

**Exploring the Intersection of Race, Adoption, and Evangelical Culture Through a Studio
Practice**

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A thesis

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Abstract

Media and media consumption is based on perception. Perception comes with biases that exist from upbringing, personal belief systems, and many other things. Exploring the intersections of those ideas is even more exciting. This document serves as an examination of religious upbringing, racial identity, and perceptions of the art world. Those topics create the work within my studio. My interest and my work exist within those intersections. This document will also be entered into the archive of an institution, J. Jack Halberstam dedicated their book *Queer History*, “To All of history’s Losers.” Archives do not record stories like mine, but this time it will.

Dedication

In Memoriam

Thistle Quickbear-Stalder (Pagona Vitticeps)
Nettle Taylor (Pagona Vitticeps)
Popcorn (AKA Mr. Mann) Taylor (Oryctolagus Cuniculus Domesticus)
Frogtholomus Taylor (Kaloula Pulchra)
Harold Potter-Quickbear-Stalder (Chameleo Calyptratus)
Doug Quickbear-Stalder (Pagona Vitticeps)
Sunny Quickbear-Stalder (Gongylophis Colubrinus)

Etiam Viviens

Daisy June Quickbear-Stalder (Canine Lupus Familiaris)
Kevin Quickbear-Stalder (Pagona Vitticeps)
Freckles Taylor (Eublepharis Macularis)
Spaghetti Taylor (Hetrodon Nasicus)
Rotini Taylor (Gongylophis Colubrinus)
Noodle Taylor (Pantherophis Guttatus)
Buddy Taylor (Pagona Vitticeps)
Elphaba Quickbear-Stalder (Chelonoidis Carbonaria)
Lasagna Taylor (Python Regius)

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This thesis aims to analyze the intersections of identity, mainly focusing on the intersection of religious trauma, adoption, and race within the context of a working studio practice. It is written as an analysis of the self, the body, the archive, and the intersections of identity.

Chapter II: Background, is a case-study-like analysis of my experiences with the evangelical church through the lens of being Native and adopted. It is contributed to this thesis to solidify evidence for the conclusions made in this thesis. It explores the childhood of an evangelical believer up to their deconstruction.

Chapter III: Evangelicalism, is an analysis of three different talking points with the evangelical church: abortion, sexuality, and race. It explores these concepts through three media sources: *The Duggar Family*, *Jesus and John Wayne*, and *Jesus Camp*. It is contributed to this thesis as theoretical background for my studio practice and the underlying themes and influences of decisions made within the studio.

Chapter IV: Native Identity, is an analysis of Native Culture through three different lenses: music, television shows, and adoption. Some of its sources include: Walt Disney's *Peter Pan*, *Reservation Dogs*, *Rutherford Falls*, and a research paper by Joseph M. Pierce. It is contributed to this thesis as a reference for cultural influences that the artist draws from in their studio for aesthetic and research purposes.

Chapter V: Artistic Influences is an analysis of three separate artists that have influenced the studio practice and who may create consideration for the larger Art world. This chapter explores James Turrell, Walter De Maria, and Cannupa Hanska Luger. It is contributed to this thesis for the purpose of showing the art historical background, roots, and consideration for this thesis and studio practice.

VI: On Practice, is an explanation and guide through the best work from the last two years of this Masters's program and aims to show the connections and growth between each project and research focus. It is contributed to this thesis as evidence of the physical work produced over the past two years.

II. Background: Reflections on Childhood and Reconstruction

“Before Jehovah’s awful throne, ye nations, bow with sacred joy; Know that the Lord is God alone,
He can create and He can destroy, He can create and He can destroy.”
(Evangelical Hymnal)

“Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders,
Let me walk upon the waters,
Wherever you would call me,
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be held stronger
In the presence of my savior.”
(Hillsong United, Oceans (Where Feet May Fail))

“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for it all.”
(The Bible, James 2:10)

I was born and raised in Southern Indiana, in a rural town with more cows than people. I do not talk about myself because I enjoy it; instead; however I hate it, but it is pertinent to give context to my view of the world. This will be a breakdown and analysis of how my background shaped my current studio practice- an abrasion on the surface to give further context.

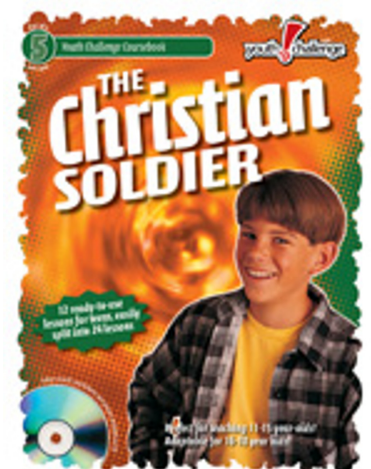
Everyone in the town I grew up in is evangelical to some degree, a word that will be defined later, however, I will describe the experience in detail now. The first church that my family attended was quite large. It had its own basketball league with cheerleaders, two services on Sunday, one on Wednesday, and several activities throughout the week. I was never good at sports, although I played basketball several times in the league. Sundays were dedicated to worship; Sunday mornings, we would sit in the adult chapel. Sunday evenings, we were taken into a separate room. Wednesdays were AWANA days. There was Bible Bowl on Thursdays, and I took voice lessons on Tuesdays. Fridays, my parents had a leadership meeting for the community events we held once a month, and typically my practice for the church play. I will further break down This abundance of information and accounts.

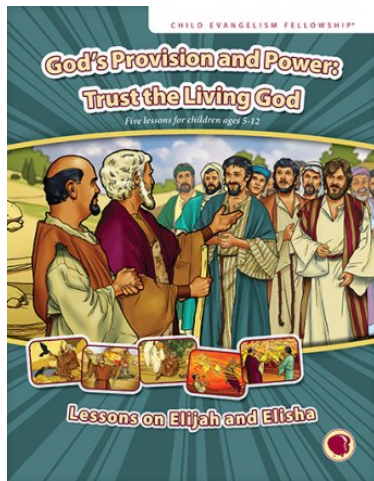
Adult Chapel was strange; the band was loud and played the same four songs. Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) was a five to ten-minute affair where people would sob at the altar:

*My Chains Are Gone, I've Been Set Free,
My God, My Savior, has ransomed me,
And like a flood, his mercy reigns
Unending Love
Amazing Grace
(Chris Tomlin, Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone))*

I realize now that the expectations of this sect of Christianity were the chains that held me down and begged me to drown in a sea of suffering. I could not be what the church sought me to be, but I could also not be myself; I was trapped in a middle ground between the two.

Nevertheless, after thirty minutes of singing four songs and crying, adult services were held, and a sermon was given. The pastor was always old and I never knew him well for reasons that will be addressed later in





the story of the familial departure from this church. However, old did not mean feeble. He was a strong man, jumping up and down on the stage and scream until his face was red with blood and rage. His sermons never made sense and were never about Jesus; he would speak about addiction and prison. I vividly remember an in-depth description of how men would sneak things into the jail through their anal cavity, how that was sodomy, and how those people would be damned to hell for all eternity—all while screaming and stomping for an hour. Rarely did we address the Bible in these sermons- more so, it was political. Queer people were terrible. Addicts were bad. People in jail were bad. I was bad. My parents were awful. Everyone, everything, was inadequate. Furthermore, God was angry, so very angry.

Sunday nights were different- six kids crammed into a side room together. We did not like each other. Often I was the object to be picked on because I believed the most out of anyone there. It started with ordinary children's stories about Noah, Abraham, Job, and the basics of the Bible. As we got older, it became more obscure characters that I adored: Esther, Jonah (beyond the whale), Elijah, and Elias. Then it stopped being about the Bible at all. Suddenly, the stories were disregarded, and we discussed sex and drugs. We signed cards promising never to have sex before marriage; we were given rings representing how pure and perfect we all were.



The ring never fit my finger; I wore it on a chain around my neck. Logically, I know it was because my fingers are small and agile. Still at the time, I thought that my inherent impurity made it unfit Nevertheless, some of me have always thought it was a beautiful allegory for what was to come, what was to pass. Eventually, those people were removed from the children's service. I believe this was because they kept teaching us about our love languages, making us take tests and quizzes so that we could intimately understand what we liked from love. According to this sect, there are five love languages, and you will objectively lean towards one more than the others:

Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Gifts, Acts of Service, or Physical Touch. They aimed to make us the perfect subservient women to the man we would be wed to. I was never married within their timeline. I never fit the quizzes because I never believed that receiving love was a singular act.

Wednesdays and Thursdays were fun days, at least for me. I was always academically minded.

I viewed the activities as a challenge that I could rise to. AWANA, or Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed, is a pay-to-play system. You could be a Christian scout for eleven dollars a year. The groups are divided by age. Those ages receive specific workbooks. The workbooks have chapters that involve memorizing verses, writing



essays, interviewing people, and making presentations. I remember the last book, Book 4, had a yellow cover. In the middle of the book, an exercise was to interview a divorced person and then make a poster board explaining why divorce is terrible. I thought I knew no one who had been divorced; it was highly frowned upon within the church. However, it turned out that one of my group leaders had been divorced. I sat in a room with her. I did not ask questions; I just listened. She told me how she had always wished she had waited and kept herself pure for her husband. She was sad. I did not need her to tell me as I could see it on her face. Each time we finished a chapter, we were given a sticker that we put on a badge that we wore all the time. In the last book that I completed (Book 4 of Truth and Training), there was a discussion question:

“What does God want me to know about the future?

God will judge nonbelievers at the great white throne.” (Awana International, Truth and Training Book 4)

There was always a correct answer and a wrong answer. There was always scripture to back it up. I was trained not to think. I was taught to believe so hard that at one church camp, my best friend slipped me a note that said I “clung to God like a magnet does metal.” The letter suggested that I believed so hard that I would never stop. Until I did.



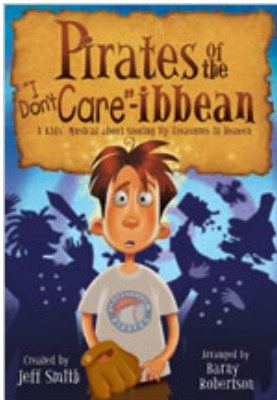
Thursdays were very similar to Wednesdays, except it was much smaller. Bible Bowl was not open to the community; it was a national competition team. If AWANA was for childhood fun, this was the antithesis. There were no snacks, and there were no treats. We honed our skills to hit the buzzer at just the right time. We memorized an entire book of the Bible every competition season. I was good, a top pick. The knowledge I gained from this time is still ingrained in me. Stupid things that are of no consequence now are still things that I remember with ease: A raven was the first bird released off of the arc, John the Baptist wore camel hair clothing, and a camel can not pass through the eye of a needle. I placed first consistently, though I never bragged. Bragging was not

humble. However, now I will brag. I can still, to this day, score a perfect score on Jeff Foxworth's Great American Bible Bowl, which is the same as a Bible Bowl with a higher budget and for charity. Bible Bowl's general prize is a scholarship to a Christian University. I never made it to nationals. It was costly to go to DC. Nevertheless, it was fun; or at least when I was told it was fun.

I do not have words to describe Fridays at the church, this is just hyperbole, but I still do not understand this day. My parents helped run community events. Once a month, we would hold church in the parking lot. This started as an anti-Halloween tradition. On Halloween, the church would advertise a form of a trunk or treat. The only rule was that you could not wear a costume. We did not celebrate the devil's holiday. This evolved into the once-a-month direction. Typically, it was

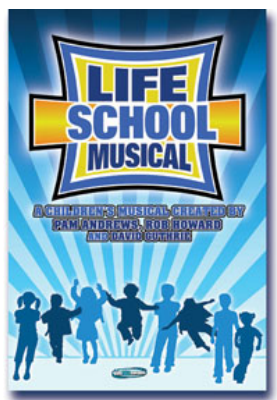
barnyard or carnival themed, and after the sermon, everyone in the community was welcome to the large barbeque from the man who made the train grill, the bouncy castles, dunk tanks, etc. It was a giant party for Jesus. While my parents planned those events I would go to play practice. Honestly, the plays were named ridiculous things: The Pirates of The Idontcareabean, Life School Musical, and Away in A Mango. None of these had much to do with their parody counterpart and were more akin to the discount Walmart bin of musicals. The strangest plays we did throughout the year were in the fall and around Easter. One was titled (literally): You Are Going To Hell. It was advertised as a sort of haunted house. It was held in the gymnasium with all the regular lights turned off and unique red lights installed to replace them. The adults would act out all the different ways they made it to hell; drunk driving, drugs, etc., with a special guest appearance from Judas. The children, myself included, were dressed in all black, and we would run around the track upstairs, appearing like little demon shadows. Towards the end of the play, we would integrate into the audience and jump-scare people, dragging them with our little demon bodies to their eternal damnation. The Easter play was, perhaps, even stranger. The month before, they would begin to erect the temple. I do not mean a

model of the temple; I mean a temple to the absolute perfect specifications of the Bible. We would start there, seeing Jesus flip over tables and a priest dying in the holy room because he did not do the rituals correctly. From there, we would wander into the woods; Peter would betray Jesus, and a rooster would crow. I have no clue how they made the rooster crow, but they did. Jesus would be led further into the woods, and a child and their father would sing this song:



“Daddy, Daddy,
 What have we seen here?
 There’s so much I don’t understand.
 So I took them in my arms
 And we turned and faced the cross
 Then I said dear children,
 Watch the lamb.”

(Ray Boltz, Watch The Lamb)



We were led further into the woods, and with at least five gallons of dyed red corn syrup, Jesus would be dripping blood from the cross. The story went on from there; Mary cried, Jesus lived, and then it was over. It was an overwhelming sense of every sensory hell that you could imagine. It stunk, was loud, and was long; my feet always hurt, and we did it every Sunday for a month.

I will summarize the church with a few organizations and activities I have not touched on because I either did not enjoy them or they were not weekly occurrences. The church basketball league was run through an organization called UPWARD. It was similar to AWANA, a once-a-week practice with a game every other Saturday. We were given pins with the same sticker style to place on it, or, if you were a cheerleader, they were regular stickers to put on your megaphone.



Everyone got a sticker each week based on sportsmanship or for other merits that I no longer recall. The only thing I remember from it was receiving my last sticker to complete my pin; I was the only one that ever did. I had not played that week, I was at Bible Bowl, so I was given the fellowship sticker for being the most Christlike. I quit the league a week later to pursue God.

There was also a week-long camp in the summer. The first time I went, I wanted to leave so badly that I was begging them to let me call my parents. They did not let me. There was morning devotional, then morning chapel, then quiet devotional. We were allowed to do activities after this, separated by boys and girls. We would have night chapel, campfire devotional, and dorm devotional in the evening. Once a week, usually in the middle, we would be rounded up around dark. They would come in wearing Roman uniforms or camo; it depended on the leadership. Grown men would scream that the United States was being taken over and that we were no longer allowed to believe in God. This was a test. They would march us through the woods, and we would witness to them, begging them to believe in our savior that only desperately wanted to love them with no strings attached. Eventually, they would believe and let us go. The following night Jesus would come into the chapel accompanied by loud music and incense.

Furthermore, he would drag himself across the floor. Then we would worship God for an hour, locked in a chapel in the Indiana heat with no air conditioning. (I will point out that someone always fainted at least once a year, usually in that chapel). This was called cry night, and I can objectively tell you now that we were all crying because we were all so sleep-deprived that believing was the only option. I would then come home from camp and sleep for days.

On the same grounds was a much nicer lodge with heating and air conditioning for the winter retreat. They were different every year, but the one that stuck in my mind was my 16th birthday present. It was January, frigid. The alleged theme was career building. However, we built no careers. I do not remember much of this retreat; it was so traumatic that I mostly blocked it out. However, I remember the first day we were there, when we sat in a circle, prayed, and held hands. We wrote our names on paper taped to the camp director's door. We promised to dedicate our lives to Christ. The next day the camp director described the men's version of this retreat. How men could be strapped to the cross for an hour to know what it felt like to be Jesus. He could not do that to us. It would have been considered child abuse. However, he could stab our fingers with glucose testing strips and then have us smear our blood next to our name. To know a fraction of the suffering of Christ. My blood ran cold that day, something shifted in me, and I knew this was wrong. I knew that if there was a God, and if he loved me, he would not want me to emulate the suffering he endured for me. So I did not do it. Furthermore, I was shamed for it. Moreover, it shifted my relationship with religion forever.

To wrap up this chapter, I will explain why we left the church and why I never knew the pastor well. My older brother (there is a nearly twenty-year gap between us) was not a good Christian boy; he will admit it. He loved softball. Moreover, the best way to play softball was to be in a church league, so he would come to church once a month to ensure his status on the team remained good (He referred to himself as a bomber, meaning he only hit home runs). Somewhere between the games and the services, he met his wife—the pastor's granddaughter. I wish to distinguish between telling too much and not saying enough; this is not my story.

However, I will say her family did not like my brother in any sense of the word. He was older, she was sneaking around with him, and it was overall not a great idea. The pastor pulled away from us after they started dating, especially after she was no longer allowed to reside in the family home¹. He would go down the line and shake my parents' hands, my hand, and my siblings' hands, but he would not shake my brother's hand. This is the ultimate Evangelical slight; even my mother knew it. She was disappointed and angry. Eventually, we stopped going altogether to the church; my parents removed themselves from leadership. We went to a new church, but the damage this church had done was complete, and my faith was shaken. I have never believed the same way, if at all. My mother does; she still regularly discusses my salvation with me. She is asking me not to be queer and to stop smoking weed and drinking. My response is always, "I am okay with who I am, and I have no desire to change. I am happy." I am happy is such a powerful phrase that I feel joy now that I had not felt within religion. That my deconstruction was my salvation. This does not matter to her; her perception of my eternal damnation is the only thing that matters. I usually try to avoid her after these conversations because they leave me shaken and shell-shocked by what I was at one point.

¹ There are organizations that provide helplines for Christian families to call into and receive advice for children of any age. This advice can range from recommending searching and drug testing, boarding schools, wilderness therapy, or in the case of adult children, outright disownment.

III. Evangelicalism: An Analysis of Three Core Beliefs

“There is a fountain filled with blood Drawn from Immanuel’s veins, and sinners plunged beneath
that flood Lose all their guilty stains, Lose all their guilty stains.”
(Evangelical Hymnal,)

There's a long black train
Coming down the line
Feeding off the souls that are lost and crying
Rails of sin only evil remains
Watch out brother for that long black train
(Josh Turner, Long Black Train)

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”
(The Bible, Romans 3:16)

Evangelicalism is a very complicated sect of religion because while it does centralize around the Christian God, it goes about it in a militant way. It is not just about recruitment, it is about believing that God is a universal authority and that the Bible is a universal truth and a cornerstone for law-making; nothing else is tolerable. The practices of this sect inevitably do damage to some percentage of its congregation. In this chapter, I will analyze Jesus and John Wayne, Jesus Camp, and Josh Duggar's 2021 pedophilia.

To analyze these cultural pieces, I find it important to define the creators and participators in the creation.

Kristin Kobes De Mez is the author of *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted Faith*. She has written for everyone from The New York Times to ChristianToday, but more importantly, she is a professor of History at Calvin University. Calvin University is a non-profit private college in Grand Rapids, Michigan. According to its website, they are affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church of North America and The Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. Their school motto is: "My heart I offer you, Lord, promptly and sincerely." They advertise that 100% of their faculty are committed Christians and they have a three-day music festival that boasts "mind-blowing concerts." It is a fairly conservative Christian school. Her book was met with evangelicalism with some scathing responses from Jonathan Leeman. He called her a wolf (Mth 7:15) and described her as a false teacher from 2 Jude. Overall, she was criticized within her community. But she was not without fault. When there arose the question about whether or not she supported the LGBTQIA+ community, what should have been a simple yes or no answer became a one-thousand-word answer. She admits in it that growing up she held a view that "same-sex marriage is sinful." but also says that she doesn't believe theology should govern laws. This is the only statement she makes, she washes back and forth throughout the rest of the statement. It was described by Chorus in Chaos as "a 1,000-word non-answer, which gives you all you really know she lands." But I don't think it's quite as clear-cut as that. From a Twitter thread on November 30, 2021, Du Mez goes into a different set of details. She describes how her church would convene a form to discuss human sexuality, how she'd never had a student seek validation, but how she had seen the consequences of disownment. She calls it "deep, soul-seeking agony. Existential agony." She discusses a student suicide and that she failed them. She finished that tweet with "To treat their stories flippantly, to use any of this to score culture wars points, is not the way of Christ. That much I know." This is not a perfect answer, but I do not believe that faith is a linear process. She is not perfect, that



much I can agree. But I do not believe that she is completely dismissable.

To understand Josh Duggar, we must understand his family and his upbringing from multiple angles. I will examine the Duggar Family from three sources: their own website, *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, and the *Fundamentalists Wiki*.

According to their website, Jim Bob Duggar (the father) proposed to Michelle Duggar (the mother) in 1983. He married her the summer that she graduated high school, she was seventeen and he was nineteen. The whole affair was fairly cheap from their recount. They bought a house after their honeymoon and they were off into married life. They began married life with the idea of two or three children and birth control pills. They had their first son, Josh (the pedophile), three years later, and then Michelle went back on birth control. Michelle got pregnant on the pill and then had a miscarriage. They sought scripture and decided to renounce birth control and asked God to give them as many babies as he wanted. They proceeded to have nineteen children. In 2002, they gained media coverage during Jim Bob's government career. This led to a magazine interview which led to a television special. From there, they decided to build a house and start the famed TLC television show *19 Kids and Counting*. They have ten boys and nine girls and those children are also beginning to reproduce, resulting in twenty known grandchildren.

The Encyclopedia of Arkansas describes the Duggar family as Baptist first and foremost. It then goes on to describe the Josh Duggar controversy briefly, including the dates that TLC pulled their episodes from the air, including the spin-off: *Counting On*. Interestingly, the encyclopedia points out that the children do not watch television and their internet access is closely monitored. They also follow the courtship model of dating; Jim Bob is infamously known for having a test to date his daughters. Overall, the Duggar parents have control over their children's lives in tradition with the *Institute for Basic Life Principles* under Bill Gothard. This is a ministry that describes itself as "dedicated to giving individuals, families, churches, schools, communities, governments, and businesses clear instructions and training on how to find success by following God's principles in Scripture." They have training facilities abroad and domestically, prison programs, and an extensive amount of online resources.

The Fundamentalist Wikipedia, a fan website updated by primarily what is known as "fundie snarkers", is an extensive document. It describes the Duggars as having twenty children, nineteen biological and one adopted, along with twenty-six grandchildren. It also points out within the first paragraph that some of their children have begun to veer away from Bill Gothard's teachings. It provides an in-depth breakdown of each child's family. They are described as Quiverfull, a movement that dedicates itself to producing as many children for civil and government positions as possible. It also describes the "Buddy System", in which Michelle Duggar assigns each of her younger children a "buddy", which is an older child that is in charge of them. It also goes into their debt-free facade that has fallen away in recent years due to their multiple financial scandals.

The filmmakers for *Jesus Camp* are named Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, they live in New York City and are not evangelical. Filming another movie, they met a Baptist pastor and from there were able to find *Kids on Fire*. They viewed this film as an analysis of the 100-million-person-strong culture war. The more interesting history lies in the leader of this summer camp: Becky Fischer. She has an extensive history of being on television and as a public speaker, which she proudly lists on her

website. She self-reports 30 years in children's ministry and has resources in 50 nations, 29 of which she has been to. She posts videos with titles like “Should I force my children to go to church” and “Spiritual Warfare for Children”. And, as *Jesus Camp* showed, she aims for indoctrination. Finally, I want to touch on where these children are now. Of the four children that this documentary followed, all of them have had some sort of crisis of faith, but only one has completely left the faith. The one that has left the faith says it both was and wasn't child abuse, that it was hurt people trying to cope with hurting.

I was raised in this culture from the age of around three when I was adopted by my maternal grandfather and his wife. I began to deconstruct my faith at eighteen when I left for college, but the fear of hellfire and damnation left me residually believing in God to date. It is from those experiences that I intend to analyze specific texts, public figures, and films to see what they're underpinned, and sometimes over pinned, goals truly are.

Jesus and John Wayne is objectively an analysis of toxic masculine culture that has been co-opted by this sect of religion. I will use it first to define what an evangelical is. Per Kobes Du Mez's definition: “To be an evangelical, according to the National Association of Evangelicals, is to uphold the Bible as one's ultimate authority, to confess the centrality of Christ's atonement, to believe in a born-again conversion experience, and to actively work to spread this good news and reform society accordingly.” (Kobes Dumez, *Jesus and John Wayne*) To break this down a little bit into easier-to-digest terms: The bible is the law over everything and everyone, consensually or non-consensually. The confession of atonement is often called being “saved” and one can be saved as many times as necessary if they stray away. The born-again conversion experience involves studying, immersion, and loving the experience. It is all-encompassing and demands every ounce of a person, nothing of the old life may continue to exist. Finally, spreading the “good news” and “reforming society accordingly”. This is the meat of what it means to be an evangelical, from a young age (if you grow up within the church) you are trained to be unafraid to walk up to total strangers and ask them to believe in God, and if they do not you are to press, prod, and beg. Reforming society accordingly means voting Republican, in the plainest terms. The evangelical church does not believe in marriage equality, abortion, immigration, or anything that would bring joy, and they expect you to push for this to be a universal reality.

Understanding what this sect's objective goals are aside from politics does begin to explain their militant beliefs. This existed before Donald Trump, this sect loved the Bushes' just as much, but they seemed to come alive during the reign of Trump. According to Kobes Du Mez, “In 2016, nearly three-quarters of white evangelicals believed America had changed for the worse since the 1950s, a more pessimistic view than any other group.” (Kobes DuMez, *Jesus and John Wayne*) This can be traced directly back to their views on Obama's presidency, described by the text as “Obama's election had issued a warning call to evangelical leaders. Leaving nothing to chance, they made the most of the moment, working arduously to stoke further fear and resentment. By the end of Obama's eight years in office, even as the president's overall approval ratings had been among the highest in recent presidential history, white evangelicals remained his most stalwart critics. Seventy-four percent viewed him unfavorably, compared to 44 percent of Americans generally.”(Kobes DuMez, *Jesus and John Wayne*) Obama was described as an antichrist-like figure

that had come to the world to destroy it, he was the harbinger of death. And due to the insularity of this group and their willful denial of science and fact, the church constantly believes itself to be in the right. Why this group hated Obama is fairly simple, the surface face level of Obama went against their core beliefs. Things such as refugees, immigration, homosexuality, and BIPOC rights do not cross their minds as a positive thing but are viewed as a doomsday-level emergency. There is always a why and a way to fix these “problems”. This pressure gave way for the emergence of Donald Trump. Kobes De Mez describes Trump as “Trump wasn’t just a nationalist, he was a Christian nationalist, and he wasn’t afraid to throw his weight around. Evangelicals hadn’t betrayed their values. Donald Trump was the culmination of their half-century-long pursuit of militant Christian masculinity. He was the reincarnation of John Wayne, sitting tall in the saddle, a man who wasn’t afraid to resort to violence to bring order, who protected those deemed worthy of protection, who wouldn’t let political correctness get in the way of saying what had to be said or the norms of democratic society keep him from doing what needed to be done. Unencumbered by traditional Christian virtue, he was a warrior in the tradition (if not the actual physical form) of Mel Gibson’s William Wallace. He was a hero for God-and-country Christians in the line of Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, and Oliver North, one suited for Duck Dynasty Americans and American Christians. He was the latest and greatest high priest of the evangelical cult of masculinity.”(Kobes DuMez, Jesus and John Wayne)

Evangelicals love television- they love people that look like them and when controversy comes they are the first to forgive and forget some of the most egregious acts. They will go against the religious text that they use as a foundation for their bigotry to turn a blind eye to the wrongs of others. Now that the stage has been set for what evangelicalism is and how it centers itself on a core set of



political beliefs, those individual beliefs can now be analyzed a bit more in-depth. I will target three separate issues within the church: sexuality, abortion, and race.

Abortion was not always an issue in the evangelical church; Kristin Kobes Du Mez did an interview with NPR on the history of the subject in relation to the evangelical church in 2022. She explains that, in the late 1960s, this was a much more complicated issue

than whether it was morally right or wrong, and that in 1971, 1974, and 1976 the Southern Baptist Convention granted access under many circumstances. She goes on to explain, “But I think more

importantly, you have the rise of second-wave feminism and, in conservative, white, evangelical spaces, a real backlash against feminism. And over the course of that decade, abortion became linked to feminism. And so you see the sentiment start to shift so that in 1979, when political activist Paul Weyrich identifies abortion as a potential to really mobilize conservative evangelicals politically, to help build the Moral Majority, then it is a very effective mechanism for doing so.” Abortion was definitely one of the first political mobilizing points where the church changed its mind, abortions were okay until abortions were being performed. Then it became immoral to have an abortion and to participate in the culture of being pure, you must hate abortion and actively advocate against it. This is easily pinpointable within the two media sources. The Duggars have a long history of being staunchly against abortion. Jill Duggar posted 199 weeks ago on Instagram “If you assist or have assisted women in abortions or have had an abortion, know that you are loved and there are people who want to help !Text “HOPE” to 73075” along with a recommendation to see Unplanned, a film about Abbie Johnson who was at one point a Planned Parenthood director and is now a staunch anti-abortion activist. She smiles in front of a poster for the film with her husband, Ben, and the



commenters outpour their support for banning abortion, likening it to murder. In 2020, Jim Bob and three of his daughters were seen marching in the Northwest Arkansas March For Life, proudly holding a sign with a fetus and the words “7 weeks after conception”. And their cousin, Amy Duggar, tweeted in 2022: “ABORTION IS OVERTURNED!!! THANK YOU JESUS!!!” But this is



not an insular case, it is not just the Duggar family who is savagely begging in large numbers for Jesus to save all the babies of the world ever. The 2006 documentary, Jesus Camp, also had something to say about abortion, as well as its leader, Becky Fischer. In the documentary she has six instances of mentioning abortion: “God, end abortion and send revival to America. Seriously... kids, I believe: you are the beginning of a movement that can be raised upon? The moral outcry can overthrow abortion in America and could turn this around.

Jesus, I plead your blood over my sins and the sins of my nation, God end abortion and send revival to America.”

[Repeat]

Children are crying to you, God. Hear from heaven, Lord. It's Time! Too long, Lord. Abortion, God.

Abortion, God. (Chanting) Righteous judges! Righteous judges! Righteous judges! Righteous judges! You made a pact with God tonight that you are going to pray to end abortion in America.” (Becky Fischer, Jesus Camp)

In these six instances, she brings up the cornerstones of evangelicalism. She uses the Bible to drive a moral point, this being that abortion is bad. She is creating a call to action to the parents of the children who may have had an abortion, a call to be reborn of the sin. She is centering Christ in her political beliefs and, most importantly, she is telling other people to do the same. This is not a belief that has changed since the documentary, either. 52 weeks ago, she posted an image on Instagram of her television, Fox News was displayed on the screen and the headline reads: “140+ Amicus briefs were filed in MS abortion case” with the scrolling headline reading: “630,000 legal induction abortions reported by the CDC.” Her caption reads: “PRAY IN THE SPIRIT FOR THIS GUY! SCOTUS is eating him for lunch!” The comments include praying hands and crying emojis to show her followers' distaste for the

existence of abortion. In conclusion, evangelicalism does not care about the facts, the science, or the evidence. It does not care about lack of faith, it does not care about rights, it cares about militantly ensuring that they are the moral majority and that only their morals can be followed.



Sexuality within the church is viewed through a very simple lens. One that I can easily define: It was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. This is a crude statement that erases a large amount of queer identity but it is a very simplified version of how the church views this “contentious issue.” *Jesus and John Wayne* describe the evangelical logic for homosexuality as “If a father was absent, a boy might start to identify too much with his mother and begin to develop certain feminine qualities on a subconscious level,” (Kobes DuMez, *Jesus and John Wayne*) opening the door to homosexuality. Essentially, gayness is centered mostly around men. Therefore the issue must be the father. If the father is absent, then the mother takes over the father role (this is inherently viewed as a poorly done job). This amount of feminine energy leads to the subconscious taking on too many feminine qualities, and therefore the person becomes susceptible to homosexuality. Science refutes this, I know that, and this is not my own core belief as a queer person. But, it is what I heard growing up, what was my baseline, and which is still a message being spread throughout the church. Becky Fischer describes it in *Jesus Camp* as “We’ve decided the bible is the word of god. We don’t have to have a general assembly about what we believe. It is written in the bible, alright? So we don’t have to debate about what we should think about homosexual activity, it is written in the bible.” (Becky

Fischer, Jesus Camp) There is no room for debate in her eyes, the Bible says in a handful of verses that homosexuality is a sin, therefore it is a choice, and therefore people just shouldn't do it. She followed up this statement in a 2013 interview with *The Other Journal*, "Why is our culture so hung up on passing laws to protect homosexuality and abortion? These are things that destroy families, people, and lives. They are possessed with an agenda of self-destruction, self-gratification, and defiance. It is they, not Christians, who are trying to tell everybody else what to think and what to do, but nobody seems to notice that." The church has created a culture where wanting equal rights, when those rights inherently go against the church, is wrong. The government must function for the evangelical church or it is quite literally the end of the world. This is not a view that has changed with the laws either. While I understand that gender and sexuality are two very different things, for the sake of understanding this culture we are going to conflate them for a brief moment. Derrick Dillard, the husband to Jill Duggar, went on Twitter in 2017 to make some statements about the star of another long-running TLC show, Jazz Jennings. Dillard tweeted (with censoring for my own sanity): "I pity Jazz, 4 those who take advantage of h** in order 2 promote their own agenda, including the parents who allow these decisions 2 be made by a child. It's sad that ppl would use a juvenile this way. Again, nothing against h** just unfortunate what's on tv these days." Dillard crafts a very careful argument here, it's not the child's identity that matters, because their identity does not exist. It is that the parents support the child, that they allow the child to participate in medical decisions. In Dillard's eyes, allowing a child to be transgender is condemning them and their parents to hell for all eternity. It is a sad affair, not a joyous celebration. It is something that should be hidden away and ignored, not to be televised. This comes from a residual fear that seeing queer people will encourage children to be queer. In 2020, an anonymous user came forward on the Instagram account *duggarbates_confession*, claiming to be close to the Duggar family. The validity of this must be taken delicately, as no proof has come out to confirm or deny this claim: "Also, they have a gay child but refuse to believe it. I am so glad I don't have to see those people anymore." I believe speculating on the truth or denial of this statement would be pointless, but I do think it raises and mirrors an interesting sentiment within the Evangelical community. As Kobes De Mez reported on Twitter, she had seen families disown children. From my own experience, my parents continue to ignore and renounce my queerness. This is how their society comforts itself about the reality of deviation from gender normality. It shows within the queer people of the church a sense of fear and loathing, a denial of the true self. It leads to death and it is not a side of the church to be taken lightly. There are more extreme measures as well, camps that will "pray the gay away", and I feel it important to



acknowledge they exist but not speak on it further due to my own biased involvement with that industry. Although homosexuality is unforgivable, it would seem that the Duggar family can forgive a different form of sexuality easily. The family's oldest son, Josh, was arrested for child pornography. In 2015, after the leaking of a police report, Josh Duggar posted on *The Duggar Family's Official Facebook* publicly apologizing for molesting his sisters, "Twelve years ago, as a young teenager I acted

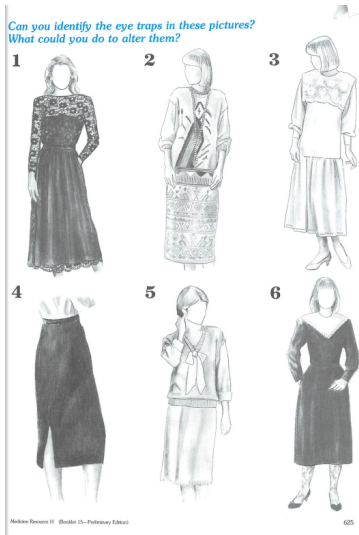


inexcusably for which I am extremely sorry and deeply regret." he goes on to say, "I would do anything to go back to those teen years and take different actions. In my life today, I am so very thankful for God's grace, mercy, and redemption." Jim Bob and Michelle had Josh sit down with a police officer and confess what he had done and then sent him to a Training Institute to receive therapy. Unfortunately, 4 years later Josh Duggar was back in the media spotlight for nearly the same reason. In November 2019, Josh's car

lot was raided and electronics were taken by the FBI. On April 21, 2021, Josh Duggar was arrested for two counts of child pornography. By December 9, 2022, he was found guilty and sent to prison where he currently resides. But the Duggars did not respond how one would expect to this judicial conclusion; Michelle Duggar personally wrote a letter to the judge asking for Josh to be released from prison because this wasn't "of his character" and how so many people would support him if he was released. She explicitly points out that he's financially wise, but she never addresses his crime. This letter went unanswered by the judge. But I believe that the contrast between the treatment of pedophilia and the treatment of queer people in this family that sits on a national stage is absolutely deafening.

In the revision of this paper, a new Amazon Prime Documentary came to light that must be entered into the record of this work for the sake of archiving. *Shiny Happy People* begin to peel back the surface layer of this particular sect of Christianity. This sect of Christianity depends on the

exterior appearance of perfection and complete paternal authority. But underneath that external perception is much more than just the sexual misconduct of one high-profile man in this sect. Complete paternal control does not end at age eighteen; this is an essential differentiator between this sect and the outside world (as they call it). Women are never given agency, instead, they live under their father until they marry someone that their father approves, they are given over to the husband's authority. In the case of the Duggars, this meant that Jim Bob signed contracts for his adult children waiving their financial compensation to him, as told by Jill Duggar herself.



She explained that it went so far as to make her film diary camera footage of her labor. (Shiny Happy People) Feeding into this lesser ideal, the curriculum that is backed by this sect and that most families use, teaches about eye traps instead of the typical school curriculum. Eye traps are clothing items that draw attention to a specific part of a woman's body, such as an inch-long slit in a dress or v-neckline. Finally, there is the law of crying out. This is taken from Deuteronomy 22:22,24 "And ye

The law of crying out

God has established some very strict guidelines of responsibility for a woman who is attacked. She is to cry out for help. The victim who fails to do this is equally guilty with the attacker.

"If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die.

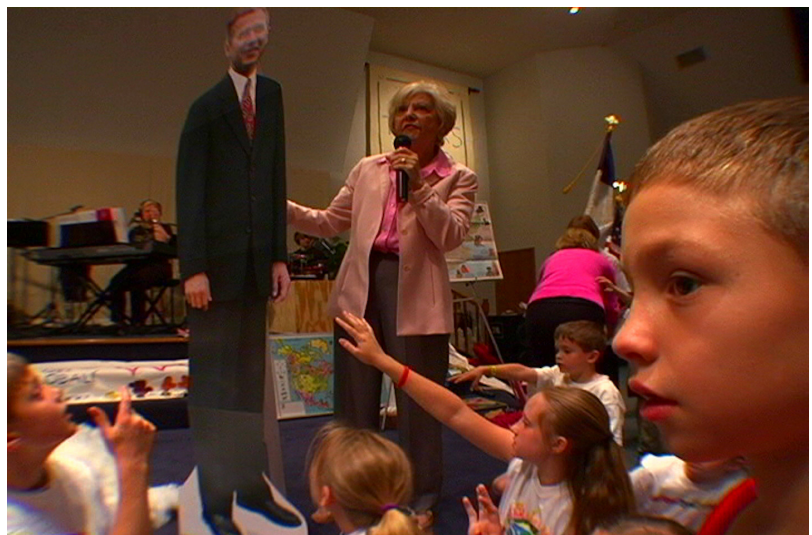
". . . And ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not. . . ." (Deuteronomy 22:22,24).

shall stone them with stones that they die; because she cried not."

This is interpreted to mean that a woman's duty during a sexual assault is to cry out to God for help. If she does not, then she was not raped. I will be fair and give a summary of what Jim Bob and Michelle had to say about the documentary: "[It is] sad, derogatory, sensationalized... with ill intentions hurting people we love." And as Jinger Duggar

said, "It was a time when we lived in fear... Fear of God coming down on me, and waiting to get me at any turn."

Finally, race within evangelicalism. I will explore this from a two-prong method because they are both inherently intertwined with the explanation for race in evangelicalism: adoption and social justice. *Jesus and John Wayne* gives an overview of what this sect believes generally about race, "Christian nationalism—the belief that America is God's chosen nation and must be defended as such—serves as a powerful predictor of intolerance toward immigrants, racial minorities, and non-Christians. It is linked to opposition to gay rights and gun control, to support for harsher punishments for criminals, to justifications for the use of excessive force against black Americans in law enforcement situations, and to traditionalist gender ideology." (Kobes DuMez, *Jesus and John Wayne*) Essentially, God chose America to be his country and anything that goes against this idea needs to stay away- far away. It creates a biased view of what people of color truly are. We see this in *Jesus Camp* when Becky Fischer describes why her camp is a good thing, "I'll tell you where our enemies are putting it, they're putting it on the kids. You go to schools in Palestine and I can take you to some websites that would absolutely shake your foundation, and show you photographs of where they're taking their kids to camps like bible camp. They're putting hand grenades in their hands, they teach them how to put on a bomb



belt, they teach them how to use rifles, they teach them how to use machine guns. It is no wonder with that kind of intense training and discipline that those young people are ready to kill themselves for the cause of Islam.”(Becky Fischer, Jesus Camp) This is an extremist view of the Middle East, objectively. A very nuanced view that paints a picture that everyone in Palestine is carrying hand grenades and ready to murder all Christians, which isn’t true. But it's fear mongering that is used to virtue signal who is the most righteous. Who is the most ready to die for God. But that is only one tactic that the evangelical church uses toward people of color. There are three Duggar scandals that show off a more modern version of evangelical racism. Jeremy Vuolo, Jinger’s husband, signed a statement of social justice penned by John MacArthur, the portion on race begins: “Race is not a biblical category, but rather a social construct that often has been used to classify groups of people in terms of inferiority and superiority.” It goes on to read, “We reject any teaching that encourages racial groups to view themselves as privileged oppressors or entitled victims of oppression. While we are to weep with those who weep, we deny that a person’s feelings of offense or oppression necessarily prove that someone else is guilty of sinful behaviors, oppression, or prejudice.” This is a complicated set of statements that restructure race and inflammatorily rewrite history to tell a story that is untrue, it denies the wrongs of the Christian Church and places the blame on the mentality of the person of color. It is a subtle dog whistle that almost states it’s not racist but throws in a “but” at the end. Derrick Dillard tweeted in October of 2017, “The US is one of the least racist countries in the world. In Unity, let’s strive to protect & improve this anomaly in history.” This, of course, goes back to nationalism. Nothing exists outside of America, it is everything. Nothing bad happens in America, those people are just victims. If we ignore people long enough, they will become silent. This is, of course, not the case, as culture continues to move forward and evangelicalism chooses to remain stubbornly still and obnoxiously loud. Jessa, one of the daughter’s to Jim Bob, also made a very long thanksgiving post which included, “I’m thankful for the Pilgrims who created the new land where they could worship God freely.” This is, of course, a direct erasure of Indigenous culture within America ever occurring. But more importantly it illustrates the level of education the children in this sect are receiving, because they are homeschooled and going through secular companies like Abeka, they are receiving all education through a specific lens related to the bible and this gives parents free reign to mold a new generation of Evangelicals.

They view the overseas adoption of people of color in a very different light. It was described in an NPR article featuring Kathryn Joyce as, “Evangelicals felt that they had kind of unfairly lost a claim to the good works side of Christianity, the social gospel, the helping the poor, and so they wanted a way to get back into doing something for poor people's rights, and adoption and orphan care came about as something that, I think, they could really invest themselves into without challenging or changing their stances on the other social issues that they care about.” (Joyce, NPR). In a way, children in Africa have become the new evangelical lamb sacrifice. It does not push against what they know, because they can imprint their beliefs on the child. Often, this goes quite poorly for the family because while there are evangelical adoption centers, there are also evangelical readoption centers as well. Second Chance Adoptions is an adoption center that posts children on Facebook. I am going to speak generally about this because I do not agree with posting vulnerable childrens’ stories where anyone can see them. But what this adoption agency does is take children that were

internationally adopted and puts them with a different family. This is not illegal or unheard of- I was shuffled between a few family members as a teenager. Some reasons a child might be rehomed according to their posts include, “Most past trauma was unknown at the time of the first adoption and it has caused issues in the home that we feel will be fairly simple to correct if placed in the correct home environment.” or “There are unhealthy bonds between all of the [sibling set] children.” or even, “Due to a close relationship between the foster and adoptive family [the child] has been unable to leave past trauma behind.” All three of these children were people of color that have since been moved to a new adoptive family through government grants. There is an idea within adoption in this culture that adoptees of color can be removed or replaced if they are not adhering to what the family is seeking from them. Adoptees must be moldable or they are replaceable. This is a subtle nuance of racism that asks a child to disregard their old life, their old culture, and ignore the traumas from that time to live in the light of God. This is a feat that is not possible for everyone, nor should it be inflicted.

This in-depth analysis of the church I grew up in serves an explanation for the underpinnings of my work. I firmly believe that the act of deconstruction² from evangelicalism is to suffer. While the end result is greatly worth it, when these ideals are things that you are taught as fact from consciousness; being ripped away from it is life defining. It is a difficult task that many people do not survive. It is a core underpinning of the work that I make because it defines who I am, and while I do not center “the self” in my studio, I center my consciousness and I center the intersections of the experiences I have had within a global lens. I am not the only one that has walked away from Evangelicalism, and I am not speaking out against it or for it. I am pointing a light on it because I wholly believe that even a glancing gaze at it can tell you everything you need to know. This can be seen within the positionality of my work, the vulnerable positions that I lay my body in mimic how vulnerable leaving the faith is without being an overbearing force like the church was. I leave room to question the intention because I never had the opportunity to do so. The vagueness, in many ways, is my sword and shield to defend myself from the onslaught of naysayers that enjoy telling me that the church is not as bad as I remember it. And to some degree, they are right. Because I still look back at my time with fondness, while I can see objectively that what I was taught was terrible, the close knit community is something that I still long for and know that I will likely never find again.

² Deconstruction, in this case, is not used in the generalized academic sense. Deconstruction in this case has been coopted by the Exvangelicals movement, a group of people speaking about their experience both in the church and after leaving the church. Deconstruction is used to describe the time spent examining the religious teaching within an upbringing and choosing which to remain with and which to let go of.

IV: Native Identity

“Flow fast my tears; the cause is great;
The tribute claimed an injur’d friend:
One whom I long pursued with hate,
And yet he lov’d me to the end”
(Evangelical Hymn)

“Blessed is the man with sons who walk beside him,
There’s not enough leaders out there, we should be riding;
They left our people broken, but homie don’t play the possum,
Learn to grow yourself, the set
Cause you can bet there’s nothing promised”
(Dreezus, Warpath)

Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.
(Sitting Bull)

Native Identity is a subject that is still complicated for me, logically I am well aware that I am Native and that this racialized identity influences every other facet of my identity, but at the same time it is hard for me to accept this identity as true. I was adopted and my adoptive father was assimilated and colonized to the point of not knowing his own culture. His mother was also adopted and taken off of the reservation. It is not so simple to identify as a race when there are multiple generations of removal. But that does not remove the race from the person. This precursor being addressed, in this chapter I will analyze three separate topics influenced by race: popular media, gender, and the murky lines of adoption. These topics will be viewed through both a historical and a modern lens to show perception vs reality. This chapter is about the cultural Native influences that help shape my studio practice.

Beginning in a musical sense, Walt Disney's 1953 Peter Pan is an interesting place to start. The iconic film about three children going to a magical place called Neverland is enchanting, a beloved classic from the mega-corporation that is Walt Disney. But there is a scene in the film and a song that I specifically want to focus in on, What Makes The Red Man Red? Shortly after arriving in Neverland, the three children are greeted by what the movie calls "the Injuns".



Sitting around a fire, the Lost Boys ask three questions of the Indian Chief: What makes the red man red? When did he first say "Ugh"? And Why does he ask you "How?" The Native characters seen on the scene have eyes that are mostly covered, each has a drum, their hair is not braided, and their most prominent feature is their nose. The Indian Chief keeps his arms crossed, wearing a headdress, he is tall and thick and passes around a peace pipe to the children, which Wendy plugs her nose to and turns away. These are all stereotypes of the American Indian. Even on the

surface, How is meant to be Hau which is a Lakota word for Hello. It is another language altogether that has been discounted in one sentence. But in 2017, What Made The Red Man Red had new life breathed into it by an award-winning Hip Hop artist from Rosebud Reservation named Frank Waln.

"Why does he ask you 'How?'
Once the Injun didn't know
All the things that we know now.

"You history book (lies)
Your holidays (lies)
Thanksgiving lies and Columbus Day

But the Injun sure learned a lot
And it's all from asking 'How?'"
(Disney, Peter Pan)

Tell me why I know more than the teacher
Tell me why I know more than the preacher
Tell me why you think the red man is red."
(Waln, What Made The Red Man Red)

The contrast between these two songs with the same name is palpable. While the Disney Company was playing up every stereotype of Native Identity in the 1950s to children, that influence resonated outside of that era and technically still continues to, while the company lists a statement before the online streaming that some of the depictions might be offensive, the film has not been removed from streaming services. Sixty-four years later, the influence of this film was still so strong that a young Native man wrote his version of it. A version that calls out the stereotypes of the original points out that the view of westernization being universal is wrong. Alongside the history of White America, is the history of Native America. My strongest example of this difference in history is the fact that in White America's history books, there is a battle called Custard's Last Stand. In Native America's history book, it is called the Battle of Greasy Grass. It is named as such because so much blood was shed that day that the grass appeared to be soaked in grease. This is not to say that one history is better than another but that the revisions of history and the way that one history can attempt to rank itself over another is problematic. Histories can easily exist alongside each other, but this has not been a desired outcome and therefore has not occurred.

Further diving into the perceptions of Native Identity in media, Youtube Channel Loberfilms started a series of videos called *Reel Injun*. In the video *Najavo*, he found two extras from John Ford films. Buff and James Edna had never seen their films before and made quick jokes about who they might have been on the screen. James brought up an interesting piece of history, though. Nobody had ever bothered to translate the Navajo parts of the movie, giving them free rein to say anything they wanted without anyone knowing. In *A Distant Trumpet*, some iconic lines said included: "Just like a snake you'll be crawling in your own shit." and "Obviously you can't do anything to me, you're a snake crawling in your shit." (LorberFilms, Najavo) Even during the filming of these movies, Natives were not happy and they were coping with it through humor. I think the most telling part of the interview is the fact that they never watched the films. The short video about Iron Eyes Cody is also interesting, the famous actor was in at least 100 films and was described as being "the image of what people thought an American Indian should be." I want to dissect this sentence- we can assume people are referring to the target audience of Westerns. We can deduce from the previous interview that the target audience of Westerns was likely White people since the extras of the movies weren't watching them either. Though, not what an American Indian is, what white people thought an American Indian should be. This is an important distinction because in popular culture, for a very long time, the thought of an American Indian superseded the actually Native person.



Thankfully, we are beginning to come into a time where this is not the case. In the past several years, there has been an emergence of contemporary Native media. My first

introduction to this genre was FOX's *Reservation Dogs*. A television series about a group of Native children living on a reservation. They form an odd version of a gang and get into shenanigans like stealing a hot chips truck and then selling said hot chips in front of their house. One of the most iconic characters in this series comes from the spirit realm though, his name is Spirit and he was a warrior at Little Bighorn. He is hilarious while also imparting important life lessons on the main character, Bear. In NDN Clinic, he imparts this advice on Bear: "Oh. Got beat up again, huh? Ah. Me, back in the day, I would've went at 'em, like that, you know? Threw a spear in that little kid's head, you know that little white one. But you probably should've ran. I got some good ones in. Custer wishes he would've ran. Like that. Took his legs off. But he didn't. He died. I'm not gonna be here forever, so... The moment we're born, we're going to die. No I mean, California. California, ayo, yeah! That's where you're going to go? You're gonna run away? Head off west, dream big. They all just run away... We all just run away." or in Roofing, "Shh, you hear that? Ghost dogs. Somebody's heart's fear is stronger than yours, Little cub. See you later, little bear. (High pitch crying) (Distant beeping)." (Harjo, Episode 2) Spirit always comes to Bear when he's unconscious and in a way, he is the devil and the angel on Bear's shoulder, his moral compass. He laments for the past while acknowledging Bear is in the future. I firmly believe Spirit is pushing for Bear to find his own path in being Native, to honor tradition and to be modern. *Reservation Dogs* is a depiction of what contemporary Native identity is like through the eyes of a young person. Spirit stands for the guiding big brother that I wish I had and he stands for the generic Native at the same time. He is a paradox of a character that should be hated but is so loved, he is the depiction of the actual reality of the stereotype in the Western genre, what a real plains Native would have been. He has a personality, a life, and he is a person, something that was missing from the Western gaze.

Rutherford Falls is a Peacock Original about the fictional town of Rutherford Falls, which sits right on the edge of a reservation with a casino. Within that casino is a cultural center, where the main character, Regan, has just taken the curatorial position. In the episode Negotiations, she is curating a show of donations brought in by the community. There are funny donations, such as a flamingo snow globe from a man who hitchhiked to Florida, and there are serious donations like a dead mother's ribbon for ribbon skirts. But the most interesting donation was a blender, the transcript reads as:

Earl: I was a featured extra on this movie.

Reagan: (Spinning around a copy of *Young Guns II*)

Earl: Got real close with Emilio. He gave me the nicest compliment. He said I was doing a lot in my scenes.

Reagan: Oh, wow.

Earl: A week later, I went on a date with a girl. I told her that I knew Emilio. 30 years, 4 kids, 2 dogs and a snake later, we're still together.

Reagan: That's beautiful.

Earl: And if you can believe it, she's still dynamite in the sack.

Reagan: Oh, that's... Why don't you tell me about the blender?

Earl: Oh, my sister Corissa took it to Standing Rock to protest the pipeline. They ground beans for coffee, blended tomatoes for soup, made smoothies for Shalyin Woodley. Then it broke January 24, 2017 when pipeline construction was allowed.

Reagan: What are the chances they'd break on the same day?

Earl: Pretty good actually, Corissa was pissed and she smashed it against a yurt post. Still, that blender saw everything. Where is that thing, anyway?" (Schmeiding, Episode 6)

Reagan is then seen digging for the blender in the dumpster. She finds it, it is displayed. This episode explored the fingerprints of what we leave behind and what that leaving behind can mean. A broken



blender, given the right context and history, is suddenly so much more than a blender. This comes from how the story is given, how the narrative is told. And how those narratives shape identity. This is of interest directly to my practice, studying what we leave behind and what that leaving behind means.

This summer I came across a book called *Reclaiming Two-Spirit*, this book explores the language we use through the lens of history in a way that is not often viewed. This book is written to

decolonize gender and sexuality, to explore what was erased from history. Drawing from multiple anthropological points, it's a well-nuanced text that explores culture. I will use this text to explain the position of being Native and queer. So let's break down how queerness in Native America was shaped by colonization. "Since 1492, the people who made colonialism possible have attacked and attempted to reshape the gendered and sexual identities and the social and cultural life of Native Americans. Addressing these complex histories is critical to understanding the choices. Indigenous people make in relation to the fluid identities embodied by Two-Spirit people today." There is documented history of queerness in Native culture predating colonization that was then documented and eradicated. An example of it is described in an account, "However, what de Vaca believed he saw, and how he described it, caused as much violence to the historical representation of the Cuchendados as assaults with cannons and harquebuses could inflict. Like scores of other European invaders, de Vaca expressed shock to discover families that included a number of "impotent, effeminate, men." (*Smithers, Reclaiming Two-Spirit*) There was an inherent choice to not understand Native culture, there was immediately a goal to conform the Native identity to match the White identity. Queerness was not welcome in colonies, therefore it had to be eradicated by force if necessary. This creates an intergenerational effect of trauma, one that is difficult to overcome and can make self-identifying as queer even more difficult. There is also the aspect of violence that comes from being Native and identifying as queer, as put by Smithers: "It is not easy for Two-Spirit people to reclaim their histories. Over 80 percent of transgender, gay, lesbian, and Two-Spirit Native people will experience physical violence in their lifetimes. That violence highlights how colonialism continues to lay siege on Indian Country." (*Smithers, Reclaiming Two-Spirit*) There is a statistical likelihood that if you are Native and identify as queer, you will see some sort of violence in your

lifetime. This is a difficult choice to make, objectively, to live authentically and know you will see violence or to hide the true self. It is the ultimate act of pushing back against colonization. It is a vital act in preserving Native culture. “History’s cycles, its openness, means that the story of what we today call Two-Spirit people is as much a tale of Indigenous knowledge, loss, and reclaiming as it is a lesson in European “discovery,” violence, and prejudice. It is a “devilish” history that’s full of seemingly queer side notes that link Two-Spirit people to the past, connect them to communities in the present, and help them imagine possible futures.” It is through reclamation that Native culture continues to thrive, in being queer, it keeps the tradition of the ancestors alive. It is these acts that are the ultimate acts of decolonization and the ultimate acts of constructing a modern Native identity.

Finally, I will address adoption in relation to Native identity by using a reading by Joseph M. Pierce, *Adopted: Trace, Blood and Native Authenticity*. He begins this essay by admitting that the work will lean on autobiographical without being one. He explains this by saying, “My reliance on personal experience owes in part to the lack of inquiry into the lasting effects of transracial adoption in critical Native studies and is also a methodological choice I have made to speak as a particularly situated subject/product of American Indian adoption policies.” (Pierce, 57) This is to say that the issue of Native adoptees is not addressed by its academic counterparts. It goes on to explain the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The ICWA has the goal of “...to protect the best interest of Indian Children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by the establishment of minimum Federal standards for the removal of Indian children and placement of such children in homes which will reflect the unique values of Indian culture... ”(25 U.S. C. 1902) The goal of this act is to keep Native children within Native communities, the need from a large number of Native children being removed from their families by agencies and placed with primarily White families. This was a last attempt at “kill the Indian, save the man” after boarding schools and day schools failed. This act is currently on shaken ground, Brackeen v Haaland is currently arguing that the ICWA should be overturned for two reasons:

a.) “Whether the [Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978](#)’s placement preferences [...] discriminate on the basis of race in violation of the U.S. Constitution.” (Brackeen v. Haaland)

b.) “whether ICWA’s placement preferences exceed Congress’s Article I authority by invading the arena of child placement [...] and otherwise commandeering state courts and state agencies to carry out a federal child-placement program.” (Brackeen v. Haaland)

It is currently an active court case and will hopefully have a conclusion met in June of 2023. One side fights for the preservation of Native culture, the ultimate goal of the ICWA, and the other fighting for the preservation of the tenth amendment. Ultimately, the outcome of this court case will shape how future Native children in the care of the government will be handled in the future. And that will, potentially, shape how Natives engage with their culture over the next several generations. Pierce identifies this in the pre-ICWA wave of adoptees and generations thereafter as, “For adoptees, this belonging must pay attention to both lived history and the pressures of colonial violence; it must include a “return” that does not attempt to assert the self as divorced from the collective. But there

are no scripts, no maps, for this “return.” Rather, the possibility of this belonging is based on trace, blood, and authenticity.” (Pierce, 62). The assimilation through adoption and child-welfare pre-ICWA shaped the generations after. The after generations are then faced with the decision to remain assimilated or to return. Returning is hard and it is not a straight line, it is like carefully climbing up a mountain with all of the wrong gear. I speak from the experience of having been in-family adopted and having my grandmother be adopted off of a reservation. It is hard to know where to begin entering a culture, and how to do so appropriately. As Pierce describes, it is a type of racial melancholy: “process, melancholia signals the incompleteness of multicultural demands to assimilate to whiteness.” (Pierce, 64). He goes on to describe the effect of this melancholy: “This melancholic desire is traumatic, messy, and ghostly.” (Pierce, 64). It is a search, a desire to find belonging but also a fear of what that belonging will cause, what the chain reaction will be for breaking the unspoken vow to chameleon into whiteness. To reject that comfort and desire.

The act of becoming Native has been a direct influence on my studio practice, and a driving force in the art that I have created. It is the underlying force and what is at stake in the creation of my work. It is through the intersections of my identity, being Native and extriabal adopted, that I have entered a queer space where creation is the only driving force to survive, it is the documentation of my existence and my connection to the broader archive of art history. To know what was almost lost and to hold onto it tightly is my way of contributing, my way of giving back. It is also my way of forgiving what has occurred in my life, it is how I find peace with the pain and how I am able to sit with atrocities and remember for the sake of preservation.

V. Artistic Inspirations

“There is no path to heavenly bliss,
Or solid joy, Or lasting peace;
But Christ th’ appointed road;
O may we tread the sacred way.”
(Evangelical Hymn)

“But the potter knows the clay,
How much pressure it can take,
How many times around the wheel,
Till there’s submission to his will.”
(Perrys, *The Potter Knows The Clay*)

‘Look,’ he said slowly, ‘there are days when Stella goes to the Metropolitan Museum. And he sits for hours looking at the Velazquez, utterly knocked out by them and then he goes back to his studio. What he would like more than anything else is to paint like Velazquez. But what he knows is that that is an option that is not open to him. So he paints stripes.’ Fried’s voice had risen. ‘He wants to be Velazquez so he paints stripes.’
(Krauss, *A View on Modernism*)



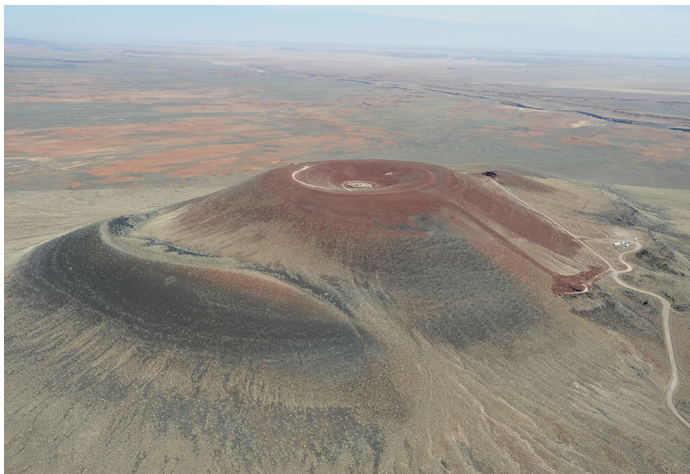
James Turrell has always been of interest to me, his light spaces are all-consuming experiences into the depths of consciousness and the creation of humanity. The first Turrell that I encountered was in New York City at *The Museum of Modern Art, Public School 1. Meeting* was Turrell's second Skyspace. The seats slant back, inviting you to sit down and watch. Though, the guards will yell at you if you lay on the floor. And you just stare up, into a blue square.

Sometimes an airplane crosses by. I stayed in that room for three hours staring up. The feeling is worshipful, like the chapel that I grew up in. Four benches, all facing each other with high backs. They exist a particular hardwood that can only be likened to a church pew. He went on to make Live Oak Friends Meeting House. A Quaker Meeting House in Houston, Texas. In an interview with *art21* he discussed two key points of interest, his first meeting and his relationship to the meeting house. In the interview, he describes his first meeting as, "And my grandmother was trying to tell me what you did. So, her explanation to me was: you went inside to greet the light. And this idea—to go inside to find that light within, literally as well as figuratively—was something that really propelled me at the time." He goes on to say, "You have to also remember that I fell away from all this—and for many years, nearly twenty-five years, had no interest whatsoever in this—but carried on this involvement with light. And again, talking about this idea of light—particularly the light not seen with the eyes—was very important." To some degree, I am beholden to light in the same way that Turrell is and that is of interest to me, which will be addressed in Chapter Six. But more of my interest is in his conversation with himself about the church. The core of his work goes back to a moment in the church, and even though he falls away from the church, that is something that he holds with him. To some degree, he is still influenced by his religious roots and creates work that reflects on that to some degree. His work has footprints of religion but never the likeness, this is something that I strive to emulate in a way that is different from his approach. He also discusses his relationship to the physical meeting space, "Well, for me that was kind of the meetinghouse I always wanted to see." I have often imagined what I would desire from a church that I wanted to see, but I can not conceptualize that reality in my mind, therefore it is not even a conceivable reality.

While I never had the pleasure of seeing *Aten Reigns*, James Turrell's centerpiece for his solo exhibition at the Guggenheim in 2013, I have seen many pictures and done my due research to try

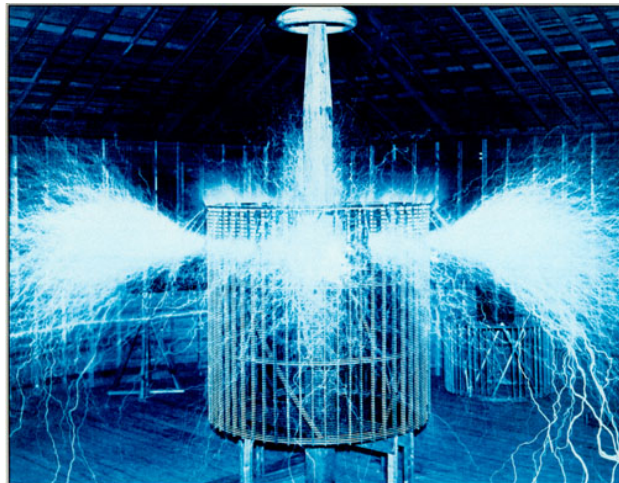
and have as full a picture of the artwork as possible without seeing it in person. I have been to the Guggenheim- the layout is a circle. The Rotunda sits at the bottom and reaches up for what seems like forever. *Aten Reign* made it so the Rotunda could only be experienced by looking up. It was a combination of themes Turrell had been studying for years. It explored color and light and religion. Aten refers to the Egyptian sun God, he was depicted as a disk with his hands stretching to either side. Aten gives the illusion that he goes on forever, the same way that Turrell's work seems to go on forever. Reigns suggest that Aten rules. If Aten is the sun, and the sun produces light and color, then it is easy to deduce that light reigns.

The light that rules Turrell's artistic practice influences me because this light is as unobtainable as *The Archive*. It can never be reached, it can only be chased. The same way that I can only chase *The Archive*. He reaches for something that is unobtainable and only observable. And while I can touch



The Archive and I can see *The Archive* and I can observe *The Archive*, I can not control it. This is our practices depart. Turrell controls the light, uses and manipulates it to create illusions, he has obtained the unobtainable and doesn't allow his viewers to do the same. I do the inverse, I invite the viewer into the unobtainable and ask them to sit with me inside of it. I ask my viewer to exist in the nearly palatable discomfort. I do hold contention with Turrell, though. He owns an inactive volcano, and while this does not cause great ecological harm, it

does show exuberant amounts of wealth. The ability to move and build and recreate the inside of a crater is unimaginable. Adding to it that he owns mining rights to another location, according to an interview with Art21. Then there is the process of visiting the volcano, to visit the volcano you must donate \$6,500 and then pay travel expenses visit it. The donator is then referred to as a friend of the volcano. This work is the removal of the rose-colored glasses, suddenly all of Turrell's work looks like grandiose demonstrations of wealth. They are beautiful to be beautiful. And while I can see the deeper meaning, it is hard to see past how lovely they are. Somehow there became a disconnect from the roots of the work and the branches. Or perhaps that was always the goal and I was blind to it until *Roden Crater*, but what I do know is that



to

while I can appreciate the early work of Turrell, it is harder to appreciate the later work.

Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field* is, in concept, like something out of a movie. I have always imagined it being like the lightning scene from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but the more logical part of me knows that this work is in a desert and the work relies on lightning to function. Outside of the rainy season, the work is just lightning poles.

This work seems so massive, so isolating and alone. But looking at it on a global scale, from Google Earth, it looks like nothing more than a scattering of black dots.



Perhaps my gravitation to Land Art is explained by De Maria, as he explained in an essay about the lightning field “isolation is the essence of Land Art.” To some degree, there is an isolation aspect to my work. While De

Maria creates total isolation, I create crowded isolation. The sense of being lonely in a full room. The emptiness of existing near others with no meaning. These isolations are merely different sides of the same coin.

K-Sue Parker speaks better about the Lightning Field than I ever could, though, “The Lightning Field and the border are two examples of land divisions that exist out of the history of conquest and the same systems of proprietorship that supports a land Market that shapes the condition under which we live today.” (Parker, 1) The core of my critique of land art is that it feeds into the same system that it tries to overtake; using the land for art goes against the covenant of capitalism that demands land to be profitable in a conventional way. But buying large swaths of land, or being able to petition a gallery for a permanent room, requires a level of privilege that is only accessible to a select few. And therefore, it feeds into the system that it tries to break away from, it is a snake eating its own tail. The snake does not know what it does, it only knows its own hunger. In the same way that the production of land art does not know it feeds into capitalism and colonialism, it only engages with the land in a different colonialistic and capitalistic way.



Cannupa Hanska Luger is an artist that I have followed for at least five years. The way that he creates community, his analysis of the world and his beginning roots of creating mirrored shields for the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests quickly put him on my radar. I could analyze nearly every work he has made in-depth, but I will stick to my top two favorite works: (Be)Longing and Stereotype.

(Be)Longing is a 2019 work, it includes mixed media life-size buffalo skeleton, sculptural installation; ceramic, steel, ribbon, fiber and video. His artist statement begins: "When the US Army lost in battle against the Plains Tribes, of which I am a descendent, a different type of war was waged against us." (Luger, (Be)Longing) This war was the genocide of the buffalo, which depleted food sources, moral, and anatomy. The loss of buffalo then led to the endangerment of prairies and grasslands. Luger finishes by saying "Buffalo are a symbol of freedom; they represent sustenance and survival for Indigenous people; they have agency and immense power. Their might is matched by an innate duty to care for all who encounter them. They give endlessly -- even after extinction, we continue to benefit from their sacrifice. In this way, I see buffalo not only as victims but as the fallen heroes of the American Indian War. As collateral damage for the war that I continually survive, the buffalo were true martyrs." (Luger, (Be)Longing) In the video, water runs over the buffalo skeleton. There is a sense of duty and remembrance in this work, a need to produce to remember. I would argue that it is a more modern form of *The Archive*. It echoes my need to remember, *The Archive's* need to seek autonomy becomes more powerful like the buffalo. These remembrances, big questions, and pulls are what draw me to Luger's work and make me return to it. It engages with the same history that I am engaging with and creates a sense of kindred spirits, seeing Luger's work is a small nod that there are people like me in the world.

Stereotype: Misconceptions of The Native American is also a mix of sculpture, video, and performance. The film in this solo exhibition begins in black and white and slowly transitions to color, passing through generations and histories of stereotypes. The sculptures are various boomboxes that are filled with feathers or strings to look like dream catchers, the colors are vibrant. His performance was the ultimate act of self-destruction, he took the boombox and smashed it on the ground. But, most interestingly, he released an accountability statement along with his solo show:



"I, Cannupa Hanska Luger am but one filter understanding culture. If I am going to point the finger, I must point it back at myself. There is no way all of the layers of the Native American can be summed up in a single art piece. We as human being are multi-faceted as the interpretation of the star pattern depicts. Who we are is like a cut stone, each plane has an opportunity to reflect the light. However, it is the whole of the faceted stone that shines brilliant in the eye of the observer. I choose to recognize the splendor of the variety, the beauty of where we are now. Shining at every point between the romanticized 'noble savage' and the marginalized economic bastard. I recognize the value of tradition and the importance of adaptation. There is not separation between our art and ourselves. Each line is a song,

each shape a story, every color is absorbed from the place that we stand. And the place that we stand remains sacred and holy." (Luger, Stereotype)

There is always a point where I need to check myself within my work, creating Native Art in a contemporary way can reach murky waters, for me at least. Even treading carefully, there are slips. No one Native is a monolith to culture, it is a community effort with varying opinions and ideas. But the ultimate goal is to do good, with accountability and good intentions. It is the honesty with which Luger works that I reach for the most in my studio. It is the goal that I consistently have my eyes on.

IV: On Practice

“While carnal men, with all their might
Earth’s vanity pursue,
How slow th’ advances which I make,
With heaven itself in view”
(Evangelical Hymn)

“When the shadows of this life have gone
I’ll fly away
Like a bird from prison bars have flown
I’ll fly away”
(Jones, I’ll Fly Away)

“Throw all your anxiety onto him, because he cares about you.”
(Bible, 1 Peter 5:7)

This chapter will largely depart from the theory of the work and the background of the creation, and will instead focus on the act of the creation and the curation of creation. It will examine *The Archive*, materiality, and choices with the studio and the ownership of the sun. These are the concepts that I return to repeatedly, they are the invisible threads that interweave with my work to create cohesion, while I am not invested in a medium and have worked across several, actions or thoughts within these concepts continue to drive my work.

No Archive Will Restore You by Julietta Sign, a decolonial scholar who has written several books. *No Archive Will Restore You* is part autobiography and part critical analysis of *The Archive* as a concept. My personal connection to *The Archive* began in New York City. While sitting in a subway car that mostly smelled of pee, I saw a glove. I subsequently picked up that glove, and then I continued to pick up gloves. I am now surrounded by gloves, when I think I'm done with gloves, they return. Sign described the archives as "an elusive hope of our individual salvation." The act of picking up gloves felt as if it was going to save me, it was my tether to the earth, my tether to other people. It was my way of processing and understanding and remembering. It made me believe that I was important. Harvesting the power of the archive taught me that I could use the weapons of colonialization as tools, I could turn them against their system, using them to my advantage.



It was upon this discovery that I began to think of land ownership and land sovereignty. This was not the beginning of my thoughts on land sovereignty or my awareness of it. I will not say that I have always had a sacred reverence for the earth, but I will say that I do not have a concussion memory of not loving the earth. For a period of time, I took the dive into land and ownership literally. I began to build small parcels of land, they were not technically dollhouses, as they could not house a doll. But they were small, permanent memories of a place in time. They were a bit of land and fictionalized memories

that I could carry with me. This moment with *The Archive* where I was fictionalizing it and manipulating it to meet my needs is best described by Sign: "I respond awkwardly that my interest in the archive is more creative than intellectual. This is a lie, since I cannot parse the difference between these modes. I say, also, that my passion for the archive is rooted in the suspicion that its time has passed; it feels already like an intellectual remnant.

If the archive is a remnant, it is one that keeps whispering to me, insisting on its place in my everyday life." This was the moment in my studio practice where I realized that the thoughts that I scribbled down on bits of paper, the hours of research and the intimate following of specific areas of academia were as much a part of the work as what I placed in the gallery or in the critique space,

they held equal weight and were of equal importance. And while I tried to ignore the archive during this time, it was always there, waiting for the correct moment to sneak its way back into the forefront of my life. At that moment in time, it became dolls. Specifically, it became American Girl dolls and their representation. I took pause at Kaya, the company's Nimiipuu doll is set in 1746. While American Girl is known for its extensive collection of early American History dolls, their historic collection now spans as far as 1986. This places the historic dolls' time as far as the American Indian Movement, which began in 1968. But there is no representation of this part of American history in these dolls, The Archive was incomplete in a way that did not satisfy me. It began to whisper to me again and I moved towards it. This led to the creation of a doll and fictional doll company, Native Girl's featured girl was Winona. It was a several-month endeavor, starting with a base doll I first hand-dyed all her skin using thin paint and layering undertones. After the skin was at an acceptable point, I had to replace the hair and the eyes. The head of the base doll was placed in boiling water to soften it and then removed. Then the eyes were individually extracted and replaced. After that, the head was resown to the body. With the head in place, the hair had to be removed using scissors and razors. Finally, the hair was rooted and glued into place. The base of Winona was completed, but then there was the struggle of creating clothing and a sense of style for her. In fictionalizing The Archive, one considers all of the details. I knew that she was at Standing Rock during the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests, and I knew that she lived on the farm. It was through that process of thought that I settled on a hooded sweatshirt and skinny jeans. She felt real and tangible to me, she went out with me and kept me company and in many ways she was an archive of everything that I wanted. But Winona felt like the satisfied end of this road of thinking about *The Archive*, to continue my search to find a real answer, I would have to shift and continue.



My shift back to *The Archive* did not leave the concept of land sovereignty behind, though, instead, it sought to meet it and work within it. This has come most recently as several different iterations of cyanotypes, these prints are physical forms of my body, whether that be through the development process of a shape or the physical piece being shaped like me. An archive of my body surrounded by ambiguity. The works are always seen from what is perceived as an aerial view, largely due to how the cyanotype is printed with the sun. This specific perspective leads to thoughts of surveillance and search and rescue. How helicopters are used to find a body, not a person. These silhouettes became an ambiguous space, a queer space where identity was stripped and the focal point at the same time. As Sighn said, “The Archive is a stimulus between myself and myself.” Creating this work created so much energy between me and me. It is a meditative process that is laborious. I create my cyanotypes by hand from beginning to end. That process starts with finding a second-hand material, the more cotton the better, although synthetic fabrics create ghostly images of the idea of bodies, an interesting aspect of *The Archive* but not my focus. Once the fabric is selected, it is cut to size and shape. In the beginning, these were mostly squares and rectangles. I ranged from large to small, seeing how I could combine and contort my body within the space. But with time it has shifted to the shapes of my body, allowing the cyanotype to develop separate from my existence, further eliminating a person and creating a body in its place. After the fabric is prepared, the solution must be mixed and the fabric must be painted. In my bathtub, I carefully squeegee the chemical on it, and when it is saturated, I wring the fabric over and over again to remove the excess chemical. This process is repeated multiple times. In the case of developed cyanotypes, this process is repeated again after printing the image. The act of printing is always different, sometimes it is cold, and sometimes the sun shines on my face. It is in that period of time that time is lost completely, it is a time suspended away from *The Archive*. It is not freeing, it is not

meditative, it is frozen. Sighn puts words to the feeling of the moment of development, "I am a disquieted archive that fumbles in words. A thing made up of infinite, intractable traces."



There is one key and explicit choice that influences my choice in materiality with cyanotyping. The yellow chemical can only turn blue with direct UVB light, which is commonly found in the sun. I have chosen to exclusively use the sun for one specific reason: I do not desire to be a colonizer of light. While I could very easily use UVB bulbs typically used in reptile care, it would be as if I took control of the sun. This doesn't settle well with me, the sun is what keeps everything on the planet Earth alive, without the sun we would die. How could I take control or colonize something so important? Could I take its place? I don't believe that I could, so I won't even attempt it. In many ways, the United Nations agrees with my stance based on its space laws. The best way to explain this complicated sense of law is with a woman named Angeles Duran, who thought she could lay legal claim to the sun. She very confidentially filed legal paperwork and genuinely believes

that she owns the sun, as she said, "There was no snag, I backed my claim legally, I am not stupid, I know the law. I did it but anyone else could have done it, it simply occurred to me first." (Duran) She was very wrong about the law, but also very confident. There is the International Space Treaty, which bound the countries who signed to monitor individual citizen space activity. In simpler terms, you need a license to launch a rocket into space as a United States citizen. This treaty also directly addressed the ownership of the celestial bodies and how it would be handled:

States Parties to the Treaty shall bear international responsibility for national activities in outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, whether such activities are carried on by governmental agencies or by non-governmental entities, and for assuring that national activities are carried out in conformity with the provisions set forth in the present Treaty. The activities of non-governmental entities in outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, shall require authorization and continuing supervision by the appropriate State Party to the Treaty. When activities are carried on in outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, by an international organization, responsibility for compliance with this Treaty shall be borne both by the international organization and by the States Parties to the Treaty participating in such organization.

Therefore, there are at least three reasons that Duran's claim to own the sun is not only unfounded but ridiculous:

Duran has not, in any tangible way, claimed the sun. She has not been to the sun, the government has not said she may own the sun, and there is no traceable way she owns the sun. This makes her claim unmerited.



Even if Duran made it to the sun and had merit, the Spanish government would have to support this celestial ownership. They have not supported it or even commented on it. Which also blocks her access to claim ownership of the sun.

If the Spanish Government did support this Duran owning the sun, nearly every country on the planet would bear down on Spain for supporting this nonsense after explicitly signing a pact to not support it. This would not be a great move for the Spanish Government, and therefore Duran will never own the sun.

The sun and the sovereignty of other celestial planets is so

important that we as a planet agree on rules to it. I do not, even in a metaphorical way, want to have control over that. So I leave my work to the mercy of the sun, and while that may not always produce perfect prints, it produces with honesty. This honesty is something that feeds and nurtures *The Archive*, it keeps it alive. So I let it be and let go of a small fraction of control. It is a reminder that not everything can be iron gripped onto with meticulous control, some things are organic, and some things don't work.

This does not mean that using a body as *The Archive* is perfect, if anything it is the most imperfect housing for an archive possible. As Sighn says, "There is an archival crisis already looming here because the body's surface is ultimately not stable ground upon which to build an archive." The body is imperfect, it is biased, it is always shifting. Attempting to build an archive on crumbling memories and incomplete interactions with humans is the most uneven ground possible. It is the fatal flaw of the body's own creation. But this fatal flaw is the pressure that is required to produce work, without being on uneven ground, I have no reason to move forward, and complacency would be the downfall of my studio. This studio is both a continuous line and a circle. From one view, there is a progression of thought, a way that the pieces click together like a puzzle. In this view, I am on a

mission to find the next piece. I am searching for more knowledge, more technique, more thought, constantly more. From the other view, my studio is a circle. The thoughts follow each other, flow into each other, and feed each other. They are like rivers into a basin. The process is similar to Bruce Nauman's *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square*. Each step is thought out carefully, each movement planned. It is careful, it is thoughtful. Both of these exist at the same time, and it is the frenzied meditation that will continue to push my studio practice.

I finished my final bit of graduate school returning to my body, to the performance that I used to do. I purchased a one pound white chocolate mold of Mount Rushmore and dressed in all white. In the video of the performance, I blend into the wall from the white balance of the camera. I am merely a head, a mess of curly hair as I stand and smash the chocolate onto the ground. Normally I'd jump at such a loud sound but the way that eyes fall upon me and the murmured distraction and desire to look is fixated on me. The chocolate doesn't taste good, I hate white chocolate but had to use it on the principle of it being just as much a lie as the mountain it is molded to appear like. I couldn't have cared about the people watching me, they were only onlookers into something that I had carnally desired for years. I wanted to destroy that mountain, because in so many ways that mountain is the archive that haunts me. Mount Rushmore will never reflect back at me what I wish it would, but I can reveal in the satisfaction of its destruction. I can disrupted a space long enough to make a place for myself and then disappear out the side door, leaving everyone to wonder if I was real or a strange fever dream.



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