

Deeper Roots than Reason

by

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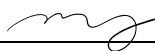
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introduction: the impenetrable condition

The word 'home', "can refer with equal ease to house, land, village, city, district, country, or, indeed, the world. It transmits the sentimental associations of one scale to all the others..."¹ The many questions that fuel my work revolve around the idea of home, simultaneously concrete and abstract.² In the beginning of graduate school, I was making work about broad cultural issues such as the opioid crisis and misogynistic actions towards women and thinking about them in the broad context of Western domestic spaces. At some point in my studies, my work took a turn toward the self as a way to better understand the broader framework of our societal patterns. I turned to looking at the connections and characteristics of place and culture in my home, my family, and my region, the South, in order to understand themes that are currently playing out on a national and international scale, especially those concerning false hierarchies and divisions.

I create artefacts that explore and exaggerate the complicated layering of histories, personal and societal, that are embedded within the familiar surroundings of a Southern home. How can simulating and complicating familiar objects or environments related to domestic space and the landscape facilitate nuanced conversations and concepts around the ideas related to home? Can these environments and objects communicate in such a way that, due to their personal nature and familiarity, allows the viewer to see themselves as within the "space" of each piece, a player in the

¹ David Sopher, "The Landscape of Home: Myth, Experience, Social Meaning," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 130.

² Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 37.

constructed landscape? Can *being* within the same plane as the work, as opposed to apart from it, due to the implied separation of a frame or pedestal, facilitate useful understandings of the ‘real’ spaces we inhabit, the environments that we shape and that in turn shape us? These questions direct my artistic practice: the themes, the methods, and the materials I employ.

The works presented in this paper probe my relationship with my nuclear family’s home, my hometown, the American South, and the Western world as a whole through the lenses of nature, language, personal and cultural histories. The work is a result of my personal experience—that of sorting out my own identity, beliefs, boundaries, and priorities in relation to place, family, and memory. For any person, and surely for any Southerner, this is an immensely complicated task. The ties that bind seem to be knotted and tangled in an inextricable ‘heap of mess,’ as my grandmother might call it. In the process of this sorting-out, some ties are untangled, some are cut, some are re-tied more firmly than ever. The works presented here are my attempts to untangle the heap while holding space to embrace intuition, contradiction, confusion, entanglement.

My mind works in a non-linear way—circling, sprawling, doubling back, jumping around. The organization of this document honors that mental sprawl within a loose organization. Comprised of short writings, each one relaying a concept that is important to my practice, the paper groups these short documents into loosely thematic sections. These writings reflect the most important themes and discoveries from my work, without relaying a complete account of my graduate research.

Part I

the machinery of the Southern pattern

The celebrated historian Howard Zinn spent time in Albany, GA during the Albany Movement, a civil rights uprising that took place from the fall of 1961 to the summer of 1962. Zinn's article, *Albany: A Study in National Responsibility*, is eerily prescient in how it casts the tenets of this local struggle as a case-study in understanding many areas in the South (and our nation) in the light of its failures, successes, and shared attitudes and characteristics. Zinn describes the violently repressive attitudes towards racial equity that publicly maintained an outwardly non-violent front in order to avoid national media attention. He describes practices of "colorblindness" that were innovative at the time, including the arrests of Black demonstrators on minor, non-protest-related charges in order to avoid the *appearance* of using police power to uphold segregationist practices. Zinn's article also describes the "willful or inert resistance", even the disinterest of the white population.³ He warns us about developing a calloused capacity for outrage and he warns about the dangers of tolerating surreptitious intolerance.⁴ There have been terrible violent incidents in Albany's history (before, during, and after the Albany Movement) in addition to the overwhelming culture of quiet but firm resistance to Black enfranchisement and power.

³ Howard Zinn, *Albany: A Study in National Responsibility* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Council, 1962), vi.

⁴ Zinn, *Albany*, 32.

I relate Zinn's descriptions of the civil rights struggle in the Albany of the early 60's because it is not so unlike the Albany that I knew growing up 30-40 years later. Albany is part of the *deep* Deep South and was founded as a commercial hub for the cotton trade, its origins mired in chattel slavery and the trafficking of human beings.⁵ Surrounded by what Zinn calls a "social wilderness,"⁶ the municipality is a small metro island in the middle of a largely rural swathe of land that still contains many parcels proudly named 'X Plantation' and 'Plantation so-and-so.' It is one of the poorest and (therefore) most violent cities in the country.⁷ Over a quarter of residents are below the national poverty line. Albany was one of the world's hardest-hit places in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, at least partially due to systemic biases that were affecting the region's healthcare system and population before the pandemic hit.⁸ The reasons for Albany's troubles are myriad, as is made obvious in the city's 2010 Poverty Analysis Report where the city cites reasonable causes for poverty such as "lack of affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, and transportation" and "long term impact of historical gender and racial discrimination." These are, however, listed right alongside racist and sexist mythical causes for the same issue like "lack of personal responsibility," "teen pregnancy and female head of households [sic] without the presence of a husband," and "structure of the welfare system that fosters dependency."⁹ In what is now a

⁵ Lee W. Formwalt, "Albany," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, last modified by NGE May 5, 2020, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/albany>.<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/albany>

⁶ Zinn, *Albany*, 34.

⁷ "Quick Facts: Albany city, Georgia," United States Census Bureau, accessed Feb 2, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/albanycitygeorgia>. and Samuel Stebbins and Evan Comen, "25 Cities Where Crime is Soaring," *USA Today*, March 9, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/03/09/25-cities-where-crime-soaring/409912002/>.

⁸ Ellen Eldridge, "COVID-19 Pandemic Exposes Racism, Health Inequities in Georgia," *Georgia Public Broadcasting*, February 18, 2021. <https://www.gpb.org/news/2021/02/18/covid-19-pandemic-exposes-racism-health-inequities-in-georgia>.

⁹ VAAC Consulting Inc, "A Poverty Analysis for Albany, Georgia June 2010 Final Report," Accessed Feb 2, 2021, <https://www.albanyga.gov/home/showdocument?id=2115>.<https://www.albanyga.gov/home/showdocument?id=2115>

majority Black city there is still a concentration of economic and political power in white hands.¹⁰ The impact and historical legacy of slavery on the area is undeniable to anyone who cares to see it, though most (white) residents do not. The overarching atmosphere is still one of barely (often not) disguised racism, overt social segregation, a lack of historical awareness, a lack of scrutiny, and a willful sense of cultural neglect in digging into these entrenched issues.

Racial injustice is one equity issue that is very visible in Albany, though there are also present many other issues of social hierarchy including gender, class, environmental abuse. Zinn says, “the whole nation is implicated in Albany.”¹¹ Something deep and ugly was evident to Zinn during his time in Southwest Georgia which remains visible in our time: a system of interlacing hierarchies that uphold artificial dichotomies, punish the individuals on the ‘wrong’ side with almost absolute impunity, and intentionally maintain disinterested complacency as an integral part of the daily lives of the citizenry. These are some characteristics of “the machinery of the Southern pattern” but they share essential features with what we could call “the machinery of the Western pattern”: dominance, complacency, self-interest, pride.

These machineries are something I react against in my work. The methods I employ in my practice—seeking knowledge through the hand, combined with careful study and consideration of lived experience, are ways I’ve chosen to combat the effect of these “machineries”. In my Spring 2020 candidacy review, I submitted a statement with the following bold claim, “I perceive this meditation on the South as a balance between an immensely personal reckoning of my relationship to my family, who are deeply invested in Southern culture, and a broader reckoning that the U.S. as a whole could be undertaking in order to mend the dissonance between ideals and reality.” Little did I know that a reckoning was indeed on its way. Living and making art during the social reality

¹⁰ “Albany, GA, September 23, 2002,” United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, accessed Feb 2, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/albany-ga-september-23-2002>.

¹¹ Zinn, *Albany*, vi.

of 2020 has contributed to and concretized my efforts to mend the dissonance between American ideals and reality. My thesis works attempt to snag dichotomies, confuse, subvert, and insert the results of this inquiry into forms that the viewer can relate to spatially, so that they might find sites of transformation within their daily lives.

Albany as place is important to the way I develop content, visual and conceptual, in my work. The Spanish moss in *hedonism and complacency* (fig 1.1), the text from *HILL BLOCKS VIEW* (fig 1.2), and imagery included in works such as *the elaborate machinery of ingenious chicane* (fig 1.3) are all directly related to growing up in Albany. My aim in explaining the social context of Albany in such detail is not to assert that my work is about the racial structures of the South, or even singularly about life in Albany, but an attempt to communicate the importance of our individual microcosms and how they relate to the macrocosm of American and global culture. The patterns that emerge define our lived experiences and help us structure the world.

There is a warning and a promise in Albany. Zinn identifies hope and a potential path forward in the midst of the turmoil he witnessed. He communicated this through prescriptive suggestions for community solutions, but also through his willingness to believe in the capacity of a deeply misguided and harmful cultural paradigm to change through education and communication.¹² Could interrogating the familiar places and objects of 'home' be an integral part of renegotiating the complacent and uninformed relationship that Southerners have to our pasts, presents, and futures?

¹² Zinn, *Albany*, 16-34.



fig. 1.1
hedonism and complacency
cotton fiber, abaca fiber, pigment
2020-21
dimensions variable



fig. 1.2 (top)
HILL BLOCKS VIEW
 vintage curtains, yarn, acrylic rod
 2019-20
 approx. 82" x 86"

fig. 1.3 (below)
*the elaborate machinery of
 ingenious chicane*
 quilt with digital inkjet prints on
 cotton and machine embroidery
 2019
 36" x 36"



various phenomena of dissatisfaction

In 2021, the order of the day is not false objectivity nor shallow, sentimental personal narrative, but contextualized narrative that integrates the self and individual experiences responsibly and thoughtfully within a broader whole. As such, I am taking this early section in the document to contextualize myself, and therefore my making practice. I have already given some context and background to the place that most influences my work. I will now give context to a more personal narrative within that place, and how it led me to ultimate dissatisfaction with many attributes of my 'home.'

I was born Caitlin Adair Segroves in early 1990 to a working-class white family in Albany. I am a cis, white, hetero woman. Petite and (for most of my life) blonde, I am not intimidating at first glance and I carry the privilege of my white skin. My father has worked for most of my life as a police officer. My mother works as a teacher. Religion was consistently present in our home though politics were largely absent in conversation. Of course, the ways that people interact in personal relationships and society are based in the political realm (and vice versa). Like the Albanians of the 1960s, my family "have shown little close-range interest"¹³ in struggles of inequality. W.J. Cash, in his book *The Mind of the South* relays a cultural pattern in the South that emphasizes the primacy of the immediate struggles and pleasures of daily life before intellectual pursuits.¹⁴ The disinterest modelled as normative during my upbringing, the persistent presence of conservative Christian beliefs, and the absence of politics (a 'moral' system that gives agency to the individual in a way religion cannot) all combined to develop in me a belief in the naturalness of hierarchy, a blind faith

¹³ Zinn, *Albany*, 20.

¹⁴ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) 95-99.

in tradition, and a self-interested contentment with maintaining the ease and enjoyment of the 'simple' life designed/intended for me.

As a child and young adult, I parroted the beliefs of my family members, with occasional fits of protest emerging from my own flimsy sense of outrage, stoked at different periods of my youthful development. But eventually, my feeble resistance to the cultural norms of my family was essentially stamped out. I grew up, entered the work force, and set out on my own. Attending art school I, like others before me, had a feminist awakening and suddenly and forcefully encountered the reality of the organized systems of oppression integrated into the foundations of our cultural and sociological systems. I began to recognize how oppression figured into my own life and have become an increasingly ardent scrutinizer of these systems and also, suddenly, the black sheep of my family. Tracy Thompson, author of *The New Mind of the South*, describes the still-very-real phenomenon of liberal Southerners returning home with their new convictions, "it will earn a native Southerner the accusation of having signed over his brain to those Ivy League intellectual snobs who despise all things Southern...they look at you like you've put your pants on your head."¹⁵

While the above facts attest to a strained relationship with my homeplace, I also gain love, comfort, and support from my family. There is deep joy in my homeplace, in strong community bonds of family, food, and friendship that are incredibly important to Southern traditions. There is a strong sense of pride, grit, willingness to work hard in the local and regional culture. And there is my bond with the place itself, with the air like a soft, heavy blanket and the warm lazy river, and the cool clear aquifer permeating and nourishing the ground beneath my feet. My attitudes about family bonds, loyalty, what is natural, what is moral...they all developed in the *place* I have described. I am from the South and I am of the South and where I go, I take the South with me.

¹⁵ Tracy Thompson, *The New Mind of the South* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 54.

My complicated relationship to home, family, personal and cultural histories is an insistent spur, driving my research on.

I have taken such care to set out the context of my personal and cultural context for two reasons: 1) because my making is fueled by a belief in the deep potential of closely examining context and the mutual flow of influence between human and environment and 2) to be up-front about my personal and familial histories with these hierarchies. My aim is to be honest about my past and that of my community, whose collective ideas about gender relations, race, class, and any other number of hierarchies mirror the biases and discrimination that are part of all of Western culture. My works attempts to speak to and work towards the breaking down of hierarchies that I have both participated in and benefit(ed) from. It seems to me that to present this work without such context might imply that I have always been actively against racism, misogyny, insidious and backwards-looking nostalgia for the South or simpler times, or other harmful ideologies. Put simply, I have not. Having been indoctrinated into deeply entrenched systems of oppression from a young age, I did not see myself within a system, but saw the system as the natural scaffolding of the world I lived in. This assumption of the natural quality of hierarchy and the inevitable growth of unjust systems is a driving factor that I work against in my practice by posing questions, complicating what seems simple, and giving the viewer the opportunity to interact with the work on their scale, in their space.

As I grow as an artist and a human, my dissatisfaction with false hierarchies and divisions also grows. With age comes an understanding of the complication of these issues, the interdependence that is built into hierarchies, and the nuance that comes from navigating them in a sensitive way. My thesis works bring that complication to light in a way that might allow for new, useful understandings of our places within culturally constructed and natural systems. I focus on achieving this through manipulating recognizable elements—flora, fauna, the domestic interior—the

types of spaces and objects which have the most potential to communicate to us about our personal and shared lived experiences. The work does not attempt to clarify or didactically educate but to ask questions and invite the viewer into a space where they can potentially find their own answers.

Part II

domestic sentiment

I am interested in the ways in which the environments that we grow up in manipulate the formation of our inner and outer lives. This years-long investigation of the domestic space comes as an intentional departure from the lack of curiosity or critical thinking that long marked my relationship with home. This new scrutiny of the close and personal brought me to Craft—the art and objects that are closest to lived experience—and to the feminine, also associated with the domestic sphere. My work focuses on the material evidence of cultural history and fluctuates between the microcosms of my individual existence and the larger systems of family, town, region, country etc. I create artifacts to pose questions concerning the contemporary state of these overlapping fields of action—the cultural, the personal, the domestic.

Death in the Dining Room has been an important text in the trajectory of my domestic research which “examines the unspoken assumptions and persuasions of everyday life through the things that framed and gave meaning to that life.”¹⁶ This book looks at the ordinary objects that one would find in a Victorian home and it investigates the ways that these objects embody and reinforce the beliefs and behaviors of the time period. In the titular chapter, Kenneth L. Ames links ornate Victorian sideboards carved with vignettes of dead game animals, hunting paraphernalia, as

¹⁶ Kenneth L. Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 1.

well as fruits and other vegetal bounty, to the larger Western cultural inclination toward dominance over other cultures and the land itself.¹⁷

Often, we think about our homes as refuges from history and the world outside, a neutral space of personal peace, but home is where the remnants, the stains, of a broader history are left behind.¹⁸ I'm interested in utilizing the communicative potential of supposedly everyday mundane objects like a hand towel and domestic spaces such as the living room, to speak to and challenge the values that we inhabit every day in the vernacular culture of the American South. By referencing these spaces, objects, and attitudes, and subverting them or imbuing them with additional signs, I hope to speak directly to the viewer through a recognizable vehicle about larger ideas and meanings, which I hope that they also find personal meaning in. By modifying or creating these 'familiar' domestic objects, I intend to give viewers an access point through which to begin looking for that meaning.

The found objects I use are often scuffed, worn, or dated ones that contain evidence of life and communicate a sense of history through their materiality. I search the thrift store and yard sales for anything to stitch into, dye, cut up or run through the letterpress. Often times I come across items within my daily life to use as material. *Have an Average Day* (fig 2.1) is made from a hand towel that I discovered in the art school's dye lab. Its wear and tear and staining made it beautiful, even if its threadbare state was no longer functional as a cleaning implement. By pairing the towel with a motto from an old embroidery, "Have an Average Day" I reinforce this commitment to investigating the potential in the ordinary. The stained and threadbare towel can be connected to ideas

¹⁷ Ames, *Death in the Dining Room*, 44-96.

¹⁸ Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, read by Bill Bryson (New York: Random House Audio, 2010), unabridged audiobook, 16 hr. 33 min.



fig. 2.1

Have an average day

dyed towel, embroidery floss, towel rack

2019

22" x 28"

about domestic work and cleaning, a historically feminine task, or it can be related to the structuring qualities of having a daily routine, or even to the idea of having a simple, digestible life like that intended for a young Southern woman in a conservative household. I take this beautiful relic of toil and mount it with fragile threads to a towel-rack, installed on the wall of the gallery. This piece draws attention to the mundane while it both negates function and celebrates it, reveres utility and dismisses it.

Stains, like ones found on the dining room tablecloth or the exaggerated psychedelic ones of the much-dyed towel from the fabric studio, have been an understated but recurrent theme in my work, beginning with the doily ‘dye prints’ that I made during the first year of graduate school. These ‘prints’ are really stains of a sort. I dye vintage doilies but do not fully rinse them. Instead, I lay them on wet paper. As the doily dries and the paper draws the dye out of the doily, a more or less sharp impression of the crocheted texture is absorbed into the paper. *absorb: a scientific and cultural exploration* is a pamphlet style letterpress-printed book that begins to combine this technique with pressure printing and text to explore the idea of material and cultural absorption. (fig 2.2 and 2.3)

There are two types of marks generated by the doily in this piece—the ephemeral but boldly colored stains of the ‘dye-print’ and the crisp but inconspicuous transparent transfer of the pressure printed doily. The pressure prints are created by placing a doily behind a sheet of paper as it is rolled through the inked press. The raised threads bring the paper into contact with the inked surface, capturing the texture of the crocheted radial in transparent ink. I was interested in the layering happening, the buildup of information imparted through different processes. A cliché maybe, but something beautiful has arisen from the pressure and the stain.



fig. 2.2 (above)
absorb: a scientific and cultural exploration (inside cover)
 pamphlet book with letterpress and 'dye prints'
 2019
 book dimensions 8" x 10"

fig. 2.3 (below)
absorb: a scientific and cultural exploration (page 1)



I continued the experimentation with a series of layered letterpress and screen-printed posters. (fig. 2.4 and 2.5) In these prints, I layer the textures of found fabric with imagery and text, building depth and complexity. I also pressure printed found fabrics onto pieces of cotton and linen, using the resulting printed fabrics to mend a damaged quilt made by my great-grandmother, Emma Leah Jenkins. I found a sense of meaning and layered history in using patches with the textured impressions of fabrics past to repair the older piece. (fig. 2.6) Mending has become integral to my practice as a way to show an appreciation of history that also accounts for the need to repair things and systems as they age and fray. I mend linens and clothing, and I try to mend the dissonance between ideals and reality of Southern life.

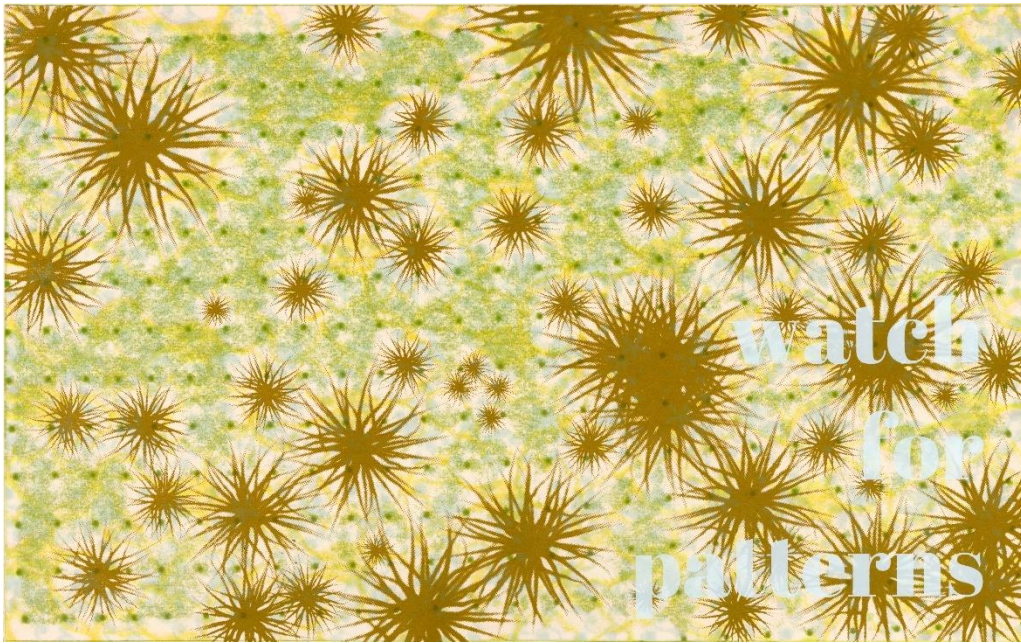


fig. 2.4
watch for patterns
screen print and letterpress on paper
2019
12" x 18"

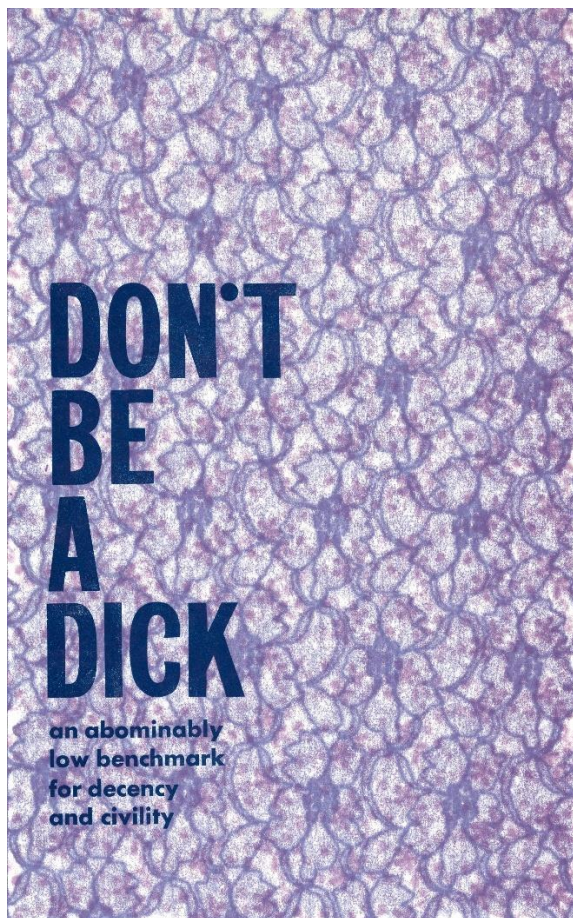


fig. 2.5 (left)
don't be a dick
 letterpress print on paper
 2019
 12" x 18"

fig. 2.6 (below)
Grunt's quilt, mended patches
 letterpress print on fabric patches
 2019





fig. 2.7
the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely) (detail)
 wallpaper
 2020-21

These experiments led me to the faux wood-paneled wallpaper element of *the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely)* (fig 2.7). The first layer of pattern in the design is a created by pressure printing a sheet of thick paper, which has seams machine-sewn into it in a plaid-like design. The prints are then marbled using *suminagashi*, a Japanese marbling technique whose name is sometimes translated to ‘spilled ink’.¹⁹ The marbled prints are photographed and manipulated digitally with the text

‘the natural flower of the backcountry—honor, inviolable and precious—had more than one fault and was not so altogether lovely as we had been told’

¹⁹ Dick Blick, “Simple Suminagashi,” accessed March 8, 2021. <https://cdn.dick-blick.com/lessonplans/simple-suminagashi-monoprints/simple-suminagashi-monoprints-boku-undo-suminagashi.pdf>.

added to the rungs of the woodgrain. The text is sourced and compiled from a book called *The Mind of the South*, written by WJ Cash in 1941. This book traces the historical patterns, the self-images and the misunderstandings that surround the South of the time, stained by the misconceptions of its own historical epoch. The white of the paper between each ring is digitally 'filled' with color to further push the illusion of a wooden texture. The digital tool responds to the lines of the marbling imperfectly and the effect shakily follows the undulating lines of ink as they were transferred from the surface of the water during marbling. The irregular edges mimic stains or staining and combine with other signifiers—text, the faux shadows and grooves of the fake paneling, the rusty staining in the lines of the deer form—to investigate the cultural remnants of the historical and cultural narrative of the South.

According to Tracy Thompson, “When history becomes personal, it confers ownership of the past.²⁰ I think when art speaks to something personal and relatable, it confers ownership of the present. My thesis works encourage this attachment by inhabiting the space of the viewer in a familiar or pseudo-familiar guise. This familiarity can work in their favor, causing the viewer to take a second look at this recognizable yet strange thing—or it can have the opposite effect, as people are sometimes remarkably incurious about the things they are surrounded with and by the history and attitudes embedded in those objects. I intend to provide an opportunity for the viewer to insert themselves into a particular constructed narrative momentarily, to ponder how the past led to the object in front of them, and to question their potential place in the narrative. By building up these histories and reconfigurations through dense layers of manipulation and creation, I attempt to speak to the ways in which our beliefs are constructed, weathered, and rearranged in our most private spaces—our homes.

²⁰ Thompson, *The New Mind of the South*, 92.

the irreducible residue of contradiction

One of my favorite places in Albany is the blue hole on Kinchafoonee creek—a spring of cool clear water that is thrust upward from the underground aquifer by pressure and chance. The immaculate clarity of the blue hole lies right beside the muddy, warm, brown water of the creek (fig. 2.8). Contradictions of all kinds live amongst and alongside each other in the American South. An uneasy incongruity between historical reality and constructed, romanticized fiction is an inescapable facet of Southern life. “If F.Scott Fitzgerald was right—if the test of a first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time—then the South... was doing a phenomenal job of raising the national IQ.”²¹ My thesis works mirror this characteristic of the Southern pattern by saturating my work with incongruity. Like the bone-like outline of a cartoon deer, the work is full of uneasiness and in-between things, the absurdities and confused layerings work together to manifest the cultural ambiguity of the region with surreal familiarity. (fig. 2.9 and 2.10)

²¹ Thompson, *The New Mind of The South*, 75.



fig. 2.8 (top)
Blue Hole on Kinchafoonee Creek
(photo credit Jim Wright)



fig. 2.9 (bottom left)
*the natural flower of the
backcountry (was not so
altogether lovely)*
in-progress detail

fig. 2.10 (bottom right)
*the natural flower of the
backcountry (was not so
altogether lovely)*
in progress component



One of my first forays into investigating paradox in relation to the South came through thinking about Southern language patterns. The colorful and romanticized nature of Southern speech can act as a decoy, distracting the listener from the words being spoken, which may sound vivid and warm in a sugary drawl, but can cloud malicious intent. Southern speech, the superficially friendly and polite manner, can be off putting to ‘outsiders’ to whom it may sound false or forced. “What the outsider is picking up on are the mixed signals emitted by a culture whose self-image is so fundamentally at odds with its true nature.”²² There is also a tradition of double speak in the South, in service to avoidance of ‘ugliness’ as my grandmother calls it. If you don’t know what I mean, well, bless your heart.

My interest in the complex character of Southern linguistics was ignited by a book called *Wings, Water, and Dogs*, a collection of short stories about the yearly cycle of activity on a duck hunting plantation in coastal South Georgia.²³ A few things struck me about the rituals of sport, space, and place that were portrayed in the book. First, the description of the relationship between the owners of the plantation and the Black employees who worked there was suspect in its romanticization and jovial tone. This book, written in the same year that Howard Zinn wrote his article on Albany, represented racial tensions as wholly absent in Georgia in the 1960’s. On a *plantation*, no less. I highly doubt the accuracy of this interpretation. Second, there was a passage describing how gentle the bird dogs needed to be with their mouths when they picked up the birds, carrying them in such a way that they do not damage the carcass. That gentleness was the main job of these dogs surprised me. Lastly, I was intrigued to hear about a native plant—sawgrass—which has serrated edges that would cut the dogs paws as they ran through it. If it were a good day hunting, the dogs would run out to retrieve more birds, meaning that at the end of a particularly successful

²² Thompson, *The New Mind of the South*, 12.

²³ Jane Rainaud Pidcock, *Wings, Water and Dogs* (Savannah, GA: Pigeon Hole Press, 1962).

hunting session, the dogs' paws were very bloody. The more blood on the rugs of the plantation house, the more successful the day had been. The vivid and unexpected details of this publication inspired *gentle mouths::bloody paws*, (fig. 2.11). This work takes the form of a pillow whose digitally printed design converts the text 'gentle mouths, bloody paws' into a pattern that inconspicuously covers the pillow. The text is layered with visual references to the bloody rugs and the violent flora from the book, though the text serves as the crucial signifier of contradiction in the piece. The imagery on this ordinary pillow turns what would be an object of comfort into a confrontationally uncomfortable piece of scenery. This piece was a turning point in considering the uneasy Southern relationship with misleading language habits, glorification of violence, and the impact of the landscape on living creatures within it.



fig. 2.11

gentle mouths/bloody paws

pillow with digital prints on cotton with machine embroidery, thread, stuffing
2019

approx. 16" x 16" x 7"

My exploration of paradox continues in a series of small quilts, which hang on the wall and mimic framed images (fig. 1.3, 2.12-2.15). In this work I start to use mined text from W.J. Cash's *The Mind of the South*. Cash uses Southern rhetorical strategies in order to vivisection Southern cultural patterns and habits. The book, first published in 1941, is full of problematic ideas and language, especially in regard to women, Black people, and the poor and working classes. I'm interested in the way that Cash critiques a system that he is so obviously (in the luxury of historical hindsight) a part of. I rearrange Cash's words and put them into new context, in both these quilts and my thesis constructions. By appropriating and recontextualizing Cash's words, I insert myself into the history of Southern rhetoric, which, it must be said, has been used to incite violence and whip up fear or hatred as much as it has been used for anything else. Through this scrambling, deconstruction, and shift in context my work is meant to critique this lineage. I too vivisection Southern language while I am participating in its troubled traditions and histories.



fig. 2. 12
*the impenetrable condition that it
 was strictly so*
 quilt with digital inkjet prints on
 cotton and machine embroidery
 2019
 36" x 36"

the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely) (fig 2.16) is a culmination of this play with residue, contradiction, and ambiguity. Instead of mirroring a paradoxical society, this construction drags the cultural narrative through the looking glass to create an obviously simulated and surreal environment. This piece is a flurry of juxtapositions—text and form, feminine and masculine, spaces of death and environments for living, culturally designed patterns and naturally occurring ones, natural decay and violent termination. The deer form is cartoonishly stylized through its material qualities are meant to suggest decayed flesh and bone. Its baby-like form is yet overlarge—the cute features both attractively toylike and repellent due to its eyeless, strangely skeletal shape and odd material presence. In this piece I have embraced the incongruity of the Southern system in a way that, hopefully, invites the viewer in to explore the antinomies by inserting themselves into the narrative or space presented.

The work is meant to be indirect or misdirecting criticism of indirectness and /or misdirection. It is the space of hypocrisy where the interest lies. My practice helps me to work through my own complicated relationship to the region and its cultural narratives and patterns and to interrogate, materially, my experience of inheriting the complex legacy of the region. If Southerners could admit a little bit of hypocrisy, and give ourselves some space to investigate how or why such paradox might exist within Southern culture, then how could that open us up to further action and understandings within our own spheres of influence?



fig. 2.16
the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely)
dimensions variable
wallpaper, steel, cotton and abaca fiber, pigment

method enacts

Patterns and repetition are at the center of my work, acting as inspiration, method, and subject matter. Social and cultural patterns serve as conceptual fodder and the repetition and flow of craft making processes serve as a physical pattern of movements that structure my practice. These processes ground my work in my body in a way that combats the sense of unbalance I often feel being a human in this world. I have a panic disorder and anxiety, and can often lose myself in my mind and neglect my connection with my body. The rhythms of process repetitive making give me time to connect with my body and with materials—to leave the buzz of my thinking brain behind and gain understanding from the felt world.

Tim Ingold, in *Making*, draws a distinction between the craftsperson and theorist, saying, “The theorist ‘makes through thinking’ and the craftsperson ‘thinks through making.’”²⁴ There is a point between these two modes of thought that I inhabit. Perhaps I just don’t like to make decisions between things that are presented in duality with each other: it seems to me like being asked to choose between two sides of the same coin, and why would I do that? And how? The more that I learn about the human cycles of creation, destruction, and ingenuity through research and the closer that I weave myself into my body and environment through the physical act of *making*—the more that I begin to understand myself as connected, belonged, placed within the greater context of life.

As I learn and replenish through my hands and body, I have more agency over my state of mind. If not for the restorative and balancing powers of craft processes, I don’t think I could

²⁴ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6.

engage in the research practice that I do, which is heavy with investigation into the complex, violent, troubled histories of the South and the contemporary effects of those histories. Since experiencing, with the world, the collective trauma of sickness, death, insecurity, unrest and violence in 2020-21, I have increasingly needed to find space away from the chaos, anxiety, and division that mark the cultural moment so that I can reengage in a way that is healthy and safe. One such space is in the studio, where I can think with my hands and allow myself to feel grounded in making. The processing power that *making* provides keeps me on my feet and allows me to forge connections that reverberate throughout my life.

Ingold describes a ‘method of hope’ in his book. “To practice this method is not to describe the world, or to represent it, but to open up our perception to what is going on there so that we, in turn, can respond to it.”²⁵ He describes this relationship with the world as ‘correspondence’. Process allows me to open up to alternate avenues of perception and to gain meaning and understanding from what I find there, which I take back with me into my own ‘correspondences.’ Through this practice I find space for intuition, common sense, and ordinary experience in a set of correspondences between me and the world, me and the viewer, me and my own histories.

²⁵ Ingold, *Making*, 7.

Part III

a great body, inextricably intertwined

There are dichotomies that exist in all of Western culture: pitting the landscape, the feminine, the intuitive, and the decorative against ‘dominant’ cultural spaces: the masculine, the rational, and the essential. Form/image and language are another set of points in this constellation of oppositions. When I was applying to graduate school, I considered both Studio Art and Art History programs because I thought that I needed to make a choice between developing a word/language-based research practice and my studio-based research. It did not take long for my mentors in this program to disabuse me of that notion and language has been steadily working its way to the core of my making since.

In the thesis works I merge form and language, feminine and masculine, nature and culture in order to confuse these false divisions in the hopes of inspiring nuanced understandings of a complex of culture, specifically the culture of the American South. I would like for my constructions to encourage people to pay attention to the spaces that they inhabit everyday—whether that means physical space, local place, or the social space that they inhabit in life, in conversation, in relationships—in a way that is attuned to the cultural values that undergird such spaces. One of the ways that I do this is by using language in conjunction with form/design.

My earliest (non-print) works that include text do so by applying language to found objects, such as in *it is what it is* or *HILL BLOCKS VIEW* (fig 3.1 and fig 1.2). Paired with objects like an old tin or grandma’s lacy pink curtains, the language I was working with also came from home, my home. The South is steeped in rich language and I mined my surroundings—family ‘sayings’, mottoes from my grandmother’s embroidery books, even road signs near my home—for language that had potential to making meaning in my search to better understand my environment. Some works include text that has been imposed onto a form, like *it is what it is*, but others, like *HILL BLOCKS VIEW* and *Have an average day* integrate text into the structure of the object, creating an affinity between the text and the object and moving form towards language and vice versa (fig 3.2-3.3). In the stitching of both of these pieces, it is not completely clear whether the yarn and thread, respectively, are being added into the object or undone from it. This ambiguity begins to allow language and object to *become*, or *unbecome*, together.



fig. 3.1
it is what it is
 vintage tin and embroidery floss
 approx.. 14” round
 2019



fig. 3.2 (above)
HILL BLOCKS
VIEW(detail)



fig. 3.3 (left)
Have an average day
(detail)

In the past year, I have been working toward creating an even closer relationship between language and form, using text to build structure instead of imposing it onto one. The impetus for this discovery came through experimentation with an entirely new material that has since become integral to my practice—papermaking. In the initial stages of the project that became *hedonism and complacency*, I began to write/shape text with handmade paper string (sheets of paper cut into strips, rolled, and joined to form a long solid string of paper) (fig. 3.4). I use natural fibers—cotton and abaca—to write with the very material that is the substrate of so much of our histories and knowledge. I perform a sort of material historiographical exercise as I use this method to ruminate on my relationship with the Southern and American historical narratives. In this work, the language/text/cultural and the material/form/natural become truly one and the same. They are mutually interdependent and supportive of each other.



fig. 3.4
moss papermaking process

hedonism and complacency brought the element of nature into my practice, where my previous focus was on interior domestic space. During the spring of 2020, when we were all quarantined in our homes, I found myself escaping more and more to my own little slice of nature in the front yard. I began to turn to nature for a source of sanity and peace, if fleeting. During this time, I developed a technique that I call ‘word-flowers’ which furthered my integration of text and form (fig. 3.5 and 3.6). These digitally designed florals use a mirroring technique to build up letters

and words into petals and stems. They are feminine and decorative and incorporate different kinds of language, from mined text to diary/stream-of-consciousness phrases. I am still exploring the potential of these forms, which have been the focus of many experiments if not completed works. I continued to use this technique to also build animal form in *sometimes deer eat squirrels* (fig 3.7). By expanding my practice to make use of natural forms, I expand my ability to confuse the balance between the constructed and the naturally occurring. “This is to soften any distinction we might draw between organism and artefact. For if organisms grow, so too do artefacts. And if artefacts are made, so too are organisms.”²⁶



fig. 3.5
these motherfuckers here
 madder natural dye ink
 on cotton with letterpress
 print
 10" x 10"
 2020

²⁶ Ingold, *Making*, 22.



fig. 3.6 (left)
ripples of ego
suminagashi marbling and inkjet
print on handmade cotton paper
8.5" x 11"
2020

fig. 3.7 (below)
sometimes deer eat squirrels
inkjet print and letterpress print on
paper
6" x 9"
2020



to hold it subverted

My investigation into the connection between the cultivated and the wild brought to my attention another facet of the Western paradigm that influences our perceptions of our cultural and physical landscapes: the view of nature a separate entity that ‘we’ are outside of, not a larger whole that we are part of.²⁷ Simon Bell says, the “major problem with the idea of the environment as separate from ourselves is that we tend to regard it as a thing or opponent, to be conquered or tamed, especially when unruly forces... conspire to destroy our own handiworks, usually perceived as more important.”²⁸ The idea of conquering nature is emblematic of the dysfunctional Western paradigm and also foreshadows my interest in hunting as a direct example of the West’s rapacious relationship with the natural world and an important part of Southern culture, tied up the cult of honor, a societal code founded on machismo and domination.²⁹

This style of perception of self in relationship to the environment—as an observer and opponent, not a participant—is related to the history of landscape painting and the history of the image in general. The landscape painting or the still photo of a natural scene is bounded by a frame and the picture plane separates the viewer from the scene. The natural and immersive physical landscape is unframed and unbounded so that the viewer is challenged to integrate his or her experience with it.³⁰ The two pieces in the thesis exhibition (*hedonism and complacency* and *the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely)*) are not framed, except perhaps by the architecture that both they and the viewer inhabit. They are an attempt to occupy the space of the

²⁷ Simon Bell, *Landscape: Pattern, Perception, and Process, 2nd ed* (New York: Routledge, 2012) 65-67.

²⁸ Bell, *Landscape*, 65.

²⁹ Thompson, *The New Mind of the South*, 33.

³⁰ Bell, *Landscape*, 70-71.

viewer to challenge them to integrate their own narratives and background into the scenes presented.

Through these manipulations of form and language, I convolute understandings of cultural and natural landscapes in a manipulated space that I want the viewer to understand themselves as a part of. My use of signifiers like the moss or dated wood paneling, merge ideas of the Southern landscape, organisms, artefacts, histories, and perceptions to confront the viewer with a mirror onto the contemporary state of the South. When the artwork is out of the frame, I hope to invite the viewer to understand themselves as part a larger constructed, manufactured landscape and to then attempt to better understand the environment they are in.

The Western perception of landscape is also one that equates Nature with a false emptiness due to supposed lack of human intervention. Simon Bell's work communicates how extremely the so-called wilderness has been cultivated by human action. In *hedonism and complacency*, Spanish moss 'grows' on a steel beam high in the large, formerly industrial building. (fig. 3.8) This plant is emblematic of the romanticized Southern landscape and hangs on the very structures of industry and capitalism which manipulated the cultural and natural ecosystems of the South to suit the wealthy and powerful class' avaricious ends. By merging indicators of the natural (foliage, wood, bone) with signifiers of the cultural (decorative patterns, hunting practices, stylized representations of natural forms) within my thesis works, I challenge the idea that the natural world is devoid of cultural information and challenge the need and cultural impetus for separation of the two. The language chosen for each piece further emphasizes the entanglement of the cultural and natural landscape:

hedonism and complacency
the rich smell of hot earth and pinewood
soft languor mounting to the brain
the sequel to this mood is inevitably a thunderstorm

and

the natural flower of the backcountry—honor, inviolable and precious—had more than one fault and was not so altogether lovely



fig. 3.8
hedonism and complacency (detail)

The South is often seen as a place that is interconnected with nature, as evidenced in W.J. Cash's descriptions in *The Mind of the South*.³¹ Cash's book is a rich source from which I 'mine' language as raw material, a technique that I used for both of the above texts and the chapter titles of this document. *The New Mind of the South*³² by Tracy Thompson was published almost 75 years later than Cash's book but still connects a Southern tradition of identification with the land. The South is also a place where people, in my personal experience, explain away the cultural and moral failings of the region and its people as the inevitable consequences of a natural order. This false notion perpetuates and props up artificial divisions between people. To many Southerners who see themselves as just trying to get by and who don't 'actively' perpetuate hate, these failings are observed as if through a frame, as if the observer isn't part of the narrative. The very real danger created by such false hierarchies (racism, misogyny, ableism, classism) goes unchallenged because it isn't perceived to be within the individuals' sphere of influence. However, if we step out of the framed relationship and acknowledge ourselves as interdependent ties in a vast, longitudinal web of life we implicitly accept the fact of our own impact. Not only has this been important in moving my work toward an experiential method, but it has also given me a framework for daily life outside my research as well.

When we acknowledge that nature and culture are not two separate processes inhabiting mutually exclusive spaces, we can open ourselves up to our roles as creators and perpetuators in this reciprocal relationship and we can interact with greater intentionality. By asserting entanglement, my work does not privilege one side of the diametric over the other but makes them inextricable from one another. To hold the false paradigm subverted I am manifesting the breakdown of the

³¹ Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 46-47.

³² Thompson, *The New Mind of the South*, 142- 143.

machineries of division through merging and making, educating myself and inviting others into awareness.

this land in soft illusion

“Camouflage’s plain face masks a very modern awareness: that the visible world is constructed, contingent, shaped in ways we can barely guess at.”³³ My work borrows visual language and strategies from hunting: a sport that trucks in invisibility and sensory deception as well as a specifically dominating relationship between human beings and their environments. Hunting, in the Western tradition, is generally linked to violence, pride, and machismo. It also has associations with the landscape, survival, ritual and decoration. These associations—along with familial and cultural ties to deer and duck hunting—led me to an exploration of the sport’s tactics, specifically strategies like the use of decoys or camouflage.

Decoys lull the animal/victim/viewer into a false sense of complacency. Similarly, I have used viewers’ assumptions about spaces and objects to lull them into a feeling of safety by using the familiar: plump pillows, placid flora, soft quilts. It is only as the viewer comes closer that they realize (or don’t) that there is more to the story.

My first exploration of hunting came in the form of a floppy, big-headed soft-sculpture shaped like a baby deer and titled *that dog won’t hunt* (fig 3.9). The soft form’s ‘skin’ was made from

³³ Jude Stewart, *Paternalia: An Unconventional History of Polka Dots, Stripes, Plaid, Camouflage, & Other Graphic Patterns* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), 116.

a vintage scarf and naturally dyed cotton: the scarf containing a bright and colorful pattern depicting hunting dogs and hunters in formal hunting attire (not camouflage). A long-standing interest in the dynamics of predator/prey relationships (a remnant of undergraduate work on sexual assault and gender dynamics) is transformed in this piece to look at humanity as the predator, depicted in the scarf and (loosely) referenced in the stylized animal form. The deer form itself acts as a decoy, appearing soft and sweet, but at the same time it has no mouth, no eyes, its legs are splayed and dysfunctional. It's broken but lovable. The highly patterned scarf successfully camouflages the violent intentions suggested in the scarf's scene, but the violence is off stage—implied in the relation between the pattern and form. The title, *that dog won't hunt*, meaning 'no, that won't work' or 'I don't believe you' emphasizes the strangeness of the pairing and the feeling of not-rightness that comes from the small, blind, bent thing.

This stylized deer form recurs, with a very different treatment in terms of formal and material qualities, in *the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely)*. References to hunting, domination, and violence, are obscured and softened. The division between natural and cultural processes remains unclear as the 'remains' of a cartoonish deer form (hunted? decomposed naturally?) stands beside the viewer in the gallery. The scene is confused by the implication of an interior setting and the paper constructions that come out into space, mimicking and informing the stylized, un-real form of the deer. (fig 3.10)

Camouflage is another strategy in my work, and importantly, it turns the usual rules of pattern on their head. Instead of the typical unifying effect that most patterns have on an object, camo breaks an object up into its surroundings.³⁴ It scatters the object's contours and makes

³⁴ Stewart, *Paternalia*, 116.

illusions of the edges of form. My work does not employ the visual patterns we think of when we hear the word camo, although it employs camouflaged elements as a means to confuse boundaries.



fig. 3.9 (above)
that dog won't hunt
 vintage scarf, naturally
 dyed cotton, thread,
 stuffing
 12" x 14" x 13"
 2019



fig. 3.10 (left)
*the natural flower of the
 backcountry (was not so
 altogether lovely)*

Within the dense wallpaper in *natural flower of the backcountry*, as in other works, I treat language as a visual pattern; abstracting and camouflaging it within the lines of design in a manner that complicates its legibility. The way that I use pattern (camouflage) is as an unassuming familiar element that becomes invisible to the incurious. I am interested in the tension between ubiquity and invisibility, how a singular element/image/word/idea may be repeated into oblivion, until it is a form unto itself, an apparently neutral fact regardless of the original element's affiliations. Meaning is obfuscated in my work through these strategies of visual and conceptual confusion in an attempt to lure the viewer in and change or challenge their experience in the space. The wallpaper itself is camouflaged as wall paneling, one more layer of manipulation in the viewer's environment. Potential danger, hinted at in both the apparently dead form of the poor deer, the specific text, and the aggressive presence of the wallpaper, is mitigated by other signs within the work—the decorative elements of the wallpaper, the flatness and unreality of the scene, the cartoonishness of the oversized baby deer. I am using these means of visual deception to entice the curious viewer from a distance, as an effective camouflage or decoy would, and to encourage an unveiling and connection between the macro and the micro in terms of human beings' relationships to the natural and cultural landscape.

the negation of detachment

To me, focusing on the personal and close things in life, like the environments within and without our homes, is a way of rooting my art in something real and tangible, something I can hold on to. My thesis works encourage attachment and connection: in their surreal familiarity, in their

unions of opposites and embodiment of a complicated in-between, and in their connection to lived space and place. Works from two feminist thinkers and writers, Luce Irigaray and Lucy Lippard, both call for a negation of detachment, in separate but complimentary ways that I respond to within my work. The works of both women merge the concerns of the personal and intimate with the concerns of broader society, as does my practice.

Theorist Luce Irigaray focuses on attachment in a philosophical, psychoanalytical, and linguistic sense. By encouraging a reorientation of the relationships between individuals, between the sexes, Irigaray speaks to the need to attend to the *between* people. She encourages women specifically to pay attention to how language, communication, and relations are structured *between* individuals and groups.³⁵ Irigaray encourages attempts to build or find language outside of the current (patriarchal) system, which, due to its self-perpetuating binary structure, cannot support authentic expressions from marginalized groups, including women. She promotes this strategy as a way to renegotiate a more just relationship *between*. Irigaray also advocates the use of critical mimesis—of assuming a feminine role and re-presenting it in a critical way in order to subvert the male system.³⁶ My thesis works are firmly situated in attachment, in an in-between. In *hedonism and complacency*, I mimic the natural world (moss, bone, wood) and run it through my own personal filters of experience and critique in order to create a possible sight of transformation, a subversion of the cultural paradigm that separates and privileges one over another.

This new way of using language complicates its legibility. The words/strands in *hedonism and complacency* tangle amongst themselves as they sway in their non-linear arrangement. A few singular lines descend toward the viewer to tease them with brief legibility and the impossibility of

³⁵ Luce Irigaray, *In the Beginning She Was* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 19-22.

³⁶ Lynda Haas, "Of Waters and Women: The Philosophy of Luce Irigaray," *Hypatia* 8, no. 4 (1993): 153. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810380>.

knowing the larger construction in its entirety. The deceptively simplified bone-like quality of layered abaca pulp on a wire deer frame mimics the constructed quality of ‘natural’ forms in *the natural flower of the backcountry (was not so altogether lovely)*. The dense visual packing of the woodgrain wallpaper pushes in and out of culturally derived forms through the use of camouflaged, mirrored, and distorted text alongside fabricated patterns. This re-presentation of cultural signifiers of the American South is an attempt to encourage or enact mystery, curiosity, complication, criticisms, and the subversion of dichotomies in this place and its culture.

Lucy Lippard, in *The Lure of the Local*, speaks to the entangled connections between humanity and our environments, “Inherent in the local is the concept of place—...seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar. Most often place applies to our own “local”—entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke.”³⁷ Coming into graduate school I never thought that I would make work about Albany or even about the South, but my practice engages me in a close and critical relationship that seems vital for personal change and also for encouraging broader change. Attachment to this specific place—and this place’s attachment to history, culture, and ideology—is inherent in my decision to make work about being from and of the South, not because of a streak of Southern pride which is often far from my mind. I make this work because I cannot detach my creative instincts and decisions from the people, land, or histories of the South any more than I can detach my brain from my heart or hands, though the connections morph over time. My research into a history that I have been largely ignorant of for most of my life of sometimes brings me great sadness and shame, but through it I am forging new and complex understandings of the past and present of my local, the South. *Making* these connections is how I move forward in a life and

³⁷ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 7.

practice that seeks to challenge the systems and machineries that dominate the South and Western culture.

For me, these two (very different) calls for attachment seem to call for an art that moves toward lived experience and teaches through means outside of the typical Western tradition. Irigaray says, “We have to discover a language which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeal.”³⁸ Margaret Whitford explains that this is not a call for a totally different language, but a reminder that alternative linguistic practices, practices that Irigaray calls for being grounded within the body, are sites for potential transformation.³⁹ Lippard says, “The potential of an activist art practice that raises consciousness about land, history, culture, and place and is a catalyst for social change cannot be underestimated, even though this promise has yet to be fulfilled.”⁴⁰ To me these imperatives are asking for engagement with the knowledges of Craft, a language of thinking and communicating through observation and work, not thought and language. Craft is the ultimate embodied language, a language attached to the ‘real’ (and often the local) in a way that facilitates education and communication outside of the mainstream Western knowledge tradition. It facilitates sites for transformation. My work is a personal site of transformation, a place where I make connections between ideas, systems, histories, and objects. I use those connections to pull myself toward new positions and understandings to then give them back to the viewer, to encourage attachment and transformation within them as well.

³⁸Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, edited and with an introduction Margaret Whitford (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1991), 43.

³⁹Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, 5.

⁴⁰Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 19.

conclusion: a perceptible perhaps

“...We owe our very being to the world we seek to know.”⁴¹ I am engaged in a practice of careful study of the world that I ‘owe my being to’ through research, through the knowledge found in material and process by the hand, and through personal lived experiences. As I come to understand my place in the world more clearly through *making*, I gain belief in our ability to bring our own worlds into being through seeking to know. Through language, nature, patterns, and the idea of home I am seeking to know my world and attempting to situate understandings that allow the viewer to bring a new world into being—one that does not conform to the machineries my work pushes against.

While I finish this document, the world is still mired in the chaos of the pandemic, deep social division and unrest, and wrestling with the foundational nature of false hierarchies in our societal systems. Margaret Whitford describes the work of Luce Irigaray as “a tension between critique and the vision of a new world order....it does not provide answers; it rather appeals to the reader to begin to invent the next step(s).”⁴² I hope that my practice can work in a similar way to enact tension, ask questions, and invite consideration, empathy, and reflection.

⁴¹ Ingold, *Making*, 5.

⁴² Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, 12-13.

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