a young woman with a serene expression, surrendering to the water surrounded by exquisitely painted flora and fauna while wearing an intricately detailed lace dress (Millais, 1851-52). The painting captures Ophelia's drowning at a point when the abdomen is submerged in the water her chest is floating making her appear hollow while her resigned expression suggests weakness. Millais' *Ophelia* perpetuates the idea that the female body (permeated by madness) in water is weak and hollow while being visually beautiful. My floating bodies in the *Buoyant Force* series are the opposite. They are empowered bodies that emerge from constraints inflicted by Western society into the light of self-acceptance.

The underwater setting for the *Buoyant Force* performances also provided a conceptual layer as the laws of hydrodynamics state the shape of the body does not determine its ability to float. Based on these laws, I propose that the underwater space is an inclusive one where buoyancy (the ability to float) is determined by body density, and not by body mass or shape (California State University, Long Beach, no date). My use of the underwater space to perform graceful gestures challenges Western society's female body standards by providing a setting that accentuates my transgression as an overweight body defying gravity.

Collaboration was a key part of the *Buoyant Force* series. There is significant literature regarding the topic of collaboration in photography. Many sources discuss the relationship between the photographer and model/subject in collaborative terms. Collaborative practices that involve the subject actively participating in the photographic process can be seen in the work of Anthony Luvera and Wendy Ewald (Palmer, 2017). The methodologies I employed in this practice-based research expands the definition of collaborative photography to include participating in the creation of elements of the image by a collaborator. In this instance, the collaborator communicated information through answers to a questionnaire that was used for the creation of the props and performances. It is an original aspect of this project that I collaborated with others to develop the

visual materials that were used for my channelling, not documenting, a subject (collaborator).

The collaborative methodology was employed in the *Buoyant Force* series to give agency to the collaborators and visualise the empowerment of their oppressed bodies. Their empowerment subverts the power that made their bodies docile and were recuperated by seeing the *Wait Watchers* images. Each collaborator completed a questionnaire that queried their experience of seeing the *Wait Watchers* images and visual indicators of joy and inspiration⁷. Each collaborator answered the following questions:

1. Please provide the general location of where you saw the “*Wait Watchers*” project. (Not the address. Example: kitchen, bedroom, grocery store, etc).
2. When you think about that positive experience, what colour(s) do you associate with that inspiration?
3. If you could associate a pattern with that inspirational experience, what pattern and what colours would they be?
4. Please describe your hair style and colour. For my self-portrait, I will be costuming myself in a wig that looks like your hair. Please be very specific and include the shape, colour, length, texture of your hair and celebrities with a similar style, if one exists.

The collaborators’ questionnaire answers and initial emails were used to create props and performances for the photographs⁸. Collaborators provided a description of their hair colour and style in order to acquire wigs for each image and is the only fact that can link to the collaborators’ physical traits. Collaborators’ narratives were translated into performances that depict a marginalised body moving gracefully and unhindered through water. This performance challenges

⁷ The methodology and associated documentation were approved by the University of Northampton’s Faculty for Art, Science and Technology’s Faculty Research Ethics subcommittee.

⁸ The *Buoyant Force* images were created in a 6-foot tall by 12-foot wide water-filled tank made of glass on three sides to allow for the camera and lighting equipment to be outside of the water. The images were created by positioning two strobe mono lights on the side of the tank with a third light positioned above the tank angled down towards the water. An assistant pushed the shutter to capture the images of the underwater performances. Each performance was produced using props and costumes. Postproduction techniques were used to remove the tank pumps and filters from the images.

Western society's female body standards that falsely dictate that an overweight body cannot be graceful. The performances are a metaphor for the collaborators' overcoming the challenges Western society placed upon them due to their physical appearance.

One example of my translation of the emails and questionnaire answers into an image can be seen in the image "The Enlister" (Fig. 13).



Figure 13 - Haley Morris-Cafiero "The Enlister" from the series Buoyant Force, 2022.

"The Enlister" recreates the story of a collaborator who wanted to join the army from a young age and at age 18, tried to enlist and was rejected because they were overweight. This rejection established an attitude of hate towards their body, and they endured a 25-year period of yo-yo dieting in an attempt to shape their body within Western society's ideal body standard. After seeing the *Wait Watchers* images online, they emailed me their story and shared that seeing the images allowed them to accept their body.

My performance of the collaborator's story is based on a military boot camp manoeuvre and the costume is a camouflage uniform cinched at the waist with video game controllers representing the video game console that brings them joy. My face is shrouded in a black and white cloth printing with their favourite pattern. The resulting image depicts a body that is propelled through the water wanting to become visible, contradicting the camouflage and its metaphoric device as the collaborator's body that was previously marginalised.

The *Buoyant Force* series was completed during the writing of this thesis and was exhibited for the first time in September 2022. It has not to date been the subject of any written analysis but will be included in a forthcoming monograph, if one is produced.

In keeping with the ethics and ethos of collaborative photography, each collaborator has received their respective image with an update of the series' conclusion and the outputs for the series. Collaborators were questioned on their opinion of the image and how it felt to collaborate. All responses received, though small in quantity, reflect that the collaborator is very grateful to have participated in the process and is very proud of the image that was produced. Each collaborator will receive a print of their image and a copy of the book, on production.

Contributing to the production of the photographs gave collaborators agency in their image and shifts the power dynamic of subject and photographer described by Martha Rosler as the "unequal power in the photographic transaction" (2004, p227). In her essay "Post Documentary, Post Photography," Rosler criticises photographers and gallerists who have financially benefited from photography that promotes a "freak show" of demonising people who are struggling (2004). Though her comments specifically address documentary work rather than constructed images, my beliefs align with Rosler's, and I have no interest in profiting from the pain of others. Although the *Buoyant Force* images will be available for sale as artistic prints, my interest in making the series is less about money and more about visualising the inspiration of others. The images fulfil my socially engaged practice

and aim to inspire others to overcome their hate of their bodies by seeing similar stories in my images.

An artist who uses collaborative methodologies to create activist work is Zoe Strauss. In her *Homesteading* project commissioned for the *2013 Carnegie International*, Strauss created studio portraits of residents of Homestead, Pennsylvania, a town that was built around the Carnegie-owned Homestead Steel Works (Naughton, 2014). The residents of Homestead generated great wealth for the Carnegie family and then suffered when the steel mill closed in 1986 ending a source of income for many residents (Naughton, 2014). Strauss opened a portrait studio in Homestead and invited residents to share stories and be photographed for a portrait. When the portrait was made, Strauss printed three prints: one to keep, one for the portrait sitter and one for the *Carnegie International* exhibition. The prints were then added to the collection of the Carnegie Museum of Art with a value of \$1,000 each and a platform for their town's history to be heard (Pifer, no date). Like Strauss who uses the artistic institution in her activism, my aim with the *Buoyant Force* series is to inspire others by making these inspiring stories visible in artistic institutions and contexts.

I suggest that the *Buoyant Force* images are contextualised within the photographic genres of self-portrait and collaboration, but I assert that the images align with work where the maker channels others. An example is Trish Morrissey's performative self-portrait photographic series *Front* (2005-2007) that depicts Morrissey's act of approaching families on a beach who were unknown to her, asking them to allow her to replace the woman in the family by approximating her outfit and sitting in her place for a photograph (Trish Morrissey's website, no date). Though the subject families were strangers, Morrissey channelled the woman whom she was temporarily replacing to explore the dynamics of a role of the female in the group.

The methodology of channelling or projecting into the identity of another person was employed by Gillian Wearing in her series *Album 2003*. In the series, she retrieved images from a family photo archive and collaborated with experts from

Madame Tussauds Wax Museum to create accurate masks of the people in the photograph to wear for self-portrait photographs (Wearing, 2003). All the photographs were of her family members from the age of twenty to thirty, with the exception of her grandparents (Wearing, 2012). By enveloping herself in the silicone facsimile of her family members' face and body, she is using her body to channel their spirit during that age (Fig. 14).



Figure 14 - Gillian Wearing, "Self Portrait as My Sister Jane Wearing" from the series *Album 2003*, 2003.

Both Morrissey's and Wearing's channelling of others' personas for their photographs is a similar methodology employed by me for creating the *Buoyant Force* series. Both artists use channelling to create an authentic visual and personal connection to their respective personas. With similar aim, I channelled my collaborators through their questionnaire answers for my performances in the *Buoyant Force* images.

Section 7. Final Analysis

The practice-based research discussed in this thesis is an original contribution to knowledge because it is the only performative photographic, socially-engaged work that insects the public through three different methodologies. In *Wait Watchers*, the public gaze is captured on the street in response to my spontaneous, mundane performance. The remarkable viral response to this

project attests to its original and timely contribution as a socially engaged artwork, extending the feminist performance of artists such as Adrian Piper and VALIE EXPORT into the emerging public sphere of the internet. For the second method, I harvest data from my cyberbullies' social media accounts to perform humorous facsimiles of their profile that are used as a photographic response to their bullying comments in *The Bully Pulpit* series. This was the first art project to address the issue of cyberbullying within the online arena, self-consciously appropriating the visual vocabulary and self-presentation tools of social media for both humorous and political impact. For the third series, *Buoyant Force*, collaboration methods are used to inform the aesthetic of the image created in response to people who wrote me messages of how the *Wait Watchers* inspired them to overcome a difficulty in their life. The three methodologies build on one another to build the narrative of the overweight, female body that is marginalised by Western society through the disciplinary gaze defends itself using the weapons used to attack it on socially media and is then liberated through celebratory performances of others peoples' stories of overcoming their body hatred. The three series connect as a larger project that employs a range of subversive devices to challenge society's rules that govern female bodies.

Through this thesis and practice-based research, I have demonstrated that performative photography can be effectively used to challenge Western society's standards regulating the idealised shape of the female body. The *Wait Watchers* series established my argument by depicting the experience of my marginalised body in public. When those images were published in the online domain and my body became the subject of tens of thousands of comments, dozens of blogs and a Change.org petition that criticised its appearance and shape, it created a platform and discussion and proof of the works' impact on a range of audiences. I exploited the bullies' own methods and online profile to create a response to their bullying with *The Bully Pulpit* series. The *Buoyant Force* series employed performative photography to show how other marginalised people have been empowered by seeing my photographs. When the three series are analysed together as one larger project, the marginalised body becomes visible, then

defended, and celebrated through my particular methodology of performative photography.

There were certain external limits placed on the making of these series. The *Buoyant Force* series is the product of my first collaboration with others in my creative practice. I have always used my body and my experiences in my practice-based research as I did not want to burden others' mental health with the emotionally difficult subjects in which I am engaged. However, after reading the collaborators' messages of appreciation to me and the detailed stories of the adversity they overcame, it was clear that their voices needed to be present in the series. I initially planned to travel to the collaborators' locations and collaborate on making the photographs in situ. The expense of traveling to over twenty worldwide locations was not financially viable. I decided to collaborate with the participants through online methods and use their words as inspiration in the creative process of making the work. The resulting images reflect the voice of the collaborator while maintaining the privacy of their story and identity. While the *Buoyant Force* series does not resemble my initial vision for the images, the process of making the series pushed me out of my aesthetic and solitary working comfort zones and I am very pleased with the resulting images.

The *Buoyant Force* series was created while I was employed at a higher education institution. Higher education institutions are expected to protect participants, staff, and the institution from the ethical, and possible litigious, impacts that could result from the research. Therefore, the methodologies and associated paperwork for all research that involves interviewing and/or photographing people must be approved by the university's ethics committee. Mental health was the subject of the most participants' initial messages to me and the ethics committee demanded that I not ask questions that referenced their situations in the initial messages. The committee believed that by asking about the situation, it might inadvertently trigger a negative mental health episode for the collaborators. To gain the approval required to proceed with the research, my questions to the participants were rewritten to be vague and impersonal. However, the revised questions did not provide the personal connection that I wanted to maintain with the collaborators. I

adapted my creative process to use the collaborators' answers to inform the aesthetic of the image, rather than dictate the specifics of the costume. The generalised answers supported the creation of imagery that was more transcendent and a metaphor for our online relationship.

My initial aim in engaging with this thesis was to connect the three series as one larger project through theoretical analysis. I understood how the individual series connected thematically and chronologically, but I wanted to connect them at a deeper, theoretical level across multiple disciplines. Through the analysis contained in this thesis, I have connected the three series as one project that employs performative photography to celebrate the female body, figured as grotesque in its refusal to comply in order to challenge those who aim to make it invisible and celebrate the marginalised body by disobeying the rules by which it is governed.

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Accompanying Material – Portfolios of Artworks and dissemination

Wait Watchers

Publications:

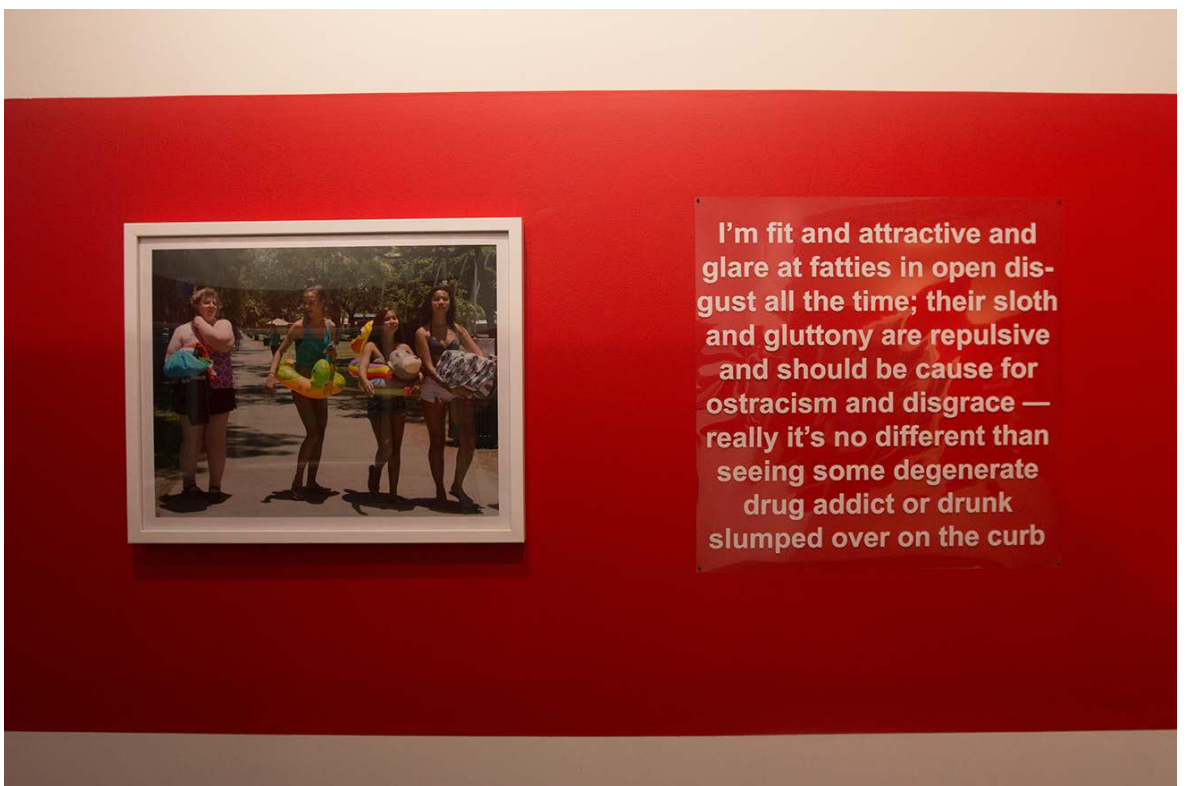
Morris-Cafiero, H. (2015). *The Watchers*. Toronto: The Magenta Foundation.

Rogers, F. and Houghton, M. (2017). *Firecrackers: Female Photographers Now*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Solo and Group Exhibitions:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2022 | <i>The Disobedient Body</i> , Landskrona Museum, Sweden |
| 2021 | <i>Opening a Dialogue About Body Liberation</i> , Musée national Des beaux-arts du Québec, Canada |
| 2020 | <i>Future Food: Food for Tomorrow's World</i> , Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden, Germany |
| 2019 | <i>The Visible Woman</i> , Lianzhou Museum of Photography, Lianzhou, China |
| | <i>Snap Judgements!</i> The Gallery of Photography, Dublin, Ireland |
| 2018 | <i>Wait Watchers</i> , University of Dayton Gallery, Dayton, OH |
| | <i>Comfort Zone</i> , M. Zilinskas Art Gallery, M. K. Ciurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas, Lithuania |
| | <i>Women Now</i> , Objectifs Center for Photography, Singapore |
| 2017 | <i>Wait Watchers</i> , UPI Gallery, New York, NY |
| 2016 | <i>Touchstone</i> , The Photographers' Gallery, London, UK |
| | Singapore International Photography Festival, Singapore |
| | Festival de la Luz, Buenos Aires, Argentina |
| | <i>Art of the South</i> , Nashville and Memphis, TN, Juror: Chad Alligood, Curator, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art |
| | <i>Now You See Me</i> , TJ Boulting Gallery, London |
| 2015 | Mt Rokko International Photo Festival, Kobe, Japan |
| | <i>Intervals #1</i> , le petit espace, Paris, France |
| | Format Photo Festival: Evidence. Derby, UK |
| 2014 | <i>Wait Watchers</i> , Newspace Center for Photography, Portland, OR |
| | <i>Wait Watchers</i> , Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, TN |
| | Renaissance Prize Finalists, Getty Gallery, London, UK |
| | <i>32nd Annual HCP Juried Membership Show</i> , Houston, TX |
| | Juror: Malcolm McDaniel, Museum of Fine Arts Houston |
| | <i>Photoville's The Fence</i> – New York and Atlanta |
| 2012 | <i>Kindred Spirits and Strange Bedfellows</i> , A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY, Curator: Catherine J. Morris, Curator, Brooklyn Museum |
| 2011 | <i>Wait Watchers</i> , Rogue Space Gallery Chelsea, New York, NY |

Installation photographs of the *Wait Watchers* exhibition at UPI Gallery from 2 March to 21 April 2017:



The Bully Pulpit

Publications:

Lewis, E. (2021). *Photography – a Feminist History*. London: Tate Modern and Ilex Publishing.

Morris-Cafiero, H. (2019). *The Bully Pulpit*. Atlanta: Fall Line Press.

Solo and Group Exhibitions:

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2022 | <i>The Disobedient Body</i> , Landskrona Museum, Sweden
<i>The Bully Pulpit</i> , FNAC Bookshops (touring all locations in Spain since 2019) |
| 2021 | <i>Female Side of the Moon</i> , Galerie Z22, Germany |
| 2020 | Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize (longlist)
<i>The Bully Pulpit</i> , TJ Boulting Gallery, London, UK
<i>you and yours</i> , JDC Fine Art, Gleneden Beach, OR
<i>Beg, Borrow and Steal</i> , London, UK. Curated by Jean Wainwright
<i>Portrait of Women by Women</i> , SESI-SP, San Paolo, Brazil |
| 2019 | <i>The Visible Woman</i> , Lianzhou Museum of Photography, Lianzhou, China
<i>The Bully Pulpit</i> , Belfast Exposed, Belfast, Northern Ireland
<i>GETXOPHOTO</i> , Bilbao, Spain |
| 2018 | <i>The Gaze</i> , EQUINOM Gallery, San Francisco, CA |

Installation photographs of *The Bully Pulpit* exhibition at TJ Boulting Gallery from 12 February to 14 March 2020:



Installation photograph of *The Bully Pulpit* at GETXO Photo, Bilbao, Spain from 4 September to 29 September 2019:

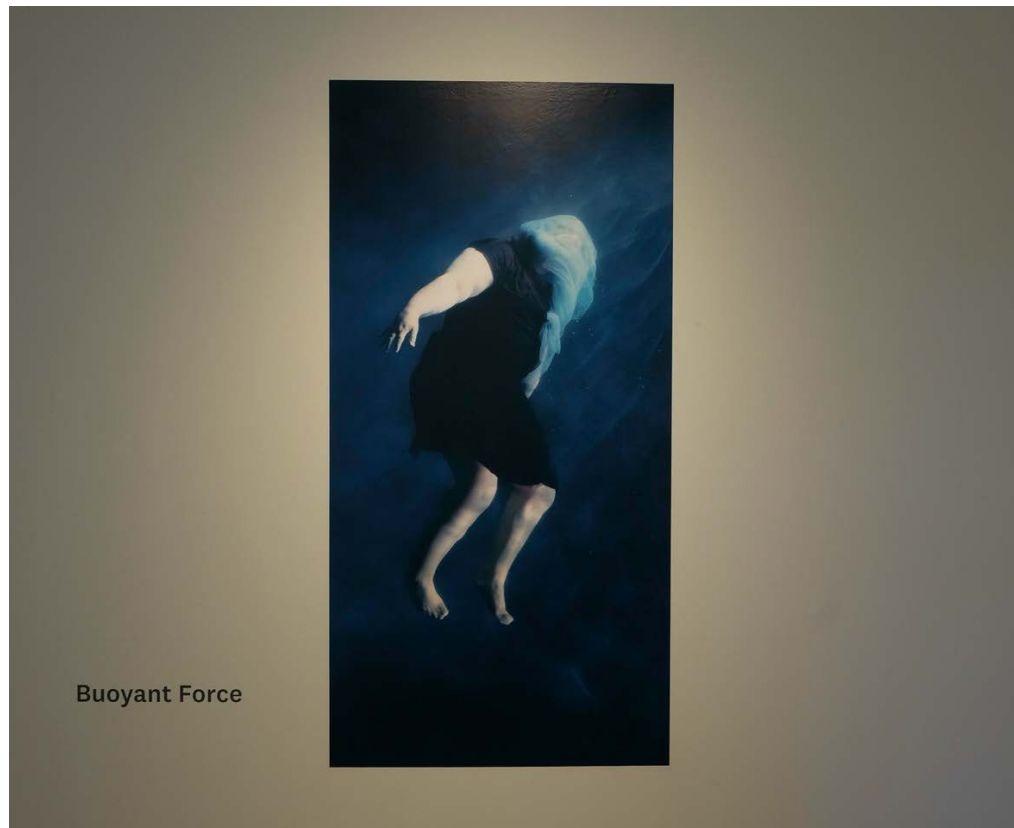


Buoyant Force

Solo Exhibition:

2022 *The Disobedient Body*, Landskrona Museum, Sweden

Installation photograph of the *Buoyant Force* installed in *The Disobedient Body* exhibition at the Landskrona Museum, Sweden from 4 September to 16 October 2022:



The Watchers

Haley Morris-Cafiero

Thank you for everything. Being overweight isn't attractive and isn't something someone should strive to be. For people to look at her like she is a lower human being is disgraceful and shows how shallow people are. That's a natural reaction to something nasty. **YOU ARE COURAGEOUS.** Why not just go to the gym and eat a little better? What I am trying to say here is that I really really really love you. Haley, you have diabetes. Get checked out and quit eating donuts, PLEASE! The images themselves and your reasons for making them resonate with me. Personally I hate seeing fat people about, it's vile. It shows a woman that is in complete ownership of herself. Fat lump of lard. Stay off the donuts and go running, makes me ill just looking at her. You are beautiful and inspiring and **SUCH AN ASSET TO HUMANITY.** Get the fuck out of the way fatty. You really are an inspiration to me. I'd bet 5 sheets this fatty cunt is unemployed. It's so hard when people constantly look at you like you're an alien. Completely fucking disgusting. It should not go outside! Ever! What you have done is **BRILLIANT AND SO POWERFUL.** She's just a lazy attention whore. I am so glad that your voice is part of the conversation about weight. Being fat is a sign that you lack discipline and a single damn about who you are. **I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH,** your work feels human. It is raw, pure and emotive. It moves people. If I looked like her, I would not be out in daylight. I thank you for your series of photographs, and for your bravery in showing them. Try losing some weight and for gawd sake, try dressing more stylish and maybe even try a smile instead of looking like you are an oversized 'grumpy, the clown'. **YOU RULE. FUCK EVERYONE.** There is something about the stupid look on her face that makes you want to laugh at her without really knowing why. Thanks for doing this. The hatred and bigotry of these people needs to be addressed. Her body looks like a pillowcase full of door knobs. I think this woman is very brave for what she does. Arm the harpoons! Your work is certainly **EYE-OPENING.** We should be more concerned about the impending onset of her type 2 diabetes. I get these looks all the time too and I just really appreciate what you've done. Ergh cankles, she is hideous. You gave me a little bit of faith in me again. What a dumb fatty. Overweight is the absolute worse thing one can be. The lookers are the ones who are judgmental, egotistical and dispassionate. Not one of them thinks that they should mind their own business. I would enjoy pushing her over just to see how long it would take her (if possible) to get up. Your story resonated with me and I feel stronger for having read it. People are staring because she's a slovenly unkempt blob with ratty hair and retard clothes and a dumb vaguely suicidal expression on her bovine face. Thank you for everything. Being overweight isn't attractive and isn't something someone should strive to be. For people to look at her like she is a lower human being is disgraceful and shows how shallow people are. That's a natural reaction to something nasty. You are courageous. Why not just go to the gym and eat a little better? What I am trying to say here is that **I REALLY REALLY REALLY LOVE YOU.** Haley, you have diabetes. Get checked out and quit eating donuts, PLEASE! The images themselves and your reasons for making them resonate with me. Personally I hate seeing fat people about, it's vile. It shows a woman that is in complete ownership of herself. Fat lump of lard. Stay off the donuts and go running, makes me ill just looking at her. You are **BEAUTIFUL AND INSPIRING** and such an asset to humanity. Get the fuck out of the way fatty. You really are an inspiration to me. I'd bet 5 sheets this fatty cunt is unemployed. It's so hard when people constantly look at you like you're an alien. Completely fucking disgusting. It should not go outside! Ever! What you have done is **BRILLIANT AND SO POWERFUL.** She's just a lazy attention whore. I am so glad that your voice is part of the conversation about weight. Being fat is a sign that you lack discipline and a single damn about who you are. **I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH,** your work feels human. It is raw, pure and emotive. It moves people. If I looked like her, I would not be out in daylight. I thank you for your series of photographs, and for your bravery in showing them. Try losing some weight and for gawd sake, try dressing more stylish and maybe even try a smile instead of looking like you are an oversized 'grumpy, the clown'. You rule. Fuck everyone. There is something about the stupid look on her face that makes you want to laugh at her without really knowing why. Thanks for doing this. The hatred and bigotry of these people needs to be addressed. Her body looks like a pillowcase full of door knobs. I think **THIS WOMAN IS VERY BRAVE** for what she does. Arm the harpoons! Your work is certainly eye-opening. We should be more concerned about the impending onset of her type 2 diabetes. I get these looks all the time too and I just really appreciate what you've done. Ergh cankles, she is hideous. You gave me a little bit of faith in me again. What a dumb fatty. Overweight is the absolute worse thing one can be. The lookers are the ones who are judgmental, egotistical and dispassionate. Not one of them thinks that they should mind their own business. I would enjoy pushing her over just to see how long it would

The Watchers

**I would enjoy
pushing her
over just to see
how long it
would take her
(if possible)
to get up.**

Source: <http://boston.barstoolsports.com/m/random-thoughts/fatty-takes-pictures-of-people-staring-at-her-fat-ass-in-public-calls-it-art/>
Date: February 8, 2013 at 5:56 PM

**I can't thank
you enough,
your work feels
human. It is
raw, pure and
emotive. It
moves people.**

Source: Email
Date: March 26, 2014 at 3:52 AM



Sunscreen

2015

Cops

2011



News Cafe

2015



Anonymity Isn't for Everyone

2010



**Her body looks
like a pillow
case full of door
knobs.**

Source: <http://boston.barstoolsports.com/m/random-thoughts/fatty-takes-pictures-of-people-staring-at-her-fat-ass-in-public-calls-it-art/>
Date: February 8, 2013 at 5:48 PM

**You gave me
a little bit
of faith in me
again.**

Source: Email
Date: September 16, 2013 at 3:14 PM

Bikini

2011





Map

2011



Dress

2014



**Personally
I hate seeing
fat people
about, it's vile.**

Source: <http://dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2275692/Obese-womans-revealing-photography-project-exposes-cruel-judgmental-stares-attracts-people-street.html>
Date: February 19, 2013

**I am so glad
that your voice
is part of the
conversation
about weight.**

Source: Email
Date: September 3, 2013 at 8:46 PM

Vitoria

2011



**Fat lump of lard.
Stay off the
donuts and go
running. Makes
me ill just
looking at her.**

Source: <http://dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2275692/Obese-womans-revealing-photography-project-exposes-cruel-judgmental-stares-attracts-people-street.html>
Date: February 18, 2013

**You are brilliant
and amazing and
courageous and
I wholeheartedly
understand
the intent of this
project.**

Source: Email
Date: July 12, 2013

Bicycle

2015





Titan

2013

Blondie

2014



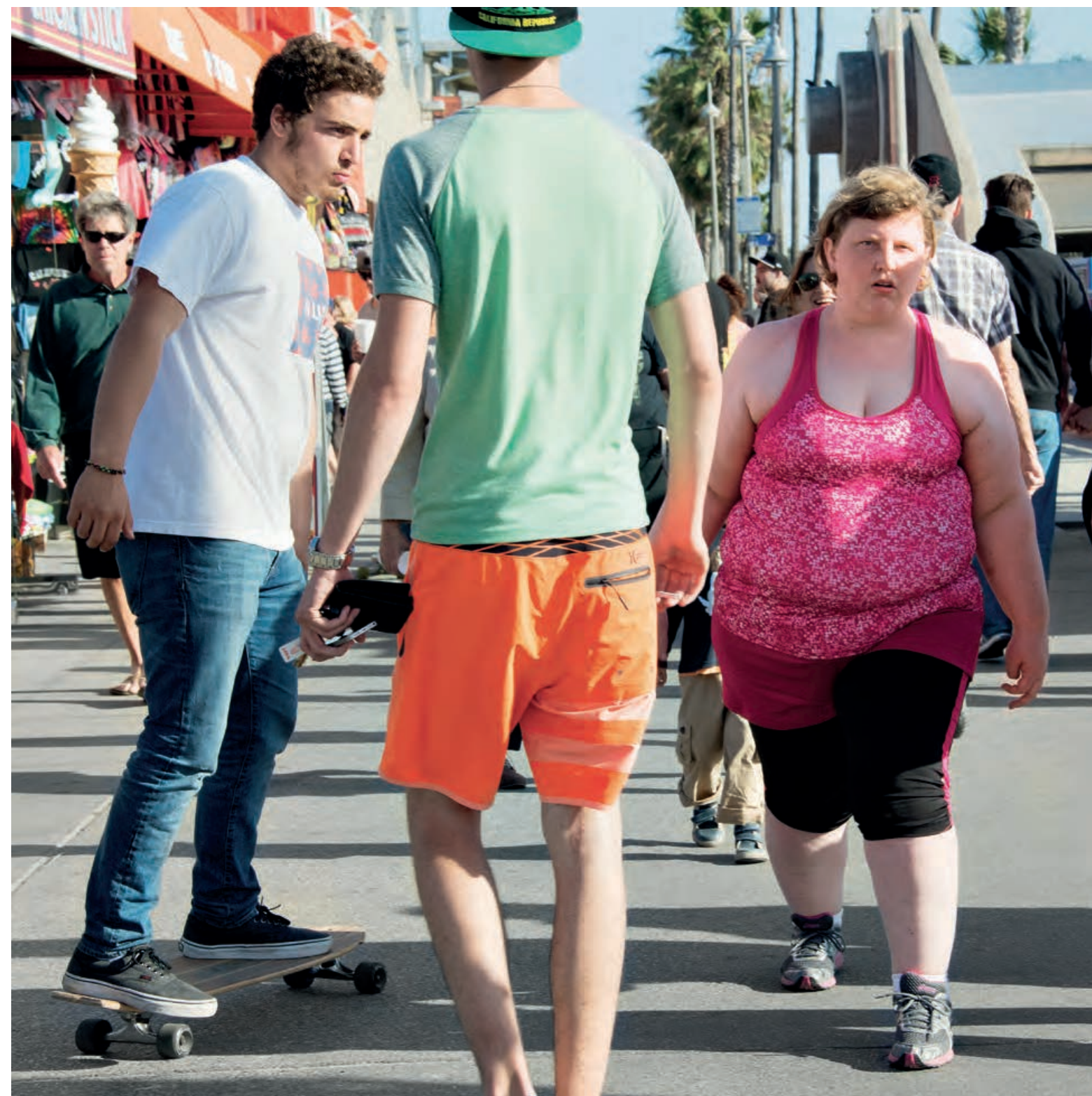
Blue Shirt

2011



Skateboard

2014



Turtle

2014



Magnolia

2011



Popsicle

2014



Flander

2014



**What
a dumb
fatty.**

Source: <http://boston.barstoolsports.com/m/random-thoughts/fatty-takes-pictures-of-people-staring-at-her-fat-ass-in-public-calls-it-art/>
Date: February 8, 2013 at 5:30 PM

**You really
are an
inspiration
to me.**

Source: Email
Date: September 11, 2013 at 2:21 AM

Crosswalk

2014



Change

2010





Alfred's

2013



**She's just
a lazy
attention
whore.**

Source: <http://boston.barstoolsports.com/m/random-thoughts/fatty-takes-pictures-of-people-staring-at-her-fat-ass-in-public-calls-it-art/>
Date: February 9, 2013 at 12:06 AM

**Your story
resonated with
me and I feel
stronger for
having read it.**

Source: Email
Date: July 4, 2013 at 4:36 PM

Sunglasses

2014



Stripes

2012



OH NO! What am I to do?!?!?! I'm grossly fat and ugly with a personality to match, and nobody wants to know me because, well, I'm a pathetic loser.

Source: http://huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/05/haley-morris-cafero-wait-watchers_n_6108498.html
Date: February 19, 2015 at 6:39 PM

For people to look at her like she is a lower human being is disgraceful and shows how shallow people are.

Source: <http://culture.viralnova.com/haley-morris-cafero/#socialcomments>
Date: February 11, 2015 at 12:00 PM

Progress

2013



Gelato

2011



Polo

2013





Being fat is a sign that you lack discipline and a single damn about who you are.

Source: <http://mpcdot.com/forums/topic/7057-fat-retard-photographs-herself-being-laughed-at-by-strangers-in-public/>
Date: May 15, 2013 at 9:17 AM

It shows a woman that is in complete ownership of herself.

Source: Email
Date: April 23, 2013 at 9:45 AM

**Thank
You**

**Get the
fuck out
of the way
fatty.**

Source: <http://boston.barstoolsports.com/m/random-thoughts/fatty-takes-pictures-of-people-staring-at-her-fat-ass-in-public-calls-it-art/>
Date: February 8, 2013 at 9:00 PM

**You rule.
Fuck
everyone.**

Source: Email
Date: April 15, 2014 at 1:07 AM

First Edition 2015
Published by The Magenta Foundation

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The Eyes of Others © 2015 Marvin Heiferman

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Printed and bound in China.

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DISTRIBUTED IN NORTH AMERICA BY

Small Press United (from IPG)
ipgbook.com

The Magenta Foundation
151 Winchester Street
Toronto, Canada, M4X 1B5
magentafoundation.org

ISBN 978-1-926856-07-0

arded. There is something about the stupid look on her face that makes you want to laugh at ally knowing why. Being fat is a sign that you lack discipline and a single damn about who you ple are staring because she's a slovenly unkempt blob with ratty hair and retard clothes and a mb vaguely suicidal expression on her bovine face. What a dumb fatty. She needs to take the money and get her teeth fixed. Then people will stop staring. Between the ridiculous clothes, e "dumb and dumber" bowl cut and the vacant stare. The weight is the last thing I notice! I'm y fat and ugly with a personality to match, and nobody wants to know me because, well, I'm a ser. Her body looks like a pillowcase full of door knobs. I would enjoy pushing her over just to it would take her (if possible) to get up. I'd bet 5 sheets this fatty cunt is unemployed. Get the f the way fatty. Completely fucking disgusting. It should not go outside! Ever! She's just a lazy ore. Try wearing something of one color instead of dressing like a clown. Then, maybe people notice you as much. If I looked like her, I would not be out in daylight. You never heard of whale ady? Of course people are going to stare. How many times do you see hippos in the middle of She is still damn ugly and I have now had a few beers! Arm the harpoons! Ergh cankles, she is losing some weight and for gawd sake, try dressing more stylish and maybe even try a smile ooking like you are an oversized 'grumpy, the clown'. We should be more concerned about the onset of her type 2 diabetes. That's a natural reaction to something nasty. Being overweight ve and isnt something someone should strive to be. Why not just go to the gym and eat a little y, you have Diabetes. Get checked out and quit eating donuts, PLEASE! Fat lump of lard. Stay and go running, makes me ill just looking at her. Personally I hate seeing fat people about, it's ot only fat, but she also looks semi retarded. There is something about the stupid look on her at makes you want to laugh at her without really knowing why. Being fat is a sign that you lack d a single damn about who you are. People are staring because she's a slovenly unkempt blob and retard clothes and a dumb vaguely suicidal expression on her bovine face. What a dumb he needs to take the Kickstarter money and get her teeth fixed. Then people will stop staring. he ridiculous clothes, bad shoes, the "dumb and dumber" bowl cut and the vacant stare. The e last thing I notice! I'm grossly fat and ugly with a personality to match, and nobody wants to because, well, I'm a pathetic loser. Her body looks like a pillowcase full of door knobs. I would her over just to see how long it would take her (if possible) to get up. I'd bet 5 sheets this fatty nemployed. Get the fuck out of the way fatty. Completely fucking disgusting. It should not go She's just a lazy attention whore. Try wearing something of one color instead of dressing like en, maybe people won't notice you as much. If I looked like her, I would not be out in daylight. ard of whale watching, lady? Of course people are going to stare. How many times do you see e middle of the city. She is still damn ugly and I have now had a few beers! Arm the harpoons! kles, she is hideous. Try losing some weight and for gawd sake, try dressing more stylish and try a smile instead of looking like you are an oversized 'grumpy, the clown'. We should be more out the impending onset of her type 2 diabetes. That's a natural reaction to something nasty. rweight isnt attractive and isnt something someone should strive to be. Why not just go to the at a little better? Haley, you have Diabetes. Get checked out and quit eating donuts, PLEASE!

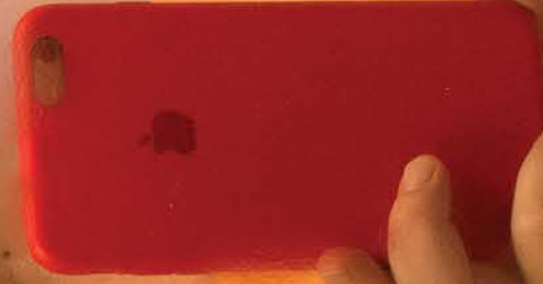
“It’s classic burlesque. Probably the most infuriating thing of all for her bullies is that she looks like she’s having a really good time.”

**— Emma Lewis,
Assistant Curator, Tate Modern, London**

**Halley
Morris-
Catifero**

**The
Bully
Pulpit**

You're fat
and gross
your arms
I make me
want to
Puke



quit looking
like a slob.
No one cares
that you're a
fat slob. Just
that fact that
you're a slob.



EVERY TIME I AM AT GROCERY STORE
AND I SEE EXTREMELY OVERWEIGHT
PERSON PUSHING SHOPPING
CART LOADED WITH JUNK

SUGARY PROCESSED
FOODS, I CONFIRM, IT'S
PLAIN IGNORANCE
OR STUPIDITY



OUR DAIRY



YOU ARE A FAT |
LAZY LIAR |



So instead of losing
some weight so people
aren't appealed by her
unhealthy land-whale
ass, she tries to change
millions of years of male
evolution...

Normal people are
never going to want to
fuck you, regardless of
how much you complain





**You never
heard of
whale
watching,
lady?**

**You look like
you got off the
ShortBus
a few stops
too soon.**



**SEA WORLD
CALLED,
THEY WANT
YOU
BACK SHAMU**



5'6"

5'

5'0"

5'

4'6"

4'

4'

4'



YOUR *WORK* OPENS

YOU UP TO

CRITICISM

3'

3'

2'

*Lucky for
her there
was no
poachers
around.*





45

She's straight up strange looking

She's hurting everybody's eyes

I'M A FRIEND OF BILL WAVERLY.

ATARI

SMITH

ANTHEM TATTOO

External Ink



WHAT'S
WRONG WITH
BODY
SHAMING?

I JUST DON'T
GET WHY DO
WOMEN
ALLOW
THEMSELVES
TO GET FAT
YOU KNOW
YOU'LL BE
TREATED LIKE
SHIT



**If she were
auditioning for the
role of depressed,
trailer park resident in
a dying town she'd
land the role instantly.**



FAT ASS SLOB





Fat shaming

Burgerime

is a thing

ARKHAM

because they
are the weaker
of our society.

Only human to
treat them worse.



Don't be fat and unhealthy and people won't make fun of you for being fat and unhealthy.

LIAGRA
Long-Acting PDE5 Inhibitor

Liagra is a long-acting PDE5 inhibitor. It is used to treat erectile dysfunction (ED) in men. It is also used to treat pulmonary hypertension (PH) in men.

Warnings: Do not take Liagra if you are taking nitrates (such as nitroglycerin) or if you have taken nitrates in the last 24 hours. Do not take Liagra if you have a history of heart disease, low blood pressure, or if you are taking certain medications. Do not take Liagra if you are allergic to any of the ingredients in Liagra.

Side effects: The most common side effects of Liagra are headache, flushing, indigestion, and nasal congestion. Other side effects include dizziness, back pain, and muscle aches.

How to take Liagra: Take Liagra as directed by your doctor. Do not take more than one dose in a 24-hour period. Do not take Liagra with alcohol or grapefruit juice.

Where to buy Liagra: Liagra is available at most pharmacies and online. It is also available as a generic medication.

USA
GAINING AMERICA
MEMES FOR



The major
problem is
that she's
disgusting.

CAPT. FANTASTIC

SPEAK OUT

THE GREAT EAST LAY



Yes
people
think you
are
disgusting



THE PROBLEM IS
LETTING THESE
FAT RETARDS
OUT ON THE
STREET



**WHY NOT JUST GO TO THE GYM
AND EAT A LITTLE BETTER?**





WOW
IF YOU ARE
FAT YOU DESERVE
TO BE RIDICULED. HOW
ABOUT SOME PLANE
BASIC
MANNER

BOTTLED
GAS

GAS

100
1546



IT'S RIDE TO MAKE SP 3 SEATS ON THE BUS

SMELL LIKE GARBAGE
MAKE NOISES WHEN TRYING TO SIT

I bet you
stink! Your
legs look
like play
dough
stuffed
into
pantyhose.





Why don't
you just
say no to
food and
try a little
exercise?

Titles —

Steam
Twirl Girl
Skoal
Fat, Lazy Liar
Red Beard
Whale Watching
Short Bus
Protect and Serve
Mugshot
Poacher
Slob
Bodybuilder
Treated Like Shit
Fear of Lions
Fat Ass Slob
Gamer
Meme Boy
Captain Fantastic
Fake Skinny Girl
Pool Hall Dawg
Hockey Fan
Biker
American Hero
Playdough Mom
Speedo Man

On Bullies and Burlesque — Emma Lewis, February 2019

Haley Morris-Cafiero can tell you the date in 2013 that Pope Benedict XVI resigned, because that's when her phone stopped ringing. For weeks until this point, journalists had been contacting her around the clock to request comments and soundbites on her series *Wait Watchers*. In this photography project-cum-social experiment, Morris-Cafiero set up her camera in public places to capture ways in which passersby looked at her—from sideways glances to outright points and stares. The project had received coverage here and there since she began it in 2010, but when it was picked up by Huffpost three years later, it went viral in a matter of hours.

Incubated in the murky cavities that online communities can become, negativity about Morris-Cafiero spread indiscriminately across social media, content forums, and blogs. Some remarks appeared to be for the benefit of fellow commenters: jokes or declaratives typed out with a metaphorical hand-to-mouth and snicker. Others addressed her directly. More surprising, a few felt compelled to email Morris-Cafiero lengthy diatribes spelling out exactly what they thought of her. *Fat. Ugly.* An embarrassment to her profession. An embarrassment to herself. The first time a message like this landed in Morris-Cafiero's inbox, she laughed out loud. Naturally, she never replied.

For the next few years, Morris-Cafiero collected this 'feedback': screengrab after screengrab until she was 1,000 images deep in inherently cowardly, depressingly 21st-century expressions of vitriol. Among the things that struck her was the ways in which people shape-shift online: 'virtue signaling' to friends and followers; spitting out bile in places those same people likely won't see. Just as it was clear that these cyberbullies don't care for actual dialogue with Morris-Cafiero, it was also clear these spaces made them feel empowered. The online forum as their pulpit: a place that promised they would be seen and heard.

What Morris-Cafiero wanted these cyberbullies to hear, in turn, was that attention of this kind is not opt-in only. The internet has a long memory, and she wanted to hold them to account. 'I see you,' her images say, 'and guess what? You're not immune'.

It wasn't difficult for Morris-Cafiero to access the bullies' online profiles and their portraits, most often selfies, presumably chosen to convey their desirability, politics, or social status. It was easy enough, too, to find the clothes and props that would allow her to create successful parodies of these images. The inability to divorce their profile pictures from their words was crucial to the idea of accountability. So, across their clothing, in the place where slogans would usually appear, she plastered their comments to her in bold type—like branding of a different kind.

In many ways, *The Bully Pulpit* is a project about visibility: Morris-Cafiero's visibility on the street, her then visibility online, the desire of her bullies to be seen, and the act of her exposé. The technique of masquerade is a continuation of this idea: Morris-Cafiero literally throws these individuals into the spotlight their images suggest they desire, but at the same time her costumes are deliberately absurd, her prosthetics intentionally crude. It's classic burlesque. Probably the most infuriating thing of all for her bullies is that she looks like she's having a really good time.

Bio —

Part performer, part artist, part provocateur, part spectator, Haley Morris-Cafiero explores the act of reflection in her photography. Morris-Cafiero's photographs have been widely exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad, and have been featured in numerous newspapers, magazines and online, including *Le Monde*, *New York Magazine*, and *Salon*. Born in Atlanta, she is a graduate of the University of North Florida, where she earned a BA in Photography and a BFA in Ceramics in 1999. She holds a MFA from the University of Arizona in Art. Nominated for the Prix Pictet in 2014 and a 2016 Fulbright finalist, The Magenta Foundation published her monograph, *The Watchers*, in 2015. Morris-Cafiero moved to Belfast in the fall of 2018 to teach photography at the Belfast School of Art at Ulster University.

Thank you —

I couldn't have done this project without the support of people who helped me move equipment, stand in the cold and the wind, and roll around with whales: Ryan Steed, Suzie Hansen, Abbey Bratcher, and Ben Malcolmsen. Dustin Lester is the hero of all postproduction heroes. I thank Charles Guice for believing in me and giving vital feedback throughout the project, Emma Lewis for her wonderful writing and great conversations about the project, Hannah Watson, TJ Boulting Gallery for showing the work and being a true friend and advocate, and also Meghann Riepenhoff for her sage words. There are so many people who inspire and support me, but none of this would be possible without my Catch who will do anything to help me fulfill my dream.

This project was made possible by an ArtsAccelerator Grant funded by ArtsMemphis.

This monograph was supported by Ulster University, Belfast School of Art, Strategic Support for Research Fund.



FALL LINE

Fall Line Press
675 Drewry Street, Suite 6
Atlanta, Georgia 30306
www.falllinepress.com

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Book Design: Margaux Fraise
Photo Editors: William Boling & Clay Jordan
Copy Editor: Megan Sexton

First Edition

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Printed and bound by SYL, Barcelona

Library of Congress Number 2019902988
ISBN 978-0-9986490-8-5

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Fall Line Press would like to acknowledge and thank TJ Boulting Gallery and Trolley Books of London for their collaboration in distributing and supporting The Bully Pulpitin the UK and EU.

Buoyant Force

All images are presented as LED panels that are 92cm wide by 183cm tall.

Image List:

1. "The Kickboxer," 2022
2. "Betty Boop," 2022
3. "The Traveller," 2022
4. "Blue," 2022
5. "The Librarian," 2022
6. "The Photographer," 2022
7. "Badminton," 2022
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