

THE SISSY BOY AND THE HETEROSUPREMACY:
A FAILED QUEER'S GUIDE TO DISENTANGLING SHAME(S)

by

FORREST LAWSON
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Approved:

Isabelle Wallace

Dr. Isabelle Loring Wallace, Major Professor

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Date

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Introduction

I have been penetrated. I am a failure. I am without virility. I am a worthless faggot.

By all accounts, my ontology of Queerness has been defined not by some internal mechanism that produces shame and self-hatred ad nauseum, but by imposed contours of a liminal space provided to me through intergenerational trauma and heterosupremacy. I want to focus less on the self-pitying aspects of familial trauma, although these abuses have informed my sense of identity, or subjectivity, and more on the mechanisms of homophobia as a Queered body that is attempting to disentangle this complex web of relegation both within a home (house), and outside of one. Tracing the contours of Queer shame, and shame in general, provides the contextual framework for a thesis body of work that interrogates site, time, process, and materiality to provide a better view of a fractured subjectivity.

Where is the site from which I develop my sense of Queerness?

From what point am I oriented towards and away?

Which lines delineate my past, present, and future, and where do they converge?

I attempt to answer these questions, however vague the answers to them might be, by suturing narratives and structures together in an intentional, albeit confused, direction towards the past. The objects and images produced for this exhibition, and throughout my time at the University of Georgia, are both guides and ghost stories – tales of the specter of a lost Queer, of said Queer's murdered internal straight child, and of time surrendered to bury these bodies and re-excavate them once more. The immaterial of memory, the process of recollection, and material that suggests visibility, vulnerability, and ephemerality become the main interrogation of my work at UGA.

*I am sick of and tired of reading and
hearing such goddamn demeaning,
degrading bullshit about me and my
friends.*

Merle Miller
On Being Different, 1971

Shameful-Queer/Queer-Shaming

“When you keep one part of yourself secret, that becomes the most important part of you.”

- Merle Miller, 1971

The use of Queer shame in reference to this body of work is not meant to act as a homogenizing or essentializing term for the Queer experiences of, or reaction to, shame. Instead, I use it as reference to the tools of shaming that frame our individual identities and attempts to mold the gay community flush with white, middle-class hegemony. Judith Butler’s (2009) concept of the grievable, and the various tools used to relegate identities and enforce, or excuse, violence globally, is where the foundations of this shame are produced. Identity categories are being redefined as ingrievable through state measures like the “Don’t Say Gay Bill” in Florida (2022)¹, in the cultural war against sexually liberated politics, and even in sports participation for Trans and gender non-conforming athletes. “The epistemological capacity to apprehend a life is partially dependent on that life being produced according to norms that qualify it as a life or, indeed, as a part of life” (Butler, 2009). Butler is describing state-sanctioned violence in war and times of conflict but taken further in this context, it also describes measures by social conservatism to define staunch masculinity, inflict gender conformity, and act stubbornly with misogyny that also dictates the worth of bodies that do not conform to standards of the Christian (nationalistic?) emphasis on reproduction. The Queer body, then, is redefined as *ingrievable* because of its refusal to participate in the neoliberalist dream of normalization and assimilation and the production of a new working, hopefully straight, class (Munoz, 2009). This is what Edelman (2004) described as the “Queer death drive,” because of the limited capacity or vision for a future where Queers exist as explicitly out or as a normalized (non-marginal) social participant. Edelman also suggests Queers sit tight and let the powers that be play whatever game they’re playing, especially because of our refusal (failure) to play under their conditions, but my penchant towards nihilism is not as strong, at least not today.

The man in the middle gets both the worm and the sanctuary, teetering between what is lost and what is given.

I began this essay with a confession of penetration; however, this is not a singular experience, nor a sexually explicit definition of anal intercourse, but one that creates a broad category for any Queered body. Penetrated here describes the vulnerability, practiced or otherwise, that comes with being the “other” and can be understood as what might be called “an existential penetration or psychosomatic vulnerability and perpetration of which is experienced as a violation of the inviolate masculine subjectivity that is (supposedly) heir” (Kemp, 2013). It is at the intersecting moment where stoicism and masculinity are penetrated, or feminized and interrogated, that a masculinist begins to fall short of heteronormative ideals, and subsequently *fails* their purpose of virility. What test of men provides both the question and answer? All of them, if you’re curious, but that’s the patriarchy baby. It’s the belief that rigid conformity to masculinity, the belief that their performance of it is a *test* of masculinity, that creates the circuitous trappings of the invulnerable and impenetrable straight male subject. Gay men, on the other hand, experience the shame of not living up to the masculinist ideals of their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts, internally, but externally as the relegated and abjected object of wasted potential- a vessel with a hole in it. It’s at this point where young gay men begin to experience shame, knowing they either come out and become squandered seed or remain in the closet doomed to perform under the pressures of a straight master. I chose being a failed man² over the exhaustion of straight performance, a choice not afforded to all, but one that elicits accountability to my own production of internalized shame, and one where interrogation of it becomes easier. As a penetrated man, as a penetrated whole (hole), I become transparent, translucent, and obscure only in the parts of me that are not yet uncovered, and my materials choices mimic this exposure, or lack thereof.³

Straightness (heterosexuality) is always attached to values of decency, conventionality, traditionality, directness, and honesty (Ahmed, 2006). Therefore, Queerness is already associated as the antithesis of performative decency and normalcy. It becomes, which I will explore further later, both object and abject, fully devoid of its subjectivity.⁴ But an unnerving difficulty arises at the introduction of age, or where the line of both grievability and abjection is drawn, alongside the idea of penetration, where children become at risk for both the metaphorical and actual penetration by devious Queers.

Conservatism and “traditional family values” have taken a firm stance on the corruptibility of minors by gay people, most recently in discussions about the acceptability to teach about gender and sexual orientations outside of the gender binary and heterosexuality, but they (purposely) neglect to understand the implications of this association of deviancy to young Queer children. It’s a shame that is introduced not through ignorance, but through assimilatory politics. A politics that reinforces heterosupremacy and the relegation of Queer identity, to both themselves (Queers) and their “superiors”. “This society wants its children to know nothing; wants its Queer children to conform or (and this is not a figure of speech) die; and wants not to know that it is getting what it wants” (Sedwick, 2003). Jen Gilbert, in her 2014 book about sexuality in schools, describes how we can imagine only straight children, until of course it is decided that the straight child is murdered by the fastidious Queen/Queer that takes their place. What is grievable here is only the straight child, their future, and the loss of perceived innocence to a failed and penetrated life. The Queer is not grievable, the Queer is monstrous, insidious, and predatory. These associations create a persistent and cyclical shame that pervades our lives from adolescence to adulthood and these complex webbing and scattered clippings are sutured in my own exploration of internalized shame through images and motifs of self-pleasure that mimic the cycle of self-reliance.⁵

Unfortunately, the self we miss at such moments, the elusively authentic, creative, and spontaneous side of our character, is not ours to summon at will. Our access to it is, to a humbling extent, determined by the places we happen to be in, by the color of the bricks, the height of the ceilings and the layout of the streets. In a hotel room strangled by three motorways, or in a waste land of run- down tower blocks, our optimism and sense of purpose are liable to drain away, like water from a punctured container. We may start to forget that we ever had ambitions or reasons to feel spirited and hopeful.

We depend on our surroundings obliquely to embody the moods and ideas we respect and then to remind us of them. We look to our buildings to hold us, like a kind of psychological mold, to a helpful vision of ourselves. We arrange around us material forms which communicate to us what we need – but are at constant risk of forgetting we need – within. We turn to wallpaper, benches, paintings, and streets to staunch the disappearance of our true selves.

In turn, those places whose outlook matches and legitimates our own, we tend to honor with the term ‘home’. Our homes do not have to offer us permanent occupancy or store our clothes to merit the name. To speak of home in relation to a building is simply to recognize its harmony with our own prized internal song. Home can be an airport or a library, a garden, or a motorway diner.

Our love of home is in turn an acknowledgement of the degree to which our identity is not self-determined. We need a home in the psychological sense as much as we need one in the physical: to compensate for a vulnerability. We need a refuge to shore up our states of mind, because so much of the world is opposed to our allegiances. We need our rooms to align us to desirable versions of ourselves and to keep alive the important, evanescent sides of us.

Alain de Botton
Architecture of Happiness, 2008

Collapsible Space

The question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how ‘we find our way’ but how we come to ‘feel at home’.

- Sara Ahmed, 2006

Wayward Queers, having been disowned, disavowed, or forcefully ejected from their closets, are in search of a place called home that re-legitimizes their discarded identities (in my experience, at least). The disorientation of this expulsion creates a linear focus of our orientation towards spaces that both welcome and confine - spaces that exist both in opposition to, and as producers of, shame. I’m referencing mostly the subculture of barebacking, cruising, and anonymous public sex where spaces are ripe with the stench of sex, sweat, and leather or latex, and of course a palpable shame. A refuge and a prison, sex in spaces like toilets and public parks “disrupts and destabilizes traditional power structures predicated on the belief that sexual intimacy equals love and fidelity... cruising is not just about participation in a sexual experience, it is an act that promulgates a unique cultural practice necessary for the survival of the culture as a whole” (Espinoza, 2019). This does not sound much like the kind of giving up that Edelman suggests; in fact, it sounds as if it’s a flourishing network of coded sexuality. However, the spaces that provide the potential for such liberatory and reaffirming sexual practices works as a mechanism of heterosupremacy to uphold our exclusive membership to such liminal spaces. The secrecy and transactional nature of this sex is empowering and electrifying, creating a tension between feeling loved and accepted to the threat of being exposed, pathologized, and criminalized. Cruising is an equal exchange of power between willing participants, where you think shame would not be experienced, but this is where I want to focus, the space situated on the line of acceptable and unacceptable (to heteropatriarchy) sexual behavior, or the space where shame creeps in. The collapsed space of a closet, the tight stalls of public bathrooms, and in dimly lit and disguised Queer spaces. Space where you must hide your sexuality, your desire, and your potential shame.

I want to speak to the work of Prem Sahib (b. 1982), a Queer artist who explores these very spaces, one that I call *afforded spaces*, which have influenced my own body of work. Sahib's *Taken by Your Equivocal Stance I* (2015)⁶ is an installation of compacted puffer jackets between two glass panels, shown in multiplicity and staggered in reference to cruising's fragmented sites and accumulation of Queer bodies. The air, breath, and space between these disembodied jackets is void, not for the sake of minimalism, but in reference to the compacted space of Queerness, and Queer sexuality more specifically. In Aaron Betsky's *Queer Space* (1995), he writes "the Queerest space of all is the void, and AIDS has made us live in that emptiness, that absence, that loss. It is not a Queer space any of us would want to inhabit, but many have been forced to make it their own". Though Betsky is talking specifically about the grief of losing an entire generation of gay men to the AIDS epidemic, the use of "void" remains poignant to Queer art and works outside of the epidemic and persists even now. The void is what is afforded to us, the space so condescendingly allowed and where police provoke, and we are expected to feel both grief for our relegated placement and shame for participation in these spaces (Hocquenghem, 2009).

Sahib's comical use of cast eggs, in *Taken by Your Equivocal Stance I*, points to a cock's failed purpose- a hen without a cock, or cocks without any hens- is also a pointed metaphor for spaces where Queer bodies disrupt the hetero-masculinist ideal of procreation and virility, expending seed as only a tool of hedonism. On the contrary, Sahib's work *Do you care? We do* (2017)⁷ is much less about void, and more of site (or sight). This loaded scene of a locker room is about Queer desire in the form of gazing and reciprocal glances and an exploration of the polluted space between a shameful desire and an explicit one. The locker itself becomes a point where we can explore our desire and metaphorically a space to lock our shame when we leave. The transaction of cruising is mimicked in the exchange between the locker and athlete (Queer?), where neither vessel can really give or keep from the other, and therefore produce an equal exchange of power. The locker wanting to be filled for purpose, and the voyeur desiring to fill and be filled. Alternatively, the locker can be viewed as a space where Queer

physicality resides, where hidden desires remain, and where Queer bodies are stuffed from bullying. The locker is reclaimed here as a site of innocent desire rather than a tool of violence or afforded space.

In another rendering of similar liminal spaces, Jon Key's (b. 1990) works *Man in Violet Suit No. 1* (2016) and *No. 3* (2017)⁸, show the nuances of Queer Black identity where the canvas becomes a space and tool for minimization, where Queer Black bodies are allowed to speak, reside, and exist. The figure is confined by the barriers of the canvas - a compacting receptacle. The figures seem to devolve and become more aware of their liminality through the contortion of their shrinking bodies as they move vertically to the compressed horizontal. Key insists the Queer Black body can take up more room, to stretch, to reclaim space but cannot demand it because of the related intersections of their oppressive space.

The forms taken by shame are not distinct 'toxic' parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed. They are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transfiguration, affective and symbolic loading and deformation. Shame, then, is what propels identities into the performative space of activism without giving those identities the status of essences.

- David Halperin, 2019

The careful use of site and manipulated corporeal space is what interests me most about these artist's work, and what I explore in *Johnson, Sausage Fest*, and *Bare Hair/Hairy Bear*.⁹ "If orientation is a matter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as "who or what" we inhabit spaces with" (Ahmed, 2006). The orientation towards finding a home, a permanent residence, where we are no longer just "aliens with nowhere to register" (Miller, 1971), is explored first with looking back towards a place I cannot and do not call home – a space I was not afforded to share or inhabit authentically. If home is where we dignify our identities, this site remains one I hold with only indignance, a house where Queer desire was punished, minimized, and pathologized. This site is where I first became aware of my sexual desire, my Queer

desires, where pleasure was only shared with myself and my internalized locker. The shape and plans of this site pervade my memory of budding desire, and plague it, still, with shame. Not shame for the desires, but shame for feeling the shame in the first place. I've used this site to interrogate a muddled and fractured memory, where I can explore how desire was constrained and negotiated for survival. Though this site has a personal and subjective specificity, it is also an invitation for the viewer to inhabit these confined and messy spaces. These sculptures suggest a corporeal scale, where bodies can occupy with only enough breath for one, which mimics Key's work. Their placement on the ground, and the looking down upon that takes place, is both a point of bodily influence and transference as well as a point of departure – where this site and the memories attached to it become discarded and relegated. The compacted space is referential not only to the Queer experience, but how we imagine the closet as being a site of occupancy and betrayal. We come to occupy this space, form our identities in, and signify it with the term home until we come out, yet through our personal metamorphosis, and evolution through time, we begin to understand this space as a betrayal to ourselves, and the place where shame inserts itself. The disoriented nature of occupying a closet, the liminal void, provides us, however, with the site to unlearn shame as we develop a more formed sense of self-worth. Easier said than done, of course.

The closet is not a home, nor was this site to me, nor are many Queer's "homes" to them. These sculptures attempt at disentangling the concept of belonging and home from a more informed subjectivity, further delineating between past, present, and future. This is not an opportunity to claim victimhood, or residence of perpetual abuse, but the opportunity to explore the abandoned and haunted infrastructure that provides the armature for our (my) subjectivity. Our participation in, and obsession with, shame is the site of accountability and ultimate departure. "We learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home" (Ahmed, 2006).

If you hold the fundamental assumption of shame that you are critically and mortally flawed, how would you cope with this? One way, as we have seen, is to avoid confronting the shame. Another way, the way of so many of us, is to compensate for shame by striving for validation from others, even if it is not earned authentically. As long as others are actively acknowledging our superior and creative accomplishments, we can at least temporarily convince ourselves that we aren't so bad after all. If everyone else thinks we're great, are we not great?

Alan Downs

The Velvet Rage, 2012

(In)Corrupted Materiality

For some, to engage with materials still seems the antithesis of intellectuality, a playground for those not interested in theory, while material studies are defined, at best, as an auxiliary science. Materiality is one of the most contested concepts in contemporary art and is often sidelined in critical academic writing.

- Petra Langte-Berndt, 2015

Material choice within my thesis body offers a sense of embrittled precarity. Beginning with salt, its nuanced historical associations to currency and rarity to that of its biblical usage of desecrating land are the same nuanced reading (writing) I've imposed on these works. The salt acts as preservative and antiseptic- arresting and cleansing a specific recollection of shame in *Sausage Fest* (2022),¹⁰ where I dreamed of the bowels of my coming-of-age dwelling consuming the desire and shame I had flushed and fed to it. The salt, alternatively, is used in *Salted Earth* (2021)¹¹ as it is used in the Old Testament (Judges 9:45) to ensure the conquered city of Shechem remains barren of life and agriculture. The mixed plaster, concrete, and salt become a foundational site burdened with growing and producing only memories of violence. Metaphorically, it's used as a nod to my own grappling with conquering this site and redefining it as beneath me (the viewer). The acrylic site plan for this inhospitable residence houses blood from its discarded Queer inhabitant, which reinscribes the site as one of violence and of survival. *Salted Earth* is also the mostly closely resembling a house plan, giving some orientational guidance to the other works, where *Mad House #1-2* (2022)¹² obscures and collects fractured memories over layered and coded blood (blue) prints, hiding the necessary information to piece its complete form together. The usage of salt is Queered through its multiplicity of purpose. Halberstam provides us the reason for this Queer material because of the association of it as outside of binary usage, it very clearly fails to subscribe to one explicit purpose.

Ephemerality, preservation, and translucency are attributed to the usage of wax within *Johnson* (2022).¹³ Translucency is used as a tool of subterfuge in this piece as the allusion of mass and volume

suggest the concealment of something, insidious or otherwise.¹⁴ Its scale to the corporeal provides the viewer a relationship to their place within the piece, preserved or trapped, and what that relationship means to their own subjugation or participation in heterosupremacy. As well, wax has an association to burial rites and usages as embalming material and encasement in Christianity and Catholicism. Catholicism designates certain saints and martyrs with the signifier of *incorruptible*, whose flesh is either preserved in cast wax or through a process of mumification, which I don't think they care to claim. Its preservative qualities, and suggestive scale, produce a sarcophagus of Queer desire. Where transparency can provide a vantage point within and clarity of structure, the wax provides an almost eerie blankness and presence from its impenetrability, although it also seems to invite one to penetrate it- a taunting provocation.

The blankness and emptiness of both the form and visual information can be tied into the works of Felix Gonzalez-Torres (b.1957). *Untitled (The End)*, 1990¹⁵ a stack of unending (ironically) offset printed lithographic posters, blank and surrounded only by a thin black frame.

The representational function of language parallels that of the blank surface: both are given in relation to an absent image that can only be constituted by the reader/viewer. Hence, the actual voice of these works belongs to the viewer, who is empowered to recuperate wholeness and to bring multiplicity into focus from whatever comes naturally to mind. (Avgikos, 1991)

The absence of both language and imagery or clarity within *Johnson* provides the viewer an opportunity not only to imagine what happened at this site but allows them to reposition themselves in a constructed narrative, or memory, of their own. The experience of a fragmented narrative between *Johnson* to *Salted Earth* and *Bare Hare/Hairy Bear* (2022)¹⁶ provides a disorientation that Ahmed describes as necessary for reorientation. The wax then becomes a grounding mechanism and tool for the viewer to recapture narrative. The viewers need to recapture and superimpose is also present in Gonzalez-Torres's work *Untitled (billboard of an empty bed)* and *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)*.¹⁷ Both from 1991, these works expose a subtle eroticism, intimacy, and vulnerability in their emptiness and corporal absence that lets the viewer negotiate their own sense of sexuality. The emptiness of the bed and platform, like the

blank page, is a site where one can impose themselves into a place of longing and sensuality, or of loss and grief, or of inhibition and performance, all depending on the subjectivity of the viewer.

The conceptual void created by this emptiness and transparency is seen more clearly, and at points negated, in *Bare Hare/Hairy Bear*. Glass as a material is void or rendered transparent only in the presence of light. Light takes on the moniker of material with glass, changing and delineating form based on exposure, shadow, and the viewer's point of view. The quality of change and transference in the glass, though empty and ripe for narrative imposition, obfuscates the viewer's empowered position that Avgikos references. It refuses the quality of narrative because of its precarious purpose, as structure and cage. As a fractured and fragile connective material to a scorched site and to the cage of Queer desire, symbolically embodied by a hare with a multiplicity of anal orifices, its material purpose becomes more codified. The uneasiness of compressed space and the cage like gridding of the glass impose its own Queer narrative on the structure, where the afforded space of Queer desire is further confined to a fallible structure of memory and recollection. This fragility also exposes the destabilized process of excising homophobia from that of childhood trauma. The wax cast vestibule of blood in hare's form also frames another non-normative form, much like the Queer body, where its status as living or dead, grievable or non, and subject or object come into question.

The slippage between subject and object are of particular significance to this body of work, especially in the usage of blood. Julia Kristeva (1982) theorized the abject horror of blood and excrement as being attributed to the breakdown of subject and object, or the "ego threatened by the non-ego, ... of life by death". The use of *Queer blood* is controversial insofar as it is already seen as ingrievable, as abject/object, and infectious. None of these associations interest me, rather they infuriate me, but the relationship between viewer and the "other", myself and Queer bodies, is where I place my focus. So much controversy is attached to the usage of blood in art, like Ron Athey's *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life* (1994), in Jordan Eagles's *Blood Mirror* (2015), and most recently in Lil Nas X's *Satan Shoes* (2021).¹⁸

Perhaps what's most disturbing about the medium is not its visceral quality but instead its conceptual underpinnings; blood captures the pervasive anxiety among artists to endure through their work even after their gone. This anxiety is often concealed behind the strength of viewers' personal, negative responses to repulsion, horror, or offense. Looking at a bloodwork sends the viewer inward to reflect upon their own uneasiness with mortality. In this way, our discomfort is not with the artist or the work, but within ourselves (Horne, 2021).

I think Horne read the use of blood not as Queer, but from a standpoint of heteronormativity. The use of Queer blood is far more nuanced than the “pervasive anxiety to endure through their work,” and instead an insistence of both shared humanity and confrontation of a viewer’s complacency to the construction of Queer grievability. Not to mention the penetrated, both literal and metaphorical, is relegated apart from the superior heterosexual male who is associated with a sealed and contained body, a more troubling aspect for the viewer to contend with. These are, however, not controversies; they are questions and curiosities volleyed to the viewer for interrogation. “We see more when we shift our attention from the controversy that surrounds artists making politically confrontational work to focus instead on what that work is taking on, using its terms to understand the nature of its intervention” (Doyle, 2013). Queer blood is not focused on the specifics of a future or inheritance, it’s an affective mirror that a situated subject can make connections from and to.

Because you are asking reflective, metacognitive questions of your viewer. But the way you use the material of blood is so precise, ordered, neat, adding a degree of symmetric beauty to what some may view as the materially abject. There's something about using a substance that has been historically vilified as infectious, as less-than, as something that needs to be quarantined and cured, there's something about taking a substance that has that much chaotic weight historically and then shifting it into a register of order where you put the interpretive onus on the viewer not on the person from whom the blood came. It's powerful re-signification.

Eric Solomon in conversation with the artist
Southern Spaces, 2020

The Climax: How to Navigate Disentanglement

It is part of the collective human condition. We are born out of movement, out of a desire to forge connections with others in order to feel less alone. Or perhaps it's to know and see ourselves, to recognize our struggles, in someone else. It's an endless cycle of transit and migration, from one fixed point to another and then another. Each time we move and flow, we change a little, we come closer to becoming that person we always imagined ourselves to be.

- Alex Espinoza, 2019

What line or orientation would Ahmed have us take through this exhibition? No lines are clearly demarcated, nor is the process of memory recollection linear or exact. I've attempted, however cautiously, to describe the intention of these pieces and the viewer's supposed position to these objects. Maybe if I treat these works as I have in cruising and in the process of uncovering the foundations of my experience of homophobia (internal and external), I can take you stubbornly through the toe tapping and coded language needed to navigate the Queer space situated within the gallery. Queerness, after all, "should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough" (Munoz, 2009). Follow no line, make your own connections, let yourself become hedonistic for a while.

Remember:

Left is Right

Right is Wrong

Upon arrival, you're unsure. You're unaware of whether this space is welcoming, if you will be wanted, if your currency is of any value. Your body, void of mind, is worth its weight in gold and ejaculate.

Upon arrival, you take your first left. You see a linear arrangement of bodies. You are situated above them. You stumble around the messiness of a decomposed corpse, glaring at the remaining skeletal system and glimpsing into the hollowness of your own subjectivity.

You must take a step outside; it wreaks of piss and stale body odor. You like it though and quickly return inside. You've gazed before, you've wondered before, and you're here now for more.

You let yourself succumb to the emptiness and imagine your own failed trappings. Your own desire unleashed. Your own shame on display.

Why do you feel like you shouldn't be here?

The sweet aroma of bees and the allure of a blank canvas draw you nearby. Inviting, taunting, tantalizing. The emptiness is yours, not your persons, but yours to collect and fill. Fill it with your wants and needs.

You don't have a bright and carefully placed hanky that says, "fuck me, suck me, eat me, consume me".

You have only your eyes, but that's all you really need. Just gaze and wait for a glimpse back.

It takes from you. It receives and absorbs you. Traps you inside. Consumes you and only gives you enough to feign survival. You follow the line of consumption. You're being digested.

You find him. He looks like Adonis, but from the suburbs. He catches your eye, and you catch his. His nod is subtle but telling. Almost forceful. A display of power and willingness to exchange it. The stall is tight and dirty. So are you.

The fragments are sutured. Held in place without force, and with gentle participation. You're inside now. Trying to will yourself free. Force some sort of clarity.

You are penetrated. You are exposed and laid bare. This hairy bear is collecting what's his. What you're willingly giving him. You will be rewarded.

The images on the wall are a cipher. A map. A collection of your desire as excrement.

*You are no longer empty. Void of desire. You are a vessel of desire. A metamorphized queen bee. A boy
become man. A cog in a beautiful machine. You are worthy. You are loved.*

You are worthy.

You are loved.

Image Index

Image #1:



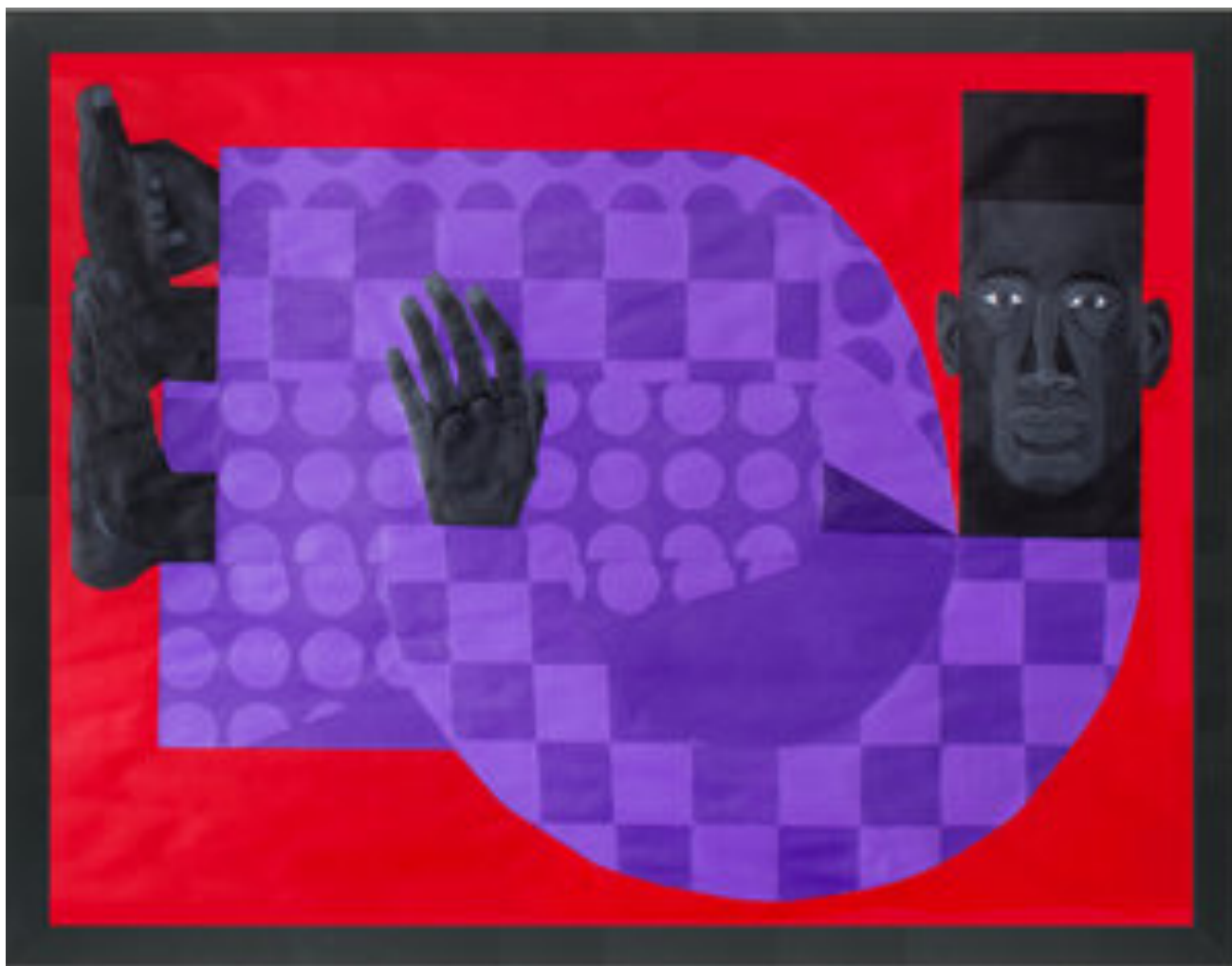
Prem Sahib
Taken by Your Equivocal Stance I, 2015
puffer jackets, hoodies, glass, steel, jesmonite, paint,
Courtesy of Southard Reid
<https://southardreid.com/artists/prem-sahib>

Image #2:



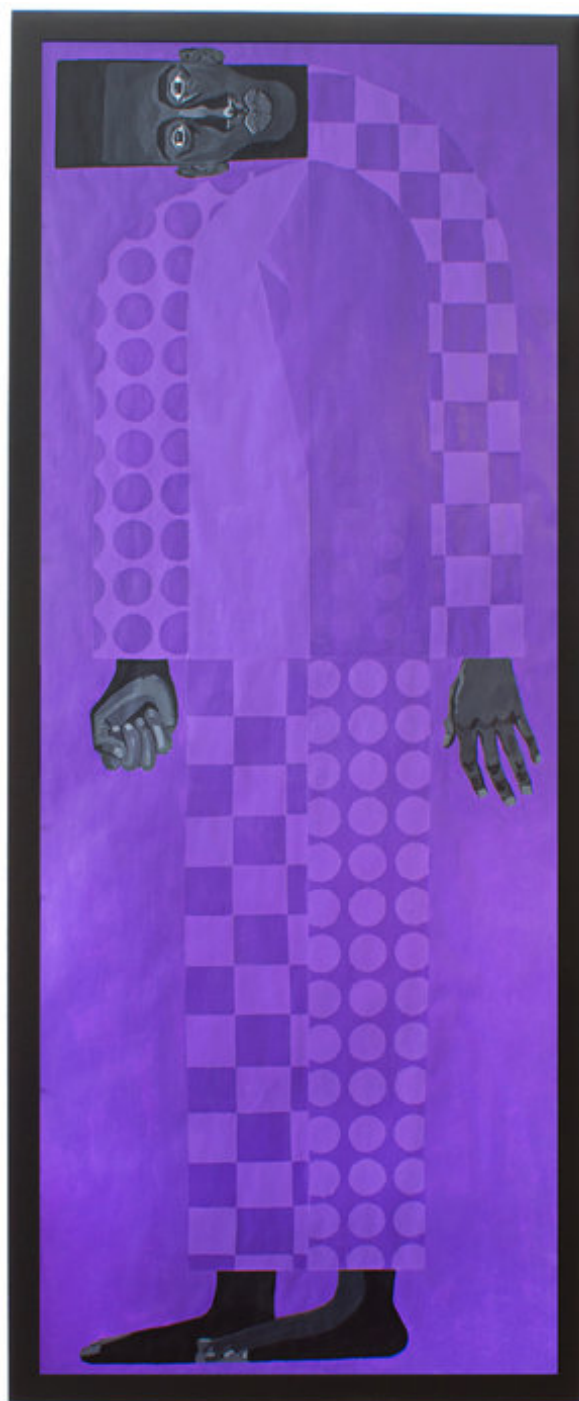
Prem Sahib
Do you care? We do, 2017
twelve lockers from *Chariots Shoreditch* (1997-2016),
dimensions variable,
Tate Collection, UK
Courtesy of Southard Reid
<https://southardreid.com/artists/prem-sahib>

Image #3:



Jon Key
Man in the Violet Suit No. 3, 2017
Acrylic on Paper
Courtesy of Jon Key
<https://www.jonkeyart.co>

Image #4:



Jon Key
Man in the Violet Suit No. 1, 2016
Acrylic on Paper
Courtesy of Jon Key
<https://www.jonkeyart.co>

Image #5:



Catherine Opie
Ron Athey/Human Printing Press with Darryl Carlton, from Four Scenes., 2000-2001
Chromogenic print
<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Ron-Athey-Human-Printing-Press-with-Darr/F1A9DC3665A8CE21>

Image #6:



Jordon Eagles
Blood Mirror, 2015-present
59 human blood donations, blood of Oliver Anene, Blue Bayer, Howard Grossman, M.D., Kelsey Louie, Lawrence D. Mass, M.D., Reverend John Moody, Loren Rice, Ty Spicha, CPT Anthony Woods, 50 PrEP advocates, preserved in UV resin
Courtesy of Jordon Eagles
<https://jordaneagles.com/blood-mirror>

Image #7:



Felix Gonzalez-Torres
"Untitled" (billboard of an empty bed), 1991
<https://ias.ucsc.edu/content/2020/felix-gonzalez-torres-untitled-billboard-empty-bed-1991-jocelyn>

Image #8:



Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Untitled (The End), 1990
offset lithographic poster

Image courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.
<https://www.felixgonzalez-torresfoundation.org/works/untitled-the-end>

Image #9:



Felix Gonzalez-Torres
"Untitled" (Go-Go Dancing Platform), 1991.
Photographer: Peter Muscato.
Image courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery.

Image 10:



Lil Nas X in Collaboration with MSCHF
Satan Shoes, 2021

Image Courtesy of: <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2021/apr/03/lil-nas-x-satan-shoes-nike-art-msCHF>

Image #11:



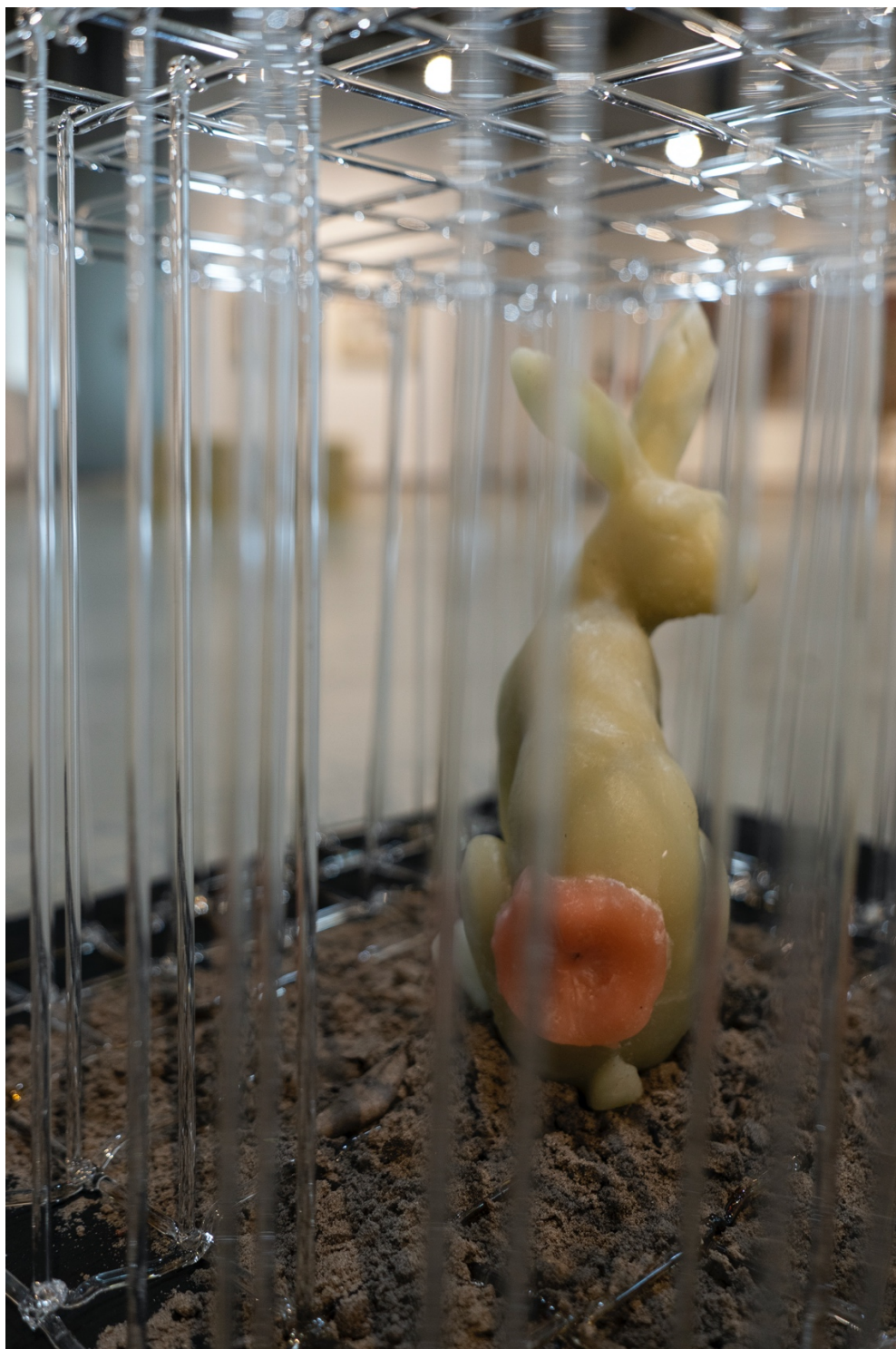
Forrest Lawson
Installation View (*Sausage Fest, Johnson, Bare Hare/Hairy Bear*), 2022

Image #12:



Forrest Lawson
Bare Hare/Hairy Bear, 2022
borosilicate glass, wax, wood, soil, acrylic, blood rubber, O-ring

Image #13:



Forrest Lawson
Bare Hare/Hairy Bear (detail), 2022
borosilicate glass, wax, wood, soil, acrylic, blood rubber, O-ring

Image #14:



Forrest Lawson
Bare Hare/Hairy Bear, 2022
borosilicate glass, wax, wood, soil, acrylic, blood rubber, O-ring

Image #15:



Forrest Lawson
Sausage Fest, 2022
acrylic, cow intestines, gay pornography, monofilament, used condom

Image #16:



Forrest Lawson
Salted Earth, 2021
acrylic, Queer blood, concrete, plaster, salt, steel

Image #17:



Forrest Lawson
Mad House #1-2, 2022
mixed media on cotton paper, beeswax, acrylic, steel

Image #18:



Forrest Lawson
Mad House #1-2 (detail), 2022
mixed media on cotton paper, beeswax, acrylic, steel

Image #19:



Forrest Lawson
Sausage Fest, 2022
acrylic, cow intestines, gay pornography, monofilament, used condom

Image #20:



Forrest Lawson
Johnson, 2022
beeswax, ...

Notes:

1. The *Parental Rights in Education* bill, assigned the name *Don't Say Gay* by Human Rights activists, is a bill limiting and restricting discussion of “controversial” topics such as sexual orientation or gender in grade school classrooms. Signed into law on March 28th, 2022.
2. See J. Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*.
3. See image index: #11 for installation view of *Sausage Fest, Johnson, Bare Hare/Hairy Bear* (2022)
4. “While they always relate to corporeal orifices as to so many landmarks parceling-constituting the body’s territory, polluting objects fall, schematically, into two types: excrement and menstrual. Neither tears nor sperm, for instance, although they belong to borders of the body, have any polluting value. Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without; the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death.” (Kristeva, 1982)
5. Image index: #17-18 Forrest Lawson, *Mad House #1-2*, 2022
6. Image index: #1 Prem Sahib, *Taken by your Equivocal Stance I*, 2015
7. Image index: #2 Prem Sahib, *Do you care? We do*, 2017
8. Image index: #3 and #4 respectively. Jon Key, *Man in Violet Suit No. 3*, 2017. Jon Key, *Man in Violet Suit No.1*, 2016
9. Image index: #11-12, Forrest Lawson, *Johnson, Sausage Fest, Bare Hare/Hairy Bear*, 2022
10. Image index: #15, #19 Forrest Lawson, *Sausage Fest*, 2022
11. Image index: #16 Forrest Lawson, *Salted Earth*, 2021
12. Image index: #17-18 Forrest Lawson, *Mad House #1-2*, 2022
13. Image index: #20 Forrest Lawson, *Johnson*, 2022
I would be remiss not to bring up the sexual usage of wax and the ephemeral qualities association with pain and pleasure, as the nature of this piece is unstable dependent on its site and position to the elements, but that would need an entirely new subsection which would only serve to distract.
14. The sealed quality is later referenced to the straight, heterosexual male. See Kemp, 2013.
15. Image index: #8 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (The End)*, 1990
16. Image index: #12-14 Forrest Lawson, *Bare Hare/Hairy Bear*, 2022
17. Image index: #7 and #9 respectively. Felix Gonzalez-Torres “*Untitled*” (*billboard of an empty bed*), 1991. Felix Gonzalez-Torres “*Untitled*” (*Go-Go Dancing Platform*), 1991.
18. Image index: #5, #6, #10 Respectively. Ron Athey, *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life*, 1994. Jordan Eagles, *Blood Mirror*, 2015-present. Lil Nas X, *Satan Shoes*, 2021.

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