

**MONSTRO: Artworks Inspired by the Disabled Experience**

**Erin H Meyer**

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington

2018

Committee:

Jamie Walker

Michael Swaine

Phillip Thurtle

Ann Gale

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

School of Art

© Copyright 2018  
Erin H Meyer

University of Washington

**Abstract**

MONSTRO: Artworks Inspired by the Disabled Experience

**Erin H. Meyer**

Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Professor Jamie Walker

Art

My ability (or, inability) to come to terms with the disabled experience-- forms the core of my artistic practice. I create semi-autobiographical sculptures that serve as allegory for the effects, symptoms, or experiences caused by my impairment. Through my work I scrutinize how my disability defines, limits, empowers, or differentiates me from my abled counterparts. Fueled by a rejection of society's current perception of impairment as a negative or inferior variation of human existence, my work instead illustrates how living with a disability is inherently non-binary -- that the disabled experience is at once both positive and negative, biological and social, personal and political. I make artwork about my disability because I believe that those living with a disability are no better, nor any worse than their able-bodied counterparts--that the word *disability* only means ***different***.

“... Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided... My discontent in living with the other--my strangeness, his strangeness--rests on the perturbed logic that governs this strange bundle of drive and language, of nature and symbol, constituted by the unconscious, always already shaped by the other. It is through unraveling transference--the major dynamics of otherness, of love/hatred for the other of the foreign component of our psyche--that, on the basis of the other, I become reconciled with my own otherness-foreignness, that I play on it and live by it.

-Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*<sup>1</sup> (pp. 181-2)

It's October, 2010 and I'm 27. I've always had recurring bouts of anxiety and depression, but this time it's much worse. I haven't slept in days and every nerve of my body feels like it's on fire. I'm losing my grip on my ability to function in everyday life, and that's a problem because I'm in the middle of a semester at the University of Alaska Anchorage. I go to the health clinic on campus to see someone about my mental health, and am soon prescribed Prozac for depression. Fast forward a few more days, and instead of helping my symptoms, the Prozac has instead magnified them further. It's now been close to a week without sleep. At one point, I thought, very pointedly that "I don't want to live like this", and it's enough to scare me into the Emergency room. I end up admitting myself to the Mental Health Unit of Providence Hospital where I spend nine days detoxing from the Prozac, and getting my symptoms under control. The whole ordeal was terrifying, but there was certainly some good to come from it: I learned the importance of taking care of my mental health, and got a proper diagnosis of ADHD (or Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) that I could confront and treat.

There was a sort of unexpected awareness that occurred when I was diagnosed with ADHD--it seemed as if I had just become two people instead of one. The sensation was jarring and uncomfortable. I think the solemnity of a diagnosis was amplified in my case by being an adult. There was this whole new aspect of my personality that I knew nothing about, and up until that point, had assumed was just... normal. Except now it wasn't. How much was "me", and how much was my impairment? I had no clue.

Coming to terms with the fact that I am "disabled" was, and still remains, a difficult

---

<sup>1</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 181-182.

actuality for me to accept. I think it's fair to say that anyone who finds themselves newly minted with the label would find it difficult. For example, If you look up the word "disabled" or "disability" synonyms include:

- affliction
- defect
- detriment
- disqualification
- inability
- invalidity
- weakness

Looking at these words, is it no wonder that the label of "disability is repellant? The definitions are so pejorative. I, for one, categorically reject any of the above words as a descriptor of me, my life, or my disability experience. Having a disability doesn't *disqualify* me from discussing universal truths like love, joy, or pain. Disability doesn't *invalidate* the productive contributions that I add to my family, neighborhood, and society. Instead, I make art so that I might come to what Julia Kristeva so poignantly calls an 'ethics of respect for the irreconcilable'--a point where I understand and accept all of the elements of myself--so I may "become reconciled with my otherness-foreignness, that I play on it and live by it".

Therefore, I argue for a new conception of the disabled body--a more realistic (and accepting) conception. I believe by creating artwork about my own disability, that that the common misconceptions of the disabled experience can be looked at with fresh eyes; to foster the understanding that being disabled is simply another version of existing as a *human being*. In the journal of *American Literary History*, noted disability theorist Tobins Siebers asks us just this--to find a new way of fully comprehending the disabled body:

"It means overturning the dominant image of people with disability as isolated victims of disease or misfortune who have nothing in common with each other or the able-bodied... People with disabilities usually realize that they must learn to live with their disability, if they are to live life as a human being. The challenge is not to adapt their disability into an extraordinary power or alternative image of ability. The challenge is to function... People with disabilities want to be able to function: to live life with their disability, to come to know their body, to accept what they can do, and to keep doing what they can for as long as they can... We still lack the means to represent what disabled bodies are because there are false notions everywhere and these bodies

change what representation is...<sup>2</sup>

Although Siebers was directly referencing people physical limitations in this quote, I will argue that the sentiment applies to those with “invisible” disabilities as well; in a chapter titled “Disability as Masquerade” in *Disability Theory*, Siebers also states the importance including invisible stigmas into the overarching disability conversation, “...such as deafness, chronic fatigue, autism, diabetes, and dyslexia”, since “...the cause of oppression usually exists in the social or built environment and not in the body [proper].”<sup>3</sup>

If societal biases towards disability were to change, then it follows that the stigma associated with disability would change as well. This notion is at the heart of much of Sieber’s work, and it is also why I find him such a valuable source in my research: his well-reasoned arguments ask, through a number of different ways and through varied topics: “What would it mean to esteem the disabled body for what it really is?”<sup>4</sup> If there were any phrase that I would choose to pair with my work, it would be this.

-----

The first instance in which I made work that specifically addressed mental health, (and tangentially, disability) was for my undergraduate BFA thesis show, *Symptomatic: Visual Representations of Mental Illness*. (Figures 1-3) I did not feel completely at ease illustrating my personal disability experience at the time, so instead I chose four mental illness or conditions that others might experience, and drafted four high-quality charcoal portraits. These portraits envisioned the symptoms of each condition presenting on the outside of someone versus being suffered on the inside, and the illnesses I chose

---

<sup>2</sup> Tobin Siebers, “Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body,” *American Literary History* 13 (2001): 750, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3054594>.

<sup>3</sup> Tobin Siebers, “Disability as Masquerade” in *Disability Theory*, 100. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Tobin Siebers, “Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body.” 750.

illustrate were Schizophrenia, Pica Eating Disorder, Todd Syndrome, and ADHD.

Researching (and subsequently illustrating) for these illnesses was not unlike what I was doing in my personal life at the same point in time; gathering professional medical information and first-person accounts, identifying symptoms most closely related to the illness, and understanding the feelings associated with the symptoms. By doing so I produced a coherent word “map” or “brainstorm” in my sketchbook that I called my “book research”. This “book research” included pertinent keywords and/or lists of details from reading, photocopies of visual inspiration, and research into other artists that I wanted to keep in the forefront of my mind as I began to structure the general composition of each of my projects.

After completing the “book research” for *Symptomatic*, it was time to start composing compositions. I made cut-and-paste collages of black and white images to use as thumbnails for the larger drawings. The images chosen for the collages were the results of putting the “book research” keywords into a image search on the internet; a somewhat arbitrary method, to be sure, but I found that the process yielded pleasantly unexpected and surprising results. After the black and white thumbnail compositions were completed, they were scanned into a tablet at high resolution so I could use them as a drawing reference for the four final drawings.

I still employ many of the same methodologies for researching my work despite switching from two-dimensional media to three-dimensional medias while in graduate school. I still start every project with “book research” in my sketchbooks, and keyword searches for visual imagery sources on the internet. For example, the overall forms for both *Visitors* and *Mothership* (Figures 4 and 5) were directly shaped by my research into scientific illustrations of microscopic protozoa and especially stunning illustrations found in *Ernst Haeckel: Art Forms from the Abyss*<sup>5</sup> (Figures 6-7). When the figures are paired together (Figures 4 with 6 and Figures 5 with 7) I can see the residual influence that the

---

<sup>5</sup>Evan P. Williams, *Ernst Haeckel : Art Forms from the Abyss : Images from the HMS Challenger Expedition* (New York: Prestel, 2015).

source imagery had on the final product's shape and form.

*Visitors* is a sculptural installation constituted of many different organisms. All of the organisms were inspired by shapes that are naturally occurring in nature, but made to be unrecognizable (and therefore foreign) through processes of abstraction, scale change, and material choices. I chose a monochromatic cream color scheme of sweater-knit materials to focus my viewer's attention on the overall form and texture of each creature. In the upper right hand corner of Figure 4 hangs a being I call "Twinsies" whose main body resembles two overgrown protozoan shapes, shares a twin "umbilical cord" and has "feeding tubes" that extends all the way to the floor. One of the tubes is bulging, perhaps filled with a meal. The "Big Guy" in the lower right-hand corner resembles a bastardization of a tardigrade shape, and is weighted heavily to the floor. The "Babies" growing in their pods under the shelter of a membrane in the top right-hand corner of the photo are almost direct copies of two of the microscopic shapes in Figure 6.

*Mothership* also features a monochromatic color scheme: this time all black, again, to focus the viewer's' attention on overall shape and form. Instead of multiple creatures, *Mothership* is one large sculptural figure with a large central pillar, and three orbiting "buds", or smaller bodies that radiate and grow up from the center form. The triad of radiating limbs were inspired by the spikey appendages in Figure 7, except inverted and turned upside-down.

As precursors to the work that I make now, both *Visitors* and *Mothership* were examples of the first time that I experimented with fibers to create sculptural works; an indelible switch-up in materials that altered my subsequent work. I playfully blame my natural penchant for "crafting" materials but (more notably) my discovery of contemporary sculptor Ernesto Neto and his works: particularly his hanging works such as *Madness is a Part of Life*, 2012 (Figure 8) and *Simple and light as a dream...the gravity don't lie...just loves the time*, (Figure 9). I had never seen anything like Neto's work prior to my research and it was a revelation--I was (and still am) drawn to his use of bright colors and sensuous

building materials, his shamelessly playful installation setups, and his ability to exact and invite viewer participation via sensory stimulation (i.e.- touch, smell, or sound).

The way that I feel when I look at Ernesto Neto's work is how I want people to feel when they look at my own work. That is to say that, when someone looks at my work, I want them to be immediately engaged; compelled to feel *something*--even if that feeling is unsure or uncomfortable. I am reminded of Mike Levin's interview with Tobin Siebers in *Disability Studies Quarterly*, where Siebers states as fact that 'artworks are bodies that make other bodies feel'. That:

"[an art object] takes possession of our feelings. It makes us feel emotions whether we want to or not. We feel that we stand before a significant appearance in the world that strikes us with its otherness, by which I mean that the artwork exists beyond our ken and control. In this sense, encountering artwork is like encountering another human being... We cannot ignore the feelings that it invokes. At the same time, we cannot help thinking about the way that it makes us feel and why it might makes us feel the way we do. Art perception involves both perception of the art and self-perception.<sup>6</sup>

I measure the success or failure of all of my artworks based on these types of feelings-- "success" being a giggle from my viewer, or a long pause in front of my work. "Failure" of an artwork would mean that it garnished little to no response. I strive for visible and active emotional engagement between my work and the viewer because, when I see it happen, it is magic. It is the moment when I know that I have managed to have a whole conversation with a stranger without saying a single word--a conversation about what it means to be human, and and to see them reflect that recognition of humanity right back.

If ever there were an artwork of my design that was particularly gifted in starting (or perhaps, interrupting) conversation, it would have to be *The Big Dumb* (Figures 10 and 11). Lovingly dubbed "a brain fart incarnate", *The Big Dumb* was a caricature in ode to the struggle it can be to motivate my ADHD brain in the morning--pre-medication. Depicted as an overstuffed humanoid figure lounging across a too-tiny bed, the weighted arms and legs of the figure pin the laggard character to the floor. The body language of the figure suggests that inertia has taken it

---

<sup>6</sup> Mike Levin, "The Art of Disability: An Interview with Tobin Siebers," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 36 (2016): 4, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1263/1272>

over completely. Upon entering the room the viewer had to move to the other side of the gallery space to get a complete view of the figure, and the movement around the head activated an ultrasonic sensor used as eyes. The sensor triggered then made a random pick of one of five very loud, jarring “farts”. The effect was as if the “farts” seemed to be coming directly from the creature itself.

What helped separate *The Big Dumb* from its predecessors were the choices that I made in altering the space *around* the figure. Choices, I found, that form a more complete narrative in support of the conceptual message of my work. By managing environmental elements such as lighting, sound, and supplemental storytelling “props”, I provide subtle visual cues that make it easier for my viewers to get a full “read” on whatever is in front of them. For example, relaxed, lo-fi electronic music played during my critique for *The Big Dumb*. The gallery walls were awash in bright colors; pink, red, orange, and fuchsia. Vinyl wall decals were sprinkled within the spheres of light that the lighting cans threw upon the wall, three black lines stacked upon one the other. Initially chosen to be just a pleasing aesthetic feature to the room, I was surprised when the decals became a sort of visual language on their own; a series of repeating ellipsis that neatly summarized the “spaced out” feeling of *The Big Dumb*. Without these type of additional elements, I doubt that *The Big Dumb*’s farts would have been as humorous as they were, or the figure as endearing as it was. Since providing a richer visual environment for my works, they have had a much stronger emotional impact on my viewers.

---

When it came time to make the work that would constitute my thesis, I knew right away that I wanted to present a subject in which I was the only expert--something that only I knew how to talk about. Something personal. My undergraduate sculpture mentor Hugh McPeck used to say: “[If you don’t know what to do] ...you gotta stick to what you

know”<sup>7</sup>. Illustrating what it means to live with (and manage the symptoms of) ADHD seemed the only fitting choice because, for me, it truly embodies the full spectrum of human emotion: from joy to pain, confusion to clarity, and everything in between. I set out to create a series of large-scale sculptural “characters” that embody a particular situation, feeling, or behaviour manifested by the symptoms of my ADHD. To each of these potential characters I posited a simple question: “If I could pluck you from my head, and manifest you into the real world, what would you look like? ...What kind of body would you have? Are you monstrous and looming, or charming and delightful?”

The first character introduced by the *MONSTRO* series was *The Incrediblob*; the centerpiece of my solo thesis show during May of 2018 in the North Gallery of the Ceramic and Metal Arts Building at the University of Washington (Figures 12 and 13). Conceptual cousin to *The Big Dumb*, *The Incrediblob* illustrates the feelings that I experience immediately *after* playing the part of *The Big Dumb*--a sense of futility, guilt, and uselessness. It is a story about wasted potential... *The Incrediblob* could ‘spin from the rafters’ and ‘perform astonishing feats of aerial acrobatics’ if it wanted to, but it instead chooses to hang listless, seemingly defeated by its cumbersome body.

To guide the overall aesthetics of *The Incrediblob*, I borrowed heavily from the visual language of circus performers and their costuming, (particularly from circuses during the early Twentieth century) and from Ernesto Neto’s *Humanoids Family* series from 2001 (Figure 15). Neto’s sculptures are meant to be worn over the viewer’s own body and are filled with relaxing lavender. Even without someone seated snugly within them the sculptures struck me as curious, emotive entities unto themselves. They are roughly person-sized, and I wanted to create a similarly bulging body for *The Incrediblob*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Hugh McPeck has since passed away, but his good-natured advice and guidance has always stuck with me. One of my other favorite quotes from Hugh about making is: “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” It’s good advice for life, too--as much of his advice often was.

*The Incrediblob* resembles a huge, glistening larvae, and was built from colorful foiled spandex filled that was filled with polyfill stuffing. I had initially added svelte dancer's legs to the figure of the *The Incrediblob* (complete with real ballet pointe shoes), and they were meant to act as a foil to play up the awkwardness of its body, but after attaching them I found that they were not quite "right". After receiving feedback on the issue I realized that the scale of the legs--an almost one-to-one relationship to those of real human legs--was pushing *The Incrediblob* too far into the realm of reality. To return *The Incrediblob* back into the land of imagination (where it belonged) I cut the legs off at the "knee" joint and added a twist to their shape--effectively reducing them to distressing corkscrews with shoes.

The "aerial hoop" which suspended *The Incrediblob* I made from heat-bending 1 inch wide PVC pipe, and covered it in sequined duct tape. Having been used for decades in aerial acrobatics, aerial hoops are also called "lyres" and resemble hula hoops in shape and scale. (Figure 14). Creating a "circus ring" for *The Incrediblob's* gallery installation required a bit more negotiation on my part; I knew that I wanted to create a durable, nearly perfect circle ten feet in diameter, but I also knew that it had to be portable, since a completed ring would not fit through the entryway of the North Gallery during installation. I ended up laying out a rough circle of purple insulation foam on the front lawn on the CMA<sup>8</sup>, and rigged up a giant compass that I used to trace out the ten foot circle. I cut out the shapes, made them "taller" by stacking an additional layer of foam on top, and then covered the finished styrofoam in paper mache. After the paper mache was dry, I painted them white and added accents of teal and black. During installation I filled the center of the circle with "sawdust" (which was in reality, a bulk amount of cedar pet bedding from Petco) and suspended *The Incrediblob* to hover above its center. Lastly, I lit the hexagonal gallery with teal, red, and gold spotlighting to resemble the colorful atmosphere of a circus tent.

---

<sup>8</sup> The "Ceramic and Metal Arts" Building on the University of Washington campus, where my studio was located, and where I built the characters for *MONSTRO*.

The second and third characters that made up the remainder of the *MONSTRO* series were *The Shiny Bright* (Figure 22) and *The Clumsy Juggler* (Figure 19). Created with their installation at the Henry Art Gallery in mind, *The Shiny Bright* and *The Clumsy Juggler* are meant to be viewed as two separate and distinct characters, but characters who clearly inhabit the same world. The visual cue is also meant to be reflective of the difference in content between the two characters, as they represent two different aspects of my relationship with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); one aspect which is celebratory in nature and potentially productive, while the other of a more ...troublesome and complicated nature.

As a moody blend of darkened jewel tones, dusky velvets, and jarring black and white stripes, *The Clumsy Juggler* is definitely the darker of the two works at the Henry; both in terms of its physical materiality as well as its conceptual content. The *Juggler* personifies the difficulties that my brain experiences in organizing tasks, remembering important dates, and (after everything falls apart) the feeling of being caught in a trap of one's own making<sup>9</sup>. During times of stress and especially under multiple deadlines, I become plagued by own frenetic and intrusive thoughts. Without medication to help me focus, I eventually crumble under the weight of anxiety and depression. There is no feeling of failure more acute than the failure of your own mind (and/or body, as it relates to disability), and that is what *The Clumsy Juggler* is really about; being rendered functionally ineffectual due to one's inherent nature.

In regards to its construction, the overall shape and form of the *Juggler* was inspired by two photos that I found in a book called *The Circus, 1870's-1950's*<sup>10</sup>. One photo was of a

---

<sup>9</sup> I have since learned that these behaviors/symptoms are related to **Executive Function Deficit**, and according to the authors of an article in *Neuropsychology*, Executive Functioning Deficit is defined as "a disruption to the efficacy of the executive functions, which is a group of cognitive processes that regulate, control, and manage other cognitive processes...". Found in both adults and children with ADHD, "...[Executive Functioning Deficit] can refer to both neurocognitive deficits and behavioural symptoms... [and] is implicated in numerous psychopathologies and mental disorders". I have included the reference for this article in the section titled "Bibliography", located at the end of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel, Noel, Jando, Dominique, and Granfield, Linda. *The Circus, 1870s-1950s*. (Köln: Taschen, 2010).

contortionist bent over backwards, and the other was of a circus “tall” or “thin” man (Figures 19 and 20). I was struck by a surprising, somewhat humorous contrast that occurred when I put the photos side-by-side: both figures wear a snug, vertically striped black and white costume, but while one costume amplified the incredible flexibility and control that the contortionist had over his body, the same optics created by the similar costume made the tall man look further elongated and more awkward. It seemed to me the perfect metaphor apply to (and amplify) the conceptual message of the *Juggler*--that of my brain operating as a “tall man” attempting to be a “contortionist”, and of course, failing.

The skeletal form of *The Clumsy Juggler's* body was constructed out of heat-bent PVC pipe, which was then secured to a base filled with heavy plaster. Batting was formed around the PVC frame and sewn into place. I created a vertically striped black and white costume that was applied like a second skin over the *Juggler's* oddly-proportioned body. Its arms resemble cooked spaghetti noodles, and were piled uselessly around the base of the figure on the floor (Figure 21). The entire construction of the *Juggler* balanced precariously on one leg, so that the figure was poised between a position of falling and recovery: having tripped over the tangled mess of its own noodle-arms it was now tumbling backwards. During installation I placed bright magenta and sharp lime green spotlighting at the base of *The Clumsy Juggler*, which cast giant, exaggerated shadows of the falling figure all the way up and onto the ceiling (Figure 19). The *Juggler* seemed as if it towered over the gallery visitors; an intimidating figure constituted of an undulating mess of arms and legs.

*The Shiny Bright*, on the other hand, was paired with *The Clumsy Juggler* to be its tonal opposite--both in content and in form. A cheery jumble of pink fluff and sequined sparkle, *The Shiny Bright* is a celebration of the potential relationship between high levels of creativity and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). I like to think that there can be positives amongst

some of the challenges that I face on a regular basis, and because of this, I am convinced that that the ADHD brain's tendency toward lateral thinking is a quality that is indicative of (and necessary for) creativity. In fact, studies in the connection between the two have found that there is indeed "...evidence to support the hypothesis that both creatives and those classified as ADHD show greater indications of mixed laterality and anomalies in cerebral dominance, more spontaneous ideation, higher levels of sensation seeking behaviour, and higher energy and activity than do normal populations<sup>11</sup>.

Since my experience has been that creativity and ADHD both support the brain's capability to provide a multitude of solutions to any given question through the use of lateral thinking, I thought that the answer to the *The Shiny Bright's* composition should itself be composed of multiples. Not one, but five creatures of varying size came together to form the body of *The Shiny Bright*, and they were stacked together, one atop the other; the largest figure on the bottom, continuing to the smallest figure at the top.

I drew formal inspiration for *The Shiny Bright's* construction from the showy, material excess of Nick Cave's *Soundsuits* (Figure 23), and from the vaguely bizarre, almost hallucinatory qualities of poodle acts performed in circuses during the 1980's and 1990's (Figure 24). Much like the visual of a team of neon pink poodles in Figure 24, I imagined *The Shiny Bright* as a team of colorful creatures having just hit the finale of a performance; one that culminated in a perfect stack of bodies that receded all the way up to the ceiling. Like *The Clumsy Juggler*, *The Shiny Bright* has a supporting "skeleton" made of PVC pipe which runs the length of the figure. By building in this way, I created a figure that not only could be worked on in sections, but also provided a built-in system for disassembly that made transporting *The Shiny Bright* much easier. Similar to Nick Cave's *Soundsuits*, *The Shiny Bright* also combines many different materials at

---

<sup>11</sup> Bonnie Cramond, "Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Creativity--What's the Connection?", *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 28 (1994): 201. DOI: 10.1002/j.2162-6057.1994.tb01191.x

once: rhinestones, faux fur, ruffles, sequined appliques, feathers, velvet, and tulle. The mass of textures, welcoming colors, and maximalist use of materials were absolutely key to the success of the *The Shiny Bright*: I wanted my viewers to be mesmerized by the glittery glow and brilliance. I wanted people to fight the urge to hug it, to touch it.

During the past two years my artistic research has taught me how to better understand and appreciate my disability experience: that, by approaching my impairments from multiple angles and embracing their strengths and weaknesses, I in fact acknowledge my own humanity. By engaging viewers through emotive characters, I can have a whole conversation about what it means to have a disability, without ever having to define a complicated medical term, or explain confusing behaviors. Most importantly, however, I can celebrate and expand upon the definition of the human experience because whether or not one is disabled, humanity is something that all peoples have in common. Like Tobin Siebers, I too believe that: “[a]esthetics opens us to more expansive and diverse conceptions of the human, and [that] disability has become a powerful tool for rethinking human appearance, behavior, and creativity.”<sup>12</sup>

-----

---

<sup>12</sup> Mike Levin, “The Art of Disability: An Interview with Tobin Siebers,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 36 (2016): 4, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1263/1272>

© Copyright 2018  
Erin H Meyer

## IMAGES



**Fig. 1.** Erin H Meyer. Overall gallery view of *Symptomatic: Visual Representations of Mental Illness*, 2015. Charcoal and Mixed media on Textured pastel paper. Floating shelves, Found Objects. Individual drawings 22" x 30". Overall Dimensions approx. 4' x 12'.



**Fig. 2.** Erin H Meyer. *ADHD as shown in Symptomatic*, 2015. Charcoal on Textured pastel paper. Paper inclusions. 22" x 30".



**Fig. 3.** Erin H Meyer. *ADHD (Detail)*, 2015.



**Fig. 4.** Erin H Meyer. *Visitors*, 2017. Fibres, Polyfill, Amplifier, low frequency ASMR sounds. Dimensions Variable.



**Fig. 5.** Erin H Meyer. *Mothership*, 2017. Fibres, Spandex, Polyfill. Dimensions Variable.

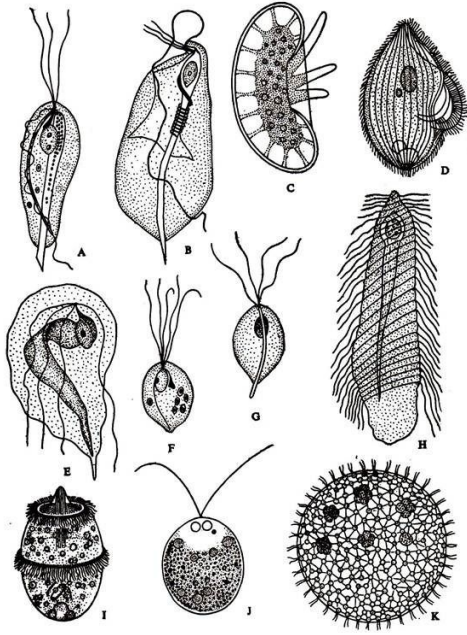


Fig. 10.48: A few examples of Phylum Protozoa (after various sources). A. *Tritrichomonas augusta*. B. *Macrotrichomonas lighti*. C. *Arcella vulgaris*. D. *Belphegia laterium*. E. *Saccinobaculus doraxostylus*. F. *Hexamastix termopsidis*. G. *Monocercomonas verrans*. H. *Holomastigotoides hemigymnum*. I. *Didinium* sp. J. *Chlamydomonas* sp. K. *Volvox* colony.

Fig. 6, Example illustration of microscopic protozoan.

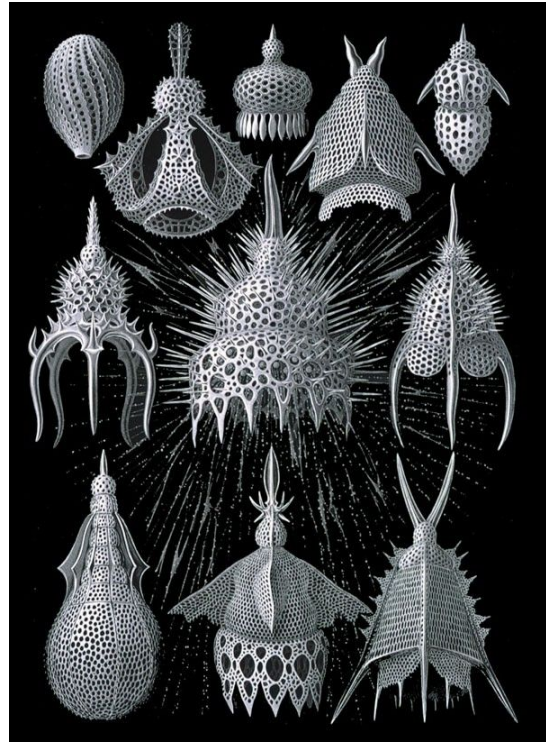


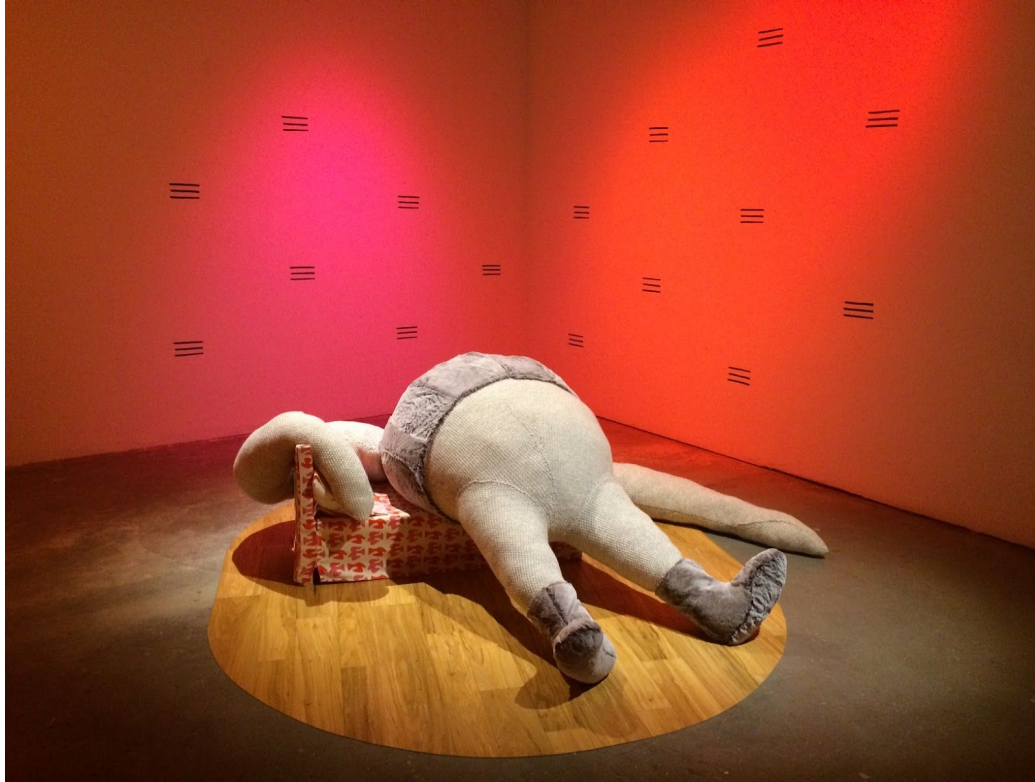
Fig. 7, Illustration from *Art Forms from the Abyss*.



**Fig. 8.** Ernesto Neto. *Madness is part of Life*, 2012. Installation view Espace Louis Vuitton, Tokyo, Japan, 2012-2013. Dimensions Variable.



**Fig. 9.** Ernesto Neto. *Simple and light as a dream...the gravity don't lie...just loves the time*, 2006. Polyamide textile, Nylon stockings, Glass beads, Styrofoam. 15 x 24 x 18 feet; 4.5 x 7.5 x 5.5 meters.



**Fig. 10.** Erin H Meyer. *The Big Dumb*, 2018. Fibres, Mixed Media, Arduino, Ultrasonic sensor, Fart Sounds, Ambient music, Atmospheric Lighting. 6' x 5' x 3.5'.



**Fig. 11.** Erin H Meyer. *The Big Dumb* (Detail), 2018.



**Fig. 12.** Erin H Meyer. *The Incrediblob*, 2018. "Performance" fabrics , Polyfill, Mixed Media, Stage lighting, Sawdust. Figure and ring measures approx. 3' x 4' x 6', Installation is approx. 10' x 10' x 11'.



**Fig. 13.** Erin H Meyer. *The Incrediblob* (Detail), 2018. "Performance" fabrics , Polyfill, Mixed Media, Stage lighting, Sawdust. 10' x 10' x 11'.



**Figure 14.** Circus acrobats performing on aerial hoops called "lyres".



**Figure 15.** Ernesto Neto. Humanoids Family, 2001. Polyamide fabric, velvet, lavender, styrofoam. 6 elements, Dimensions variable. Installation view Kölnische Kunstverein, Cologne. Photo: Manfred Wegener and Boris Becker.



**Fig. 16.** Erin H Meyer. Overall gallery view of *The Shiny Bright and The Clumsy Juggler*, 2018. Mixed Media. Dimensions Variable. (Photographed by Mark Woods.)



**Fig. 17.** Photo of a sideshow "tall man" from *The Circus*, 1870's-1950's.



**Fig. 18.** A photo of a contortionist from *The Circus*, 1870's-1950's.



**Fig. 19.** Erin H Meyer. Installation view of *The Clumsy Juggler*, 2018. Fibres, PVC pipe, Mixed Media, Found Objects, Stage Lighting. Dimensions approx. 6' x 6' x 6'. (Photographed by Mark Woods.)



Fig. 20. Erin H Meyer. *The Clumsy Juggler* (Detail), 2018. (Photographed by Mark Woods.)



**Fig. 21.** Erin H Meyer. *The Clumsy Juggler* (Detail), 2018. (Photographed by Mark Woods.)



**Fig. 22.** Erin H Meyer. Installation view of *The Shiny Bright*, 2018. Fibres, PVC pipe, mixed media, found objects, stage lighting. 4' x 3' x 9.5'. (Photographed by Mark Woods.)



Fig. 23. Nick Cave. Installation view of *Sojourn* at the Denver Art Museum, 2013.



Fig. 24. Two example images of circus acts from the 1980's and 1990's that feature especially colorful poodles.

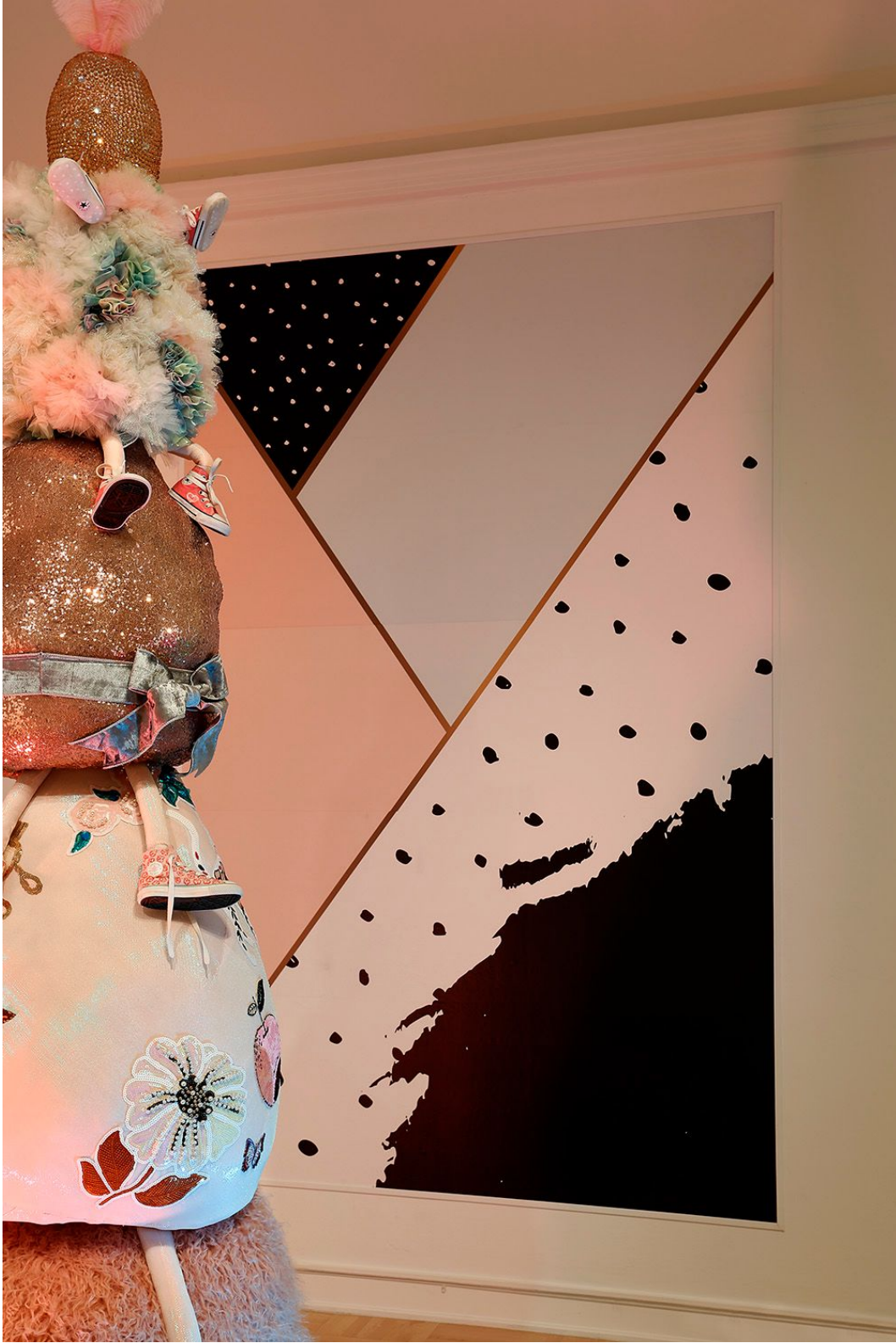


Fig. 23. Erin H Meyer. *The Shiny Bright* (Detail), 2018.



**Fig. 24.** Erin H Meyer. *The Shiny Bright* (Detail), 2018. (Photographed by Mark Woods.)

## Bibliography

- Cramond, Bonnie. "Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Creativity - What is the Connection?" *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 28 (3) (1994): 193-210. DOI: 10.1002/j.2162-6057.1994.tb01191.x
- Daniel, Noel, Jando, Dominique, and Granfield, Linda. *The Circus, 1870s-1950s* (Köln: Taschen, 2010).
- Elliott R, "Executive Functions and their Disorders", *British Medical Bulletin* 65 (2003): 49–59.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 181-182.
- Levin, Mike. "The Art of Disability: An Interview with Tobin Siebers." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 36 (2016): <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1263/1272>.
- Marchetta N, Hurks P, Krabbendam L & Jolles J, "Interference Control, Working Memory, Concept Shifting, and Verbal Fluency in Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)", *Neuropsychology* 22(1), (2008): 74–84.
- Siebers, Tobin. "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body," *American Literary History* 13 (2001): 737-754. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3054594>.
- Siebers, Tobin, "Disability as Masquerade" in *Disability Theory*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 100.
- Simic, Charles. "The Truth in Poetry" in *Dime-Store Alchemy: The Art of Joseph Cornell*. (Ontario: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1992.)
- Williams, P., Evans, Dylan W., Roberts, David J., & Thomas, David N. *Ernst Haeckel : Art Forms from the Abyss : Images from the HMS Challenger Expedition*. (Munich ; New York: Prestel, 2015).