

bodymind: exploring a trans disabled present

by

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Section I: Looking

Introduction

American society's influences exist all around the world and are especially evident in visual media, such as signs, art, and movies. Through these visual elements, the position of what is good, moral, or normal becomes striking, with those who are white, thin, able-bodied/minded, and of higher class typically cast as "normal." My work centers around perception and epistemology—how we think about what we see and are taught what we know. With my experiences in the United States as a trans, Black, neurodivergent lesbian, I cannot avoid reckoning with social constructions of gender, race, sexuality, and ability because my identities place me outside of all of the "normal" constructions of each of those western categories. Although normalcy is a fallacy, there are people within societies who ostensibly fit into norms and those who do not. Through the exploration of textured paint and embodied surfaces, I embrace this dichotomy, taking a nonnormative perspective and turning it toward a wider audience.

Canon

Although painting is a canonical medium in the art world—making it a very normative medium—, my personal use of it lies nearly completely in its texture and color quality; despite engaging with many mediums before I latched onto paint, no other medium fulfilled a sensory experience for me that felt tangible or noteworthy. Apart from my interest in its physical quality, I think it is also a useful tool in attempting to engage those who are unfamiliar with art as a practice because of painting's familiarity. In engaging in a conversation of normativity and nonnormativity, it is important to engage with the history of the foundational medium of my work: painting is an established, gendered, typical medium that precedes the word "normal," whose use first appearing in the *English Oxford Dictionary* in 1848 in relation to statistics¹.

While not the inspiration of my work, I also want to acknowledge that my work is in conversation with the canon of painting the nude, wherein the subjects of paintings were

¹ Elizabeth Stephens, "Normal," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1-2 (January 1, 2014): 141–44.

often women and often prostitutes. This introduces the conversation of the male gaze as well, something which I recognize that my work acts as a refutation of. Although the recognition of the male gaze as an oppressive lens is important, I feel as though conversations of the “female gaze” or other types of gaze can quickly become trite and work to reinforce gender norms. In relation to history, I am far more interested in the relationships between women prostitutes as subjects of painting and the history of transfeminine people being sex workers, giving added meaning to my intent to paint transgender people. I feel that the irony and the recency of the word normal, western culture’s obsession with it, its place within painting, and women as a painting subject, while not directly influencing my work conceptually, is an influence nonetheless, and thus, a relationship that must be acknowledged.

The Introduction of Gender, Race and Identity in My Work

Currently, I am pursuing dual degrees in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (Women’s Studies), as well as Art. Many of the authors that were first introduced to me as I explored my major in Women’s Studies still have great conceptual value in my work, as their texts are evergreen and more informational with each read. Key authors such as Siobhan Somerville, Judith Butler, Solís y Martínez, and Alison Kafer were all influential for gaining new understandings of topics of gender, sex, sexuality, race, and disability.

Gaining awareness of how these authors navigated complex subjects permeated my academic interests and merged into my artwork, allowing it to transform from something metaphorical and political, but sometimes lacking in clarity, to concretely and directly engaged in social and political issues.

At a very early stage, I was introduced to the concept of *intersectionality*, a term coined by Kimberly Crenshaw when she was working to find language to describe the ordeal of facing legal discrimination for being both Black and a woman; while criticized for its legibility to an oppressive legal system and focus on identitarianism, it taught me the importance of finding and using language effectively. As noted in “Friends & Strangers” by ART21 with Deaf artist Christine Sun Kim, the need for specific language is often created in relation to the need to be clear about one’s rights and experiences: “I’m always a little bit jealous of artists who have the privilege to be misunderstood. For me, I

automatically feel like I need to explain what things mean. I have to say, ‘No, it’s not this, it’s that.’ And I think that stems from a place of how misunderstandings can affect my rights.”² Finding accurate language for one’s experiences is essential for being able to find community and understand that isolating issues are not actually isolated, evidenced further by consciousness raising groups, such as the Combahee River Collective (active during the rights movements of the 1960s-80s).

In understanding this, I came to the realization that womanhood³ in the United States is inherently built around heteronormative white supremacy: in order to be viewed as a woman, you must be contextualized by the masculinity of a male partner. This goes hand-in-hand with white supremacy, as what is defined as feminine and appropriate is dictated by white ideals of gender. Somerville explains this further by introducing a sect of evolutionary theory which held that due to evolutionary “progress,” “inferior” groups, such as the Black female, existed in the pre-evolutionary stage of the white male: “[a]ccording to the logic of recapitulation, adult African Americans and white women were at the same stage as white male children and therefore represented an ancestral stage in white males.” She goes on to state,

As Robyn Weigman comments, “Such an analogy simultaneously differentiated and linked two of the nineteenth century’s primary forms of social difference, instantiating and perpetuating the visible economics of race and gender by locating their significance on bodies that could not claim the disembodied abstraction accorded to those both white and male.”

Going further to say

One of the most consistent medical characterizations of the anatomy of both African American women and lesbians was the myth of an unusually large clitoris. As late as 1921, medical journals contained articles declaring that “a physical examination of [female homosexuals] will practically in every instance disclose an abnormally prominent clitoris.” Significantly, this author added, “This is particularly so in colored women.”⁴

Through this, she demonstrates that people of color and women do not have the privilege of seeming neutral and normal the way that white men do, as well as the fact

² “Christine Sun Kim in ‘Friends & Strangers,’” Art21, October 20, 2023.

³ I use “womanhood” because it specifically relates to my gender and was the topic of Somerville’s chapter, allowing me to further link these ideas to multiple gender identities while giving the audience a concrete example.

⁴ Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Racialized Body*, 24, 27

that discrimination against seemingly distinct groups have intertwined origins. Although these racist scientific theories have been largely disavowed, we cannot pretend that they do not directly inform beliefs that most of western society holds true, such as evolution as both a theory and belief; further, it takes much longer to dissect and dismantle the racism in these concepts than many would like to admit. Due to these ideals, which prevailed in Europe and America in the 19th and 20th centuries, they were further spread to places that Britain and America had colonized. Solís y Martínez explores this when calling for a new sort of gender to be created; he states that the gendered expectations of his mother to be a good feminine housewife and of his father to be a hypermasculine breadwinner were exacerbated by the discrimination they experienced as Salvadoran immigrants. His father could not make enough money to support the household, which threatened his ego and further emasculated him when his wife was forced to get a job. Martínez, as an effeminate gay child, always sided with his mother on the gendered arguments that raged between his parents, further calling his gender—which was linked to sexuality in Salvadoran culture due to colonialist expectations of gender—into question. Because his queer gender alienated him from his family in some ways, he calls for a gender which disidentifies with these colonial expectations of gender, which were furthered through scientific racism and homophobia.⁵

Through analyses such as theirs, I realized that all of these ideas were intertwined with one another and became even more so as I realized how disability can be integrated. Furthering the analogy of what a “woman” is supposed to be, aside from being white, thin, and straight, people who are conforming to gender standards are also supposed to be able-bodied/minded. Thus, if someone is perceived as⁶ conforming to one of these standards but not another, they appear to create an individual problem as opposed to reflecting a societal one.

⁵ Daniel E. Solís y Martínez, “Mestiza/o Gender,” ed. Maurianne Adams et al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, no. Third Edition (2013): 406–11.

⁶ I use the passive voice of “perceived as” here to highlight the fact that whether or not someone is meeting social standards is often based on imagination rather than fact, something that is evidenced through “invisible” disabilities.

Alison Kafer explores this in her book, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, where she talks about the raced and gendered standards permeating the Foundation for a Better Life's "disability series" of billboards. In this series, disabled people are shown again and again, removed from the context of their communities and outside resources; they become depoliticized individuals who have "overcome" their disabilities by sheer determination or perseverance alone. Kafer also navigates the decontextualization of disabled people in her chapter about Ashley X, a disabled girl who was given a "treatment" in order to sterilize her and stop her from experiencing puberty. In this case, her future body was held against her, and her parents and doctors imagined it solely as a hypothetical source of pain and discomfort, even refusing to use the language of "sterilization," and justifying her treatment through the logic that she would never use her sex organs: therefore, there was no problem with removing them.

These cases show us how marginalized people become depoliticized, decontextualized, and individualized in order to ignore social structures that were designed to harm us. Although I did not learn about all of these things at the same time, understanding them on different levels pushed me toward making work about these topics. I knew that this information was valuable, but I found a problem in that much of it was acquired through sometimes long and difficult-to-read texts. As much as I enjoyed reading the information, I knew that academic literature was not an accessible form to everyone, especially those who did not have the privilege of a college education. My work, then, became a way for me to visualize my intent to educate people on these complex and interconnected subjects.

In thinking about my thesis work, I realized that I was portraying a truth about the people I painted—the truth lies not in how I portray them directly, but instead an awareness of how they carry themselves and what they do or do not wear. This thought was encouraged by the popular phrase "speak your truth" as well as the presidency of Donald Trump wherein truth and fallacy came into question daily. I asked each participant for candid photos of themselves, giving them the control to decide what facet of themselves was portrayed. For me, the paintings act as a melding of multiple truths, (mine and my participants) which function to reveal objective things about society.

While it is objective that white supremacy exists, it is also true that some people can live their whole lives without ever noticing the effects of it. I think this comes not out of only nuance or contradiction, but rather, the idea that truth and objectivity share space to influence people's personal experience. In the aforementioned cases, the documentation of people's true experiences (parental arguments; stereotyping about race and disability) demonstrated objective facts about society (racism, ableism, homophobia, etc. are taught through oppressive structures), further evidencing the fact that individual experiences are functions of social occurrences rather than isolated problems.

In conceptualizing this work, I was also influenced by my desire to refute narratives created by artists such as Jenny Saville, a British oil painter who is known for her fleshy paintings of women which desire to refute the male gaze. Despite this desire, Saville, fails to think about the subjectivity of the people she paints in relation to herself, particularly in her paintings *Matrix* (1999) and *Passage* (2005) wherein she paints trans and intersex subjects to “get something interesting.”⁷ In one interview she states, “I’m drawn to bodies that emanate a sort of state of in-betweenness: a hermaphrodite, a trans-vestite, a carcass, a half-alive/half-dead head.”⁸ Having written another essay about Saville and holding incredible distaste for the ways in which she talks about marginalized subjects, I neglected to initially relate my work to hers, despite them existing in clear relation to each other. I write,

I find this comparison between a person with a marginalized identity and a carcass quite disturbing—it feeds directly into a narrative of trans necropolitics wherein transgender people, and especially Black trans femmes, are always already dead when they are spoken about, particularly in the news. Although her subjects are alive, likening them to a carcass does dangerous work of playing into these necropolitics. Comments by Saville such as this one reveal that she does not fully take into account the complexity of the identities that she uses in her pieces—there is an intellectual dissonance between the narrative of Saville’s pieces and the complexity of the subjects’ identities she uses; she also disregards the implications of placing a binary trans person (i.e., someone who identifies as a trans man or trans woman) under the category of “between genders,” which takes on a seemingly unintentional trans medicalist view

⁷ Saville, in Elena Cué, “Interview with Jenny Saville.”

⁸ Schama, Simon. Excerpts from “Interview with Jenny Saville”

wherein transgender people are only the gender they say they are if they have had a number of surgeries that align with cisgender expectations.⁹

Apart from this, Saville also fails to incorporate race into her work, despite being heralded as a feminist who is critically aware of feminist issues. I find the notion of her work as being feminist particularly disappointing, as it demonstrates people's proclivity to associate anything to do with (white) women as inherently feminist, along with illustrating how much "feminist" has become a buzzword whose relationship to race, disability, privilege, and power is suddenly irrelevant. I learned about Saville and her language about transness and intersexuality at a similar time that I learned about Somerville and Solís y Martínez, further driving my desire to spread information about these important subjects through accessible means.

Section II: Locating

The Ambiguous

In finding my way of working, I have seen peers and other artists who talk about complex subjects, but do so with ambiguity. Earlier on, I referenced Christine Sun Kim, an Asian-American Deaf artist who articulated that she seeks to be specific in her work and in talking about her work because it affects her rights. In thinking about ambiguity in artwork, I began to examine how ambiguity and language affects one's rights and found its influence to be very raced, gendered, and abled. Of course, people of marginalized statuses can make work that is ambiguous; however, the white supremacy of both larger society and individuals affords white people (especially white men) ambiguity where there is none or ought not to be any, while people of color are challenged and misunderstood, whether or not what they say or make is ambiguous.

In order to conceptualize ambiguity as antithetical to my way of working, I must define ambiguity as a mode of working that lacks visual and/or conceptual clarity; unlike ambivalence, ambiguity does not necessarily work with contradiction or nuance. Although sometimes ambiguity may be the intent of the work, I question viewers' (often quick) propensity to name (white artists') artwork as ambiguous, illustrating the idea that artists of marginalized identities, especially artists of color, are not often afforded

⁹ Graham, Analyzing the Use of Transgender and Intersex Subjects in the Work of Jenny Saville

ambiguity because their work is always already about race, gender, or some other charged identity (whether or not it is part of their intent). In my opposition to ambiguity, I aim not to highlight the concept itself, but to emphasize how people apply it to one another and their artwork—illustrating that the application of ambiguity is not innocuous, much in the way that my Midway work (Fig. 1-3, 5) highlights how highly sexed and gendered spaces of bathrooms are not objective or neutral in their social position.

This analysis is informed by many things, one of which being feedback that I have received in my time at UNR—I either face people who willfully misunderstand my work due to their own ignorance (driving my desire for a clear call for the audiences’ intellectual participation) or an experience where the viewer fronts their own knowledge, which reduces the complexity of the work and leads to something I hesitantly call a “lazy read” (partially driving my desire for clarity). People who fail to fully engage with the work tend to reflect feelings that more simplistic parts of the work should be highly complex; while more complex parts of the work are not complex enough, creating a pertinent double standard wherein the work done by a person of color is never enough. I am hesitant to write this even now, as I could be perceived as playing the “race card;” however in using the work of other artists, I aim to show (like many other things related to gender, race, or identity) that this is a systemic issue rather than an individual one.

In the billboard series *How Many Billboards? Art In Stead*, artist lauren woods depicts a poem written in Urdu that reads, “As long as the earth and the sky last, /Smile like a flower in the garden of the world” when translated into English. This poem illustrates an excellent example of ambivalence rather than ambiguity: “the image of the poem on the billboard does not transmit its meaning, because most of us read neither Arabic script nor the Urdu language.”¹⁰ Its use of an Arabic language—in a propagandistic country that paints all things associated with West Asia as negative—creates a location-based specificity, which has a nuance and complexity that is emphasized by knowing the

¹⁰ “How Many Billboards? Art in Stead,” MAK Center for Art and Architecture, February 8, 2010.

translation of the text, although translating the text is not the function of the work. While not knowing the meaning of this piece of text may create a perceived ambiguity, it would actually be ambivalence that the viewer is experiencing rather than ambiguity: despite the text potentially lacking clarity for monolingual viewers, the intentionality of the piece is clear.

The use of more than one language, or in the case of Christine Sun Kim, a different way of visual working, points to a context of marginalized experience in which the artist cannot be ambiguous because doing so would cater to the comfort of privileged viewers, avoiding a sense of clarity that is necessary for articulating one's experiences. Even those who engage in purposeful refusal, such as Legacy Russell in her manifesto *Glitch*, who may avoid using language that is mainstream and has racist/sexist connotations, are engaging in ambivalence rather than ambiguity. Their purposeful refusal to engage, then, points not to their privilege, but to a need for a new way of working. In engaging in ambiguity, white cisgender artists, for example, often point to their privilege; those who are marginalized cannot afford to be nonspecific—when they are, they are misunderstood through useless identitarian tropes that the majority have constructed about them.

Although I point all of these things out, I encourage privileged (and especially white) viewers and readers not to shy away from engaging with topics that they may have preconceived notions about. In Linda Alcoff's "The Problem of Speaking for Others," she articulates the importance of engaging with issues that are not our own: she emphasizes that while it can be necessary for privileged speakers to "back down" and choose not to speak, the ability to back down also reinforces privilege. She therefore emphasizes the importance of recognizing one's location (race, gender, geographical location, sexuality, etc.), as well as refusing to use one's sense of "honesty" in order to avoid accountability for what they say. She says,

I would stress that the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise. And the effect of the practice of speaking for others is often, though not always, erasure and a reinscription of sexual,

national, and other kinds of hierarchies.... But this development should not be taken as an absolute dis-authorization of all practices of speaking for. It is not always the case that when others unlike me speak for me I have ended up worse off, or that when we speak for others they end up worse off.¹¹

The importance of location is why I name my identities at the beginning of this paper, and why I find the insistence of ambiguity so frustrating. It is too often that people refuse to hold complexity in their hands, and either refuse to speak about something, or speak so much about something that they forget themselves: they forget that their actions are not innocuous, whether it be because of some minority status(es) that they have or simply because they have gotten too comfortable. Alcoff does not come to a concise conclusion about what is to be done about the problem of speaking for others because it is impossible to do so—to come to a clear answer would be to refuse the complexity and the work of feminism, activism, anti-racism. In this conversation of ambiguity—and with my work in general—I hope to remind people that allyship is work and that it is not comfortable.

In creating the work, I desire to speak *about* rather than *for*, despite my shared identities with the people I paint. Through my own process, which complicates and queers the traditional surface of painting, I show others' experiences while working to keep conscious of my own non-objective perspective. Through creating the work and taking the time to sit with it, I am gifted the presence with those whom I share community, seeing a window into their personal lives which I cannot truly know. While I did receive the suggestion to interview participants, I felt that would influence my perspective in painting my participants, diluting the shared truth that is represented in the work.

Midway: *The Personal Is Political*

My Midway, an exhibition marking the halfway point of my time in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program, titled *The Personal Is Political* was a painting exhibition featuring 14 paintings, including two interactive works in the Sheppard Contemporary Gallery that hinged on displaying familiar scenes and objects to people—toilets, bathroom signs,

¹¹ Linda Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others," *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (1991): 29.

bedrooms, and body parts, to name a few—sometimes fully rendered, and other times partially abstracted, in an effort to show audiences that the meanings of spaces, places, and things change based on a person’s identity. Through my use of textured brush stroke, visible underpainting, gesture, and interactivity, I worked to remind the audience of the fact that I had *chosen* to replicate all of these things, further reinforcing the non-objectivity of personal experience. Two of my works *I Know Exactly Why I Walk and Talk Like a Machine* (Fig. 1) and *Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria or Something Like It* (Fig. 2) were the interactive and most personal pieces in the exhibition. Also the largest, they mirrored each other on two walls and allowed the audience to change their perspective of the pieces by pulling an apparatus which moved my trans tape/thread screens up and down.

This was my first play with accessibility in the gallery space, as I used large handles for easy grasping and lightweight materials. Although the pieces were successful in some ways, I felt that the audience’s intellectual (rather than physical) participation was lacking; along with this, I agreed with feedback that I received that the trans tape/thread pieces felt as though they were acting as parts of the painting rather than works of their own, leading them to feel unresolved. I also had issues with making the gallery accessible through benches, which reflected larger problems with the institution.

Although my title referenced a well-known and oft-repeated feminist quote, I still felt as though many audience members, regardless of familiarity with my concepts, did not push themselves to understand my work. I realized that the intentionality of my work and language, whose origins are from feminist, queer, and anti-racist theory did not necessarily come across to my audience. Despite my work being directly influenced by my identities, I don’t think it was clear that the work was not *only* influenced by my identities. Along with this, it occurred to me that the work alone was not enough to supply my audience with the information that writers like Judith Butler and Siobhan Somerville gave me. In responding to these issues, I began to form my thesis work: while I believe that artwork can very effectively communicate complex ideas, I also feel that nuanced work accessible to multiple types of audiences cannot be communicated

through visuals alone, informing my use of text and my inclusion of my thesis draft and reference library in the exhibition.

Section III: Grounding

bodymind: exploring a trans disabled present is partially shaped by a desire to more clearly integrate the effort of theory into my work, as well as a desire to persuade audiences to *think* more. Multiple times while my *Midway* was installed, several people asked me questions about the work that could've been answered through multiple avenues other than myself: "What is the show about?" "What do the bathroom signs mean?" "The signs are talking about how we focus too much on gender, right?" (Fig. 3). The title of the works, the artist statement, or thinking critically about what the work presents to the audience are all ways these questions could have been answered: both the titles and artist statement clearly featured both topics of gender and disability. I found these questions frustrating—while not everyone has access to the information that formed that work, almost everyone has the ability to think on some level.

The function of this body of work is to honor and represent trans/disabled people, inspired by my own love and admiration for those within my community. In combination with text referenced from academics/literature that I brought into the gallery via reference library, I use language that relates to these identities to make clear to the audience my positionality, which is informed by my education. Although some of the language is inspirational, inspiration is not its main function—rather, it is to get at some kind of truth: our identities *are* too complex to be understood in passing glances (Fig. 4); there is joy in communities of disabled people (Fig. 5); effective politics *do* come from love (Fig. 6). Although I am perfectly capable of establishing this on my own, using others' language gives credit to my influences, for no ideas are truly original. Using others' words also emphasizes the fact that this language can resonate with others even if it does not feel accurate to a specific viewer: much like my own identity, this is not an individual occurrence, but rather, related to social experience.

In relation to admiration and education, I noted that the work exists similarly, but in great contrast to historical nudes, such as Frederic Leighton's *Venus and Cupid*, wherein

“[f]or Leighton, beauty was achieved through a process of academic generalization and idealization that involved the transformation of the imperfect flesh of the life model into the smooth perfection of classical statuary.”¹² My work however, exists not to idealize the model, but to pay tribute to them and demonstrate a kind of love that is represented through tenderness, rather than the sort of objectification that is created by men putting women on metaphorical goddess pedestals which they can never live up to.

Ironically, half of my works do exist on pedestals leaned up against the gallery wall, which I hand-crafted and painted a warm pink, avoiding the “neutrality” of white, and allowing the panels to straddle the line between 2D wall hangings and 3D objects. Some of the poses that the participants take, particularly *shaped like love* (Fig. 16), *surged line* (Fig. 4), and *natural shapes and black wire* (Fig. 17), echo poses that harken back to more classical forms of nude; however, their display and materiality disrupt this relationship, queering the form of the nude and allowing it to take a different shape—especially the transtape works, which were visible from the back, showing parts of the painting process. Along with this, participants had the option to remain clothed, although nudes were preferred. I used the form of the nude and partial nude to disrupt the assumption that someone’s gender is “truly” revealed when they are naked. Unlike the classical nude, I did not choose the nude to represent the most perfected form of beauty, but rather, to show the naturalness of different body shapes, which are often obscured by clothes. Along with this, I chose to depict clothed people and people using mobility aids to emphasize bodies with different needs and turn from the inclination to focus on the nude as the true form of bodily expression.

Materials

The desire to integrate more intellectual participation drove the atypical surfaces on which I worked, particularly the integration of the wooden surface. Although a panel is a standard surface, its composition of over 200 7 1/2 inch 1 x 2s is not. While some read this use of material as an easy-to-read metaphor for complexity—though not an incorrect read—it actually originated out of a more direct desire for physical presence, a

¹² Keren Rosa Hammerschlag, “Excavating Evidence from Frederic Leighton’s Paintings of the Female Nude,” *Victorian Studies* 56, no. 3 (2014): 442.

necessity to be able to carve into the wood and integrate the academic text and literature which foregrounds my work, and a desire to prevent waste. Half of my panels were made of reclaimed or donated materials which were going to be thrown away or remain unused. Using these materials provided a cheap solution for me, while also integrating a conversation of waste, reuse, and embodiment that is present with my trans tape work. Creating a distinction between purchased and reused or donated materials was important to me because it denaturalizes the process of sourcing materials. Often, audiences only see the finished product and are not compelled to think about where the artist may have gotten the materials. In distinguishing between “donated,” “reclaimed,” and “purchased” as the sources for my wood on my title cards, I prompted the audience to further investigate the artists’ relationship to materials (Fig. 7).

I decided to use Varela Round as my font for both carving and painting. Despite talking about academic references, I did not want my font to come off that way—thus, I avoided a font like Times New Roman that has specific associations to formalized writing.

Instead, I chose something that was easily accessible to me (through Google Docs) while also being inviting but not goofy or sarcastic like Comic Sans. I felt that the font’s rounded edges would come off as more friendly while also being easier to replicate than a font with very thin heads or feet. Because I chose to freehand the painting of the font, I also felt that it would draw more attention to the choices I’d made. My freehanding process, which I used for the text canvases that supported my trans tape pieces, consists of loosely writing out the text in watered-down paint, typically in my handwriting, or a mix between my handwriting and the font I am using. I paint this in a color that contrasts both the background and the color I am using—either formally or conceptually. I avoid being precise and use only loose lines as my guide for how the text should align. I do not use projectors, rulers, or anything else that would allow me to plan out exactly where the text would go, often leading to unexpected in-the-moment decisions, like having the text wrap around the side of the canvas (Fig. 8) or moving a word up or down a line from where I’d originally planned. Although not as loose of a process, I also freehanded drawing the letters for my panels; however, I drew in the font in pencil so I could be more precise about carving, since carving can not simply be redone like painting can. These inexact processes are informed by my process for

painting people and objects (Fig. 8, an in-progress work) and further my work from more standard traditions of painting, wherein one might create a detailed underpainting or sketch to render something that is supposed to be detailed or legible.

The use of trans tape was a happenstance development that I have been working on over the last three years, originating out of a desire to prevent thread waste when sewing and an observation that thread naturally sticks to itself when piled together. I began to experiment with the discarded thread as a surface, wanting to integrate it into painting, a medium that I do not want to abandon, as it brings me joy and sensory interest. This became intertwined with my transgender identity as I again attempted to find a way to prevent waste, as transtape is a removable product that can be used to bind the chest (among other uses) for about five days¹³. I noticed that when I removed it, the edges frayed, and I figured I could use it the way I did thread if I removed the adhesive.

Through a lengthy process, (which included washing the tape, spraying it with Goo Gone, scraping off the adhesive, washing it again, scraping off any remaining material, giving it a final wash, drying it, and then individually unraveling every single piece of trans tape that I had (approximately 120)), I was successfully able to take apart the tape and use its threads, ameliorating the problem of slowly accumulating sewing thread, which limited surface size. It took me about a year to accumulate enough discarded thread (including donations from other people) to make a surface that is approximately 20 x 20 inches; therefore, combining the thread and the tape allowed for more exploration and surface size expansion. All of these material choices also incorporate a less intentional, but ever-present, repetition that represents my neurodivergence through my highly repetitive and scheduled life, which also inevitably permeates my work.

Through using these atypical materials which queered the standard process of painting, I was able to generate increased audience participation and curiosity about the works. In installing the works, I also positioned small MP3 players with headphones next to them, which, when turned on, played a recording of myself reading image descriptions of the

¹³ transtape.life, "Binding with TransTape," Transtape, accessed February 11, 2024

works. The image descriptions were intended to serve blind or low-vision people and described the painted person's race, clothing (or lack thereof), environment, pronouns, and the material that they were painted on. I found that including these MP3 players, apart from making the work more accessible, also persuaded sighted audience members to think more carefully about the gender of the participant and think about the formal aspects of the work more closely, such as textural choices, underpainting gestures, or highlights on the skin that I paid special attention to whilst painting.

In relation to accessibility, I also built four 22 inch tall wooden benches with 6 inch cushions (Fig. 15) in order to accommodate those who desired or needed to sit in the gallery. As a person who cannot stand still for very long periods of time, I find it immensely frustrating when there is one or no benches within a gallery space, forcing people like myself to spend less time in the gallery. I also hung my work at 45 inches, which better accommodates the sitting or wheelchair-using viewer. My goal was to ensure that the benches were comfortable and sturdy, using weather-resistant black outdoor fabric that can be easily cleaned. I aimed to prioritize the body rather than compromise comfort over the aesthetic of the gallery—I find it highly distasteful when a gallery's only accommodation is a single uncomfortable minimalist bench.

Methodology

In order to gather participants, I put out calls on both Instagram and Tumblr for people who were trans and/or disabled, especially people of color, with nude photos accepted and encouraged. Although I expected to get responses from people I knew, I also hoped that using these methods would mean that I received responses from people I'd never met or had not truly engaged with. In total, 2 of the people I painted I knew very well, 3 were acquaintances or people I met in passing, and 7 I did not know at all or had never previously interacted with.

Despite the inevitability of response bias due to my method of gathering participants, I tried to include a range of identities, with over half of participants being people of color and one of them over the age of 50. Although I found age a relevant demographic, I was not able to get a larger number of older people because I found other methods of

gathering participants were impractical, potentially dangerous, or simply unavailable to me due to time and mobility constraints. While it would have been very useful to include elderly disabled people, I found it also useful to have younger disabled participants, as younger people are often pictured as being “too young” to be disabled. I would have, perhaps, liked to include elderly transgender people, as there is an incorrect statistic circulating that the majority of transgender people do not live past the age of thirty. In going about this project, one of my aims was to refute common narratives about transgender and disabled people, and I feel that my demographic largely does that. The most pressing part of my goal is to show people who are alive and honoring their identities, refuting narratives that disability is a sad thing that “happens” to people, as well as the unintentional narrative that transgender activism has created that transgender people (especially Black transgender people) are always already dead.¹⁴

Language

In emphasizing my work’s relation to academic text, I chose the title *bodymind* in reference to disability writing, which is a term that highlights the hypothetical dissonance between a disabled person’s body and mind; it originates from Cartesian body-mind dualism, which dictates that the body and mind are completely separate and prioritizes consciousness and intellectualism¹⁵.

As with the case of Ashley X mentioned earlier, her hypothetical voluptuous, innately sexual, and inappropriate potential adult female body was held against her “infantile” mind.¹⁶ Intellectually disabled people are perceived as not mentally competent enough to keep their agency, while physically disabled people are perceived as sad cases of having “functioning” minds but “broken” bodies. Ashley X exists at an intersection

¹⁴ Laurel Westbrook, *Unlivable Lives: Violence and Identity in Transgender Activism* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021).

¹⁵ Howard Robinson, “Dualism,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, September 11, 2003, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/>.

¹⁶ Despite calling her mind infantile and insisting that Ashley could never have desires or wants, her parents also mention that she has preferences for certain things over others, often laughing and smiling or having negative reactions. This highlights the lack of complexity that abled people are okay giving to disabled people, as well as the ineffectiveness of the term “infantile,” and the lack of usefulness of claiming that intellectually disabled people having the “mind of a [x] year old.”

between these two, where she is only considered a sentient human when it is convenient.¹⁷

In applying “bodymind” to other identities, trans and queer people (but especially transgender people) are often framed as mutilating their bodies with surgeries, hormones, and other types of body modification due to a “sick” mind in need of treatment. Complete agency is medically held back from both transgender and disabled people (as well as cisgender women and especially women of color) due to a perception of not being informed enough about what is best for oneself. In order to get many gender affirming surgeries, a trans person will often need consent from two mental health professionals who see symptoms of gender dysphoria in them, a disorder listed in the DSM-V (the guidebook for American mental illness diagnosis), which is described as “distress caused by the body and mind not aligning and/or societal marginalization of gender-variant people.”¹⁸ Although gender dysphoria has been edited to a less pathologizing name (previously called “transsexualism” in the DSM-III and then Gender Identity Disorder in the DSM-IV)¹⁹, its inclusion in a list of disorders “[pathologizes] identity rather than a true disorder.”²⁰ Along with this, homosexuality and other aspects of sexuality termed “kinks” also used to exist amongst this list of disorders, with some kinks still existing there, their definitions having been modified to be considered disorders when the endangerment of others is involved. Despite this change, much in the way Somerville displayed how the pathologization of the bodies of lesbians and Black women informed stereotypes, the previous and current pathologization of gender and sexuality informs perceptions of these experiences today.

Although I name these similarities between the way transphobia and ableism are ingrained into Western society, I originally made the connection between transgender and disabled identities through the language that both transgender and disabled (as well

¹⁷ It is important to note that all of these issues I’m raising are due to ableism and not disability. In addition, both types of disabilities I list exist on a spectrum—I am referencing more specific ranges of disability.

¹⁸ Eric Yarbrough, M.D., Jeremy Kidd, M.D., M.P.H., and Ranah Parekh, M.D., M.P.H., “Psychiatry.org - Gender Dysphoria Diagnosis,” www.psychiatry.org, November 2017.

¹⁹ “Psychiatry.org - Gender Dysphoria Diagnosis,” www.psychiatry.org, November 2017.

²⁰ “Psychiatry.org - Gender Dysphoria Diagnosis,” www.psychiatry.org, November 2017.

as transgender disabled people) talk about their lives. This language is most evident in a book called *trans/love*, which is a series of essays where transgender people talk about intimacy and love in their lives. From this book, I used an essay by Sassafras Lowery in one of my panels. Lowery talks about the power of having sex with someone who understands that sex is about far more than inserting a man's penis into a woman's vagina: it is about pleasure. This talk of pleasure and happiness in relation to transgender identity is something I found extremely powerful and moving, and resonated with conversations I'd heard from authors like Alison Kafer and PISSAR (People In Search of Safe And Accessible Bathrooms) about finding power in community and the differences in our bodies, something that greatly motivated me to create this work. PISSAR, a group that works to ensure that bathrooms are safe for both disabled and gender nonconforming people, gives language to something that I explored in my Midway work, a literal and physical intersection between gender and disability.

This intersection is made most clear in my work through the phrases that I carved into my panels and the canvases that my screens hang in front of. One of the panels whose text comes from Alison Kafer, titled *around* (Fig. 10), reads, "proudly proclaiming disability as sexy, powerful, and worthy." With each piece, I desired to honor each person's depiction of themselves. I asked the people I painted²¹ to send me pictures they liked of themselves, which I asked to be as candid as possible and half or full body. Most people sent me several pictures and said it was up to my discretion to choose which image I used. Although many of the choices were influenced by my own interpretations and biases, I tried not to make choices that obviously exerted my will upon these people; I ensured that they consented to be painted, and chose phrases that were general and did not make claims about the self, such as "my gender is powerful," or "I think my lover's cane is sexy" (the latter a quote from *sick4sick*, a poem by torrin a. greathouse that I considered using). While some of the statements are more specific, others, such as "Our identities are too complex to be understood in passing glances"²² or "there [is]

²¹ Language I am using instead of "subjects", as it feels less clinical and hierarchical.

²² Morty Diamond, ed., *Trans/Love: Radical Sex, Love, and Relationships beyond the Gender Binary* (Editorial: San Francisco Manic D Press, 2011). 96-98.

nothing more radical than love”²³ are general in a way that could be applied to both identities that I reference.

I highlight these similarities in language and identity to emphasize the fact that the groups I have chosen could not be simply interchanged with any other marginalized group. In this work, I am depicting people of multiple identities in order to show that these categories are not discreet. Although I have talked about disability and transness separately, many of the people I painted are both disabled and trans; in gaining more intellectual participation from the audience, I also hope for them to understand that the people I depict who have physical disabilities are not the only disabled people within the work. That lack of assumption is something I also want viewers to approach the work with in regard to the formal qualities as well: the colors I use, the level of rendering, and the varying levels of background detail. Just as my use of paint is driven by sensorial desire, so too, is my color palette and texture. As noted earlier, when dealing with specificity vs. ambivalence, people refuse to allow something comparatively simple to be simple: the color pink, for example, which I use for sensory, formal, and visual appeal in many of my paintings. I have experienced a hesitance from viewers to reckon with the fact that while color is often gendered, my work has never explicitly engaged with color as a gendered theme, and moreover, that color theory is far more relevant to painting than it is to gender theory. They assume that because they may not fully understand the theory I reference, they must latch onto something that they do understand, despite the work directly asking them to let go of preconceived notions. Although the work specifically references identity, there is zero impetus that the viewer should pick and choose which aspects of the work they apply preconceived notions to. Keeping this in mind, I chose to use an array of pinks, from warm reddish pinks, to highly saturated neon pinks in the exhibition itself, as well as in my marketing materials (Fig. 26), emphasizing the fact that gendered assumptions related to colors like pink are often decontextualized and relative. I found that using an array of pinks removed people’s inclination to associate pink with gender, and perhaps related it more to colorful formal choices.

²³Morty Diamond, ed., *Trans/Love*. 96-98.

While I do not know most of my participants personally, I have had some kind of interaction with them that evidences a sort of shared thinking or shared experience, and in speaking about them, may provide language that even they themselves do not have. My language is in every way gifted to me by the scholars and authors I read, and I wanted to share that and be able to give that to others, motivating me to include personal book copies and influential articles in my reference library. In creating the work, the participants gave me the ability to sit with my communities and step outside of myself to think about experiences that are not my own. By sitting with the people from *alizarin crimson and prussian blue* or *a familiar kind of soft* (Fig. 11, 5) I am able to investigate these different people more closely. I learn what they wear or how they carry themselves, the nuances of their faces and bodies, their interests or things that are important to them. Because a representation of someone can be worth so much, I decided that it was unnecessary to interview them: by interpreting their words, which would not actually be used in the work, I would put even more of my influence into my portrayal of their experiences, potentially creating less direct and impactful images.

In lessening my hold on my participants and surfaces, I worked to treat the paint as its own object, avoid unnecessary pre-planning, and allow things to happen in the moment. Because of how many choices I'm making—brush size, font choice, wood grain pattern, etc—I let choices like the color of underpainting, how much of it to cover up, and text color happen more intuitively. If I attempt to make all of the choices equally complex or loaded, the gravity of the choices is lessened and the beauty of happenstance is eliminated, also increasing the amount of control I exert over the participants. Although I am conscious of my level of control, I am also aware that nothing and no one are objective. My visual choices, a carryover from my Midway work, are evidence of the humanness and nonobjectivity of experience. Aside from this, I believe that there is a difference between being truthful or accurate versus being objective, and that by combining my experiences with those of my participants, we show this nonobjectivity while also revealing objective truths. This is particularly functional with relation to the trans tape pieces—as opposed to the panels—, which are situated a few feet in front of relatively legible text. In shifting one's physical location, they can shift their perspective,

emphasizing the language that goes along with experience. Moving through the pieces also provides them a closeness with the work which is typically admonished in gallery settings, and provides them an insight into the complex making process.

Transcrip

In between breaks from writing this paper, more and more similarities between the lived experiences of transgender and/or disabled people occurred to me. One such example are the terms “crip time” and “queer time.”²⁴ Queer time was a term first introduced to me by queer studies scholar Jose Esteban Muñoz, whose influential book *Cruising Utopia* uses it as a methodology for explaining the ways that queer (meaning nonnormative as well as “gay”; therefore including transgender people regardless of sexuality) people do not live along the same timeline that heteronormative society expects of us—“Queers, for example, especially those who do not choose to be biologically reproductive, a people without children, are within the dominant culture, people without a future... who do not have the complete life promised by heterosexual temporality.”²⁵ This may be because we cannot biologically have children or choose not to, do not have access to the same legal rights, desire to uphold cultural traditions, or live in poverty because of social outcasting from our families. Whatever the reason, queer people live out of time of straight life and straight expectations. Through this, Muñoz calls on utopianism as a useful hermeneutic, identifying that if we can look to the past and present of joyful queer life—drag, art, and the quotidian—as the ways we “fail” at normative life, then we can look to a better future. This looking to the queer past for a better future is also out of sync with straight time, as queer pasts are often cast as sad, and rhetoric surrounding the past used by cisgender heterosexual often function to suppress us. He writes, “[u]topia’s rejection of pragmatism is often associated with failure. And, indeed, most profoundly, utopianism represents a failure to be normal.... Queer failure is often deemed or understood as failure because it rejects normative ideas of value.” He continues that this associated value comes from “straight time, which is

²⁴ Although I choose to use the word “trans” instead of “queer” in my title, they function as interchangeable in some ways for me—I use trans as a way of creating clarity about the group I am talking about, but mostly for the purpose of continuing dialogs about transness and creating synchronicity for the audience.

²⁵ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). 98.

laden with temporal obstacles and challenges that ensure a kind of queer failure as axiomatic for the queer subject and collectivity.”²⁶ In articulating queer failure, Muñoz uses queer performance art (which includes drag) to depict his point. As queer people come together to experience and create this nonnormative artform, they step out of the expectations of straight time—they are not conforming to capitalism, which desires that we isolate ourselves into neat units, such as the idealized nuclear family. He does not mean that queer performance art is not successful in an artistic sense, but rather, that performance art—especially art done by queer people of color in a collective environment—, is not conducive to racial capitalist expectations because it is not bought and sold.²⁷ It is performed in small queer clubs with sweaty bodies existing in a time outside of time for the purpose of pleasure.

Much in the way that queer people exist out of time with heteronormative society, disabled people also live outside of heteronormative time. Although the term “crip time” exists in many disability texts, it was first introduced to me in Jones et al.’s writing about the *Crippling the Arts* symposium, wherein disabled artists worked to emphasize the importance of their multiple identities as both disabled people and artists. They made a point not to prioritize oral information over visual information, and went to great lengths to make sure that people who spoke slower or had different presentation needs were as prioritized as those who had more normative needs; therefore, not every person had the same amount of time to speak for their segment, literally embodying crip time.

There is a queerness about disabled bodies that creates crip time: whether one speaks slow or moves slowly, spends more time in bed than usual, needs an interpreter for conversation, or cannot have children—or like many queer people, are told they should not have children—disabled people also live outside of “standard” time. The ways that

²⁶ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*. 171-172.

²⁷ I am aware that shows such as RuPaul’s Drag Race exist that do commodify this artform; however, Muñoz’s book was published the same year that Drag Race came on the air, thus existing before its popularity took off. In addition, the argument can be made that Drag Race falls outside of the queer utopian future that Muñoz is talking about due to RuPaul’s personal politics as well as the show’s history of trans exclusion. Moreover, Muñoz is specifically referencing a performance art and drag that occurs in clubs rather than sets for TV, which greatly changes the context and purpose of the artform.

time affects these groups of people varies greatly; however, both are constructed as having no future: for trans and queer people because they cannot have children or are thought of as always already dead, and for disabled people because their disabled futures are futures that no one wants or should want, casting disability as a “problem” to be “solved.” This is evidenced by Kafer’s own experiences with being denied a future for being a wheelchair user:

Not even the ivory tower of academia protected me from these dismal projections of my future: once I made it to graduate school, I had a professor reject a paper proposal about cultural approaches to disability; she cast the topic as inappropriate because [it was] insufficiently academic. As I prepared to leave her office, she patted me on the arm and urged me to “heal,” suggesting that my desire to study disability resulted not from intellectual curiosity but from a displaced need for therapy and recovery. My future, she felt, should be spent not researching disability but overcoming it.²⁸

One of the many ways that Kafer and other disabled writers and activists work to fight ableism is by finding pleasure in the disabled body. This can be through sex, community, or by refutation of the idea that disability only ever means pain. Dominika Bednarska talks about this in her essay about queering people’s perception of gender and sexuality by having sex with a gay man while still identifying as a lesbian: “N and I met at a discussion on sex and disability. We had more flexibility about going home together because we both had accessible apartments. We both used accessible transportation. It made things easier.”²⁹ She doesn’t find that this arrangement shakes her perception of her sexuality because it’s not about attraction or gender: it’s about pleasure. In both of these ways, disabled and queer/trans people find ways to live outside of straight and abled time through pleasure.

Furthering this link of pleasure and time is an excerpt from *trans/love*, whose excerpt by Sassafras Lowery I previously mentioned. Ze says,

When I have sex it’s not insert tab A into slot B, it’s not formulaic or clean or simple... I find nothing hotter than transgressive bodies, and gender is the lubricant I can’t get enough of.... As complicated bodies touch, we are molded like soft clay into something resembling a form we can

²⁸ Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. 2.

²⁹ Dominika Bednarska, “Passing Last Summer,” in *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity*, ed. Matt Bernstein (Seal Press, 2009). 78.

be comfortable enough to live in. Sex is the glue that has held my jigsaw body together.... it's given me back the body I lost to abuse and dysphoria, it has in fact made me real.

Ze goes on to say that when ze has sex with hir partner, they are “doing nothing less than fucking [themselves] real.”³⁰ Ze points out the attractiveness of transgressive bodies, connecting to many, many versions of language about disabled bodies. Although the aim of my thesis work is not necessarily to talk about sex, it is connected to a sense of pleasure derived from seeing oneself depicted honestly, joined together to represent a diverse community of people. Although some of the participants do not smile in their portraits, I am employing a more critical type of joy that cannot be found in the often false smiles that people make for pictures. Instead, this joy comes both from being able to document images of and honor these people as they live and breathe through painting, as well as joining seemingly unrelated people together to create community and display nuance.

Because of these specific embodied experiences of trans and disabled people, I wanted to make space for them not just in the work but in the gallery, driving me to include self-recorded physical image descriptions and hand-built benches. Although several galleries have some sort of accessibility practice in play, they often require a method that still privileges more normative people. At Nevada's state museum in Reno, the Nevada Museum of Art, for instance, there are phone numbers one can dial for the Spanish translation of museum text such as artist statements; they also have benches in some rooms and land acknowledgements situated in relation to exhibitions that deal with Indigeneity. Although all of these things do make efforts to accommodate others (with emphasis on otherness), these arrangements still privilege the people they are not intended for: Spanish-speaking audiences must take extra steps to understand things that are presented easily for English-speaking audiences; the galleries only have one bench per room, if any, requiring people to stand if the limited seating is occupied; and only acknowledging the genocide of Indigenous people when Indigeneity is the topic at hand ultimately functions to make settlers³¹ feel comfortable.

³⁰ Morty Diamond, ed., *Trans/Love*. 96-98.

³¹ Anyone who is not ancestrally from the land they occupy (the United States in this context). If your ancestors immigrated to or were brought to the land they live on, you are considered a settler.

In making a more conscious effort to have an accessible space, I created a bench for each wall, used a lower center line at 45 inches to center my work (as standard eye-level for installation, which is usually at around 60 inches, clearly privileges those who do/can stand), and used physical MP3 players with pause and play buttons so that they could be navigated by touch rather than sight exclusively. Initially, I considered using a QR code, but much like the call-to-translate signs, this privileges seeing people and adds extra steps for those who are visually impaired.

Conclusion

Bodies, pleasure, and time are just a few of the similarities between social narratives and lived experiences of transgender and disabled people. Although several authors I have read do include one or both identities, I haven't seen many of them invoke the language of the two disciplines, such as time or future, to join them and emphasize their ability for coalition. Thus, I want both this paper and the body of work to supplement the gap that I find in conversations of transness and disability for both scholars and everyday people. It is quite common for authors to read the similarities between gender and race or sexuality and gender, but conversations of both transness and disability are often missing or lacking from these conversations. Further, as powerful as the words of Alison Kafer are, as someone who is interested in both disability and transgender studies, I find a lack of true integration of transness in conversation with disability within her work despite their similar frameworks; although she does talk about transness in relation with disability, especially in relation to PISSAR, this comes only in her last two chapters of *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, with the initial introduction being relatively short. She notes, “[i]t remains rare, however, for issues of disability access and trans access to be raised concurrently.”³² In so concretely integrating language into my show, I want to point to things that we are not looking toward or do not pay attention to. As previously noted in relation to truth, I find that many of the statements I make are very plain or seemingly self-explanatory, but are themes that need more attention. In separating the trans tape pieces from their accompanying canvases, for instance, I create space for the audience to view the text I have used as both noteworthy language as well as image, deconstructing

³² Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. 156.

and reconstructing the relationship between people and language (Fig. 9). Through this installation, which more fully incorporates the body and mind than my previous work, I create avenues for myself and others to think more fully about accessibility and its relation to artwork, as well as the ability for art to give more complexity to objects and people who require more comprehensive engagement.

Kafer emphasizes that multiple academics, whose work is located in both transgender and disability studies, are treated as if transness or disability is merely an additive to more pertinent work—something that I experienced with my Midway. Although she uses the example of the necessary work of bathroom politics' relation to the two nondistinct groups, she does not highlight many other pertinent similarities which are necessary to further emphasize the relations between disabled and transgender identity beyond their interactions in public space. I use her as a reference point in relation to the need for further intervention because she is both well-known and recent in the field of disability studies. While many authors have noted the need for more intersectional and full scholarship, both trans and disability studies are comparatively very new in relation to feminist studies, for example; therefore, I find the fact that Kafer called for an intervention in relation to these fields of study quite relevant, especially because they are often thought of subsets of larger groups rather than groups on their own (trans acting as a component of LGBTQIA+ or disabled as a smaller group of people within a racialized group), and thus, are built on emphasizing the importance of not leaving the more marginalized behind. While many current single-issue movements are very important, I find it equally important that there is a constant and ongoing conversation about the complexity of the people who fall under an identity category, such as trans, Black, or disabled. In creating this texturally and textually rich work, I build further and more concretely on the intervention of many feminist and disability academics in which they ask what we as scholars and activists are overlooking.

Image Gallery

Separate plain text of the image descriptions of the work can be found [here](#).



Figure 1. *I Know Exactly Why I Walk and Talk Like a Machine*



Figure 2. *Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria or Something Like It*



Figure 3. *Not Being the Same is Not the Same as Being Different*



Figure 4. *Surged line*



Figure 5. *familiar kind of soft and a soft, furrowed window*

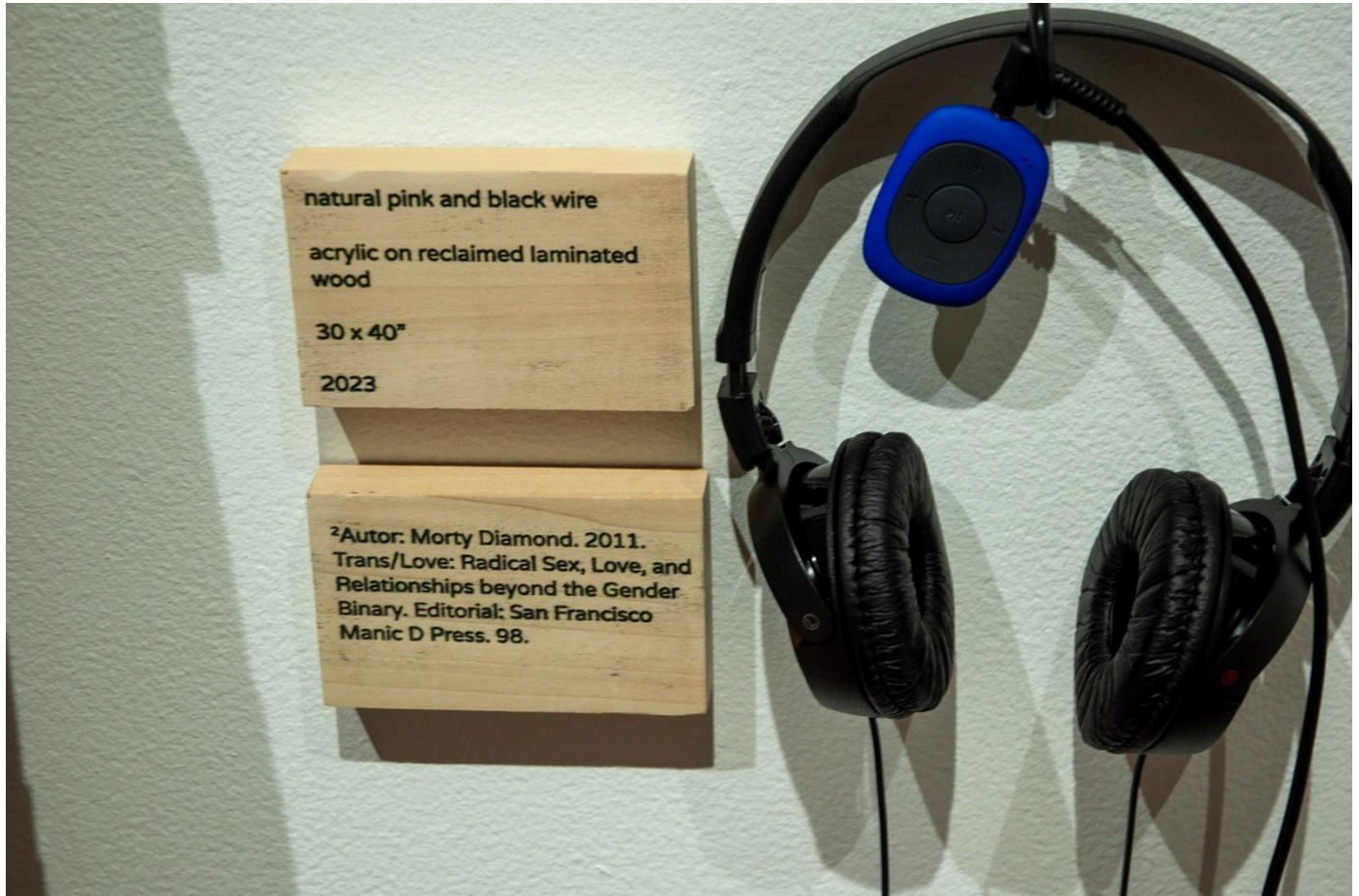


Figure 7. Wood panel title card (Page 13)



Fig. 8 *Accessible Outside* (Page 13)

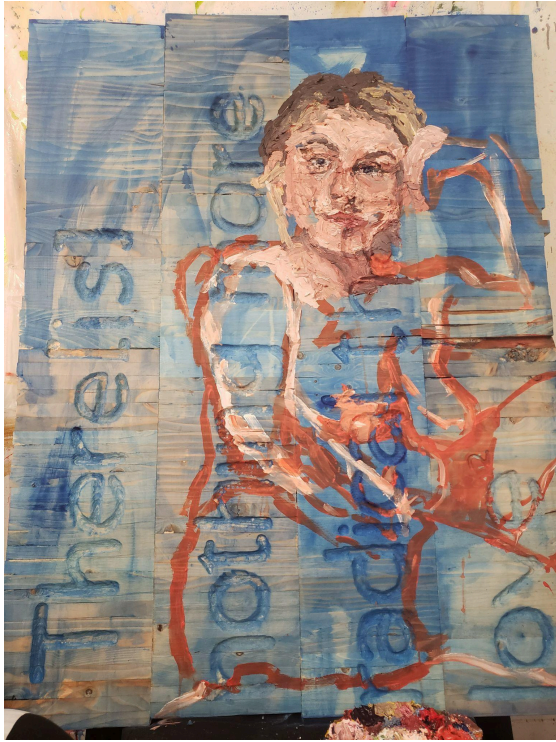


Figure 9. painting of *natural pink and black wire* in progress (Page 14)



Figure 11. *alizarin crimson and prussian blue* (Page 19)



Figure 12. text closeup; title card, headphones, and MP3 player (Page 25)

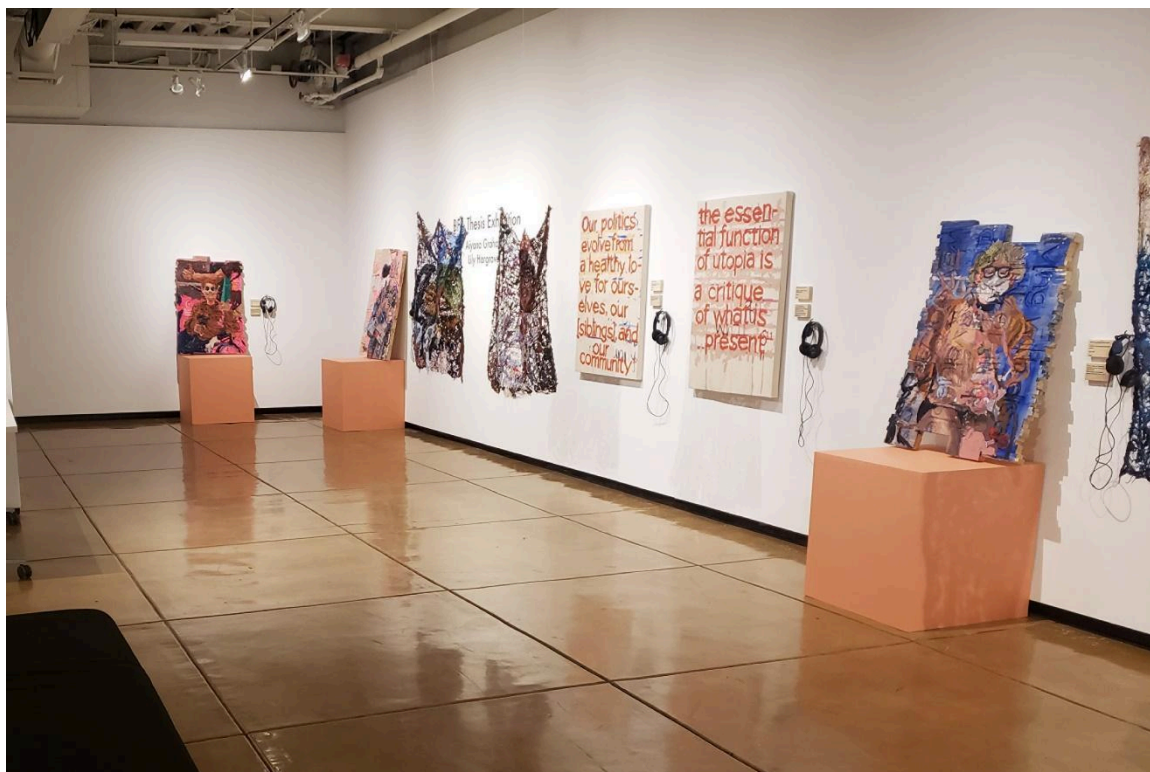


Figure 13. Front of gallery, left side



Figure 14. Front of gallery, right side

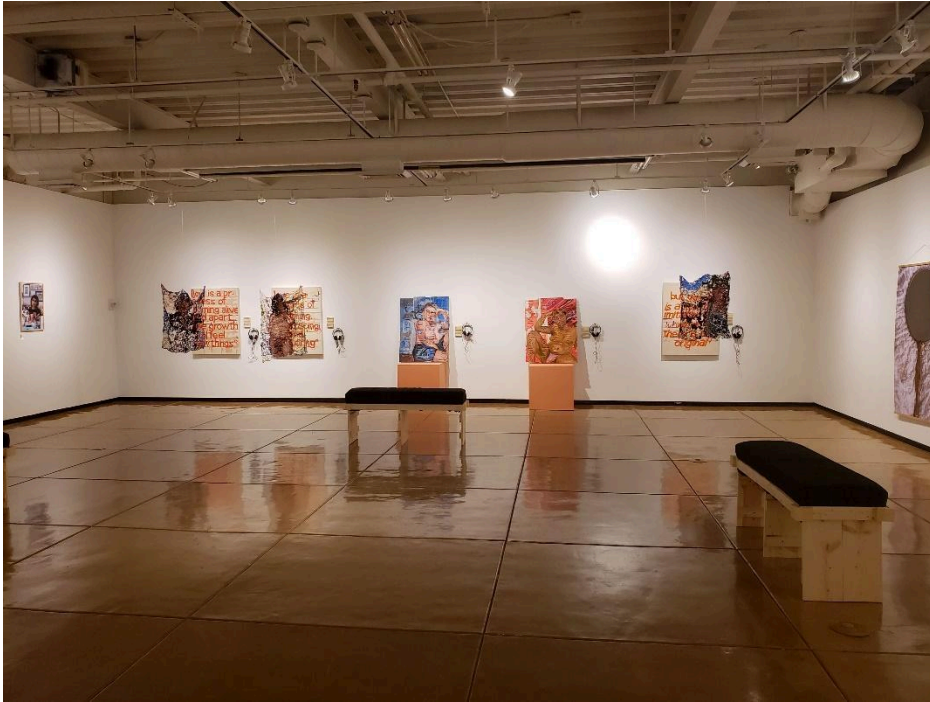


Figure 15. Back wall of gallery and benches



Figure 16. *shaped like love*



Figure 17. *natural pink and black wire [finished]*

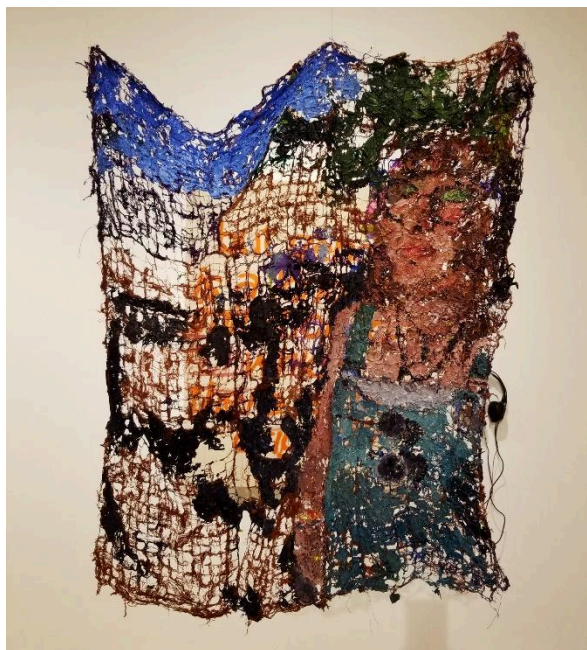


Figure 18. *rainbows and trans-lucent black*

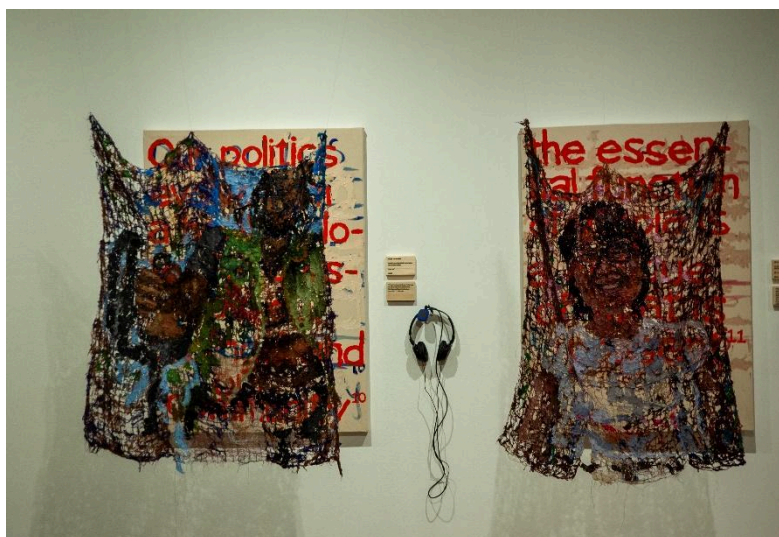


Figure 6, Figure 19. *to get us outside, direct shapes and white shirt*



Figure 20. *black to purple to blue to pink*



Figure 21. *a wheelchair, a friend*

Figure 10, *around*

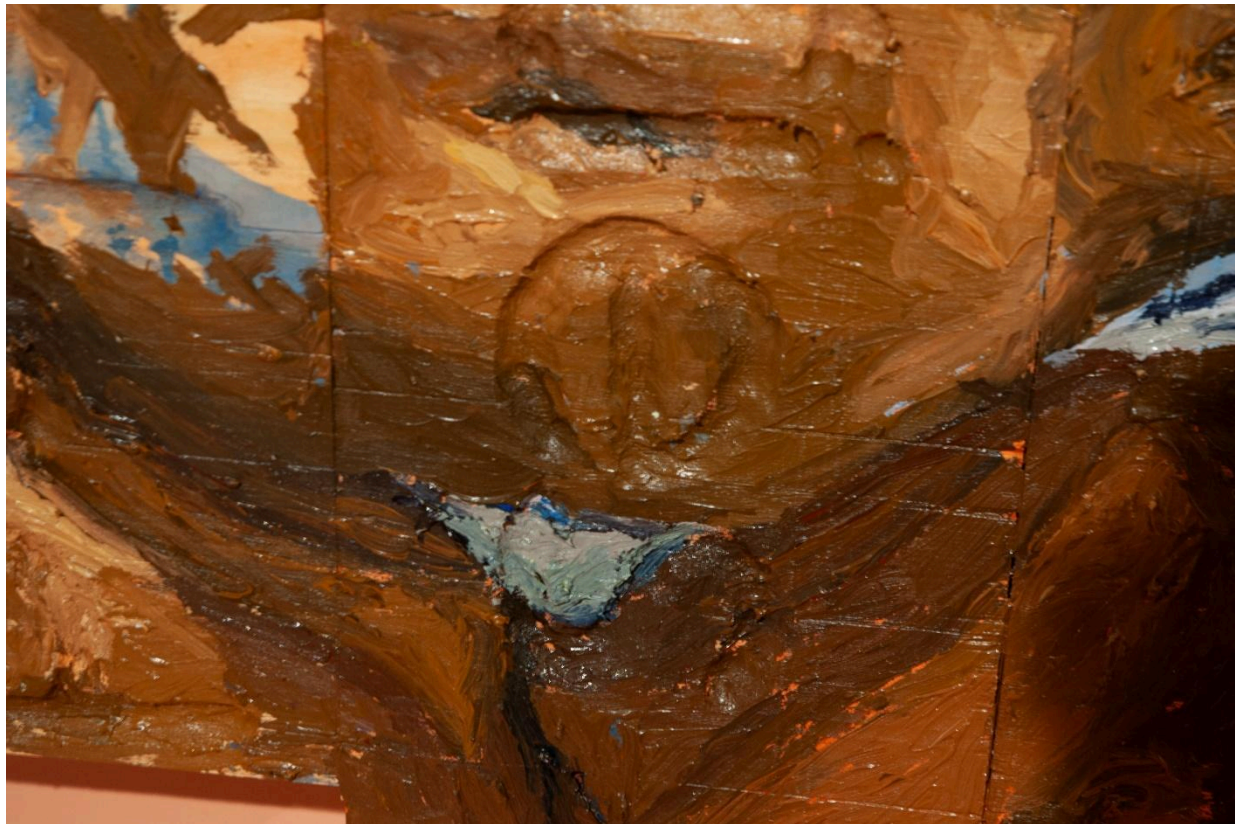


Figure 22. detail shot, *familiar kind of soft*



Figure 23. detail shot, *surged line*



Figure 24. detail shot, hanging method for *to get us outside*



Figure 25. detail shot; a soft, furrowed window canvas

**bodymind:
exploring a trans
disabled present**

aiyana graham

march 5th-13th
reception march 7th,
mon-fri, 12-4pm 5-7pm
church fine arts building
reno, nv 89512

disability accessible
painting bfa thesis show

ASUN Department of Art, Art History and Design
College of Education, School of Arts

GSA
Graduate School of Art and Architecture
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

Figure 26. Marketing material

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