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## Gallery 404

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# Gallery 404

## **Abstract**

404 is an experimental gallery and home. The project explores the possibilities of alternate, more intimate spaces for art and dialogue. 404 is not interested in inaccessible, material art work. In these next few months, 404 will be exploring installation, performance, and instructional-based art work. The space was inspired by Hans Ulrich Obrist's 1993 show "do it." Our first installation is *What to do When You Meet Rihanna* by Zenobia R., a space that revolves around the artist's sexuality and her self. Through Rihanna, instructional art, and radical self-love, Zenobia constructs a heterotopia, i.e., an anti-hegemonic site within society that offers the possibility for the creation of new knowledge and new ways of being in the world—and you are invited. Later on we will have an installation by Khadija T., *Am I Overreacting?*, which will explore pain in relationships by reconstructing internal spaces through physical objects and writing instructions around how to be truly intimate with people. A third installation by Sky Y. will focus on intimacy through the internet, and the way we so quickly move between everything from porn, to violent news and social media sites. It will also integrate instructions for recreating his pieces so that each participant may personalize his art and reflect on their own digital identities and desires.

## **Disciplines**

Art and Design

## **Comments**

This paper was part of the 2015-2016 Penn Humanities Forum on Sex. Find out more at <http://www.phf.upenn.edu/annual-topics/sex>.

Gallery 404 is at my apartment, 4404 Chestnut Street. The name 404 is a diminutive of its address, as well as a play off the 404 error 'page not found' that I imagine even the bystanders of the digital age are familiar with, as every website has one, and it is often happened upon by accident.

*Type in new tab at the same time — [upenn.edu/sanity](http://upenn.edu/sanity) —* Such is the case with 404, a place that my flatmate and I happened upon by accident, only for it to become the space we had searched for, but 'not found' at Penn.

For the Penn Humanities Forum, and to make it sound more official, we added the word 'Gallery' in front of it and '.org' after, but it will always be just 404 to me. 404 is an experimental home created by my friends and I through the support of the Penn Humanities Forum, in order to explore the possibilities of alternate, more intimate spaces for art, dialogue and existence in general. 404 is not interested in inaccessible, materialistic art work. In these next few months, we will be exploring installation, performance and instructional based art work.

And perhaps I should say, because it is not said often enough, that 404 intends to support the voices of all marginalized groups at Penn. We are aware of the white power structures that run most Western art institutions. We are dedicated to uplifting and protecting marginalized identities. We do not fuck with work that is harmful, oppressive or ignorant towards an individual's identity or community...

Now I imagine that you are beginning to get the uncomfortable feeling that I

am not following the rules. I seem to have forgotten that I am here to talk about sex. What does 404 have to do with sex? There are a number of distinct approaches to and interpretations of the topic at this conference: sex as sex, sex as sexuality, sex as work, sex as a matter of health—I am here to think with you about sex as intimacy, as transcendent closeness, with yourself, with other people and with the world.

For the most part, we have sex at a home; we have our most personal moments at home. I would argue that only a truly intimate space like a home, and not a gallery, could host art work and conversation that addresses certain fundamental questions about intimacy.

Speaking of which — *click 404 button* — What is the most intimate way to be with someone? Perhaps the answer you come up with is not what you would expect. I encourage you to think of your answer in terms of instructions, and not conceptual terms, should the theory I am about to present begin to bore you.

This is the central question 404 is responding to, though the wording—a bit to esoteric to hit someone with on the website—is more like “What is the most intimate way to be *with*?” The Caribbean philosopher Edouard Glissant confronts this question in his magnum opus *Poetics of Relation*, a theoretical treatise on the practice of a different mode of history capable of transforming our aesthetics, politics and identity. For Glissant, our identity is formed in relation to one another, but instead of trying to comprehend or ‘grasp’ the identity of another—following the Western colonial paradigm of knowledge

production—we allow everyone and ourselves the right to a fundamental opacity. Opacity means we are not necessarily ‘all the same’ in the end, as one would need full knowledge of another’s humanity in order to verify this essential sameness.<sup>0</sup> Instead, there is an obscurity to everyone’s self that gives us the right to personal or cultural sense of difference that cannot be understood by an Other, but also not entail us becoming enclosed within ourselves and sealed off from the world. In other words, Glissant’s poetics of relation involves *interaction*, and not examination, as we are all opaque to one another while also existing in an immense system of Relation.<sup>1</sup> This system of relations exists within what Glissant calls the *chaos-monde*, which translates to something like chaos world or chaotic world. It is a reality that is not ungoverned but also not generated by one singular set of truths, and instead by a multiplicity of truths in relation with each other.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of a multiplicity of rules brings me to the first exhibition at 404, which is in fact tonight (03-25-2016). In the chapter “Expanse and Filtraiton,” Edouard Glissant demonstrates how both Darwinism and Christianity, though often seen as irreconcilable ideologies, both establish the concept of continuous linear time, and remind us that this singularly defined vector of time is only a “particular way” of viewing the world.<sup>3</sup> According to Glissant, the concept of linear time began with mythic traditions that were meant to explain how one’s community came into existence, and has been maintained by means of scientific and religious narratives because being at the continuous end of a steady progression has given us a sense of stability and control over time and history.

<sup>0</sup> “If we look at the process of ‘understanding’ beings and ideas as it operates in western society, we find that it is founded on an insistence on this kind of transparency. In order to ‘understand’ and therefore accept you, I must reduce your density to this scale of conceptual measurement which gives me a basis for comparisons and perhaps for judgements.” Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. p. 204. See also pp 49-50.

<sup>1</sup> “Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components.” Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* pp. 94-99.

<sup>3</sup> Buddhist mythologies, Mayan and Aztec concepts of time, defy Western linearity. *ibid.* pp. 47-55.

*Go to photo of Zenobia on the catalogue*

How then might we go about alternate ways of being in relation, of being *with*? Again, the first exhibition at 404, *What To Do When You Meet Rihanna*, offers one artist's answer to just that. WTDWYMR is an immersive performance-based installation conceived by Zenobia Rasbury and I. Within the rooms of 404, Zenobia builds up an environment around Rihanna's latest album ANTI. At the center of the performance is Zenobia, who will embody Rihanna and herself at once. The environment will transport you into the Zenobia's intimate subjective space as she listens to each song. An album booklet will be given out, where each song will be accompanied by an instruction written by Zenobia that will explain how to interact with the music, with each other and with her. House Rules will also be posted on the walls. Through Rihanna, instructional art and radical self-love, Zenobia constructs a heterotopia, i.e. an anti-hegemonic site within society that offers the possibility for the creation of new knowledge and new ways of being in the world.

Heterotopia was first detailed in an article whose title translates to *Of Other Spaces*.<sup>4</sup> They are sites that affirm difference, that house a kind of Otherness, while retaining a direct relationship to their time and place, unlike Utopia, which never truly exists.<sup>5</sup> Hospitals, theaters, prisons, ships have all been named heterotopias. Foucault compares them to a mirror, because they are reflective of the society that created them, yet they are more often defined as a “reflective agency for change or commentary on contemporary society.”<sup>6</sup> Heterotopias are often considered sites of resistance, though some scholars have focused on the possibility for the production of

4 Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces.”

5 *ibid.* pp. 3-4.

6 Tompkins, J. *Theatre's Heterotopias: Performance and the Cultural Politics of Space*. Chapter 1.

knowledge within heterotopia. One of the most famous heterotopias in Foucault's work is that of Jorge Luis Borges' Chinese encyclopedia, which classified animals in entirely unexpected and contradictory ways. The reference to the encyclopedia emphasizes heterotopia's "capacity to produce one's own measure, one's own ideas of evaluation, one's own aesthetics and logics."<sup>7</sup> Though it is never independent of the dominant order from and against which it arose, heterotopia may, at least momentarily or fragmentarily, "produce new ways of knowing."<sup>8</sup> Foucault's reference to Borges' encyclopedia also emphasizes the importance of language as the catalyst and site of a new order of things. Though the specifics of Foucault's heterotopology characterize human culture with a questionably colonial attitude, the concept as presented here is key for a constructing a more comprehensive theoretical framework for Zenobia's performance and instructions, and perhaps an answer to the question in Glissant's work on how to create cultures of alternate time, alternate history and alternate ways of being with yourself, others and the world.

By writing instructions for a home, instructions for music she loves, that directly address how to be *with*, and often, to be *close with*, Zenobia creates a heterotopia—an aesthetic centered around herself, and a logic around her beliefs that allow the possibility for intimacy and *interaction* between people on Zenobia's own terms.

*click on do it, click on the interview, highlight the paragraph under heterotopia*

In her own words, in an interview we did together recently, she explains that

<sup>7</sup> Lorenz, Renate. *Queer Art: A Freak Theory*. p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> Topinka, Robert J. *Foucault, Borges, Heterotopia: Producing Knowledge in Other Spaces*.

she is creating a space where she is “dictating the norms, a space where she feels most comfortable, most empowered, and can move about with ease, and glamour.”<sup>9</sup> This sentiment relates particularly to sex and sexuality, considering Rihanna, as you all must know, is very sexy and sings explicitly about sex. Thinking through that in relation to her own sexuality, Zenobia explains,

“That’s one of the things I love about her, that she is just overtly sexy. I just kind of relate to the sentiment of her being a Black Woman and her owning her sexuality, and whoever she is sharing that sexuality with I think its on her own terms, and thats one thing I really love. It doesn't seem to be kind of on some Taylor Swift random shit—its like “Im a bad bitch and you want to have sex with me and you know it and you should because I'm just the dopest”... shit like that aren't conversations that are celebrated coming from women and so I find a lot of power to hear that voice, and especially from a black woman I think its dope because, you know, black women’s sexuality is largely vilified. So I found a lot of solace in that queer or not.”<sup>10</sup>

### *Go to instructions for Work*

Yet most of the instructions address far more than sex but rather intimacy and interaction with others. Only one instruction makes reference to a necessary shift in one’s political and cultural understanding of the world, though it explains with quick words the larger foundation on which Zenobia’s heterotopia stands: “Proper english, proper time, and proper clothing are colonial lies. / Remember that.” The instruction is under the song “Work,” for which Rihanna received a great deal of racist and ignorant criticism in America

Analysis of *WTDWYMR*  
merged with  
*Gallery 404* presentation

<sup>9</sup> Zenobia. Amalia Lund.  
Gallery 404. March 20,  
2016. Gallery404.org.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*



and Europe for speaking ‘gibberish.’<sup>11</sup> In fact, Rihanna was singing in Jamaican Patois, and though she is from Barbados where they do not speak patois, her song was a celebration of Jamaican sound and her Caribbean heritage. Though much Black and Brown cultures are highly visible and influential in today’s popular media, the ‘proper’ standards of language, time (cf. CP time/Caribbean time/Cuban time), and clothing are still clearly dictated by a colonial, white, anglo-american tradition in the States. This instruction both disrupts these standards and reminds the participant reading the instructions or interacting with the space that there already exist alternatives these proper norms and that they take precedent in the space. For example, the articles of clothing Zenobia changed into throughout the performance were styled by a Queer Black Woman Khadija Tarver who incorporated Zenobia’s love of crop tops as well as sensual fabrics and cuts that embodied sex and confidence. Zenobia’s jewelry was provided by a Queer Black man Jameel Mohammed, who pulled from the line of jewelry he designs, Khiry, which in its mission intends to deny European standards of beauty and instead arise from a global African aesthetic. In this way the general aesthetics and logics of WTDWYMR extend themselves beyond ‘proper’ standards and emphasize another system of relations in the chaos-monde that prioritizes and honors Zenobia’s identities.

The centrality of Zenobia’s image, as well as the relationship she draws with Rihanna in the creation of her heterotopia may be juxtaposed with the installations and performances of Ei. Jane. For their senior thesis show, as well as others before it, Ei has flooded a room with lavender light and put up collages of Black Femme celebrities in what she calls the “Land of NOPE,” a kind of alien world beyond ours that revolves around Black Femme peoples.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the majority of the instructions revolve around intimate interactions

11 Black Girl with Long Hair. *Unaware of Jamaican Patois, Critics Blast Rihanna for Speaking “Gibberish” On Her New Single ‘Work.’* [blackgirllonghair.com](http://blackgirllonghair.com)

12 “I am not an identity artist just because I am a Black artist with multiple selves. I am not grappling with notions of identity and representation in my art. I’m grappling with safety and futurity. We are beyond asking should we be in the room. We ar in the room. We are also dying at a rapid pace and need a sustainable future. We ned more people, we need better environments, we need places to hide, we need Utopian demands, we need culture that loves us. I am not asking who I am. I’m a Black woman and expansive in my Blackness and my queerness as Blackness and queerness are always already expansive. None of this is as simple as “identity and representation” outside of the colonial gaze. I reject the colonial gaze as the primary gaze. I am outside of it in the land of NOPE.” Jane, Ei. NOPE (A MANIFESTO). [e-janestudio.tumblr.com](http://e-janestudio.tumblr.com)

the participant is meant to perform with others and with themselves. They offer more concrete ways in which one can interact in Zenobia's heterotopia. The importance of the concept of heterotopia over utopia here should be noted. These interactions are not inherently intended to be an ideal way to be *with*. They are instructions that arise from Zenobia's dreams, ideas, revenge fantasies and real life and validate them as ways of being in the world and being with. Awareness of this may help explain the range between an instruction like, "Get drunk. Call your ex. Say all the things you wish had said. If they don't pick up, leave a voicemail." (from "Higher") and "Think of someone you hope comes tonight. They must be likely to show up. When they arrive, kiss them on the cheek. Continue this practice every time you see them." (from "Kiss it Better"). The notion that such instructions are capable of validating such interactions within the space of the exhibition (and perhaps even outside of it) is illustrated by the fact that a couple people actually did call their exes during the show! The effect of the second instruction is more difficult to judge because it calls for the creation of a ritualistic interaction. There are other ritualistic instructions in the catalogue, particularly the one from "Love on the Brain" which asks for the participant to touch a part of their body every time they see a certain person in order to fix a tangible and corporeal feeling to seeing them. Both are instructions that play of Olaffur Elaisson's instructional work for Hans Ulrich Obrist's international and ever-changing exhibition on instructional art, *do it*, where Olaffur asks the participant to press on their eyes when they meet an older person so that they may remember them by doing this action even after this person has died.<sup>13</sup> Others that involve another person only need happen once and are more site specific, such as the sole instruction for James Joint that asks the participant to

13 Elaisson, Olaffur.  
Psychological Memory. Do  
It at e-flux manual at  
[e-flux.com](http://e-flux.com).

find the Marlboro box with one cigarette and give it to (if they don't smoke) or share it with someone (if they do), saying, "I only have this one cigarette, but I'd rather smoke it with you." The interaction is one that perhaps Zenobia has done herself or experienced in her life, but perhaps it is an imagined one. The reaction of the other person is not noted in the instruction and entirely variable; both the potential for disaster and for friendship is present within this one instruction. Hans Ulrich Obrist, following essential instructional artists like Yoko Ono, describes instructional art like a musical score that can be interpreted by each musician who plays it. In an interview, Hans Ulrich Obrist asks Yoko Ono about the "early beginnings of instructions in [her] work" and she replies, "It started with music."<sup>14</sup> The way Zenobia tethers her instructions to Rihanna's album, and structures the presentation as an album booklet, refers to the potential for musical scores and instructional work both to produce a new rendering of the work each time it is enacted.

Other instructions outline how the participant should have been specifically with Zenobia. One of the instructions for "Needed Me" places a buffer between her and those who do not know her, as strangers are asked to address her friends before they speak to her. Conversely, in "Yea, I Said It," participants are told to "Speak deliberately." and to "Tell Zenobia what you think of the show." This control over the way in which people are meant to interact with Zenobia is nonetheless counteracted by the autonomy that the participant has to interpret and even deny these instructions. What happens to a heterotopia when its rules are broken or go ignored? No doubt this question was posed forthright during the principal night of the performance, as many people attended and many of them selectively chose to their degree of participation or dissent. Furthermore, it is impossible to even quantify this

14 Yoko Ono. Hans Ulrich Obrist. 2002. [e-flux.com](http://e-flux.com).

degree in a meaningful way, as many of the realizations or denials of the instructions would not be easily identifiable.

Written instructions as well as printed and digital versions of the work designed under the supervision of Zenobia both disseminate a sliver of her heterotopia and allow for her work to continue long after the initial performance. However, each instruction is a kind of collaboration with the participant, as they are free to change and add on to the work. On the one hand, there is the dangerous side of this collaboration—perhaps someone takes too many ‘Steps to Heaven,’ perhaps in enacting an instruction they disrespect it or use it to make someone uncomfortable. Disregarding instructions like those for “Pose,” which are only meant to be done “if you are Black,” is a clear example of how the instructions could be disrespected. Nonetheless, the potential for collaboration could also be productive.

Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed is a compelling way of understanding the potential productivity of audience participation, or rather the “spect-actors.” There are myriad kinds of Boal’s Theatre, but the most famous may be Forum Theatre, where the main actors perform a scene where someone is being oppressed, and the participants are asked to stop the scene whenever they like and offer different ways in which the oppressed and the oppressor could react. At times, the spect-actor proposing the alternative action is asked to take the place of the actor and perform it themselves. The Theatre does not seek to find the ‘right’ way to deal with oppression, but rather to source, share and contemplate all the possible ways people manage it. Though there was no intention of creating a kind of ‘forum’ during the performance, there remains the ability to enter the place of the artist and create within the context of the work, and in that way prompt oneself to

consider new ways of realizing the instruction as well as new scenarios in which this instruction could be performed.

The majority of these instructions reflect the ways in which Zenobia responded to each song on *ANTI*. The instructions that involve only oneself, those like “Tightly press your palms together, interlacing your fingers. / Enjoy your own warmth. There is nothing warmer.” (“Needed Me”) are both an invitation to hold oneself and one to interact with the music and with world *with* Zenobia. This is a process that will continue with those who attended the performance and took a catalogue with them, as well as the many who have downloaded the digital version on the 404 website. In that way, Zenobia’s heterotopia, her new ways of interacting others in the world, will quietly slip into the world and perhaps even begin to change it.

Khadija Tarver's installation and performance, *Am I Overreacting?*, explored the pain and healing that springs from intimacy between family, friends and lovers. Each room in 404 contained its own installation which also furthered the motifs of the other rooms. Upon entering 404, one was brought into the living room, where furniture from Khadija's room was installed in one of the corners of 404, replicating the way the furniture had sat in the corner of her own room. At the same time, it was intermingled with some of 404's furniture. A shirt hung above the fireplace that read, "Khadija by Khadija Tarver for Khadija by Khadija Tarver in collaboration with Khadija Tarver for Khadija by Khadija Tarver." Every other written piece in the show seemed to address another person, often with a raw and honest tone, yet the mantelpiece reminded the participant that Khadija ultimately made the clothing and the installation for herself. On the night of the opening, the larger space was initially closed, and so participants first wandered from the main room to the smaller gallery space, where "the shop" was arranged. On three triangulated racks in the center of the room hung sixty-two shirts, all in a precise order, and each with a question, statement or declaration written on them in black ink. People naturally began flipping through the pieces, one by one, reading them like a cadenced poem. Turtlenecks (one of Khadija's favorite articles of clothing) separated the different sets of shirts from each other. A mirror stood in the corner of the room with blue glittery letters at the top that read, "know yourself." In the back of the room was a desk in which participants could bid for each piece. Everyone was required to put down their name, contact information and social media handles. Most people wrote notes to Khadija as well, about why they wanted the shirt and what it meant to them. The bids system was structured such that Khadija would have power over who could own and wear each shirt. She returns the bidder with a message containing a price if she is even willing to sell to them. The price is determined according to how she feels about the bidder. When so much Black Femme culture is being appropriated by the mainstream while the

Black Femmes are being over punished for their identity, this system was designed to give Khadija a certain security in knowing who owns each piece. She received around thirty bids that night and has received more from the online shop set up at [gallery404.org](http://gallery404.org).

The final room opened about an hour after the show began. That it was closed before made the reveal much more dramatic. Two thirteen foot strips of cotton hung from the ceiling on either side of the room. The piece on the left said, "Boys don't satisfy me, but neither do you!!!!!" The one on the right was a long poem that addressed many different 'yous' whose fabric needed to be manipulated by the reader in order for them to read it in full. On the wall to the left were hung three latex outfits. On the right wall was a projection: "PEOPLE ARE NOT HOMES?"

A live crab sat in the bathtub with a burning candle. Khadija periodically went in with people who were of the zodiac sign Cancer and provoked the crab with her baby blue latex boots and a kitchen knife.

Analysis of  
*Am I Overreacting?*  
by Khadija Tarver

There were a number of elements of Byzantine art that called upon its beholder<sup>0</sup> to react to an object or image, the first being text. Andreas Rhoby demonstrates the importance of text on a Byzantine object in citing the inscriptional epigram on the reliquary of Saint Marina (10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century) as a representative example of this idea.<sup>1</sup> Though this reliquary was made for a private individual, who would have known that the reliquary contained a relic of Saint Marina, it begins with, “You ask beholder, whose that hand?”<sup>2</sup> Direct addresses such as this one can be found at the beginning of many epigrams on various different kinds of objects and images in Byzantium. Tomb stones further demanded the attention and participation of any passerby, such as one with an epigram that begins, “Man, stop here and look at this and admire the changes of life and the braveness of the soul against the enemies”<sup>3</sup> Similar phrases have also been found inscribed on Medieval Latin tombs. These inscriptions can act as social markers of divinity or even class status, but ultimately they remind the beholder that it is not the object that must be venerated but the “inner value,” the holy person invoked the object.<sup>4</sup> In general, the inscriptions bring the objects alive, initiate a dialogue with the beholder and instruct them on how they should perform towards this object.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond epigrams engraved into objects, extended writings were also incorporated into images, particularly onto scrolls of prophets and saints in both Byzantine manuscripts and on the wall paintings of churches. The archangel Michael is depicted next to the entrance of a church where he stands guard, sword raised above his head, holding a scroll that states that he “will raise his sword against those who are entering the church with a bad heart.” Popular verses of inscriptional epigrams have also been preserved on the scroll of representations of John the Baptist which often begin with, “You see,

<sup>0</sup> The Byzantine *beholder*, in contrast to the Western *viewer*, is an active participant in the creation of the meaning of an image. See Stock and Mariev. *Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium*. 85.

<sup>1</sup> Relics were a part of a deceased holy person’s body or belongings that are kept by religious institutions as objects of worship, and reliquaries were adorned encasings for them. Relics were fundamental to Byzantine religious culture and were used by the Church as a direct connection to divinity. Often they had miraculous properties.

<sup>2</sup> Rhoby, Andreas. *Interactive Inscriptions*. 321-322.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 323.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the poetic quality of the epigram could indicate the amount of money a patron must have spent on hiring a poet. Rhoby, Andreas. *Interactive Inscriptions*. 321.



beholder, the madness of Herodes.” Furthermore, Rhoby argues that the direct address is more than ‘you see’ but rather more like ‘you are forced to see’ or ‘you cannot escape seeing.’<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, these inscriptions were not always legible, as some are placed in sections of the church that render them difficult to read such as the dome.<sup>7</sup> In this case, the text may be understood as decorative, but also as symbolic according to the context. As Rhoby explains, “The Byzantine beholder is not only attracted by the actual content of the inscription but also by the magical power of the inscripational word in general... Inscriptions form the connection between the beholder and the dead matter and that way the matter / the mere object becomes a live part of the interaction.”<sup>8</sup> Many Byzantines were illiterate, but it is possible that they were able to recognize certain formulaic inscriptions such as the beginnings of these epigrams that address the beholder. Even if they did not, they would certainly have understood the potential powers these words invoked.<sup>9</sup>

The two enormous scrolls hanging in the main gallery has an interesting relationship with the scrolls the prophets and angels in Byzantine churches. They seemed to designate a gateway into the space that was dictated by these words, which commanded the room with their floating grandeur. The projection, “PEOPLE ARE NOT HOMES?” made the room bright with white light and so the fabric almost glowed. It also began a dialogue with the participants that may be likened to the opening lines of the Byzantine epigrams, prompting the participants to search for the answer within the hanging pieces and the show in general. The question also relates back to Khadija’s furniture in the main room. Paralleling the way one loving someone can be understood as metaphorically attempting to create a home in another person’s soul, Khadija’s furniture physically experiments with what happens

5 Maguire, Henry. “Image and Imagination: The Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response” 1-25.

6 Rhoby, Andreas. *Interactive Inscriptions*. 325.

7 *ibid.* 319

8 *ibid.* 327.

9 *ibid.* 325-326.

10 For example, the poetic quality of the epigram could indicate the amount of money a patron must have spent on hiring a poet. Rhoby, Andreas. *Interactive Inscriptions*. 321.

11 Maguire, Henry. “Image and Imagination: The Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response” 1-25.

when one tries to create a corner of her room in another person's home. The extensive poem seems to narrate many of the stories hinted at by the shirts in the smaller gallery, though much of it is deliberately ambiguous and meant to be contemplated. Nonetheless, the poem is somewhat difficult to read because it hangs so high up. Thus words are also symbolic (like the scrolls in the dome) of the outpouring of emotion that comes with the instruction that titles the poem in larger, legible font: "Dump Them." The latex on the walls embodies a strength in one's relationships that often does not exist in the real world, in the same (unfortunate) way that one does not often wear latex day to day. The juxtaposition between the confidence, power and sex expressed by the latex and the vulnerability, frustration and love addressed by the projection and the hanging scrolls form a complex shrine dedicated to the all of Khadija's contradictory needs and desires for the relationships with her family, friends and lovers.

Other kinds of inscriptional formulae were placed on apotropaic amulets to keep away daemons and bring good health for the wearer, inscribed on tablets to curse an adversary or even a horse and rider at the hippodrome and woven into the fabric of one's own clothing. Many of these inscriptions are thought by contemporary Byzantine scholars to be invoking a kind of 'magic,' though many of them incorporate symbols of Jewish, Christian (and early on) local Pagan religions. In this way did people perceive the power of words and symbols to command forces out of their control. Khadija's shirts are simple. Her words are casually inscribed onto simple, white cotton shirts. There is little craftsmanship or customization involved. Thus perhaps we must consider that there is a certain power in wearing these words that have been made by the hand of an artist. In conversations with Khadija, she noted that the

instructional shirts in particular, ones like, “don’t forget to open” are intended to give the wearer, according to Khadija, a commanding strength from outside of oneself. Knowing that the artist (especially considering the personalized process for acquiring the each piece) is also determining you to *open*, for example, and wearing these words on your chest, words handwritten by the artist herself, gives each piece a kindred relationship to Byzantine apotropaic amulets and articles of clothing in the way that they transfer emotional strength and apotropaic energy to the wearer. Though the shirts address the people who are around the wearer, such as, “Ignore my smile I don't know how to express my anger” or “I’m sad a lot now. But I”m working on loving me and you can work on loving me too,” they arguably work in a similar manner. It is not to say that Khadija’s installation pieces are actually *like* Byzantine epigrams or amulets, but rather this comparison was intended to suggest that her work assumes certain types of objecthood that do not exist much in Western art theory.

## Curatorial Statement

As curator of Gallery 404, I commissioned, budgeted and helped realize the installations and performances of each artist. I managed a group of around ten people, each of whom put their skills to work for the artists and I in order to make AIO and WTDWYMR happen. Around 200 people collectively attended each event, and many people were ecstatic to see a space like Gallery 404, and young burgeoning artists like Zenobia and Khadija producing large scale work. It was an incredibly fun and insightful experience for me as an aspiring curator and meaningful work for everyone involved.

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