

Honey, I Shrunk The Respect.

An Ecofeminist Approach to Understanding the
Mistreatment of Women and Honey Bee's in
Western Society in Order to Provide Education
and Inspire Activism

Ivy Rose Smith
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ABSTRACT

Each artwork created by artist Ivy Rose Smith will be analyzed through the microscope of this paper to explain each respective work's anthropological significance as well as the processes that lead the artist to make her artistic conclusions. Smith bases her artistic style off of the Dada and Surrealist art movements. That being said, her works thrive on symbolism and base their success off of an audience member's ability to decode the meaning of each intricate symbol.

In order for Smith to formulate a connection to each audience member and communicate her ideas effectively, it is vital that Smith has a deep understanding of her topic and how she can pull the heartstrings of different types of audience members. Thus, understanding the anthropological significance behind each of her works makes them extremely powerful, educational, and potentially inspiring enough to promote activism.

Since Smith prides herself on being a "symbolic person," each aspect of her works, down to the surfaces in which the paint has been applied, is drenched in meaning. Regardless of her ideas and passions for ecofeminist activism, Smith provides an interesting look into historical and modern symbols of femininity and the environment and thus becomes an anthropological study within herself.

Ecofeminism plays an integral part in understanding both environmental ethics as well as human rights issues by analyzing the relationship between patriarchal dominance over the intersectionality that comes with feminism and the vast destruction of the planet's ecosystem, environment, and nature in general. Ecofeminism is key in being able to make intelligent connections between gender roles and the mistreatment of the Earth's resources but most importantly, ecofeminism is a call for environmental justice (environmental justice being defined here as the need for every human being to have a safe and healthy environment to live in). Through the utilization of ecofeminism as the main theoretical approach, one can seek to understand the relationship between the mistreatment of women and the mistreatment of honey bees in Western society through the analysis of the multimedia artwork created by Ivy Rose Smith.

Keywords: honey bee, Ecofeminism, multimedia art, Surrealism, women

Theoretical Approach and Art Movements

Ecofeminism has been defined in a variety of ways by different scholars but, for the purpose of this research, ecofeminism will be defined through the separation of two branches: essentialism and social constructivism. Essentialism is typically what critics of ecofeminism understand ecofeminism to be. Essentialism is the idea that women have a connection to nature because of their biology (Buckingham 2004), with links seeming from the binary man:woman as culture:nature.

Social constructivism goes beyond biology and looks at how women's position in society is derived from social and economic structures which exposed them to certain environmental injustices (Buckingham 2004). Since the same structures damaged the environment, women "shared" this similar experience with nature and therefore could fight for nature on its behalf. Social constructivism encompasses patriarchal dominance over land which leads women to have less power but also connects the natural with women and gives them power through allowing them to have control over their environment through gendered educational practices (Wayland 2001). This type of ecofeminism can also be described as "social feminism".

Ultimately, at the core of the definition, "Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women...It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women." Ecofeminism emerged in the mid to late 1970's alongside second-wave feminism and the green movements. (Mellor 1997: 1)

In addition to the utilization of Ecofeminist theory, the ideas and processes that surround the art movements of Surrealism, Dadaism, and Abstract Expressionism are applied to dissect the semiotics behind the multimedia artworks created by Smith. While these three art movements are similar, the differences that separate them are important and help to define different movements of thought and reflect the different values that were present in the time periods in which they began.

Surrealism began in the 1910's in Paris with its roots beginning in 1890 with American psychologist William James and the coining of the phrase "river of consciousness" (Mundy 1987: 493). André Breton, one of the main surrealist theorists, explained that viewing art as a window doesn't make it art: art goes beyond surface into a world of illusion that's "marvelous" and "surreal" (Mundy 1987: 492). As defined in Breton's first *Manifeste du Surrealisme*, Surrealism is masculine, "pure psychic automatism by which one intends to express verbally, in writing or by any other method, the real functioning of the mind. Dictation by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, and beyond any esthetic or moral preoccupation" (Waldman 1992: 154). Breton further defined Surrealism in his second manifesto as a way "to lay waste to the ideas of family, country, [and] religion," to subvert as many social structures as the movement possibly could" (Ochoa 2010:122).

Although Surrealism was an attack on the formal and rational order of Cubism (Waldman 1992: Chapter 5) as well as other social structures, Surrealism intentionally wanted to exclude the feminine from the movement (at least, in terms of André Breton's definitions of Surrealism which were sometimes looked at as the more radical Surrealism). Since women were not necessarily included in a lot of Western education-let alone art education-during this time period,

being included in an art movement that morphed together an artistic understanding with an educationally based critical analysis of one's own work, women were not seen as a group that should be included within the movement.

Thus, when thinking about the Surrealist movement, only a few female artists come to mind who truly were able to break boundaries. Artists such as Frida Kahlo, who had a severe accident which allowed her to be more connected to her conscious pushed her into the movement, and Leonora Carrington, who was the wife of André Breton and was hospitalized for mental illness giving her a deeper connection to her consciousness. Carrington and Kahlo unfortunately never met but Kahlo's works and impact on the Surrealist movement helped Carrington found the Women's Liberation Movement in Mexico in the 1970's (Chadwick 1986: 37).

Carrington also had a unique place in the Surrealist movement because she wanted to link psychic freedom with feminist political consciousness (Chadwick 1986: 37) as well as her relationship with André Breton. Carrington attempted to redefine Surrealism to adapt the "subversive stance of Surrealism to express her own feminist views, and in doing so ironically subverts a number of Surrealist tenets, namely, the Surrealist tradition of female objectification and the archetype of the *femme enfant*" (with the *femme enfant* being defined as "child woman" or invoking childlike feelings) (Ochoa 2010:122). Carrington wanted Surrealism to be more inclusive and to reflect the changing Western ideals in regards to women and with the development of the "flapper," for example, as a beginning symbol of feminine freedom in the U.S.

In response to the Surrealist movement, the Dada movement-and eventually the Neodada movement-erupted around 1916. The Dada movement and the Surrealist movement are very similar but, Dadaism was an art protest on political and social systems while Surrealism wanted to create a new structure for order in art and society (Waldman 1992: Chapter 5). Dadaism offered artists the space to create works of art that could allow for a shared experience with audience members whereas Surrealism added this extra step, as if one had to enter a different frame of consciousness in order to be able to understand the artistic intentions behind a Surrealist work. André Breton's Surrealism was like a club that one had to be inducted into before they could be considered a Surreal artist: Dadaism was for the common person to begin to push beyond questioning their surroundings and take action.

Shortly after Dadaism was rising in popularity, Abstract Expressionism began to flourish around the 1940's. Abstract Expressionism, like Dadaism, is also similar to Surrealism but is also a challenge to Surrealist ways. Abstract Expressionism is based off of the Surrealist idea of "automatism" but was used to create radical new abstract imagery. This was also known as "automatic drawing." Abstract Expressionist were still creating pieces based off of the idea of subconscious drawing and recollection but, Abstract Expressionism called for the simplification of symbols and an emphasis on color without moving too far into the realm of minimalism. (Waldman 1992: Chapter 7)

Abstract Expressionism was the first internationally recognized American style that was created by the "New York School" of artists. The first mention of Abstract art was technically in 1911 by Wassily Kandinsky who self proclaimed "his" new style of art after creating an abstract series but, was not turned into a movement until the forties. The theorists of Abstract

Expressionism did not create a manifesto because they wanted to have “limitless possibilities,” elements of chance, accident, and irrationality (Waldman 1992: 202). This was the major way that separated Abstract Expressionism from the Surrealist movement.

The Honey Bee

Bee's have been an important part of society in general since the Egyptians began domesticating them before 2600 BCE and then again in the 17th century when the European colonists brought the honey bee over to the United States (Ott 2015: 403). Ever since, the honey bee has played a vital role in providing sustenance for Western society: about a third of the food produced in the United States relies on the pollination from honey bees (Ott 2015: 402). Honey bees also act as one of the most important pollinators because they are “generalists” meaning that they pollinate a wide range of flowers including important domestic crops like squashes and berries (Ott 2015: 405).

But, with the domestication of the honey bee, there has also been dire consequences such as the development of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony Collapse Disorder presents itself in several ways; “rapid loss of adult worker bees, few or no dead bees in the hive, presence of immature bees (brood), small cluster of bees with live queen present, and pollen and honey stores in hive” (Ott 2015: 404). As Colony Collapse Disorder runs rampant throughout the United States, honey bees are dying at a severely alarming rate which not only threatens the food supply of the U.S. but also the lives of the people who live there.

Honey bees play a huge role in popular culture as well. Besides being a constant symbol present on food labels, clothing, makeup, and other products, honey bees inspire innovation and

design. At the London Design Festival, three designers-Kevin Hill, Vanessa Harden, and Ben Farga-utilized honey bees for something other than their honey in order to create something: a baby's crib (Greenlees 2010). The designers found a way to create a structure that attracts the bees so that they create a "playground hive" then, once the bees are finished, the waxy structure is removed and coated in a composite to solidify the object: this process takes twelve months (Greenlees 2010). But, such innovations require a lot of honey bees and with Colony Collapse Disorder on the rise, this may not be feasible. Greenlees explains this process as "creature craft" and that it's "all the rage" but, how will honey bees have the energy to create more frivolous things for human use when the honey bees cannot even survive the winter because of disease?

For example, free market solutions would face collective action and game theory problems, free riders and defectors face no regulation that incentivizes cooperation, common law tort and property actions leave too many decisions up to local judges which creates a lack of consistency, congresses cannot get any work on Colony Collapse Disorder out of committee, and only a limitation on the use of pesticides would be inefficient and hard to enforce (Ott 2015). If the EPA enforced an outright ban of the pesticide, farmers would be forced to look to the black market for the purchase of the pesticide which would severely limit the supply of the pesticide and thus the harmful effects for the honey bees.

Ott offers alternatives to using the neonicotinoid pesticides such as "gene targeting, bee friendly pesticides, and hydroponic farming" (Ott 2015: 419) which actually produces more food in a smaller area in a more controlled environment. Ott also explains with urgency that the honey bee crisis and Colony Collapse Disorder need to be assessed quickly because no modern technology can pollinate crops as efficiently as honey bees and that it will be "easier to develop

an alternative pest control system than an alternative pollinator” (Ott 2015: 424). Through policy change, Ott argues, Colony Collapse Disorder can be solved or at least alleviated.

From the view of a biological anthropologist, Caldararo explains that “Colony Collapse Disorder...shows [similarities] to a number of mass behavioral responses in other social animals” (Caldararo 2014: 82) like in humans and their responses to disease such as the Black Plague and AIDS and that in order to understand and solve Colony Collapse Disorder, one must understand human mass responses to threat, food production, and food sharing. Since the domestication of bees by the Egyptians, honey bees have lived a sedentary lifestyle just like humans. With this sedentary lifestyle comes the possibility of the spread of infectious disease which induces behavioral responses. In honey bees, one can see this when “hive bees who become infected or ill will leave the hive to die alone” (Caldararo 2014: 83) or in humans with the Black Plague, for example, would quarantine infected people from the healthy ones.

Influential Artists

By looking at the works of other artists, unanswered questions about process, materiality, direction, meaning, and symbolism can become apparent for the working artist. When looking for artists to help me through understanding my own works, there were several overarching themes that I gathered together to help formulate a gameplan to find artists that fell into those categories. Since such a large part of my St. Mary’s Project revolves around feminism, it was very important to me to find artists who proclaimed themselves as feminists and did not just make artwork that was described as “feminist works.” Feminist intentions in artworks became more important to me than symbols that reflected the ideas of feminism and gender equality.

With feminist intentions in mind, the utilization of one's own body in artwork became an interesting narrative for me to pursue. Yet, this category did not necessarily mean that the artist needed to actually have their body be physically a part of the work but rather, it was important to me that their artwork was a reflection of their body: their identity as a person, their health, their thought processes. Whether it was a search for identity or a spiritual journey, I needed to have artists who were aware of their bodies, what their bodies could do, and how their bodies acted.

The found object plays a huge role in the construction of my St. Mary's Project so being able to find artists that could successfully incorporate the found object into their works could potentially help me create fluid integrations of the found object in my own works. I was not just looking for artists who blatantly incorporated the found object into their works-like hot gluing toys onto a canvas, for example-but rather, I wanted to see that other artists also used found objects for their materials and throughout their processes.

I also wanted to have artists in my repertoire who utilized bright, harmonious colors in order to help me make sense of my own color palettes as a painter. As someone who has extra cones in my eyes, I am able to see more color and more vivid colors than the average person. Thus, being able to find other artists who show strong relationships with color can help provide insight into how I can successfully utilize my gift of being able to see more colors efficiently.

When first looking for influential artists, I thought about Wayne Thiebaud, who I had been looking at since I first started painting in high school. Pop culturally, Wayne Thiebaud is known for his still lifes of food and for his time changing landscapes. But, Thiebaud's lesser known figural paintings share the same intimate qualities as the rest of his works. Wayne Thiebaud and I share similar goals when it comes to accurately depicting reality while

simultaneously using vibrant colors to invoke a personal connection with the viewer. Thiebaud also has a strong ability when it comes to emotionally, and almost physically in a sense, pulling his viewers into his artworks. This extremely important quality of Thiebaud's works is what has drawn me to pursue him as a mentor artist because symbolism and an ability to evoke strong emotions through art are the two most important qualities of my artworks.

But, as I moved forward in my quest for understanding different aspects of my artworks, I more intimately discovered the found object works of Joseph Cornell. Joseph Cornell was at the forefront of Abstract Expressionism because of his redefinition of surrealist thought and his attention to childlike ideas. Cornell goes beyond the traditional idea of framing a picture by extending his narrative through the frame. The found objects that Cornell utilizes truly interact with one another to create a new fantastical and mysterious environment. Cornell helped propel my research into Abstract Expression and showed that his “colleges of the 1930’s also reveal a disarming innocence and naivete quite different from the black humor and disturbing, often grotesque imagery deliberately cultivated in Surrealist painting and poetry” (Waldman 1992: 205). Cornell was the first artist that helped move me away from the more masculine and “grotesque” Surrealist movement and into something different but not necessarily abstract.

As I continued to pursue artists to look at, I was reminded of how important the feminist aspects of my work were and how I really could not create feminist works without looking at a few feminist artists. Thus, I discovered the works of Niki de Saint Phalle, Hilma af Klint, and Ana Mendieta who all inspired the work of my final installation, *Pollen to Politicians*.

Niki De Saint Phalle radiates confidence, femininity, and a pride in her exuberant sexuality that manifests itself through her zealous, extravagant, and interactive designs. De Saint

Phalle creates pieces that are almost performative in nature in which she asks members of her audience to literally enter inside her pieces, whether it be a sculpture garden or a giant female figure with the entrance to her internal shell being through her vagina. While De Saint Phalle viewed the process of her works as a way to heal herself after being admitted to an asylum in the 1950's (Levy 2016), her works morphed into a way for De Saint Phalle to heal others as well.

De Saint Phalle works on a large scale, constructing giant human-like figures called "Nanas," interactive sculpture gardens/parks, and a series entitled "Tirs" in which human sized plaster figures were filled with paint and shot with a gun to expose the splatter to create an image. The series "Tirs" also contained many recurring, easily recognizable, thematic symbols and found objects to connect to wider audience. De Saint Phalle's series "Tirs" challenges the erotic, masculine, fetishisms that were found in the le Nouveau Realisme, a NeoDadaist movement founded by French art critic Pierre Restany, by confronting gender inequalities and societal violence (Carrick 2003).

For example, in *La Mort Du Patriarche*, the piece's title translates to "the patriarchs death" and contains powerful (in the sense of a governing force) and stereotypical "masculine" symbols such as a plane, guns, and cars on top of a human-like shape that is very similar to the abstraction of human figures used by the Dadaists. While De Saint Phalle was very much so concerned with her process, De Saint Phalle was more concerned with how the act of her process could create a deeper narrative that challenged stereotypical societal viewpoints in popular culture.

De Saint Phalle's attacks on popular culture also manifested themselves through her creation of her "Nana" figures, which roughly translates to "broad" in English. Once again, De

Saint Phalle carefully observed the place of women and their relationship to society by emphasizing the beauty of round and curvy women but also through making it abundantly clear that women lacked a certain amount of appreciation and importance in society.

Through the analysis of *Nana*, 1993, it becomes clear that, through the creation of these more than life size figures that contain imagery that emphasizes sexuality, De Saint Phalle was not only tackling the key themes of femininity and destruction that many of her works were centered around, but rather, De Saint Phalle also wanted to create an intrusive look into female sexuality. De Saint Phalle achieves this by creating patterns on the figures in a one-piece bathing suit shape with the pattern changing around the breast and buttock area (typically in a circular way). The rest of the figure is typically painted a solid color, typically white, like in *Nana*, 1993.

Nana, 1993 is a unique Nana because of the addition of the snake wrapping around the figures bottom half. While snake symbolism typically references “sin” or the garden of Eden, the snake depicted in this sculpture does not seem malicious but rather, friendly. This stems from De Saint Phalles bold acknowledgement of her own sexuality: “I started noticing that I had quite a bit of success with men. I enjoyed the power of turning them on” (Levy 2016). De Saint Phalle found peace and refuge in creating her artworks so it is no surprise that another form of her self healing would come through in her sexualized Nanas.

Out of all of her body’s of work, Niki De Saint Phalle’s sculpture gardens are the best representation of her ability to heal herself and others as an artist. De Saint Phalle worked on *Tarot Garden* in Tuscany for over two decades in which she even lived in one of the sculptures (Levy 2016). After being in an asylum when she was in her twenties, she believed that creating art returned her to a place of sanity. De Saint Phalle wanted to create “an alternate reality—“a

sort of joyland,” she once said, “where you could have a new kind of life that would just be free” (Levy 2016) in which she wanted to share the gardens healing capabilities with anyone who felt like they needed healing.

The *Tarot Garden* was the first piece that De Saint Phalle created on a grand scale explaining that “I’m following a course that was chosen for me, following a pressing need to show that a woman can work on a monumental scale” (Levy 2016). As the garden grew and grew, representing different figures on a deck of tarot cards, De Saint Phalle began to realize and exploit her notions of a strong feminine presence in the art world that was severely lacking. After leaving her family to pursue her art career (which, at the time, seemed like the absolute worst thing a women could do) De Saint Phalle wrote to a friend and exclaimed, “Men’s roles seem to give them a great deal more freedom,” she wrote to a friend, “and I WAS RESOLVED THAT FREEDOM WOULD BE MINE” (Levy 2016).

My initial ideas of creating an interactive feminine beehive with a chicken wire base and a plaster (or as it eventually morphed into a paper mache and plaster flower chair for my *Pollen to Politicians* installation) outer shell even came before my discovery of De Saint Phalle. But, the most bone chilling discovery that I made through my research of De Saint Phalle was a quote that I found in *The New Yorker*: “She finally graduated from Oldfields, a boarding school outside Baltimore, where “there were horses and fences, and rolling hills”” (Levy 2016). Oldfields is a boarding school that is located five minutes away from the sheep farm I grew up on as a child and I spent a lot of time at the school because my best friends mother worked there when I was young. Although De Saint Phalle was French born, coming to a very small boarding school that’s tucked away in the woods of Northern Baltimore County, MD where she looked at the same

rolling hills as I did growing up for inspiration already proves that there is a deep connection between the two of us.

Aside from biographical information that connects the two of us, I have always used my artwork as a form of healing for myself and others. In high school when I first started painting with oil paints in a serious fashion my junior year, I was extremely sick with Anorexia Nervosa. At the time, I was not receiving treatment but I painted scenes that depicted my struggles with my body image and my relationships to food. In *Cold*, I depicted my bare back with nothing on except a ghostly white blanket. Like De Saint Phalle's *Tarot Garden*, this was my biggest piece at the time (lifesize). The painting was healing for me because I was able to see the lack of health in the topography of my skin but, was also eerily healing to others as they saw the sickness that was hidden beneath my clothing. Later that year in the summer, I was institutionalized for four months because I had almost lost my life to the disease one day and decided then that art would be my savior and that I would not hide its healing powers from other potential survivors.

My illness had lasting effects on my body, such as developing osteopenia (the precursor to osteoporosis when I was only 17) and potentially juvenile arthritis, which has also affected the way that I am able to create artwork. Besides having a myriad of mental illness, having a body that does not always cooperate and is in constant pain makes handling art supplies difficult. But, similarly to Niki De Saint Phalle, I do not let this stop me. Hinojosa-Azaola and Alocer-Varela explain that "artists such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Antoni Gaudí, Raoul Dufy, Paul Klee, Frida Kahlo and Niki de Saint Phalle are good examples of how rheumatic diseases such as RA, scleroderma and chronic pain can influence the artist's perspective, the technique used and the content of their work" (Hinojosa-Azaola and Alocer-Varela 2014: 1725).

Much of the time, an artist's physical ailments are not necessarily taken into consideration when doing art historical research on them unless its a “visible disability.” For De Saint Phalle, a lot of her health issues were actually caused by the materials that she used in her works: “her work reflected both anger and violence as a product of her suffering, but she emerged from each physical and emotional crisis with new force and new ideas” (Hinojosa-Azaola and Alocer-Varela 2014: 1729). Thus, her health issues become not just an important way to understand who she was as a person but also an important way to understand her process.

De Saint Phalle not only felt her own pain but also felt the pain in the world around her. Different events surrounding the time periods of the creation of De Saint Phalle’s art may have been a reaction to the distress they were causing her, such as the large scale decimation of cities during World War II and the creation of her piece *King Kong*. De Saint Phalle was fighting for social justice in her pieces but also portrayed violence in different symbolic ways to show her pain as well (Whitting 2014). Through her strength, resilience, and sexuality, De Saint Phalle created an iconic female role model, character and spirit through her artworks that I hope to be able to capture through my works as well.

After extensively researching the works of De Saint Phalle, I discovered the works of Hilma af Klint, one of the first Abstract Expressionists. Hilma af Klint was born into a protestant family in Stockholm, Sweden in 1862. From an early age, Klint was exposed to “theosophy, an esoteric belief system that, amongst other ideas, promoted equality of the sexes” (Higgie 2016: 13). Using theosophy as the basis for her works, Klint produced hundreds of paintings and drawings at varying scales that described and illustrated her conversations with herself and worlds beyond what the common human can understand. Hilma af Klint broke traditional

boundaries of what it meant to be an artist and has even been explained as the first abstract artist who “arrived before Kandinsky” in 1906, five years before Kandinsky self proclaimed “his” new style of art (Vos 2013). Through an analysis of the work created by Klint, one can seek to understand how Klint redefined the process of not only art making but, science and religious belief as well.

Published in the middle of the nineteenth century, Darwin’s theory of evolution had made many question the validity of either religion, science, or both. The idea of being “spiritual” versus “religious” also began to rise as ideas about nature having a soul and inanimate matter, like rocks, even contain cosmic energy became more popular. It was believed that “magic links” existed between the invisible and visible parts of the universe and that communication could be facilitated between the two by means of “intuition and channelling” (Bernitz 2012:588). Hilma af Klint was inspired by both of these movements but, instead of focusing on fame and recognition like her male counterparts who were taken more seriously, Klint started to focus on her own spiritual journey by founding the group known as “De Fem” (The Five) of only women in 1896 (Bernitz 2012: 590).

Through the creation of “De Fem,” Klint created a safe space for women to understand their own spiritual journeys without the influence of the negativity of the patriarchy. During the meetings that “De Fem” would hold, the women would conduct seances and spiritual activities in order to communicate with supernatural beings that they called “De Höga” (the High Masters). The women of the group kept detailed notes of their communications and eventually also resorted to drawing as well. Coined later in the 20th century by the Surrealists as “automatic drawing,” Klint may have been one of the first people to utilize this type of unconscious, visual

communication during the seances (Voss 2013). As time passed, Klint became the leading member of the group.

Because of her admiration for science in connection to her spirituality, “it is surely no coincidence that the idea of contacting spirits corresponded with Heinrich Hertz’s discovery of electromagnetic waves in 1886 and Wilhelm Röntgen’s invention of the X-ray in 1895” (Higgie 2016: 14). For the first time, there was scientific proof that validated the idea that energy could flow from one thing to another invisibly. As scientific thought progressed, so did Klint’s spiritual journey and how she thought about her processes as an artist: “the pictures were painted directly through me, without any preliminary drawings and with great force. I had no idea what the paintings were supposed to depict; nevertheless, I worked swiftly and surely, without changing a single brushstroke” (Higgie 2016: 17).”

In 1906, Hilma af Klint began work on her first large series called *Målningarna Till Templet* that consisted of 193 paintings and drawings that were divided into several smaller groups and series: *Urkaos*, *The Swan*, and *Paintings for the Temple*. All of the works were numbered and dated but, none of them were signed. Klint also utilized a wide variety of styles ranging from figurative works to abstract works and using only primary colors to using only bright pastel colors. But, the subject matter of her works remained consistent and did not change.

In the first group of work *Urkaos*, Klint focused on the broad concepts of evolution-symbolized by a snail spiral shape-and the dualities present in the union of opposites, specifically that of matter and spirit, male and female. Klint had hoped that one day the *Urkaos* group would be displayed in a spiral shaped temple “in which the viewer would encounter the groups of paintings in room after room in ever-narrower circles” (Bernitz 2012: 591). This series

also contains letters such as occasionally “AO” (spiritual evolution) but more frequently, “WU” (the dual relationship between matter and spirit).

In *No. 5. Primordial Chaos*, Klint illustrates the dualities of male and female in evolution. Klint successfully accomplishes this through her use of color, text, and the recurrence of the snail spiral. In Klint’s works, “the female is almost always depicted by the colour blue and the male by yellow” (Bernitz 2012: 591). At the top of the piece, the letters “WU” are present with the “W” occurring again at the base of the snail spiral. While the snail spiral is yellow (which represents male qualities), it is also outlined in the color blue to show unity. The color blue (which represents female qualities) is present at the center of the spiral and again surrounding the bottom of the spiral with loose brushstrokes. Klint shows an understanding of the process of automatic drawing and her communication with the higher beings but, her technique of painting is less developed and has a sense of urgency when it comes to the cleanliness of her brush strokes and line work. While this work is more geometric in nature and less figural, the geometric qualities are more organic and less calculated.

Hilma af Klint’s second group of work within *Målningarna Till Templet* is entitled *The Swan*. Within *The Swan*, Klint demonstrates better control of paint as a medium and the shapes she utilizes are more defined and geometrical. There is less known about this group of 24 paintings because Klint did not want to share much explaining that the paintings were too personal in character. Klint did explain, however, that these paintings represented the “astral plane”. *The Swan* group shows Klint’s “development from figuration to abstraction and back again.” (Bernitz 2012: 593)

No. 1. The Swan depicts two swans, one black and one white, mirroring each other on opposite colored backgrounds. Once again, the colors yellow and blue are present in the beaks, feet, and outlines of the birds signifying their relationships to the male and female dualities that were first seen in *Urkaos*. According to symbolism in the field of alchemy, “the swan represents the union of opposites” (Bernitz 2012: 593). Thus, seeing the blue (female) in the white swan and the yellow (male) in the black swan, there is a further emphasis on the union of opposites and understanding harmony between binaries.

Yet, what I connected with most in Hilma af Klint’s works were her notebooks that she kept in which she documented in extreme detail what occurred at the seances held by “De Fem” as well as her daily observations of the world around her. Klint used her notebooks to understand patterns, color relationships, how energy flowed, as well as brief automatic drawings that she sometimes used as sketches for larger pieces.

Since the beginning of SMP, I have kept detailed journals about my art, my art practices, my life, and more frequently, how I interact with and place myself within nature. The combination of drawings and text helps me to capture ideas and momentary flashes of brilliance that I have so that I can hope to capture them later in pieces that I can share with an audience who can hopefully relate to my pieces. Klint’s dedication to her notebooks as a daily ritual inspires me and shows that with a routine, one can hope to understand the processes of their own work better so that they can gain a better understanding and control of their materials (like Klint and her use of paint).

Klint’s notebooks are also very reminiscent of my daily drawings that I have been keeping throughout SMP. While I do not utilize an instituted seance, my drawing have an

“automatic” quality to them: I never go into one of my daily drawings with an intention but rather, I allow my hand to be an extension of the deeply rooted chaos within my mind. Weirdly, my pieces have always maintained a steady sense of control-almost like a woodblock carving-and range from abstract patterns to detailed figures. Like Klint, my pieces all contain some sort of narrative that is told by intelligent symbolic structures.

Over her lifetime, Hilma af Klint created more than one thousand paintings and 124 notebooks drenched with knowledge that she gained from her lifelong spiritual journey. Klint was an active feminist artist who pushed beyond the boundaries of the church and science in order to question what society was constantly drilling in her head. While Klint was most definitely a revolutionary, little is known about her because she expressed in her will that she was told by higher beings that her works could not be shown until twenty years after her death. Yet, her works did not see a public gallery until 42 years after death (Higgie 2016). Never has an artist ever resonated with me more.

Since my final installation piece *Pollen to Politicians* was suppose to be an interactive piece and I had never done that before, I needed to find an artist who created interactive pieces. While Ana Mendieta provided me with key information about women, nature, and identity, her pieces were more about personal interaction with the environment around her and tend to be violent acts upon herself. Mendieta’s pieces are a solid representation of hardship, strength, a search for identity, and the connections between women and nature but, my pieces are also very different from hers. My pieces tend to be gentle and intimate while tackling hard issues and are not thematically grotesque like Mendieta pushes her pieces to. Regardless, Mendieta wanted to create art to reclaim space in an interactive way and that is what draws me to her and her works.

Ripped from her homeland of Cuba at an early age, Ana Mendieta began creating artwork in order to reclaim a space for her lost identity. Mendieta pushed the boundaries of conventional art and installation especially through her perseverance and resilience as a female artist. Mendieta became an active voice for the desexualization of the naked female body and advocated for the resurrection of women's connection to nature while maintaining her status at the forefront of conversations about ecofeminism. As a woman who literally and figuratively submerged herself in her materials and her artistic processes, Ana Mendieta and her artwork prove the importance and significance of feminist nature art and conversations surrounding the body in reclaimed space: "she resuscitates a link between the female body and space" (Best 2007: 67).

"The work of Ana Mendieta encompasses the full range of avant-garde 1970s movements—conceptual, performance, earthwork, feminist, and identity art—yet it is profoundly Cuban as well" (Roulet 2012: 21) which gives her a certain amount of power and unearned disadvantages as well. In order to address these different movements and the issues that affect Mendieta on a daily basis, Mendieta creates a reclaimed space "that can be seen as yet another *nepantla* or "in-between" where identities are negotiated, modified, and sometimes transformed" (Ortega 2004: 26-7).

But, since Mendieta was an experimental female artist in the 1960's and 70's, gaining recognition to shed light on the issues she so deeply cared about was difficult. Mendieta's involvement with A.I.R. (Artists in Residence Inc) is extremely significant because it connected her with other female artists and helped her forge networking opportunities that propelled her

forward in her art career (Griefen 2011). By bringing herself into different feminist activist groups, Mendieta was able to gain the support she needed to bring her dreams to fruition.

In Mendieta's series *Siluetas*, Mendieta attempts to create a relationship between humans and nature so that one can understand that "art must have begun as nature itself" proving that humans and nature cannot be separated (Best 2007: 71). Although Mendieta immersed herself in her natural surroundings by covering herself in nature itself or by leaving imprints of her body in nature to slowly be eroded away, the goal of her pieces is not "to control or dominate or to create grandiose monuments of power and authority" (Best 2007: 67). Mendieta wanted to challenge the traditional ways that people thought of nature as something to be dominated and wanted people to appreciate nature and its brief and temporal status (such as a silhouette passing when the sun goes down or when one of Mendieta's pieces would wash away in the ocean water).

Mendieta utilizes each space with caution and intentionality in order to have respect for the earth but to also symbolize a deep meaning about "ecology" and "anti-colonialism" (Best 2007: 67). Mendieta explains her *Siluetas* as "'the landscape and the female body' and as 'an ongoing dialogue between me and nature'" that looks for a way to "assert her place in the world" (because of her exile from Cuba at a young age) so that she may find a "coexistence with nature" (Best 2007: 72). The most obvious way that her connection to nature (besides her use of material) shows through is the positioning of the body itself.

The pose that Mendieta utilizes in her *Siluetas* is reminiscent of ancient goddess poses such as the Minoan snake goddess, a popular Latin American Catholic image of the soul in purgatory, or even potentially that of Mexican earth and nature spirits (Best 2007: 68-9). The pose consists of a feminine figure in a standing position with arms pointing upwards that the

palms facing outwardly and flat. This pose is also very open and welcoming which allows for a chilling but almost comforting discourse to occur surrounding the ideas of the female form and nature.

Besides her outdoor pieces that call for a reclamation of space, Mendieta creates extremely personal pieces that call for a reclamation of her own identity such as *Death of a Chicken*, 1972. In *Death of a Chicken*, Mendieta performs her first and only animal sacrifice naked, in a white room. In this piece that she recorded on film as well, Mendieta allows the blood of the chicken to saturate her body. Mendieta not only kills the chicken but becomes a part of the death of the chicken as well.

Death of a Chicken speaks closely to Mendieta's lifelong journey for her search for her identity. When she was growing up in Cuba before she was exiled at age 13, Mendieta was raised Catholic but remembered the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería as being a potent force on the island and a way for her community to connect (Roulet 2012: 21). With this memory of the island inside her, Mendieta felt the need to perform this piece in order to reignite the feeling of connection, community, and home.

Although my pieces are less performative in nature, the connection that both Mendieta and I have to nature and a calling towards ecofeminism is extremely important. My pieces do not involve the body but, my paintings, for example, are so personal (and are also almost always self portraits) that they become an interactive look into the way that I have been searching for my own personal identity through nature. My nature journals can also become easily compared to Mendieta's works because I capture what I am seeing through small drawings, poetry, and

observations but, most importantly, I attempt to put myself in nature by connecting my beauty to the beauty I see around me so that I can hope to find a place for myself in this world.

My final installation piece for SMP continues to push the boundaries into the realm of performance and nature but not necessarily self performance. While Mendieta was more on the search for her ethnic identity, I am on a pursuit to find my gendered, sexual, and environmental identity.

Pollen to Politicians (Installation, Spring 2017)

Growing up, I lived on an old sheep farm. Our driveway section had a rickety garage that never housed any cars because it was constantly filled with unwanted junk that my parents hoarded for special projects like an old band saw, rusty nails and washers, tarps, plastic bags filled with strange metal odds and ends for craft projects, and other miscellaneous items. This shed was an integral part of where I fashioned my toys as a young girl and where I was truly able to develop a mature sense of creativity and imagination.

The act of collecting is something that I have cultivated from my personal history: found objects carry a certain residue of their past and that is extremely tantalizing to me as an artist. I crave the connection between myself and their past lives, worldly issues around me, the past and present lives of people, and the materiality of things. Through my collecting, I am able to feel empathy for the object, everyone the object has touched, and everything the object has seen. Through that transfer of energy, I am taken on a journey through time and space, a journey that allows me to be the object's eyes, ears, mouth, nose, and touch: I *am* the objects' senses.

In my installation *Pollen to Politicians*, I hope to propel the audience into the realm of social justice by creating a comfortable space to digest harsh realities and to provide the resources to do something about those harsh realities. By using found objects in my works, I am able to invite the audience into our shared reality but, after enticing the audience member with recognizable and safe symbols, I trap them by confronting them with tough issues like the destruction of honey bees, who produce $\frac{1}{3}$ of the food we eat in this country, and the mistreatment of women on a variety of levels that need to be faced and have been ignored for so long. Thus, ecofeminism provides the comfort of normality with the whirlwind sitting down and communicating with strangers about the topics that my artworks inspire.

Ecofeminism plays an integral part in understanding both environmental ethics as well as human rights issues by analyzing the relationship between patriarchal dominance over the intersectionality that comes with feminism and the vast destruction of the planet's' ecosystem, environment, and nature in general. Ecofeminism is key in being able to make intelligent connections between gender roles and the mistreatment of the Earth's resources but most importantly, ecofeminism is a call for environmental justice (environmental justice being defined here as the need for every human being to have a safe and healthy environment to live in). Inspired by the disposability of the art of the revolutionary post war Dadaists, the performative aspects of Contemporary art movements and social justice movements, and the resurrection of the stream of consciousness and dreamy state of the Surrealists, my artwork captures what it's like to experience beauty, gratitude, stress, sacrifice, strength, resilience, and vibrancy through the thoughts of a passionate feminist who is in love with questioning everything this universe has to offer.

The Process

The Rocks/Stones

Many, many years ago before my family was hit with a more unmanagable poverty, we lived on a sheep farm in Northern Maryland that was owned by two wealthy British folks and their three daughters. My father held the title of “Farm Manager” so we lived in a quaint old house surrounded by a sturdy fence on top of a hill next to the tree line that bordered and contained the property. In the backyard of our generous island, we had huge boulders that any five year old child could easily imagine were rolled there by giants to act as pillows for their oversized beds (one even looked like a Brontosaurus curled into a ball about to take a nap...what a unique idea for the giants interior design plan!).

The farm had one main driveway with smaller extensions for each building's own driveway. Our house happened to be at the end of the quarter mile long trek in which the driveway formed a circle around a Dogwood tree that filled the landscape with beautiful light pink and white flower petals after it was finished blooming in the spring. Within our driveway section, we also had an old garage that never housed any cars because it was constantly filled with old junk that my parents hoarded for special projects like an old band saw, rusty nails and washers, tarps, plastic bags filled with strange metal odds and ends for craft projects, and other miscellaneous items. Before my family's junk inhabited it, the old shed was once where the equipment for milking the dairy cows lived before the farm was transformed into a wool based farm.

Next to the garage was a Holly tree that was perfect for climbing. Many days I would find myself perched in one of the higher branches listening to the three sisters scream while they played in the luxurious pool wishing that they would invite me to come and join. Luckily, I always found myself amused with the better things in life like chasing the barn cats around or by making extensive cities out of the pile of sand that was behind the barns where my dad did a lot of his work. There was never a dull or boring moment on the farm and my feet were always calloused due to my constant desire for a lack of shoe.

When I was in elementary school, my family and I traveled to California to stay on a ranch owned by the people who owned the farm we lived on. Since we went during the school year, we only spent about a week there but, my family wanted to get in as much fun as possible. Through this desire to find pure excitement, my parents decided to take my little brother and me to the Redwood Forest. When one thinks of old trees, they automatically assume that they will be tall. But, these trees were not tall: these trees were monstrous. I never thought that a tree's height would shock me until we got in the middle of the forest, looked up, and felt as though the treetops extended past our ozone and went beyond our universe. The trees felt like fences to the outside world, like they were guarding us from the sounds of planes and cars, the thoughts of violence (especially since 9/11 occurred almost exactly one year before), the overwhelming feeling of too many thoughts, and so much more.

Even though the forest was peaceful, it was loud. The trees could and were speaking to us as if they wanted us to take away as much wisdom as possible from their omnipresent being. Birds chirped, black squirrels scampered, and insects joyfully looked for food. It was as if the Redwoods were attempting to pull us in with every last one of their limbs and were holding us so

tightly that we could not leave. The Redwoods gave us wisdom to make change in the world but they were not ready to let go of our friendship. The Redwood forest was a truly magical place unlike anything I have ever seen.

Classrooms, on the other hand, are very much so on the opposite side of the spectrum from the Redwood Forest. I can remember sitting in classrooms in high school with no windows or with windows that were covered by blinds to keep the sun out because we did not have air conditioning. The walls were constraining and eerily white but if one held a piece of blank printer paper up to the wall, they may or may not be disturbed by the lack of whiteness covering the walls and the extreme abundance of unidentifiable stains that reside there. Although the edifice had been constructed to encourage learning, each building block used was taken from the mind of a child causing them to sit and act mechanically with a lack of free will due to the emptiness within their brains. Hereford High School was the equivalent of the electric chair: erected by someone higher up and without a true face that sucks the life out of the person sitting in it.

Every place, regardless of its positive connotations or negative connotations, has borders: borders that restrict access to something, borders that protect the people inside from something outside, borders that separate spaces and ideas. Since borders are socially constructed ideas of the division of property, in order to understand this planet and its environmental interactions, it is important to temporarily allow oneself to dissolve those borders from their mind so that one can more cohesively determine a plan for how to tackle tough issues. For example, during the Industrial Revolution, the idea of teamwork was imperative for a successful workforce: the idea of the assembly line taught workers that how they worked and expediency in which they did so

affected others work. Around this same time, the first National Park in the U.S. was created because people were realizing that nature was an important asset to protect (even if parks just create another border, the general concept of the protection of nature is key).

Once Capitalism began to rise closer to the 20th century, the idea of the individual became important in regards to monetary success which translated into success in life in West ideology. With teamwork seeming like a distant idea of the past, the individual created borders by creating personal boundaries around property and other things which created an “eat or be eaten” kind of world.

As individualism increased, the magnitude of importance in which people placed on protecting the environment decreased. Individualism became an artificial place with walls that had very little windows. Without windows, individualism allowed people to be more cut off from even seeing the environment and the negative affects that people were having on it in general. In order to have a world that not only takes care of one another more efficiently but also takes care of the environment, it's important to bridge the gap between the windowless artificial and the loud wilderness. Through teamwork, there is a greater likelihood that the West can work towards a more healthy environment. While this doesn't sound like a fresh idea, the idea of incorporating more windows in one's life is a fresh idea.

Coming to a decision as to what I would use for the border of this piece took weeks. I had brainstormed possibilities such as mulch, flower petals, sand, dirt, even an old orange shag carpet that I found at a dusty yard sale. But, none of those items felt right somehow. Not having a border was out of the question: without a border, my installation could not be a reclaimed space but rather, an area where some artwork was stored. Having a border for my installation meant

that I could create an intimate, shared space and that was exactly what I needed in order to accomplish my goals for the project.

One day, after a flash of innocence and some barefoot dancing on a beach off campus, I sat down in the white sand with the sound of the wind weaving its way through the short grasses behind me and the wind whipping itself across the atoms of the water in front of me. To the right of me, a few people old enough to not have a curfew were enjoying the sun and to the left of me stood the echoes of the Naval Base as people began to exit their buildings to go home for the night.

In that moment, I was at peace. Yet, for some reason, I felt vulnerable and like my intimate moment was being shared with people whom I did not want to share. Quickly but gently, I began to collect stones that were placed behind me in the grasses that had been worn down from years of wind and sun and bleached due to long days in paradise. As I collected the stones, I placed them in a circle around my sitting body. After placing a piece of driftwood in front of the circle with a colorful rock, a shell, and a feather on top of it and a dried stick in the sand standing upright next to the altar, I sat in my circle and closed my eyes. After a few minutes, the stones were cleared of any negative energies and were ready to provide comfort for those who would utilize my installation.

I completed this process one more time in order to have enough rocks to create a space for my installation. Then, once in the gallery, I placed the rocks into a circle again with an opening in the front so that one can enter the space without stepping over the boundary or making people believe that they cannot enter the space.

The rocks are meant to be soothing, cool and smooth to the touch, and to be a representation of time, erosion, and the preciousness of our environment.

The Moon Chair

I found the original rocking chair with a broken back piece at a Goodwill for \$15. When I saw the chair, I was immediately drawn to its quirky shape and the fact that it was not only ugly, but, that it also needed to be fixed. I brought it back to my studio but could not get inspired as to how to approach changing. Then, a streak of brilliance!

After fixing the back of the chair with some fabric I had in my studio, I found two cans of old paint that were donated to the SMP students and mixed them together to create this luscious pale blue color that I used to cover the entirety of the chair. I had previously been inspired by Professor Patterson talking about a project she was going to do at her art studio with Sharpie markers so I proceeded to recreate one of my frequently used symbols in my pen and ink drawings (the Sharpie allowed me to recreate the sharpness of line that I had achieved in my small pen and ink drawings). With the Sharpie, I also illustrated the symbol of the “triple goddess” on the top of the chair to represent strength, protection, and the stages of life. Yet, the chair still did not feel complete to me. In order to make the chair feel more homey and closer to a feeling of feminism, I added a vintage handkerchief to the seat.

Drawing and painting on the chair helped to satiate my needs for sculpture, two dimensional media, and three dimensional media but, I had truly begun to miss the act and process of painting portraits and capturing human life. Thus, the introspective face in the bottom right corner of the chair was born.

Typically when painting portraits, I prefer to paint on a cooler tint of a pale orange because it brings a certain glow and unique quality to my works. Thus, I knew it was going to be a challenge for me to paint on the almost exact opposite color. But, the blue and greens of the chair-to my surprise-did not make the face look sickly or dead but rather, the blues emphasized the liveliness of the figures features.

As the figure looks up to the moon, she appears to have so many questions yet, at the same time, the moon stares blankly into space and radiates confidence and wisdom. The purpose of this chair is to act as a mode of transportation for a storyteller: as the storyteller sits there and reads to a child, for example, the story seems so innocent and simple until the storyteller begins to question their own innocence. This chair is about contemplation and sharing. For this same reason, I placed the book of my *Daily Discovery* drawings in the seat so that audience members can sit, rock, and contemplate the beauty and fear of innocence.

The Flower Chair

Originally, I had bought two rolls of chicken wire to create a fully interactive beehive. When I realized that within the time constraints this was fairly impossible especially with my lack of skill set regarding plaster, I had to reinvent a new plan.

After a lot of soul searching, I went to the Habitat for Humanity Restore in Great Mills to see if I could find any inspiration in the found objects there. While in the furniture section, I discovered a rickety wicker chair that was cylindrical and had a small, matching footstool. I somehow managed to finagle the chair into my shopping cart-along with a few other odds and ends-and brought it back to my studio.

For some reason, I stared at that chair for days. The once inspiring moment that I had at the Restore had vanished. But then, A stroke of brilliance! I took the chicken wire-the hexagons, which look like honey combs, inspired me-and wrapped it around the chair to form this weird, long, Surrealist flower in which I eventually allowed some of the chicken wire to show through to expose the hexagons (as if the bees were in the process of building the flower themselves!).

Then, I covered the chicken wire in powdered paper mache, newspaper, and plaster that was mixed with cheesecloth for easy application. I primed the flower with white paint and spent easily over twenty or so hours to paint the flower with acrylic paint to add dimension and a realistic quality to it. The flower also remained hollow to act as a mailbox for the postcards. In order to cover the exposed plaster on the inside, I lined the inside of the flower with soft, yellow fabric. This flower chair would become the most interactive part of the final installation and the inspiration for the name *Pollen to Politicians*.

Postcard

The postcard, that is suppose to be sent to “someone who should listen” and will be “delivered by the queen bee” (me), depicts my version of a powerful and strong lady justice balancing two beehives, one in each hand. Behind her, there is a planet with the phrases “Strength in Unity” surrounding the planet. Also behind the female figure is a banner that reads “una apis nulla apis” which is latin for “one bee, no bee.” This phrase becomes very important because a honey bee is a super organism which means that it genuinely cannot function as a singular bee, the hive needs all of its parts in order to survive. This lesson is something that humans in the West should

take to heart remembering that we should all work together to accomplish our goals to make this the best habitat

Flower Pens

The flower pens, which are placed in a vase to look like a bouquet of flowers next to the postcards, are constructed from blue pens, florist tape, and fake flowers. The flowers used to create the pens were all flowers that aid in honey bee pollination that are easy to plant and maintain: sunflowers, rosemary, lavender, and buttercups.

Bee Cookies

The bee cookies helped to add an extra interactive and safe element to my piece. By having the bee cookies set out, the cookies offered a strong invitation for one to come into my created space, sit down, and think. The cookies were basic sugar cookies with designs on them that included: a bee, a honey comb, a flower. In order to have the designs be “relief designs,” or designs that protrude out from the cookie, a concave cookie stamp was used.

The Painting

When I was in my senior year of high school, I shaved my head with a “zero” razor which meant that I was basically completely bald. I told everyone that I was excited to part with my long locks and dispose of the dead skin cells that are hair so I could start over before I went to college. Unfortunately, that was not necessarily the case.

For almost two years of my young adolescent life, I was in a relationship with a person who treated me like I was less than human. I was not his girlfriend but rather, his property, a symbol of his dominance, and the only thing that in his life that he could have complete control

over. When I talk about the parts that I can remember with people, no one ever says “why did you stay?” But, I know they are thinking it. Unfortunately, when someone deems you their property, you cannot foreclose yourself to escape.

Thus, shaving my head was not my decision. Before he broke up with me and set me free, as an attempt immortalize his dominance over me, he sat me on the floor one night and said, “you would look a lot better bald.” He took the razor to my head and did not stop even when I said to. Hair fell to the floor in clumps. I rode the light rail home with a hat on my head (it was February), crying. That was the day I let go of the popular notion of hair being a security blanket and learned that hair was a way to define someone's humanity. And then, I learned how much further hair could go.

This painting was created in response to how I processed my interactions with people after I had short hair as a woman and how I began a discourse with myself about hair and women of color. For me, interacting with people when I had short hair/no hair meant satiating the needs of stereotypical cultural constructs of length of hair defining the level of someone's femininity. For example, in Western society, if a male has long hair, he is seen as feminine and if a woman has short hair, she is seen as masculine. Thus, when I had no hair, people would casually pet my head and tell me that I looked like a “dyke” or when my hair started to grow in a little bit, I was, in their minds for all intents and purposes, a boy. For women of color during the Slave Trade, in order to dehumanize them further, their masters would shave their heads, stripping them of their dignity and identity.

In order to connect this piece back to my Ecofeminist theoretical approach, I thought about how a honey bee hive and its honey are defined by the pollen of the flowers that the honey

bees collect. For example, when one goes to the store, they could purchase “wildflower honey” or “clover honey” or any other variety that the honey bees of the hive decided to get their pollen from.

To keep honey bees healthy and happy, an extremely easy way to help with pollination is to maintain meadows in which many flowers can bloom and flourish thus helping honey bees discover and create their own personal honey flavors. But, in an attempt to keep “lawns pretty,” people of the West tend to keep their grass in their lawns extremely short (which is also bad for the environment), leaving honey bees with little sources for food.

With meadows defining the flavor of a hives honey and the length of a woman's hair defining her femininity, I created this painting as a reflection of this connection on a canvas that I built ad stretched myself.

Daily Discoveries

My *Daily Discovery* drawing have been a therapeutic process for me. As someone who sees more color than the average person, drawing in black and white would be expected to be a challenge. But, drawing with a permanent medium-my micron pens-allowed me to explore texture and sound through my pieces instead of just offering an experience of how light reflects off of objects through color. The repetition of shape and line helps to create an auditory experience for me, as if the objects being drawn emit some type of sound that the normal human cannot hear.

My *Daily Discoveries* take on the Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist notion of automatic drawing in which I allow my thoughts to pour out onto the paper without a lot of

initial thought put into them. Then, once my drawings are complete, I am able to sit down with the drawings and analyze the symbolism present in them so that I can discover something new about the world around me, how it is affecting me, and how I am reacting to that world subconsciously.

The small size of these drawings give them an intimate feeling so that they are small enough that one can hold the piece of art in their hand and be confronted with the same discoveries as I was and am. The small size also allowed me to create more pieces more quickly so that I could confront a larger array of issues over a shorter period of time.

My Daily Discoveries are intimate, gentle, sharp, and innovative.

Conclusions

The origin of the word “bee” is derived from a Dutch word for “ruler” or “king.” It was not until 1586 that it was finally recognized that the sex of the head bee was female but it was only published in England years later in 1609. Moses Ruden, a royal beekeeper, claimed that “bees were proof that ‘Monarchy is founded in Nature’,” so it is no surprise that the publicity surrounding the sex of the head bee was a “powerful natural precedent for Elizabeth I’s reign” (Preston 2006: 60-62). Elizabeth I’s reign was powerful and helped to restore a sense of nationality and stability to England in her 44 year reign, something that her predecessors had struggled with.

Recognizing connections between the mistreatment of women and the mistreatment of honey bees provides valuable insight into all aspects of human life. If one educated themselves on the theoretical approaches of Ecofeminism, political systems can be stronger, environmental

health could increase, gender equality would be normalized, among many other social, cultural, and physical issues that could be potentially alleviated. Through the creation of multimedia artwork with recognizable symbols, intimate interactive pieces, and community outreach, the goal of creating a more harmonious and understanding world can begin to come into focus.

In order to bring my St. Mary's Project to a close, I end with this poem that I created as part of my artist statement for the Fall semester. This poem encompasses my hopes, dreams and goals for this project: some of which, of course, still need to be addressed in further work. But for now, this is a start for many more years of research and creative processes.

honey bees | the moon | ecofeminism | activism

A search for identity.
 A quest for wisdom.
 A pursuit of happiness.
 A reclamation of space.
 A need for change.
 A path for beauty.
 A thought of synesthesia.
 A creation of life.
 A comparison.
 A challenge.
 A heartbreak.
 An experiment.
 A mistake.
 A lesson.
 A lot of self love.
 A ton of questions.
 A single answer.
 A human connection.
 A connective universe.
 A symbol.
 My art.

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