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**University of Arizona School of Art 2008 Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition**

April 10 - May 18, at the Joseph Gross Gallery and the University of Arizona Museum of Art
ADIN deMasi: Women are fascinating and complicated. Women are cryptic and beautiful, women are peculiar and compelling. Women are dangerous. But so are men, and so are rattlesnakes and small choking parts. The ironic statement is a bold one and even smacks of provocation.

It is undeniably true even if sorely incomplete. Gender relationships have so rapidly morphed over the last 30 years that the framework for how we should act is nebulous. There is no singular model for how the modern man should relate to the modern woman. I am trying to represent my own bewilderment through this cacophonous display of images, text and music. I am trying to pull the viewer in using the cheapest of means. Screaming declarations tend to polarize and force dialogue (even if the technique is a little like that of the carnie).

 theftis fightin’ words.’

Here the words “Women Are Dangerous” function to limit the multiplicity of connotations offered by the images even while it relays and expands the significance of the images. I am interested in the phenomena of proximity and how our cultural codes tell us that when words and images are next to each other they belong together or “mean something.” I am also emphasizing the essentiality of the viewer—when a viewer steps onto the dance floor/stage they trigger the motion-detected music—when they stop moving, the music stops. This heightens the sense that the viewer’s very presence is vital and actually completes the piece. The music is coupled with a jumble of images to stress the physicality of the act of viewing (even the eye must move about quickly). By exaggerating the physical experience, the viewer then becomes hyper-aware of the performative nature of active viewership.¹

¹ Thanks Gwyneth.
² The original “Women Are Dangerous” dance tracks.
³ When confronted with a barrage of visual information (like we are everyday) the active viewer will consciously analyze, interpret, decipher and conclude for him or herself what it all means. The passive is simply barraged. It is not enough to be barraged by images to qualify the bombardee for active viewer status. It is not unlike the difference between being force-fed unlabeled cold canned goods and going to the market, selecting ingredients and making your own meal.

Women Are Dangerous, 2008, mixed, dimensions variable.
La Cholla, a headland near Puerto Peñasco, Mexico, has one of the largest tides in North America. The semi-diurnal rhythm of the tide completely empties the bay and exposes the thriving biodiversity in the rocky reef and tidal flats, then hours later erases any trace of the organic texture, replacing it with a vast expanse of blue.

The red chair depicted in the paintings alludes to the fable of King Cnut, so besotted with his own power that he boasted he could control the tides. Though a story over a thousand years old, its point is apt: one cannot control the natural cycles of the world, nor demand that they bend to one’s will.

The skeletal steel structures of the mutoscopes bear a resemblance to coastal beacons, museum cases, the inner workings of clocks, and devices from the 20th century tourist industry. This reference to early technology evokes the industrial age, when we began to harness natural resources on a grand scale to improve the quality of life, forgetting that part of that quality was simply the presence of the wild expanse of the other, and the time necessary to appreciate it.

The mutoscopes speed up the process of the tide so we can see it more evidently, as a phenomenon that sets La Cholla apart from other places. They offer us a technique to control the speed of the tide by how fast we crank the handle and yet provide us with an apparatus for delighting in the incredible breadth of the tide’s wake.

Tide Cycle — An Act Against Erasure, 2008, mixed, dimensions variable
Tomiko Jones

draw forth, cast aside
small gestures of drifting weight
open sky above

It is said that the one thing we can be certain of is change. It is a constant, yet we never can predict when and at what velocity it will arrive or depart. It came as a tempest raging. Then began the long cycle of yearning deeply for something past, a permeable dark anger, while struggling to lift eyes to the open sky above that offered possibilities. In consideration of attachment as a physical state, a ball of string finds it’s way into my hands. At first I walked out into a dry desert wash, a place that holds the memory of water. Later I took it everywhere. wound it, unwound it, cast it into rivers and off of cliffs and drew it back, longing and despising, a gesture of almost desperate measures. At times we find the most profound things during our lowest points, the richness of the well revealed.

I have heard many times that everything you need to know you can learn from a river. It is always flowing but always different, moving constantly towards its destination. Memory, like water, is fluid and changing. The landscape offers metaphors for existential understandings.

Transformation occurs in allowing things to change states as simply as molecules become solids, liquids and gases. Small gestures repeat themselves, and finally, something very physical and recognizable, a visible change to the body. The moment of ritual creates a liminal space for transcendence beyond the everyday exhaustion of human activity.

(from left) Shorn, 2008, part three of a timed sequence video installation
Drowning, 2008, video, part one of a timed sequence video installation
Wound, 2008, video, part two of a timed sequence video installation
I have made these six things to be viewed together and in order. Each is an articulation of the relationship between consumption and war, celebration and casualty.

When my aunt, Gail James Yoakum, died last year, the newspaper republished an editorial she wrote when the Paris Peace Accords were signed, officially ending U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Seven months after she became a widow Gail wrote about how she viewed the end of the war: its repercussions and responsibilities, the relationship between the personal and shared loss, private and political sacrifice. She is aware of her problematic position as one who belongs to the side of the aggressors despite their sympathies and pain. The article helped me mourn and remember Gail as she was, and gave me cause to consider the similarities and differences between the conflict we are currently engaged in and the one that was ending 35 years ago.

On the shelf are copies for people to take home with them.

The legacy of the Endless Column is, foremost, an advanced language of “pure” form and geometry. The great master produced the sculpture many times over at smaller scales in timber, bronze, and stone. As it was reiterated, divorced from its original context (Romanian memorial to soldiers who died in World War II) and reference to real and symbolic preexisting forms (funerary poles, axis-mundi) the column has lost much of its intended meaning. I wanted to use this multivalence form: war monument, acme of pure form, and glorified useless furniture to examine how individual works are depoliticized and emptied of their intended significance.

My endless column is a bottomless container for those needs left unmet by desire-based consumption at the end of war.


(below) LOSS, 2008, acrylic on ink jet print
Danny Martin

The Magic City is a reference to the nickname of Birmingham, Alabama. This is important because I like to think of Birmingham as my hometown, even though I grew up in a very rural section of Alabama, about 45 minutes south of the city. I consider a person’s hometown to be their point of reference… not just of origin.

This is my amusement park ride version of Birmingham. I had to present my imagery in a ride format to properly present how I remember/experienced my background. To have any honesty at all… there had to be an element of the silly while still presenting the subject matter with respect.

Hopefully I have done an adequate job of balancing those elements.

The Magic City, 2008, inked sintra plate, dimensions variable
“The central question is why would any woman — for that matter any man — want to make themselves over just to please another person? There is no such thing as a ‘Perfect Woman’ … or a ‘Perfect Man.’”

—Cheshirecat on The Perfect Woman BLOG

Cheshirecat is right. There is no such thing as a Perfect Woman or Perfect Man. Yet, there is a whole industry built around the pursuit of this impossible goal: cosmetics, fitness, plastic surgery, diets, and makeover shows. You can have your hair styled, cellulite massaged, teeth fixed, nose reshaped, penis enlarged, and breasts augmented. You can consult self-help books, life coaches, psychiatrists, psychics, personal trainers, and shamans. And the lists continue. There are endless ways to “improve” yourself, and plenty of people to help you along the way, for a fee.

The question I hope to ask with this project is, “Why would any woman — for that matter any man — want to make themselves over just to please another person?” Indeed, why is American culture so obsessed with “perfection” and “personal transformation”? How does this affect our expectations in relationships and shape our sense of self?

By offering my body as a canvas for the desires of others and by going through this transformation and dating process in a public, unedited, transparent way, I hope to encourage people to take a look at their lives and how they are or are not affected by social pressures. Ideally, Perfect Woman Project will foster dialogue about cultural practices, love and identity.

(Profiles) Perfect Woman Project #2, 2007-2008
Online Interactive Performance, 160” x 108” x 120”

(Below) Perfect Woman Project #3, 2007-2008
Online Interactive Performance, 54” x 48”
Maria Navarro

My creative praxis is informed by a deep desire to explore and visually interpret social issues that affect me at personal or empathic levels. Concern such as the gross inequalities often encountered in our society — nurtured and fueled by innocuous causes cloaked as religious, pseudoscientific, nationalist or political dogmas greatly impact my art making.

My work also charts how differences in cultural patterns, belief systems, race, and lifestyle choices are hierarchically positioned to creating the illusion of dominant and subordinate classes. I am moved by the recognition that groups who feel threatened, strategize to create meanings to subdue, exile or destroy that which does not calibrate with their social constructs or views of themselves.

It is a prodigious misconception that one’s wealth must be accompanied by another’s poverty, one’s success by another’s failure. We are conditioned to believe in this dichotomy as the natural and inevitable process of the survival of the fittest, when, in fact every individual has the natural right to enjoy what the world has to offer, and has the potential to succeed ceteris paribus.

As a graphic designer, I am interested in creating compelling messages that contribute to the betterment of society. I am to bring awareness to issues that affect those that have no voice. My process is to maintain an attitude of inquiry and a desire for experimentation. I endeavor to avoid limiting my message by a specific set of tools or media. Rather, my objective is to enhance what I have mastered with new materials, processes, and technologies.

Through my visual work, I desire to bring attention and encourage participation in the discourse of current conditions of social inequality, command the attention of the viewer by placing him or her in the position of the marginalized, and inject a cerebral aftertaste that will provoke participation in social change.


Alejandro Pérez-Avila: I am interested in the digital: using computer code to create meaning and balanced compositions. But how can a computer function form a narrative?

“Code” is just a set of define instructions that tell a computer what to do, but the meaning of the “code” can also serve to define a purpose.

From this idea I envision the piece Family Portrait.

The piece is divided in two sections:

The visual — “Family Portrait” — which includes five interactive portals, each representing my relationship with my parents and siblings.

The code behind — “Family Portrait” — which includes computer instructions that defines my relationship with my parents and siblings.


— Father: The Visual: Unbreakable bricks. The Code: Physical function that applies forces to a brick depending on the surrounding bricks.

— Older Brother: The Visual: Spinning circles. The Code: Recursive function that finds the shortest path to a point.


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What came first, the story or the image? What the Animals Had to Say explores the relationship between the creation of images and stories. As an illustrator, I often create illustrations for stories, but in this work the images informed the stories, and both later defined the final illustrations.

Beyond this process, this work is a tiny version of human history, or passages of it, as some sacred books have recorded. It also depicts different facets coexisting in our own personalities that shape our behaviors. As a spiritual book, as its narrative suggests, it calls for a harmony between man and nature and within man himself.

More than the obvious Aesop’s Fables, What the Animals Had to Say is a hybrid work rooted in oriental philosophy, similar to the five ancient books of the “Panchatantra” which were the first animal fables to appear in literature. More intimately, it owes a debt to the works of poets like Khalil Gibran and Rabindranant Tagore, and to spiritual masters like Paramahansa Yogananda and Lao Tse. I also cannot deny influences from the Ancient Testament and Christ’s teachings. I was also inspired by the conversations with my great-grandmother about spirituality and her Rosicrucian practices.

(opposite) What the Flying Cat Said to the Fish Headed Man, 2008, intaglio, 9”x12”
(below) What the Three Headed Dragon Said to the Stubborn King (detail), 2008, intaglio, 9”x12”
what forces might cause one booming urban center to grow depressed while another major population center in severe decline remains spirited? Many assume that economic growth and cultural attractions create thriving cities and downtowns; however, across the United States, modern-day ghost towns are paradoxically experiencing substantial economic and cultural growth, a phenomenon that defies existing stereotypes. The Pavement Memoirs project is dedicated to understanding and celebrating our relationships with major urban centers.

My Pavement Memoir is a celebration of the relationship I maintain with Cleveland, Ohio, a four-time All-American City. My connection emerges from Cleveland’s ability to submerge me in its daily rituals. Once suffused in such beauty and history, I go beyond the architecture and public works that represent the historical richness, and realize that businesses have closed, public schools have failed, and local government have been hopelessly buried in a myriad of problems too complex for any one person to solve.

Once the fifth-largest city in the United States boasting nearly one million, Cleveland now ranks fourteenth in population with a mere four hundred thousand. This reduction in population suggests a corresponding decline in spirit, yet modern boomtowns in the United States scarcely compare to the exuberance of a shrinking city like Cleveland. This duality of beauty and decline makes me question why Cleveland remains a destination that enlivens the soul.

This duality can only be understood once submersed in a depressed, yet booming urban center after losing yourself in an urban center that leaves you energized.
I’ve carved out a place for myself that is male; it’s true. To look at me, you might not see anything other than a white guy. A set of cues that say this person is male. But that is just an external place. A clothed place that makes my life safer. It is only a layer of my identity. Perhaps the most radical thing I could do is take off my clothes and show my multigendered form. But that too is just a set of external cues that lead to some sort of gendered conclusion. And anyway, I’m not that kind of guy.

I could let people see photographs of my growing up and my transition. Let the “truth” in those photos tell the tale. But in photos, there is more information than one could ever make sense of. Too many facts. Too much revealing. Too much happening.

So I draw the lines, and give gendered hints. Recreate the photos in a way that they couldn’t be seen at the time. And let the grey areas expose the truth they’ve always held.
being present in the moment is simultaneously to question your own self, and to find answers there. Change in life comes from the same place where butterflies churn inside your stomach. This is the place I call the epicenter.

It is your core from which you give birth to ideas, dreams, and thoughts. Every transformation begins here. Epicenter: the moment of action that carries us forward, and then back to our core self.

I am caught between my layers. The layers of paper which I choose to sort through and the layers of my skin that I am transforming out of.

Every day is a constant of trying to keep Balanced...
Breathing 15–20 intakes per minute
Drinking 3–4 liters
Eating 3–4 small meals.
Nurturing and to be nurtured in tandem.

When the ice below your feet begins to crack what do you hear? Do you hear the ice giving way, is it your own breath, or is it your heartbeat filling your ears?

My epicenter is here in this now.

I transformed from an artist who solely makes objects by bringing myself directly into my artistic expression. Using my own body as a component of my installations, I create a very temporary, very unique event—a performance. Using time-based video and audio, I transform a whitewalled area into an environment within which any willing viewer can engage by participating or by observing: here is a space where we can share and be in the moment.