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Lifetime

A thesis (or dissertation) submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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LIFETIME

By Emily Elizabeth Kuchenbecker, MFA

A thesis (or dissertation) submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of (list degree, for example, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Social Work) at
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Major Director: Jack Wax- VCUarts Department of Craft and Material Studies

Abstract

Time is my bully. Time marks the start of something, as well as the end. We are all carrying out the inexorable passing of time as it relates to our impending mortalities.

I do not fear death.

The awareness of my body's impermanence employs me to feel that much more connected to the vessel containing that of which I am.

But what am I? Am I my body- or is it much deeper?

Through the work executed during my graduate research, I have attempted to quantify my existence through the archiving my time and body. This document ushers you through my perception, my relationship to nature, and how it manifests through discovering answers to what I believe it means to be human.

Vita

Emily Elizabeth Kuchenbecker was born October 17th, 1993 in Madison, Wisconsin. She graduated from Verona Area High School, Verona, WI, in 2012. She then received her Bachelors of Fine Art, from the University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI, in 2017. She participated in multiple public art installations throughout the state of Wisconsin, studied at the Pilchuck Glass School, Penland School of Crafts and Ox-bow School of Art. Emily currently serves as the Co-Chair of the Digital Media Committee for the Glass Art Society, and teaches glass locally at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond. Emily recently attended the 365Haridwar artist residency and received her Master of Fine Arts from the Craft and Material Studies Program from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2019.

“I began a kind of journey in which my life would become more insignificant and more wonderful than I could have ever imagined. And- this was the odd thing- every step of the way would taste of salt. Salt came in through my skin and my mouth left its mark on my headband. It was a part of the earth that moved through me. Gradually, not looking for it, salt became my teacher”

- Diana Kapple-Smith¹

¹ Smith , Diana Kappel. “Salt .” *Desert Time* , University of Arizona Press , 1992, pp. 141–152.

Sentience

Life

Some of my earliest memories involve my enchantment with the natural world. When I was young my brother was incredibly ambitious about bird watching. He would spend hours watching, filling the feeders and studying their calls. I always loved sitting in the backyard with him.... listening. Chris's largest ambition was to feed a hummingbird. So one day, Mom got him a fancy feeder and sweet, sweet nectar to entice the birds to visit.

Week after week we waited, but no hummingbirds visited.....

One afternoon, Chris and I were watching a storm from the living room window. While staring into the yard, we saw a flash of teal whiz through our peripherals.

Noses against glass, we watched the teal glide through the backyard. She danced, and whirled; stopping only for that sweet, sweet nectar.

Then suddenly...

She slowed down.

It was almost as if time had stopped when the hummingbird flew to the window and hovered.

Centered in our gazes, I met eyes with the bird...

I saw its life...

All of it.

Right there.

Her wings were moving so fast they looked still, and she continued to hover. Looking us in the eyes, she thanked us for the nutrients that would bring her to the completion of the day and the awakening of another.

Never before had I interacted so intimately with a part of nature. I had a physical reaction to the presence of this being and even though I was young, I somehow knew how precious this moment was.

It's because at that moment I realized that this bird and I were powered by the same stuff...

and that I too am alive.

Death

That same summer I was walking through the woods at my summer camp heading to read under a tree. I used to sit at the trunk, flatten the dirt and create a comfortable space to read my Junie B. Jones books. As I approached the tree I noticed something strange.

It was a dead rabbit.

Its bones were exposed to the air, dry and brittle. The fur was limp, and its ears were practically gone. I'm surprised I could even tell what it was to be honest. My body became stiff, as I was disgusted by the rotting carcass.

Yet something inside me was curious about where the life went.

I just couldn't stop looking at it...

As the way it was breaking down was sort of.. Beautiful.

So I drew it.

A few seasons passed and I went back to the tree. The rabbit was gone, practically consumed by the soil. All I could find was a bone, and in its place was a fern just starting to grow.

I remember feeling less scared about death after this- I saw the cyclical nature of life.

Still incredibly confused... I drew the fern too.



Figure #1: *Final Exhalation*, Glass, Mica, 2018

Self

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness, it took me years to realize that this too was a gift.”² - Mary Oliver

I remember what it used to be like.

Gathering wood from the backyard to build fires in the house. My mother, brother and father, bundled up and bracing the Wisconsin winters. I remember the fullness of this family, and all of the love.

I remember the connection, before it left forever.

When I was four years old I was molested repeatedly by my nanny's husband.

I remember his face.

The blanket he would lay on the floor.

I remember his mustache, the mustard colored carpet, the way he used snacks and toys to bribe me out of the nap room. I remember being told never to speak.

I remember being told never to speak.

² Mary Oliver- Thirst- *Uses of Sorrow*

But eventually I did. I told my mother what had happened. She blamed my father for finding the nanny, who blamed my mother for not finding one herself. I remember speaking, and regretting what I had said, for my voice led to the beginning of the end.

Yelling “don’t go”, while holding onto my fathers leg. Soon to watch him walk out of the door of the house for the last time.

I remember blaming myself for breaking the family apart. Angrily throwing petals at the ground while walking down the aisle. I remember saying “I will never call her mom”

I never spoke again about what happened at the nanny’s. It’s almost as if I have erased the memory completely . My family acted as if it never happened- so much so that I actually questioned if it did.

I remember being silenced by my step mother daily. The smell of brandy and cigarettes as she told me how unworthy I was. “Nothing you say will ever matter.”

Nothing you say will ever matter.

I remember going to my friends house for what we called “eat overs”

Their families sitting at the table, everyone with their own regular seats. The smiles on their faces as they went around the room asking each other about the day.

Was this what it was really like to be a part of a family? to be “normal?”

I didn't know it then but inside the box of darkness that was given to me as a child was a voice.

I wanted to be normal more than anything the world, but exposure to sexual assault and alcoholism weren't the markers of normality. Thankfully despite the past, despite how awful my stepmother was, my mother was there.

A woman so strong she could carry the universe on her shoulders. A woman who never understood my pursuit in art at first, but supported it anyway. A woman who guided me and reminded me throughout life that the dark times, the bad memories, the hard feelings- those are valuable. They mean something. They lead you right to the things that make you thrive. A woman who showed me the value of my body, and how worthy I am. A woman who reminded me daily that the only constant is change, life is cyclical, we are of the earth and we will return to it.

A woman who continues to remind me now that even the most beautiful things, if you look at them right, can be hidden in a box of darkness.

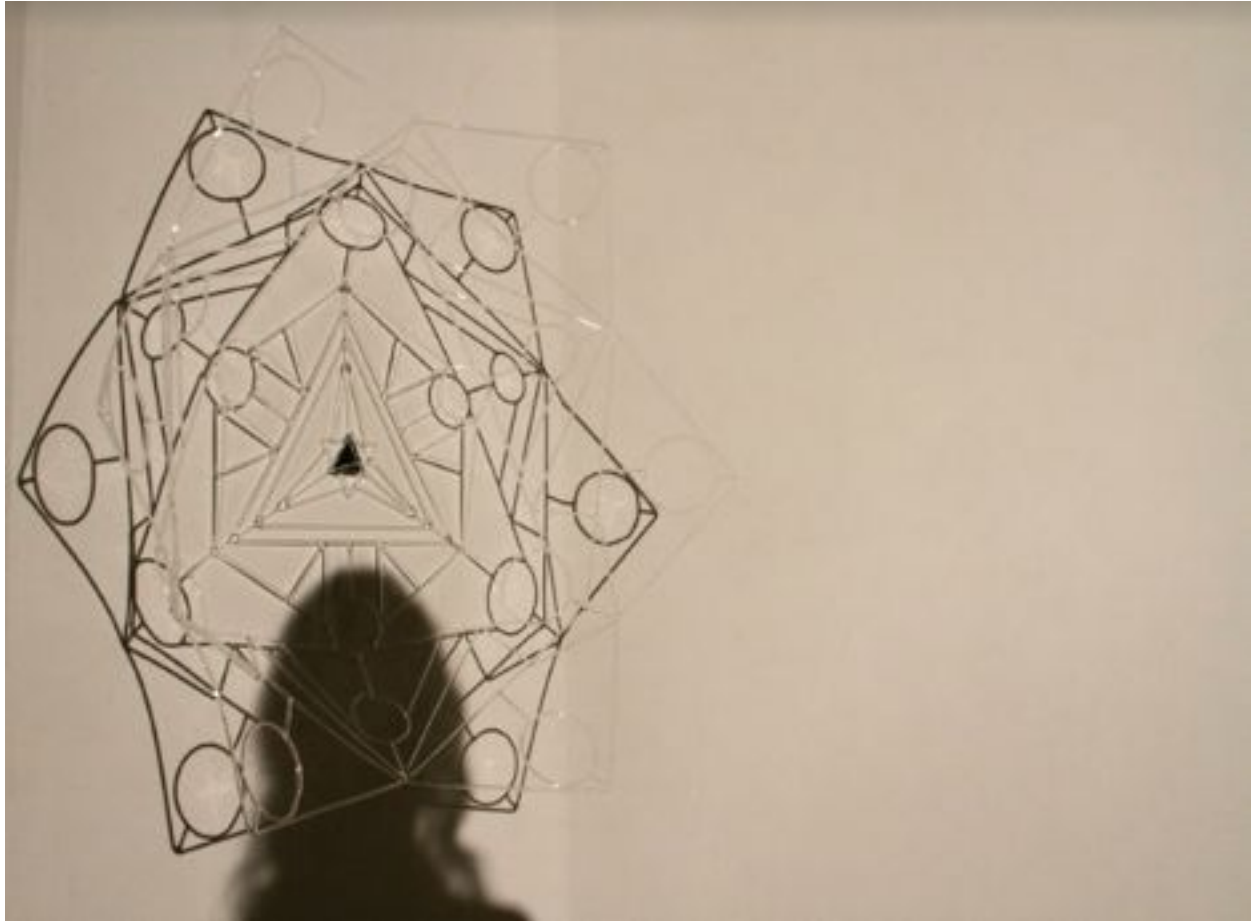


Figure #2: *When I Opened the Box of Darkness* , Glass, Mirror, 2017

Micro/Macrocosm

It's the external world where I found myself. My mother being a microbiologist made me aware of life on a microscopic scale at a very young age.

Mom would bring me to work from time to time and set me up near a microscope to examine slides. I saw the collections of tiny circles, cell walls, and nuclei repeating endlessly. I couldn't wrap my brain around how these unseen things had vitality yet, I was so wrapped up in their beauty.

Nature became my salvation.

I very much feel that when I leave home, I am not just going outside but rather, I am entering a network of vivacious energy. If these tiny cells were the basic units of life, and I too am a reflection of "life", then we must be the same, or at the very least— connected. The fractals and geometries of the natural world situated themselves as the platform for my artistic investigations.

Vascular Bundles are works containing cellular structures in glass made from traditional veil murrine³. I started by examining the cross sections of various botanical forms. By encasing these cells within solid glass, I used glass's inherent transparent and magnifying properties. When bundling separate pulls of glass, and pulling murrine I discovered some similarities between the glass and mitosis. In mitosis, cells split and regenerate. Similarly to pulling one cane the glass is pulled into one large cell, chopped and split, then rebundled to pull a second

³ Veil Murrine- a hot glass process of coating colored glass on the outside of a solid clear mass, pulling the mass into a long thin strand, later to be chopped into smaller cross sections of the pull.

generation. The staining of the cells reveals their intricate geometric structures, and I was keen to recreate the patterns in glass. I wanted this work to entice a viewer to think about the things in life that are intangible, to connect them to the smaller life forms that power their being. These works allowed me to deepen my investigation with glass, but they didn't communicate the vibrancy of life, they didn't reveal anything about being human... and that's really what I was searching for.



Figure #3 *Vascular Bundles*, Glass, 2017

Human as Nature

Scientists, spiritualists, and philosophers have come to find repeating mathematical order and sequences known as The Golden Ratio, and The Fibonacci Sequence, that appear in all scales of life. Geometry reveals an unspoken language of the natural world, and (wo)man as a part of it all.

Euclid (325-265 B.C.E.) of Alexandria, wrote one of our first recorded and most basic teachings of geometry entitled *Elements of Geometry*.⁴ This book contained the first recorded knowledge of the divine proportion as a mode of quantifying growth in plants. The Divine Proportion⁵ is a ratio in which the whole is to the larger in exactly the same proportion as the larger is to the smaller. Or, a pattern of numbers that increases by adding the two previous numbers. This ratio can be reduced to 1.618 (but is continuous) and has multiple names such as Phi, Golden Mean, Golden Ratio, and Divine Proportion. It is a mathematical representation of the structure and framework in which life manifests.

Plato (427-347 B.C.E) described five regular solids known as the platonic solids. These solids apply the divine proportion and are same regular polygons having the same number of polygons at each vertex. Plato defined these solids as natural elements such as earth, air, water, fire, and ether, and they define all matter within the universe serving as basic building blocks for matter.

⁴ *Elements of Geometry*- The Greek text of J.L. Heiberg (1883–1885) from Euclidis Elementa, edidit et Latine interpretatus est I.L. Heiberg, in aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1883–1885

⁵ Hemenway, Priya. *Divine Proportion: Phi in Art, Nature and Science*. Sterling Publishing Co., 2005.

Leonardo Fibonacci was the discoverer of the Fibonacci sequence, which first showed up in his book *Liber Abaci*. The sequence is a series of numbers that proceeds by adding the previous two numbers together and goes on infinitely. This mathematical sequence correlates with spirals. The Fibonacci sequence has a direct correlation to phi, for when you take two numbers in the sequence and divide the first number by the second number, the decimal is always 1.60 which is approximately equal to Phi. This sequence is commonly applied to analyze growth patterns of plant and human life. Leonardo Da Vinci himself even used this sequence to construct his masterpiece, the Vitruvian Man.

The plants and water, the elements, rocks, minerals, sky, sun and moon, they hold the answers to who I am, to what I am, why I am here, and why we're all here..This wonder and awe keeps me curious and I continue to ask child like questions that lead me to make work.

What does life look like?

Why is it that when I feel small in nature- I feel more alive?

How does my physicality shape the way I see the world?

If we are always rotating, why aren't we dizzy?

If the trees were removed, could we breathe?

What is the secret to the power of water?

Is there an unspoken language amongst ALL life- can it be taught?

Through my work, I strive to better understand the relationship between my body and the natural world. I make objects to bridge the gap between curiosity and unknown parts of the physical world by trying to make them tangible. Time, space, movement, and death are forces of the universe that guide it all.

The Circles of Time

Time moves in circles.

We have always followed the cyclical pattern of the Sun and Moon, and historically our time is based off of their movements. In Middle Eastern Civilizations , people recorded cycles and patterns of the celestial bodies in order to gain a deeper understanding of the world and of our place as humans within it all. Using tools like sundials and astrolabs they recorded movements of the stars and planets⁶. As humans evolved as a species, we have lost this connection to the outer world, and created an imbalance between ourselves and the earth- we now view time as simply numerical.



Figure #4: Oldest Islamic Astrolabe, Islamic Museum of Art, Doha.

⁶**Astrolabe**- two dimensional map of the heavens which shows the movements of the celestial bodies. "The Oldest Islamic Astrolabe ." *The Oldest Surviving Islamic Astrolabe*, Islamic Museum of Art , 2019, www.mia.org.qa/en/collections/metalwork/the-oldest-surviving-islamic-astrolabe.

Watching the calculated ticks and tocks of plastic hands moving across sterile numbers seems so futile. Is this really how I calculate the passing of my life?

We are ALWAYS subject to the celestial movements- the dances of the cosmos. In early Western societies, various philosophies were developed in attempt to understand where humans fall in this spectrum of a *lifetime*. Artists and philosophers provide us with rich and symbolic imagery supporting the theories of “how it all started” The book *Alchemy and Mysticism*, takes the reader on a journey through platonic imagery that “governs our understanding of the world.” ⁷

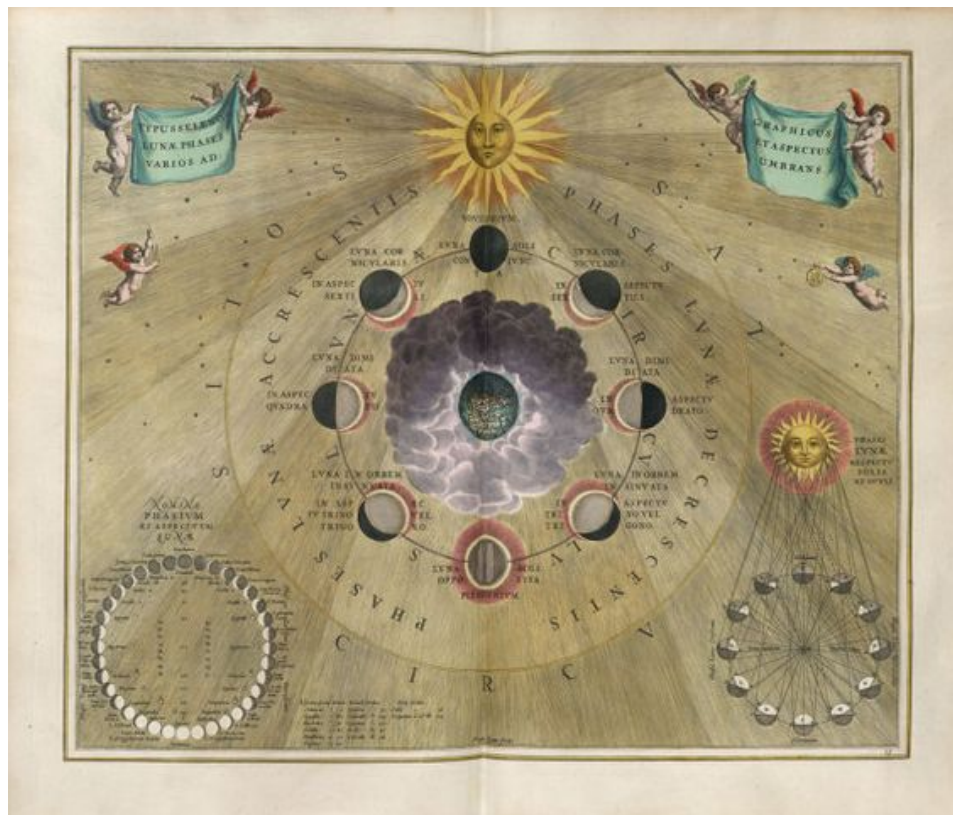


Figure # 5. A. Cellarius *Harmonia Macrocosmica*, Amsterdam, 1660

“ True, True, Without a Doubt, Certain:/ The below is as the above, and the above as the below, to perfect the wonders of the One./ and as all things came from One, from the meditation of the One, so all things are born from this One by adaptation. Its Father is the Sun, its Mother the Moon; the Wind carries it in its belly; its nurse is the Earth./ It is the father of all the wonders of the whole world. Its power is perfect when it is transformed into Earth./ Seperate the Earth from Fire and the subtle from the gross, cautiously, judiciously./ It ascends from Earth to Heaven and then returns back to the Earth, so that it receives the power of upper and lower. Thus you will possess the brightness of the whole world, and darkness will flee you./ This is the force of all forces, for it overcomes all that is subtle and penetrates solid things./ Thus was the world created./ From this wonderful adaptations are effected, and means are given here./ And Hermes Trismegistus is my name, because I possess the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world.”

8

Mind. Body. Soul.

These existential discoveries were the beginning of our conscious awareness that we may be something more than our physical forms, that we have a soul..that perhaps we humans... are of made of the same stuff as everything else.

⁸ Roob, Alexander, and Shaun Whiteside. *Alchemy & Mysticism: the Hermetic Museum*. Taschen, 2018. Pg. 9

These images, and object make think about time differently. Instead of ticks and tocks, seconds, minutes and hours... I want to know how many moons I've seen. How many sunrises have warmed my cheeks? How many winters have numbed my extremities, and summers made my pores sweat?

I want to count my years with the tree rings.

I want to pay tribute to the movement, the hard work that the universe puts in to make all this beautiful stuff happen.

In *365 Revolutions*, glass shoes were used as an extension of my body. By rotating my body 365 times on a sheet of glass, my movements slowly etched into the glass marking the time passed. I was interested in the gesture of rotation in our daily lives. Both as a hula hooper and glass blower, I feel that I have an intimate relationship with rotation. Rotation is an access point to meditation in hoop dance. Flow arts⁹ got its name because through the repetition of body movements, one enters the physiological state of focused attention. Psychologist Csikszentmihalyi, states that Flow is when a person is working in a full state of being in the zone while remaining energetically focused.¹⁰ We are constantly in a circular motion simply by being on this earth. Rotation keeps things together, it helps to control the forces of gravity (especially in glass). Through this piece I attempted an almost ritualistic movement to pay tribute to the movements of our celestial bodies resulting in etching of my movements left in space forever.

⁹ **Flow Arts** is a general term used to describe the intersection of a variety of movement-based disciplines including dance, juggling, fire-spinning, and object manipulation. The broad category Flow Arts includes a variety of pursuits that harmonize skill-based techniques with creative expression to achieve a state of present-moment awareness known as Flow.

¹⁰ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper Row, 2009.



Figure #6 *Glass Shoes*, Glass, Fabric, Wood, 2017



Figure #7 *365 Revolutions*, Glass, Body Movement

365 Revolutions, Glass, Wood, Etching through body movement- 2017

Making as a Form of Meditation

I use my practice to slow down and reach a state of emptiness. Emptiness, similar to the flow state is a meditative state or a phenomenological analysis of experience.¹¹ I view being an artist as a way in which we attempt to answer the same questions as religion- Why are we here? What is our purpose? Both practices create a system to explain and give purpose to the human experience. While I am not a practitioner of any organized religions, I find that the structure of both a spiritual practice and an artistic practice to be synonymous.

When in India for the 365Haridwar artist residency in December of 2017, I spent a lot of my time noticing. I noticed how the people of Hairwar had a routine they followed daily, how it became a ritual, and the ritual was their lifestyle. But no matter the job, everyone was present. They allowed tasks to take the time that they needed, and no one appeared to feel like they were rushing.

Their relationship to time was inspiring.

The body was treated as a sacred space and rest, rejuvenation and healing were encouraged! This was enlightening being a western raised woman, as I've always been told to get more done, work harder and sleep less. After returning to America I started to think deeper about my relationship with time, and its need to be rebuilt. .

¹¹ Brauen, Martin, and Mary Jane. Jacob. *Grain of Emptiness: Buddhism-Inspired Contemporary Art*. Rubin Museum of Art, 2010.

Spiritual and artistic practices are the quests of the self where one confronts the great mystery of being human. Hopefully within that, one finds a method for which they experience the joys and beauties of life.

This is what I absorbed from the people of Haridwar.

During my residency I spent the first half of the days exploring the city, attending prayer ceremonies at various temples, we explored sacred gardens and observed various artisans in their crafts. The second half of my days were spent in the studio primarily focusing on why it is that I make rather than actually doing any making.

Ernesto Pujol in conversation with Mary Jane Jacob states, "Spirituality and art are the highest forms of human expression."¹² In Ernesto's practice he refers to himself as a "social choreographer," - and I love that!. His conversation with Mary Jane Jacob shows that sometimes the content of artwork is within the moment or a happening. Something that can only be *experienced*.

¹² Interview with Ernesto Pujil and Mary Jane Jacob- Baas, Jacquelynn, and Mary Jane Jacob. *Buddha mind in contemporary art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.



Figure # 8 *Grass Circle*, Performance, 2009

In Ernesto's work *Grass Circle*¹³, 2009, Pujol and 23 participants from Skowhegan walked backwards, on 24 mornings. The act was individual and silent resulting in the trace form of each participants movements remaining in space temporarily. The ephemeral gesture references the zen buddhist practice of mindless walking. Not yet knowing of this work when I made *365 Revolutions*, I am moved by the unknown results of making ephemeral work. The work is an action, and the result is an archive of the experience. The act of making the work brings the performer (maker) into a transient state, where the mind no longer does the thinking, but rather the body.

¹³ Pujol, Ernesto. "Grass Circle." *Ernesto Pujol.org*, 2019, www.ernestopujol.org/index2.html.

Mary Jane Jacob and Jacquelyn Baas have published two texts that have been very influential to my work. "*Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, and *Learning Mind- Experience and Art*," are compilation of essays focusing on how "The mind in meditation is like the mind in creation."¹⁴ This type of art relies on the artist, environment, and spectator to be realized. Art has the power to captivate a person, so much so that when viewing a certain work, "one forgets themselves as this entity in the world, and all of a sudden they are interspersed in this world via this vehicle, which is the work of art."¹⁵ A viewer experiences the work themselves while simultaneously experiencing themselves through the work" Art works can be the active agents to inspection.

¹⁴ Pichard, Caroline. "The Energetic Persistence of Water: An Interview with Mary Jane Jacob." Art21.org. February 28, 2012. Accessed March 10, 2018.
<http://magazine.art21.org/2012/02/28/the-energetic-persistence-of-water-an-interview-with-mary-jane-jacob/#.WqSBefkrKt8>.

¹⁵ "The Empty Conversation" Jacquelynn, and Mary Jane Jacob. *Buddha mind in contemporary art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.



Figure # 9 *Blue Mind*, Glass, Sound, 2017



Figure # 10 *Present Moment Reminder*, Glass, 2018

My works *Present Moment Reminder* and *Blue Mind* served as objects of contemplation attempting to creating an individual moment for the maker and viewer. But what these objects lacked was a universal approach. I was making them for me, to become more aware of my own intentions as an artist. When I really wanted my viewer to have a moment.

Marcel Duchamp helped carve space for work about being aware in the twentieth century, enlightening us that “conceptual art resides not in the mind of the artist or object, but in the mind of the viewer.” With his *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913. Duchamp employs this theory by attaching a wheel to a stool, which was not intended to be a work of art. The *Bicycle Wheel* was a “shift between

artistic product to process” and gave more responsibility to the viewers perceptions. Duchamp provided a new perspective to experiencing art and life by showing that “attention is a creative act.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Nowhere From Here, Jacob, Mary Jane., and Jacquelynn Baas. *Learning Mind: Experience into Art*. University of California Press, 2009.

Body

Movement- Performativity in Craft

In my practice I am utterly and consistently perplexed by the possibilities of having a body. How is it that we all experience the world through incredibly individualized yet universally understood vehicles? Growing up as a dancer, movement has been an important factor in my everyday life. Due to this, I now evaluate my process as a maker and the role of my body in my craft. The way the glass reacts to each gesture of the body captivates me. Every move I make is translated directly into the material. I am constantly fascinated with the competing characteristics of hot glass. Being both liquid and solid, elastic and brittle, captivating and humbling, hot or cold and moving or static. A glass maker's body plays an integral role in the work- it must inherit an understanding of these characteristics and how to manipulate them under the forces of time, temperature/heat, and gravity.

I view the steps of making a glass object (for example a cup) as choreography. There is a certain way the gaffer moves and navigates the hotshop when working with hot glass. It's muscle memory that is learned through repetitive action. But how does one show the steps to making an object rather than the object itself? How does one make space tangible?



Figure # 11 *Choreography of a cup*, movement in hotshop, 2017.

“Craft Only Exists in Motion”¹⁷ - Glenn Adamson

My interest in bodily movement is rooted in a feeling driven by my body's motion. The notion of emptiness fills my being when I dance with my hoop, and also resonates similarly

¹⁷ Adamson, Glenn, and Valerie Cassil Oliver. “Perpetual Motion.” *Handmade Exhibition Catalogue*, 2010,

within my craft practice. Glenn Adamsen references a similar concept to emptiness in his article *Perpetual Motion* published in the *Handmade* exhibition catalogue. Glenn mentions the meditative state of “no mind,” in which the artists body performs tasks with little to no thought. The *Handmade* exhibition unpacks the relationship between performance and craft by looking at how the body has trace in artwork. ¹⁸

Similarly to the thought of craft only existing in motion, according to Valerie Cassel Oliver in the article “Craft out of Action”, objects act as archives and blueprints. She writes that hand made objects are created out of actions and performative happenings, and this action is formed through the human body. I value Valerie’s perspective for demystifying the craft object and enlightening a reader to the explore issues around the object such as process, the body, and the hand. ¹⁹

¹⁸Adamson, Glenn, and Valerie Cassil Oliver. “Perpetual Motion.” *Handmade Exhibition Catalogue*, 2010

¹⁹ Oliver, Valerie Cassil. “Craft out of Action.” *Craft out of Action* , no. 1, 2010.

Body in Space

It is not fair to say that we only have five senses. Movement is a powerful sixth sense, and a way in which we perceive the world. Rudolf Laban's book *Choreutics* evaluates movements of the body, its physicality and the spaces we inhabit. Laban is known for the theory of space harmony- a practice/theory based on universal patterns of nature and man as a part of universal order. His research on the body in dance made me think about space differently. Instead of seeing space as a void or something empty, I started to see its potential. Perhaps space could be manipulated. In order to test this I started to evaluate the bodies movements by looking at the space in which movement takes place.

Laban recognized a spatial pattern in human movements and saw the shapes of the platonic solids within these patterns. He was then able to reduce these movement patterns to choreutic scales through looking at inclinations, pathways, levels, and directions of movement. This determined the pattern of movement to be one that moves through the shapes of polyhedrons and the platonic solids.²⁰

So what does this mean?

It means that the spaces of our bodies, the way we move through the world.. it's all a part of the universal network connecting us back to nature. From the largest of lifeforms to the finest of cells... movement is there and it's following similar choreography.

²⁰ Laban, Rudolf, and Lisa Ullmann. *Choreutics*. Macdonald & Evans, 1976.

In dance, the body has an imaginary space referred to as the Kinesphere.²¹ Although it is intangible, it moves with you everywhere you are. It defines where your body ends and the world begins shaping your personal space. Essentially everyone's kinesphere is different, because every *body* is different.

Kinesphere is an object that represents the space of my body so that I can carry it with me everywhere I go. During the opening of the show *Methods*, the exhibition where this work was exhibited in 2018, I wore the object roaming the space while interacting with my viewers. When moving through the space, my viewers became more aware of their intimate bodies and the space of the room.

²¹ "the sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extending the limbs without stepping away from that place which is the point of support when standing on one foot"



Figure #12 *Kinesphere*, Glass, Body Space, 2018

Rebecca Horn, an artist working in the 1970's moved through themes of the body and space. After a severe illness caused by fiberglass, Horn started making my personal favorite body of work- her body extensions (now acquired and exhibited at the Tate) . By making work that extends outward from her body, Horn articulates the complexities of the human physical and emotional forms in space. My personal favorite, *Mechanical Body Fan* 1973,²² adjusts to the

²² Tate. "'Mechanical Body Fan', Rebecca Horn, 1973-4." *Tate*, Purchased with Assistance from Tate Members 2002, 2002, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/horn-mechanical-body-fan-t07851.

artist's personal body space. It is important to note that the object is meant to be worn and activated. By using the body as a static axis, the fans rotate, fold, and unfold to examine the physicality of the artist's body. Having a body is a deep-rooted fact of being human, we all have this in common, but it is something we often do not evaluate deeply. Horn's work enlightens us to the limitations of the body.

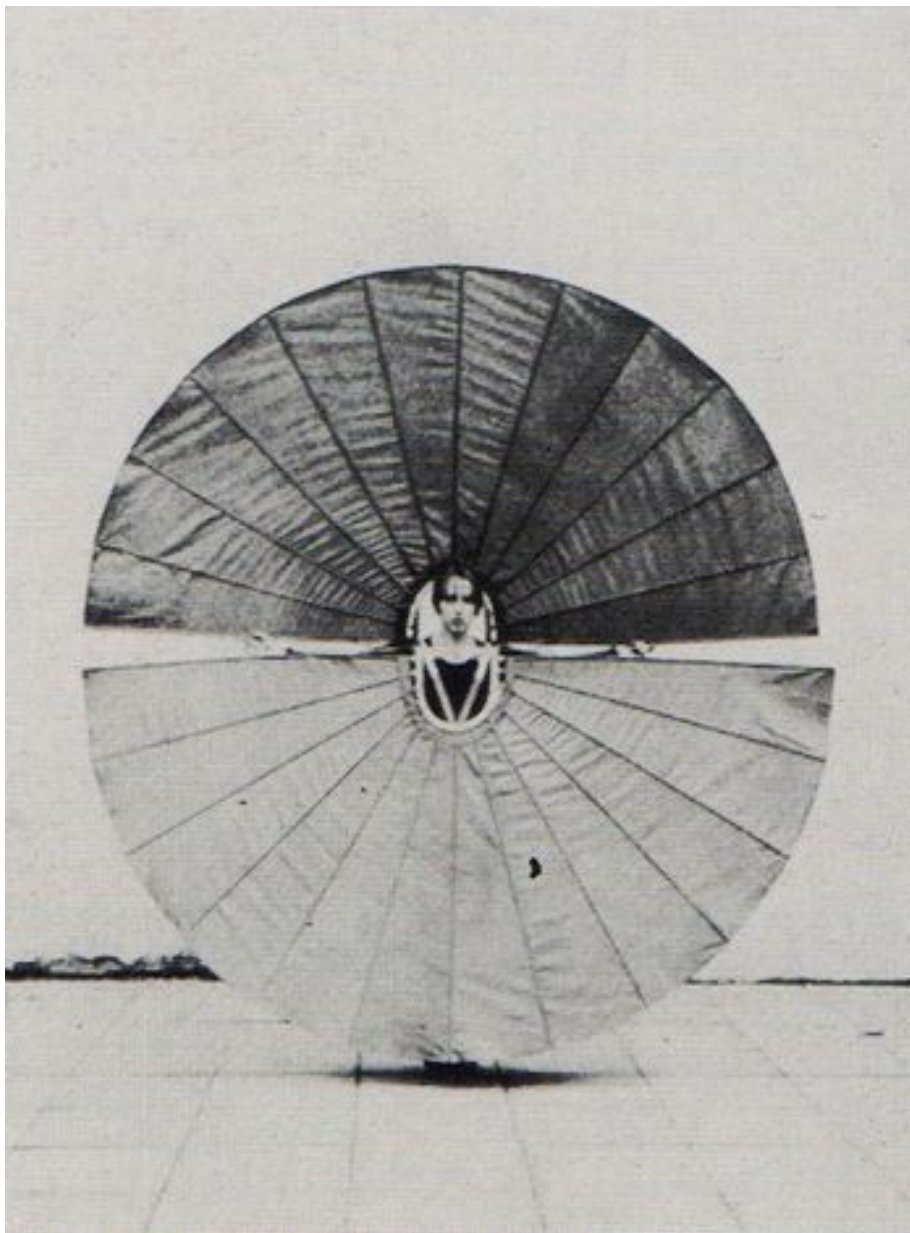


Figure #13 *Mechanical Body Fan*, Body, Fabric, Metal, 1973

Similarly to Horn, Ana Menidieta's *Siluetas* confront the physicality of human form, while also addressing the body's connections to nature and spirituality. I resonate with her relationship to the natural world and paradigm between femininity and the body. In her *Siluetas* series, she carves the negative space of an abstracted female form directly into the ground. The works become ephemeral representations of the human form in space. Subject to nature they eventually fade away, speaking to the notion that there is "one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy." ²³

²³ Viso, Olga M. *Ana Mendieta: Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2004.



Figure # 14 *Siluetas*, 1971, site specific installation

Horn and Mendieta were active artists in moving my curiosity toward the body as an active agent in my work. In order to understand the more intangible parts of the self (mind, soul)

I felt that I needed to engage with my physical body first. When I move through the built world I often think about how objects are made for bodies. Our doorways are fabricated to allow the most average heights to pass, utensils are made to fit your hand perfectly. It seems as though the body is a unit of measurement-the scale of our world.

Have you ever been somewhere so deep in nature? With large trees or a mountain range? Do you remember how small you felt? Perhaps that's because there was nothing around you relative to your size.

I love feeling small.

But it makes me curious, Is the space between my limbs considered my body because my body is occupying that space? If an object (or my body) occupies space, then it is defining the line in which the body (or object) ends and space begins, but how do we define the space between?



Figure # 15 *The Space Between*, Performance, 2018

In my work “The Space Between” I moved my body through the negative spaces of a common stool. I use my body to experience the world and in the video I am using my body to compare to other objects in hopes to heighten my viewers awareness of their personal space and relationship to man made objects.

This work led right to the work *Inhabitants* where I intended a viewer to think about how we inhabit a body. In my series *Inhabitants*, glass forms act as an extension of the body to articulate the bodies boundaries of space. I activated the negative spaces of the body with energy by creating a tangible form that represents them. Having a physical body present in

relation to the work allows the body to be used as a tool of measurement to gauge these spaces based upon human proportions. The transparent glass allowed me to not only make objects that fill the negative spaces. But it also allowed the space that is being highlighted to still be present. I am not interested in filling space and blocking it out. I am interested in how all things are interconnected through the basic understanding of our bodies. Space is something that we all inhabit as we are made of matter. Since energy is a common thread in all biological life, I picture energy to be a complex system of interconnected elements. By using the technique of lampworking I am communicating the natural impulse for repetition, entering that mental space of emptiness which as I mentioned earlier, is extremely important to my practice as a maker.



Figure #16 *Inhabitants (1 of 4)*, Glass, ,Bodyspace



Figure #17 *Inhabitants (2 of 4)*, Glass, ,Bodyspace



Figure #18 *Inhabitants* (3 of 4), Glass, ,Bodyspace



Figure #19 *Inhabitants (4 of 4)*, Glass, ,Bodyspace

Time- A Bully

I know this will end, and even worse... I know that it is coming... My body will slowly break down, disintegrate, and return to the earth.

I am young, healthy, and more or less at the prime of my life. Writing this at the age of 25-a distant place my younger self never thought I would reach.

Once I wrote a letter to myself to be read when I was older. It wasn't a school assignment, or a prompted entry, just me and my journal. I remember it vividly. I sat under a tree (yes the same tree with the rabbit), and I asked myself what life was.... I told my older self that if there was one thing I needed to do, it was to not only exist.. But to really live. I told myself who I was at that moment, I wrote my ambitions, I asked myself questions... hell, I may have even written the answers to the questions I'm still asking. I knew then how important it was to appreciate every moment we have. I told my older self what I thought my life would look like, how life would live.... Just in case I never got the chance too.

I lost the letter.

I never read it again but I still think about it all the time... I can still see the words on the page and I still feel the vibrance of that moment, and my excitement to live.

I don't presume I will die any time soon, although I am aware that death is always one step behind me, slowly working its darkness into my body.

I admit that at any second I may be gone. I may not exist anymore, and everything that I was will remain as nothing but a silhouette; Residue in the memories of those I touched, and my corporeal experiences will be left behind.

I do not fear death because impermanence is a transitory state.

When I go I will stay long gone from this form, but pieces of me will remain in the salts of earth.

Just I grew from it.



Figure # *I Told Myself How Life Would Live in Case I Never Got the Chance To.* Glass,
Pigment, 2019



Figure #21 *I Told Myself How Life Would Live in Case I Never Got the Chance To.* (detail)

Glass, Pigment, 2019

Conclusion

So what have I learned about the human condition?

The exhibition *Lifetime* was a collection of three installations surrounding themes of the bodies impermanence and time. Its the silky part of the self that guides my curiosity to explore the unknown yet universally understood (the body, time, death, love etc). Life is too precious to not *notice*.

Dissolution was an installation made of cast salt to the mass of my body (approx 140lbs). A large glass vessel containing dyed water (black) slowly released drips of water onto the salt block, causing it to slowly dissolve. The work communicated the ever changing state of the body and how we are all slowly starting to decompose, returning back to the earth that we came from. By using the process of decomposition and evaporation I learned that this work had many stages. The first being its infancy-a white salt cube and a vessel full of liquid. No saturation. Then it grows up a bit, and soaks in some of the world, until the world deepens herself into it.

When the work was exhibited at the Anderson Gallery, the liquid in the hanging vessel eventually ran out, but was collected in a glass trough below. The exhibition was only two weeks long so the collected liquid never evaporated fully. This gives the work multiple stages to be shown. It's inspired me to exhibit it again and again and let it the duration be altered.. to see what is revealed.



Figure #22 *Dissolution*, Salt, Glass, Mica, Liquid, 2019



Figure # 23 *Dissolution (detail)*, Salt, Glass, Mica, Liquid, 2019

Someday There Won't Be a Yesterday is a work that attempts to quantify my lifetime. I have recorded the lunar phase for each day I have been alive. One moon is printed in representation of the previous night. It is a daily act that allows me to be present in the moment, to slow down, and to appreciate, notice, take in the world around me. I will continue this process until I die, and the book will be left as an archive of my corporeal experiences, woven into the fabric of consciousness.



Figure # 24 *Someday There Won't Be a Yesterday*, Ink, Paper, Time, Thread, 2019



Figure # 25 *Someday There Won't Be a Yesterday (detail)*, Ink, Paper, Time, Thread, 2019

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- Interview with Ernesto Pujil and Mary Jane Jacob- Baas, Jacquelynn, and Mary Jane Jacob. *Buddha mind in contemporary art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

- Jacob, Mary Jane., and Jacquelynn Baas. *Learning Mind: Experience into Art*. University of California Press, 2009.

- Adamson, Glenn, and Valerie Cassil Oliver. "Perpetual Motion." *Handmade Exhibition Catalogue*, 2010,

CV

Education

Master of Fine Arts- Craft and Material Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University- Richmond, VA, 2019

- Graduate Student- Master of Fine Art-Craft and Material Studies Program- Glassworking

Bachelor of Fine Arts- University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point-2014-2016

- Major: BFA 3D Art- Glass Emphasis
-

Exhibitions

- “Lifetime”, MFA Thesis Exhibition, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019
- Methods, MFA Candidacy Exhibition, Artspace, Richmond, VA, 2018
- EMERGE, Page Bond Gallery, Richmond, VA, 2018
- Humyn and Nature, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA, 2017.
- Virginia Glass Guild, Juried Exhibition, The Charles H. Taylor Arts Center, Hampton, VA, 2017
- International Student Exhibition, Glass Art Society, World Trade Center, Norfolk, VA, 2017
- Juried Student Exhibition, Carlston Gallery, Stevens Point, WI, 2016.
- New Visions Gallery, Marshfield, WI, 2016.
- Solo Show, Schneider Student Gallery, Stevens Point, WI, 2016.
- Central Wisconsin Environmental Station, Public Art, Stevens Point, WI, 2016.
- Bachelor of Fine Arts Senior Exhibition, Carlston Gallery, UW-Stevens Point, 2016.
- Juried Student Exhibition, Carlston Gallery, UW- Stevens Point, 2015.
- International Student Exhibition: Glass Art Society Conference, San Jose CA, 2015.
- Glass Art Society Online Student Exhibition, 2015.
- Neon and Solar Light Show: Madison Children’s Museum, Madison WI, 2015.
- Back From the Front: A Veteran Print Project. Carlsten Art Gallery, UW-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI, 2015.

- The Things That Remain: A Veteran Print Project. Kenosha Public Museum, Kenosha, WI, 2015.
- National Undergraduate Print Exchange and Exhibition. Central Michigan University Park Library, Mount Pleasant, MI, 2015.
- "Centertainment at UWSP," Dreyfus Center, 2014.

Teaching

- Glass Collaging, VCU Qatar, Doha, Qatar, 2019
- "Drawing With Glass" Visual Arts Center of Richmond, 2019
- Intro to Hot Glassworking, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019
- Intro to Hot Glassworking, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018
- Art Foundations- Intro to Flameworking, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018

Community

- Chrysler Museum of Glass, participated as a dancer for "Failing the Sun," Third Thursday, 2019
- Treehaven Environmental School, Installation/Public Art, Tomahawk, WI, 2017.
- Central Wisconsin Environmental Station, Public Art, Stevens Point, WI, 2016.
- Site Specific Collaborative Environmental Sculpture/ Public Art, Treehaven Environmental School, Tomahawk, WI 2015.
- Illumination Gathering: Site Specific Installation/ Public Art, Turtle Creek, Clayton WI, 2015.
- "Blackhawk Church Mural," Blackhawk Church, 2012.
-

Professional Activities

- Glass Art Society, Co-Chair of Digital Media Committee, 2018-2019
- Bohun Yoon, Teaching Assistant at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond VA, 2017
- Sean Salstrom, Teaching Assistant at University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point, 2017
- Glass Art Society, Co-Chair of Digital Media Committee, 2017
- Debora Moore, Teaching Assistant at the Pilchuck Glass School, WA, 2016
- Jon Chapman, Studio Intern/ Teaching Assistant, UW- Stevens Point, 2016

- Glass Art Society, Chair of Digital Media Committee, 2016-2017
- Glass Art Society Board of Director, Student Representative, 2015-2016
- Jon Chapman- Studio Intern/TA, Beginning Glass Class, UW- Stevens Point, 2015

Published Writing

- *GASnews*, "Historical Flameworking," Winter Issue, 2017
- *GASnews*, School Profile, "California State University, San Bernardino," Winter issue, 2016
- *GASnews*, Student Profile, "Noelle Weigand," Winter issue 2016
- *GASnews*, Student Profile, "Hikari Sasaki," Fall issue, 2016
- *GASnews*, School Profile, "Linneaus University," Fall issue, 2016
- *GASnews*, School Profile, "University of Wisconsin-Madison," Summer issue, 2016
- *GASnews*, Student Profile, "Laura Aalto Setala," Summer issue, 2016
- *GASnews*, School Profile "Northlands Creative Glass", Spring issue, 2016.
- *GASnews*, Student Profile, "Marie Renee Morales," Spring issue, 2016

Awards

- David Smith Award, Juried Student Exhibition, 2015.

Grants/Scholarship

- Virginia Commonwealth University Travel Grant, \$300, Travel to Urban Glass Pedagogy Symposium, 2017.
- Graduate Teaching Assistantship for Bohyn Yoon, Virginia Commonwealth University, \$5,000, 2017.
- URSCA Travel Grant- \$194.53. UWSP, 2017.
- Carlston Gallery Student Advisory Committee Public Symposium Grant- \$1300.00, UWSP, 2016
- Tommy Rush and Richard Jolley Scholarship, Full Work Study Scholarship, Penland School of Crafts 2015.
- URSCA Research Grant, \$1000, UWSP, 2015.
- David Smith Scholarship, \$500, UWSP, 2015.
- URSCA Research Grant, \$761, UWSP, 2015.
- Oxbow School of Art, Merit Scholarship, \$750, 2015.
- URSCA Travel Grant, \$523, UWSP, 2015.

