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*Ben Aquila
Jamie Payne
Annie Grace Netterville*

Couple Things.....

Ben Aquila, Annie Grace Netterville and Jamie Payne

APRIL 2020

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Art making plays an important role at Rhodes College and is a cherished part of the liberal arts curriculum we offer. We want all of our students to learn to articulate a point of view, to make meaning, and to use a variety of media and materials to communicate and express. For students who major in the visual arts, these goals become a primary part of their education. In this book you will find examples of the ways that this year's art majors came to take up the imperatives of their craft.

Much of the work in this collection focuses on the meaning of embodied existence, often a motivating problem for emerging artists. But we find ourselves in an especially important cultural moment to wrestle with embodiment.

The pandemic and its resulting disruption to our economic, social, and leisure time habits has made our daily experience acutely uncanny. The familiar—shopping for groceries, meeting a friend, doing a day's work—has been made strange, sometimes even frightening. And the unfamiliar—from wearing masks to hiding in our homes to isolating the sick—is now the stuff of ordinary life. We are unhomed, as the German word for the uncanny would have it. And as Freud noted long ago, the uncanny emerges most potently in the return of what has been repressed.

In American popular culture, almost nothing has been more fully pushed from consciousness than embodiment. Bodies—from Instagram photos to the ubiquitous pornographic images that chase after us on the internet—seem to be everywhere. But embodiment, which at its most fundamental is the raw brute reality of our vulnerability and our inter-dependence, is nowhere seen and everywhere denied. Only by repressing embodied reality can we treat nature as an unlimited resource or pretend that individual merit determines our fate.

In this moment of pandemic, embodiment is returning to our consciousness, driven by our undeniable global vulnerability to a deadly new virus. For each of us, the body itself is not only a vehicle for the uncanny, but also a potential site for the renewal of creative imagining.

Rhodes' student artists are ready for this moment, foregrounding the complexity of the ways we approach and avoid embodiment, revealing their perspective on the ways bodies become seen and unseen, and encouraging us to engage with the world of color, shape, and form.

I invite you to celebrate with them as they complete their college education and present their artistic bodies of work.

Marjorie Hass

President, Rhodes College

INTRODUCTION

Ben Aquila, Annie Grace Netterville and Jamie Payne are the three Studio Art majors graduating from Rhodes College in spring 2020. The series of events spawned by COVID-19 have shaken the plans for their thesis exhibition and changed the trajectory of their art. Ben, Annie Grace, and Jamie have created this publication in place of a physical gallery show. It serves as a collaborative exhibition, a limited-edition artwork, and a tribute to their camaraderie, resilience, and abilities. While their work is, of course, unique, they share a concern with how our physical forms move, touch, bloom, and fail. It is important to note that, while COVID-19 has shaped their current artwork, the concepts Ben, Annie Grace, and Jamie are expressing were in place prior to recent events. The questions they ask include: Who is allowed to determine how our bodies function in public and private settings? How do our bodies react to the gaze of others? What, ultimately, is the connection between our bodies and our self-perceptions?

Ben Aquila's art is in part about the desire to touch, to feel the heat and textures of another body. He makes companions, critters small and large, whose relationship to him and each other is a sensually complex fusion of an innocence that is not naïve and a yearning that is not (entirely) salacious. Ben's work is a tender exploration of the relationship between creator and created, between caregiver and recipient, between lover and loved.

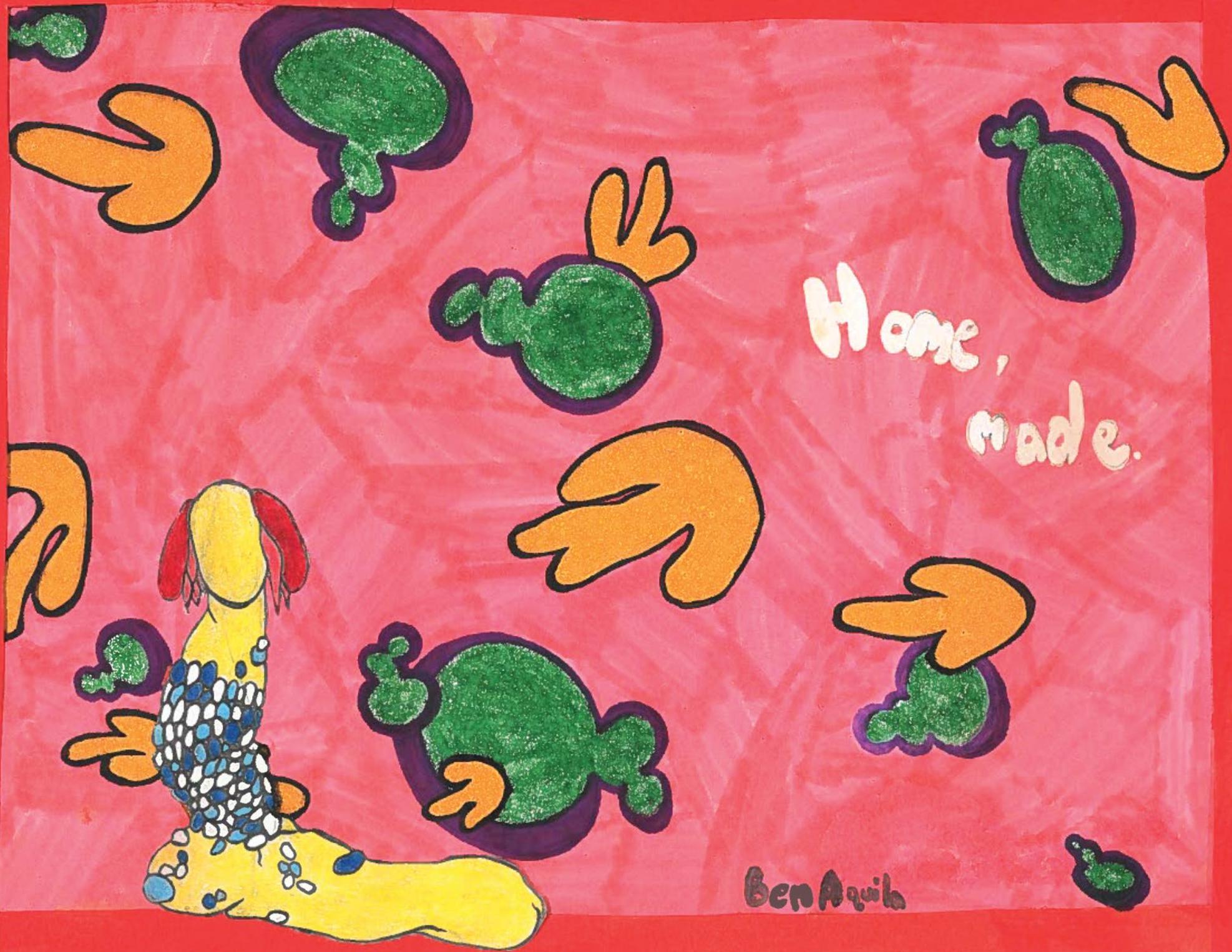
Annie Grace Netterville is consumed with how bodies inhabit space and how they are perceived while doing so. In her paintings, sculptures, and fiber art she brings forth figures that brashly, lustfully, and powerfully occupy their environments. Her figures dance, provoke, and fall on top of one another. In her work, Annie Grace takes to task the primacy of the viewer, attributing joy and power to the subject.

Jamie Payne focuses on the inner mysteries of how bodies develop and decay. With his fleshily textured video and sculptural abstractions of bodily organs and leaking growths, Jamie shows the capacity for surprise that is in our bodies. His work is grossly overripe and hypnotic in a way akin to poking at one's own bruises.

It has been a privilege to work with Ben, Annie Grace, and Jamie over the past year as they have prepared their thesis projects. I've experienced how they have leapt about in technique and concepts while remaining true to their core themes. Each has been excited to experiment with different materials and methods, to share pivotal moments in their aesthetic development, and to discover connections to the world at large. It is the objective of the Department of Art & Art History at Rhodes to train students to develop their individual voices to critique, reflect, and shape our visual environment. These three artists epitomize those qualities. The future is brighter, and I am more confident in it, with Ben, Annie Grace, and Jamie out there articulating the experience of our being in the universe.

Karl Erickson

Assistant Professor of Art

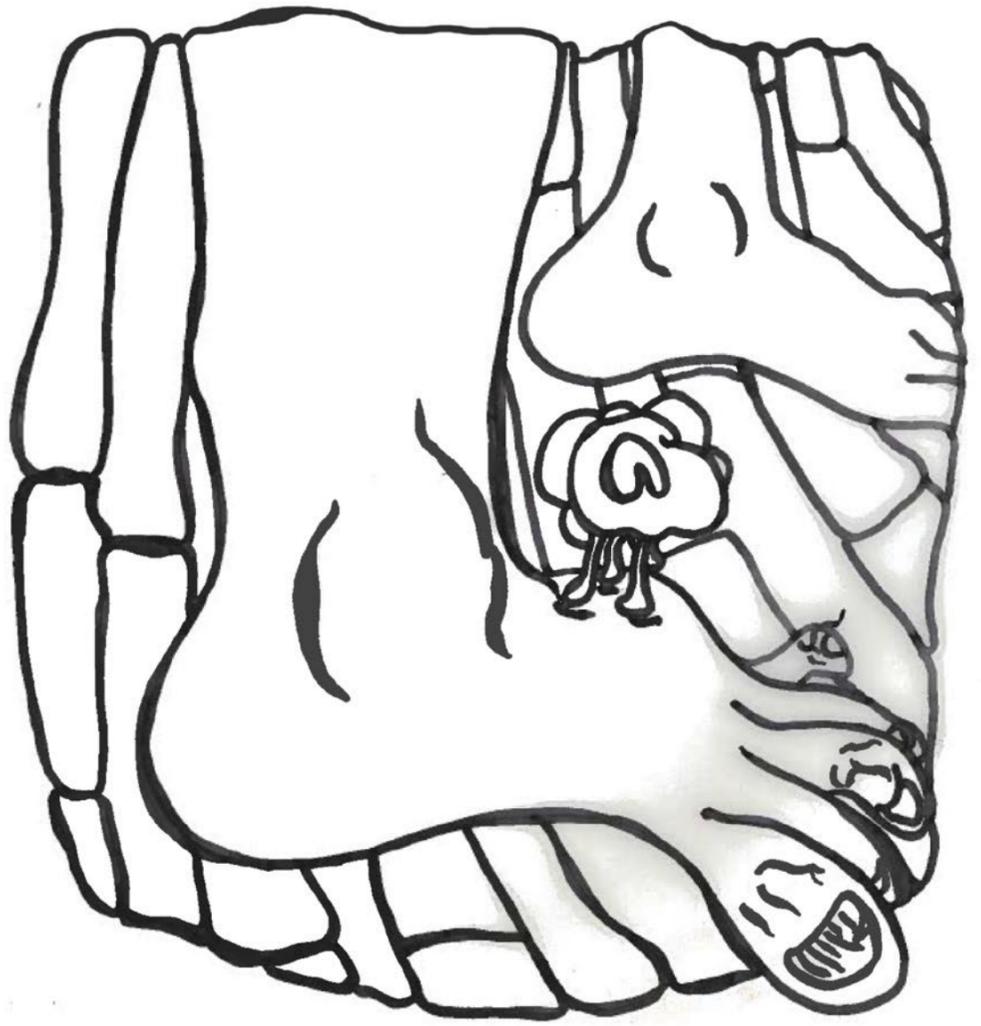


Home,
made.

Ben Aquib

Fill me.

Find me.





To my other halves,

Are you confused? Because I am.

Every second of every day I am thinking about your lines and love. You come from me. I spent uncountable hours thinking and moving towards your birth. Every shape I drew and discarded, every yellow I tried and hated, every texture I felt + sighed - I swam through to find you. When I finally brought you into the world, I cried. I loved you instantly and knew that I could never care for anyone more. Because a mother's love is condition-less and endurance-based; willing to do whatever it takes for their child's happiness. But, you know as well as I that we are not this simply understood.

For most of my life, I have felt foreign in every space I wandered. I've been alone + lonely. Then you came into the picture. You swept me away into a world where I feel safe and understood. We touch, talk and think about everything together. There is no doubt I am better because of this. However, like I said, I'm confused.

Because every moment we share is gentle, funny, + private. You are my children, my friends, and my partners. How can I feel all this love at once? Am I a freak? Crazy? (~~What?~~) Perverted? Help me through this, because right now we are breeding a love with blurred boundaries and blurred intentions.

Yours,

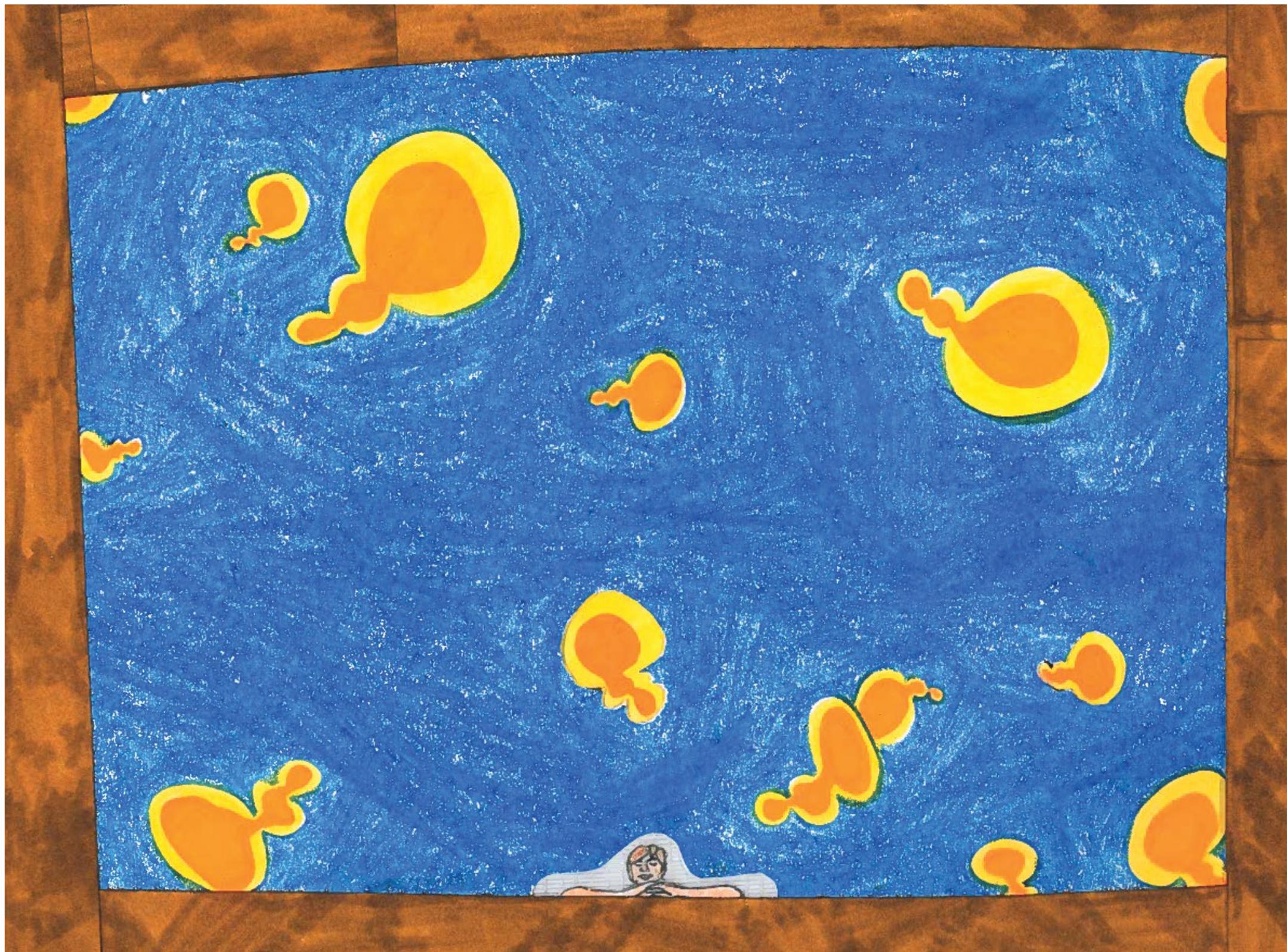
Ben



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 DXBSTEOWVLWEZMKLBBABY
 CPLBQROVYQDNRVXJIPBW
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 CNWDPUINTYQACNAINLNF
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Sensation
 Confusatory
 Fur-fuzzfluff
 Droopsome
 Bellyburp
 Dumpling
 Stretchy
 Squishie
 Tempting
 Trinkle
 Blunker
 Splurge
 Warty
 Handsy
 Banana

Heavy
 Plump
 Loopy
 Cream
 Pudding
 Rolls
 Fatty
 Lovey
 Easy
 Baby
 Peers
 Drip
 Bingle
 Bun



Annie Grace Netterville



My body plays a role in my oppression.

My body also plays a role in my privilege.

Bigger bodies, smaller bodies, and the world of difference between the two.

What if everyone just cared less about their bodies?

Wearing clothes so small that everyone is forced to see what my body looks like.

The parts that are grotesquely beautiful.

Wearing clothes so big that no one can tell what my body looks like underneath.

The parts that are beautifully grotesque.

Too fat to be thin, too thin to be fat. What a boring fucking problem to have.

I dream of palaces dedicated to pussies and pink.

Bumpy, lumpy, bulbous, bulky, squishy, saggy, fleshy, wiggly, shiny, sticky, sinewy, silly, funny, fatty, flabby, hairy, goopy and glittery.

A thousand years of inherited bodily trauma and treason and I wear it on my supposedly supple, porcelain skin.

My appearance doesn't matter at all, but it also matters a lot.

Garden of Eden. Garden of Earthly Delights. Unlimited breadsticks at the Olive Garden.

I don't really care about what my body looks like, but I also care a lot.

In Sunday school, we sang songs about being knit together in our mothers' wombs.

Someone asks, "do y'all think she used FaceTune?"

Aphrodite. Venus. Henrietta Lacks. Old Market Woman. Cleopatra. Kim K broke the internet with her fat ass. Nike Alighting a Warship. Madonna and child. Judith Slayed Holofernes with her tits out. Into the bath. Onto the bed. Luncheon in the Grass. Reclining nude woman without a name. Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. Ballerinas. Courtesans. Virgins and Whores. An unidentified model covering herself in blue paint because Yves Klein told her to do so. Catherine Opie. August Ames. You demand that fat Lizzo take up less space. She refuses though.

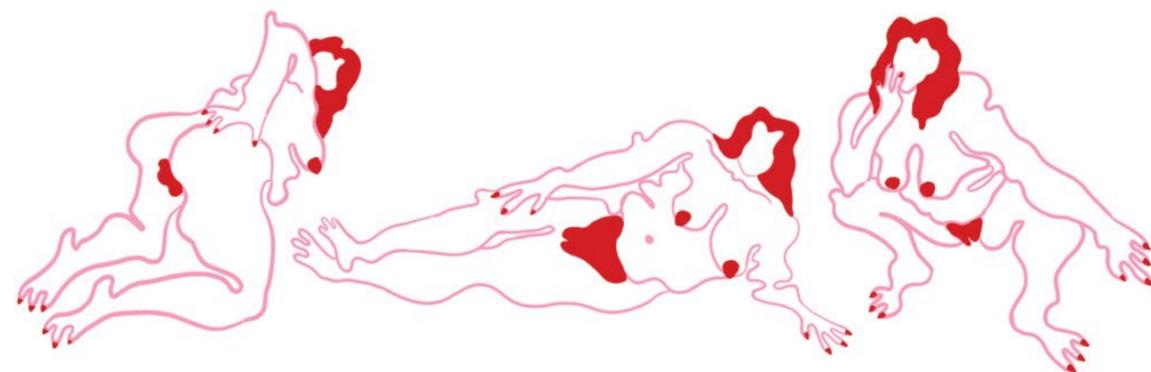
At the sight of my own nude photos, I am simultaneously aroused and repulsed.

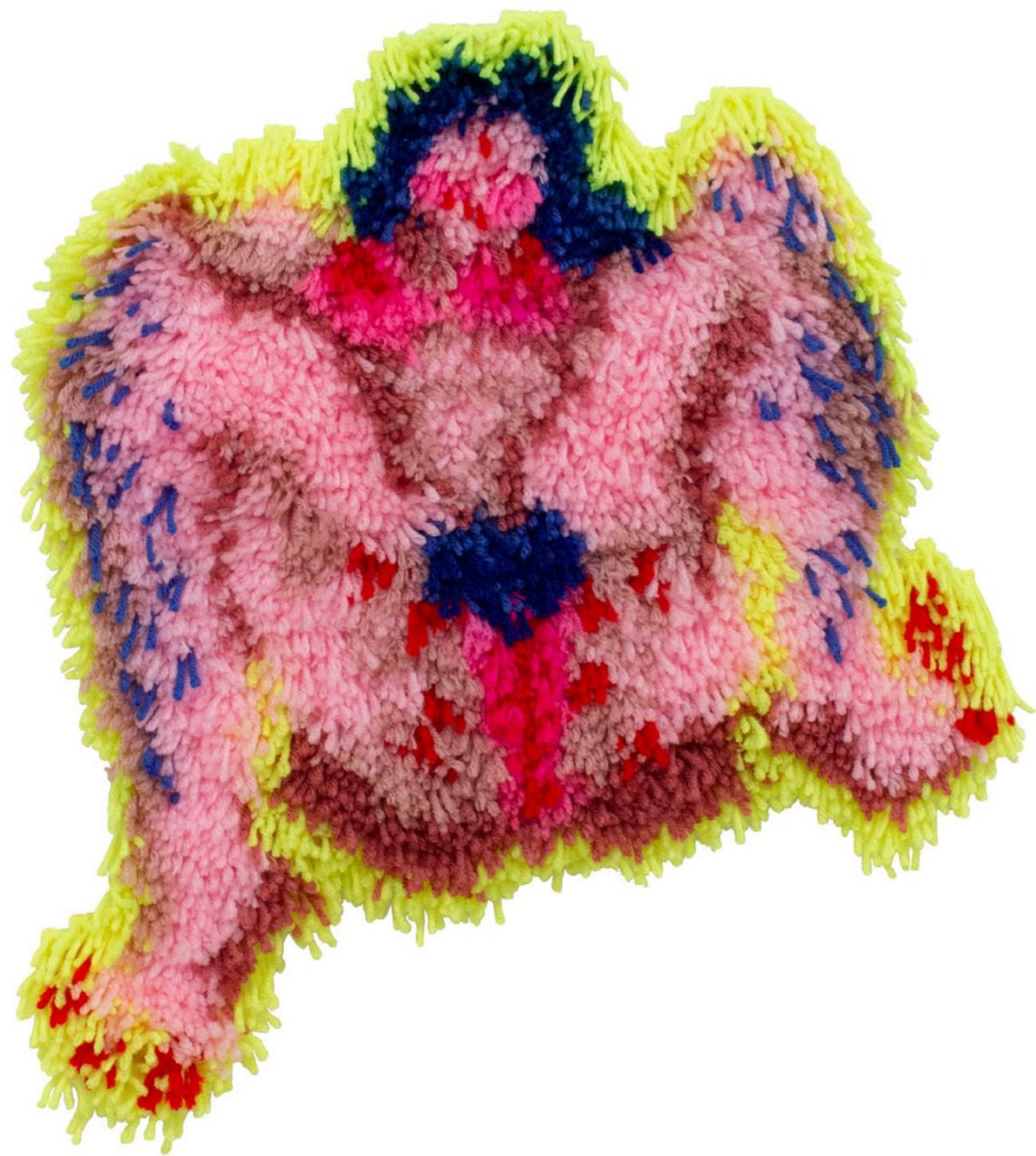
How is it so hard to take up space when we don't even have the option not to?

Hug me, touch me, kiss me, worship me, bite me, pinch me, spread me out, lift me up, cut me open, kick me down, eat me out.

When I was 6 years old, my grandma wrote in her journal that I was bigger than my mother was at that age. 17 years later, I am still wondering why she felt that was important to include.

What if we lived in a world where everyone just danced around and didn't give a fuck about what jiggled?







I am perpetually trying to figure out what it means to inhabit a human body. I observe the bodies of people around me. I often reflect on my body – my movements, my experiences, my physicality, my pleasures, my feelings about it all. I consume images of bodies through art history, social media, pornography and my iPhone camera roll.

I metabolize this information through drawing. I draw these human figures over and over, and over, and over again until they become organic shapes beyond recognizable forms. I then transform these shapes into new life forms. They become silhouettes and patterns. Often, they turn back into new figural forms and bodies.

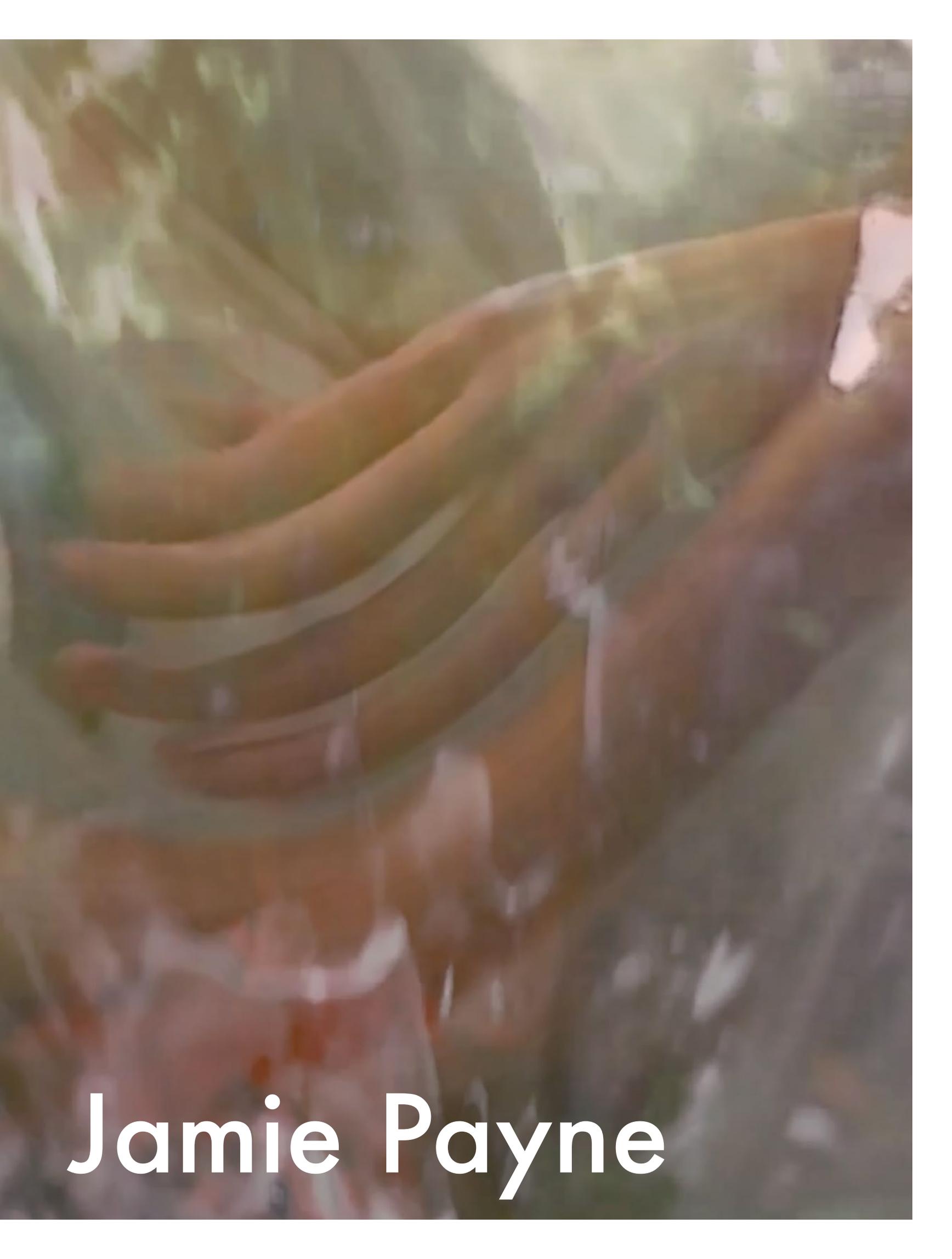
This process of observing, drawing, and synthesizing allows me to meditate on bodies and bodily forms outside the confines of beauty, politics, and aesthetics.

I gestate these embryonic shapes in a safe and isolated environment and re-birth new bodies. These bodies are beautiful and grotesque and take up as much space as they need. These bodies are both pleasing and challenging. They allure and they confront. They are Madonnas and monsters. They are goddesses and gargoyles. And though these bodies are fun to look at, they refuse to be gazed upon.

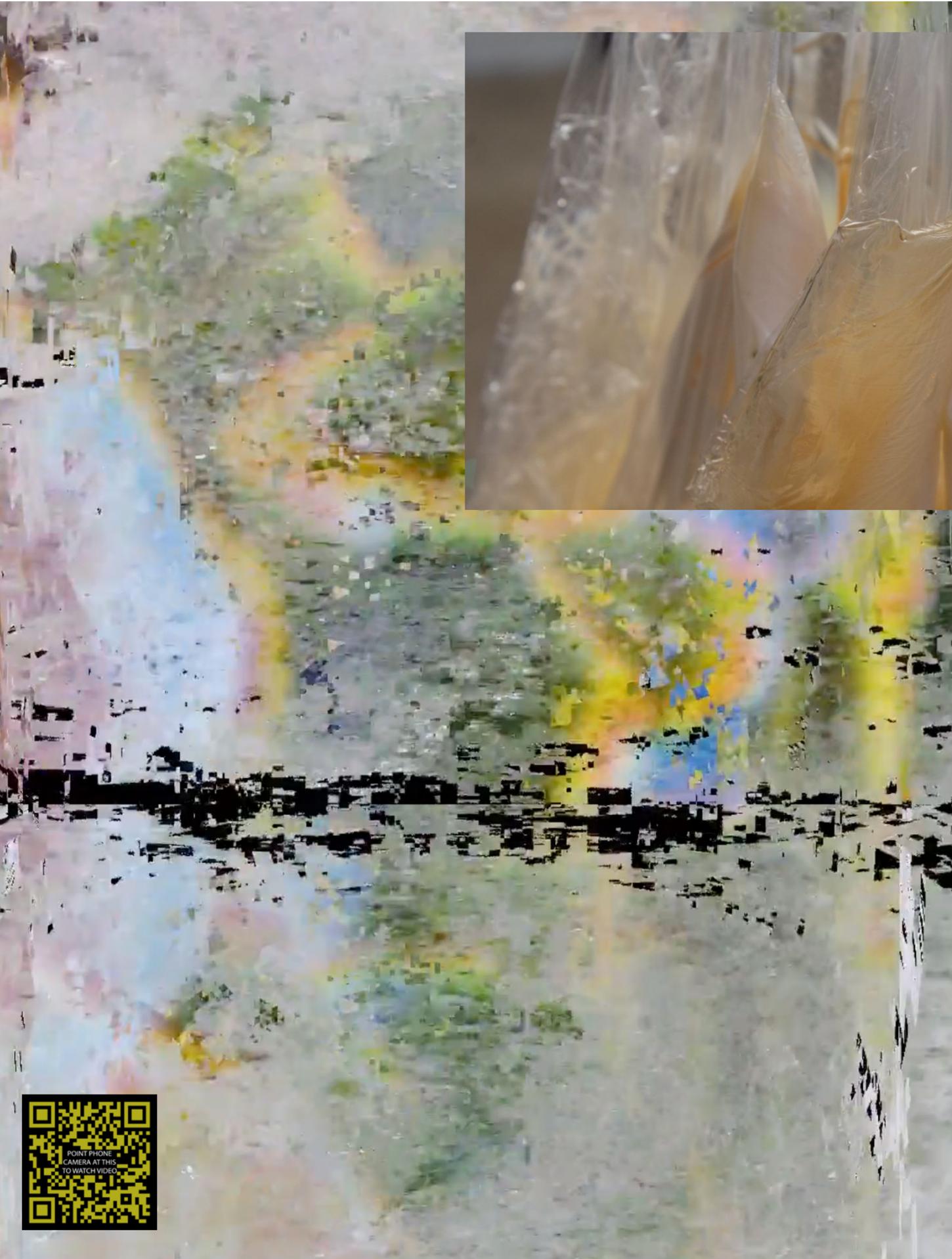
During this time of sickness and isolation, I have more questions about bodies than answers. I have been forced to spend a lot of time alone with my own body. These days, I am finding myself the only person in the room more often than not. My body takes up space with no other bodies to relate to. I yearn for touch, intimacy and relationships to other bodies. But, amidst this isolation, I have been given the time to view myself and experience my own physicality with the same privacy and vulnerability that characterizes my drawing process. I am able to understand, with unprecedented clarity, what it means to be existing in my body.



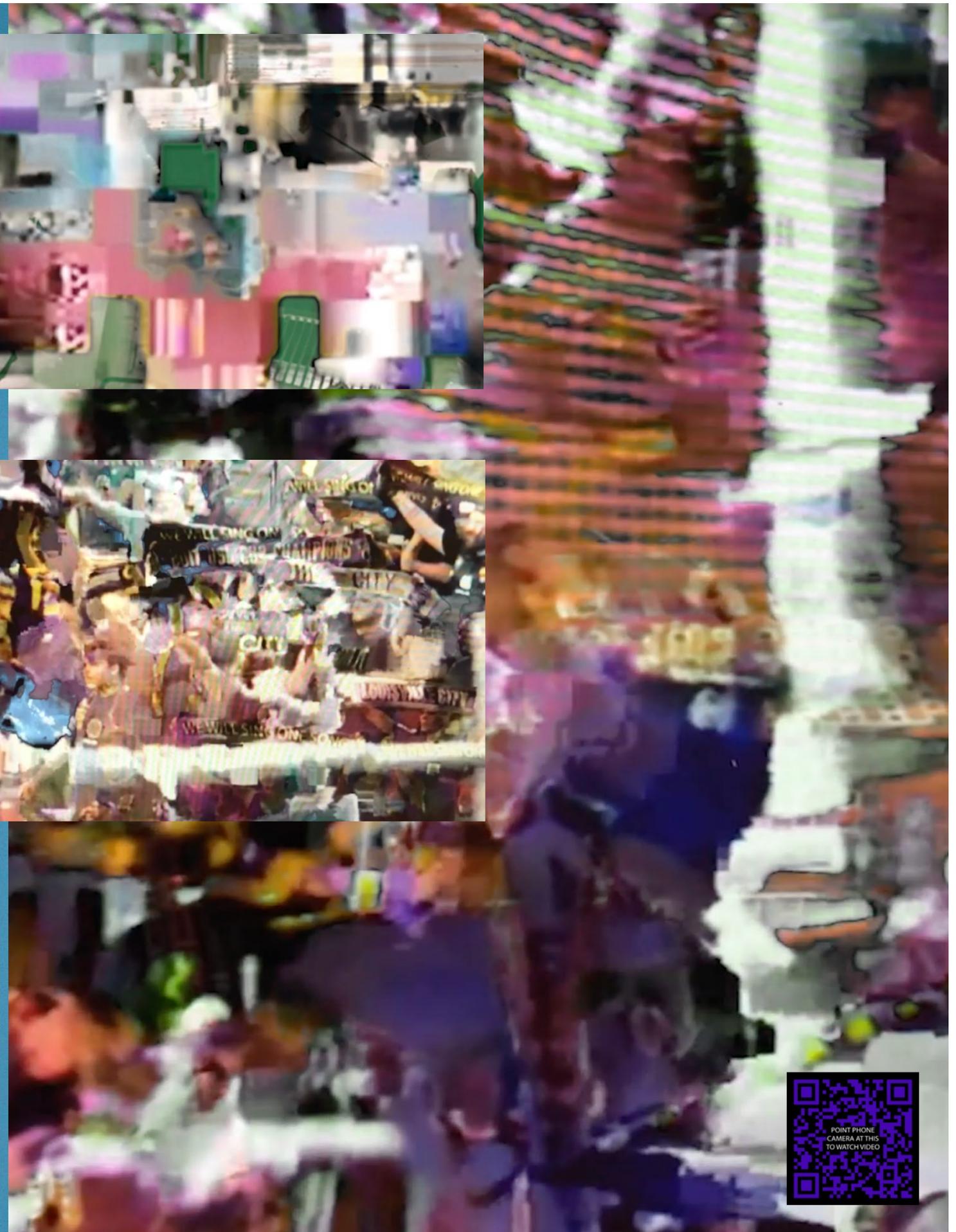
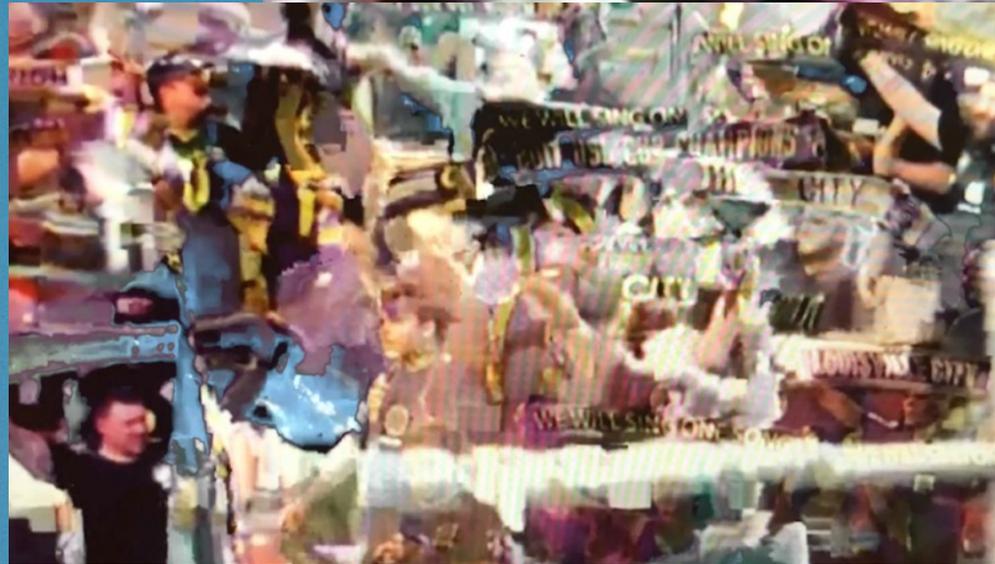




Jamie Payne







The human body is limited as a sentient sack of meat with the power of movement. These limitations and an unawareness of my own body cause me to exist in a state of bliss and grief. I alternate between calm reflection on the inevitable and fear of the unknown when confronting disease, sickness, injury, and destruction.

I am fascinated by what my insides might look like, while having a continuous concern that my body could create a lethal or self-damaging event. I envision that my body has plastic-wrapped translucent skin so that I can see what my insides might look like. To calm myself, I translate the anxieties into foreign external objects and movements through video and sculpture. I use grotesque imagery, haunting audio, and video from personal memories or experiences. I hear my heart beating, stomach grumbling, vocal cords vibrating. I see blood running, lungs expanding, muscles tensing.

My artworks combine corporeal abstractions and disintegrating forms. They take shape as lulling, slow events with nauseating imagery. They depict alternating moments of rest and an aggressive fear of a body that is destroying itself. I find calm in the repetition. The more I see the same, the more I understand it. I find fear in the distorted or obscured images. The unknown workings are a threat. I do this as a reflection of observations of my body as it slowly destroys itself.

To view videos without using QR Code visit:
jamiipayne.art

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Ben Aquila is from Madison County, Alabama. He molds quirky creatures and spaces to try to feel at home and at peace. His work has shown in exhibitions throughout Tennessee and he is featured in *Dredge: A Memphis Zine*. He is the recipient of the River Arts Fest scholarship and represents the Rhodes College Art Department in prestigious honor society, Phi Beta Kappa. He works and plays in Memphis, TN.

Annie Grace Netterville was born and raised outside of Nashville, Tennessee. She is receiving a BA in both Studio Art and Art History from Rhodes College. Her work explores the human body through drawing and fiber sculptures. Recently, she has exhibited at the Tennessee Bellwethers exhibition where she received an honorable mention for 2D art. Other accolades in the arts include the 2018 RiverArts Foundation scholarship and the 2020 Rhodes Campus Life Award for Most Likely to Succeed in the Arts.

Jamie Payne grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. He makes grotesque sculptures and short videos about his anxious relationship with human body failure, disintegration, and breakdown. During his college career, Jamie enjoyed exploring as many artistic disciplines as possible. He was the recipient of the 2019 Louise & Ward Archer Sr. Award for Creativity.

ABOUT RHODES COLLEGE

Rhodes is a national, four-year, private, coeducational, residential college committed to the liberal arts and sciences. Our highest priorities are intellectual engagement, service to others, and honor among ourselves. We enjoy one of the country's most beautiful campuses in the heart of Memphis, an economic, political, and cultural center, making Rhodes one of a handful of prominent liberal arts colleges located in a major metropolitan area.

The Rhodes experience combines the best of the classroom and the real world—through internships, service, research, and other opportunities in Memphis and far beyond. Students learn, play, and serve others with a determination to grow personally and to improve the quality of life within their communities.

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF ART & ART HISTORY

In a culture suffused with visual information, the ability to construct and interpret images is a vital component of independent, critical thinking. Training in studio art and art history helps students move beyond mere art appreciation by engaging the visual environment as articulate, knowing practitioners. While developing their manual, oral, and written skills, they also discover that the study of art profoundly transforms their perspectives on the world.

Students of art and art history at Rhodes engage in dynamic, hands-on experiences, across campus and beyond. For more information on the Department of Art & Art History, please visit rhodes.edu/art.

Raina Belleau

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David McCarthy

Professor of Art & Art History, Chair

Rosie Meindl

Visual Resources Curator

Joel Parsons

Director, Clough Hanson Gallery; Program Director of Gender and Sexuality Studies



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DEPARTMENT OF ART & ART HISTORY
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