

## Artist Statement and Current Work

Mary Lou Grace Robison is a female contemporary artist based in San Francisco. Her work incorporates hyperrealism with abstract forms, found and personal objects, and poetry. Robison's practice explores her personal feminine discovery whilst continually healing from experiences of relationship abuse and childhood trauma. Nostalgic memories filled with colorful characters, familial isolation and the unawareness of societal norms as a growing woman, her work mourns for adolescence, the preservation of obliviousness and heartache for the past.

Robison's current work explores the feminine connection to horses through revisiting memories of growing up in a horseman's home. Horses throughout history have been symbols of freedom, strength, and independence in various cultures. These characteristics have inspired artists for over thousands of years; from cave drawings and battle scenes to the American West. Paired with these constant depictions, the horse has as a result been predominantly dominated by the male, seen as existing for the sole service of the man. Until recently, the connection between horses and the feminine has been brought to the attention in our modern-day society, having both negative and positive connotations. For example, "horse girls" have become a contemporary meme, possessing sexual stereotypes and judgements towards women who ride horses. An animal seen as a symbol of power for men contrastingly being sexualized for women.

To tame a horse, the rider or trainer must work the animal until it has no choice but to submit. To be tamed is to be dominated, to be controlled and to be domesticated. This idea of control and destruction of the animal can be used as a metaphor to be compared to the abuse experienced in domestic violence of women. The horse can be put in place of the female in the relationship, where the abuser tears down the woman until she has no other choice but to give in. The 20th century writer Virginia Woolf discusses this connection between feminist ideas and the horse where she states, "I believe we must have the power over [you] that we're said to have over horses", referring to male supremacy over women and the power shift that needs to occur.

Throughout Robison's personal experience with domestic abuse, she states that she had been beaten down both mentally and physically to submit to her abuser. Suppressing feelings, thoughts and her feminine identity, she has spent the past five years rediscovering her femininity and using her practice as a motive to empower and heal herself as well as others who can relate to her experience. Through uncovering suppressed memories from her childhood, recognizing familial connections to horses and redefining what she personally believes to be feminine, she can learn from her past and heal from the obedience she was forced under.

Note to self.

What does it mean to be feminine? When did I lose this part of myself that I long to connect with? How have the women in my life found solace?

## Collection of Writings

hey kid, don't worry. hey kid, stop crying. hey kid, you know I love you.

I was 19 when he discovered me. I was back living at home, mom was gone. Dad would disappear for hours on end. My brother and I were scared but immune. I found bottles in the room. I wished Mom was there.

I was 19 when I met him. I stole my mom's nicest pair of cowboy boots and wore my favorite dress. He was dark, tall and full of spirit. Hesitation encapsulated me. I wanted to reach out and touch him but was afraid he would be startled. The connection was instant. I wish I could have helped myself sooner.

I was 21 when he got sick. Silence left space for my thoughts to run freely. His eyes bulged, muscles tensed, the groans swelled. I watched as the pile of cans multiplied. His secret box sat nestled on the table, carrying a world I didn't want to enter. But maybe if I gave him one, he would shut up.

You're freaking out, you should take one of these. Just try it, you'll feel better. I wonder if I could fit through the gaping hole punched next to my head.

I was 21 when it ended. The day before we had been running through the grass. The day before I had been dominated. The day before I had a partnership. Moments before the jump, he died beneath me.

I am now three times bigger.



She runs with you on her back  
Detached from herself she jumps

Fallen dead beneath you

She throws you from herself

No longer in control

No longer being beaten

You are left without partnership

Now she is the master

Now she is in the room of her own

Once hidden in plain sight

She is now three times bigger

There we sat in that god forsaken car. You wanted to drive because I guess I can't. But this is my town. You wish you had it, but she's mine. You wish you knew how to drive on 183.

My head is still pounding from the night before. We left that hotel room trashed. Why wouldn't we? I felt like a slut.

We finished everything. I had 30 dollars left. My location was unknown. But we kept going. Why wouldn't we? I felt just like him. But I liked it.

It hurts to think about this now. How dare I reminisce? There's nothing here to reminisce.

Your face is a blur in my mind.

After all, why would I?

You write beautifully

Bunny you are beauty

You're my little rabbit

I love when you wear my clothes Where's that dress I love?

Where are those boots?

You shouldn't wear it when I'm not there Why would I?

He wanted us to die together

I'd rather die alone

He said no one else could do it better

I think I'll just do it myself

I return to this dead grass

That used to cradle my wet hair

I return to this rotten wood

That once sang to me

Where from the light falls

Is now left untouched

I want to run my hands through it all

But I am left with splinters

I dig for them in my fingers

Scraping past each layer

But only rhymes and songs are released

I can't remember much of my childhood

It is just a blur of sand dunes

Dead grass and Sticky fingers

Cutting the hair off all my dolls

Their hair made me squirm

I hated all of them

They all looked the same

Copy and pasted girls up and down the absent sidewalks

It was so ugly there

But we climbed the trees and found the fairies

Mosquito bites were constant

So was the sweat



