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ABSTRACT

The ability to heal, adapt, and evolve is essential to thriving within new circumstances. These characteristics, which are so easily observed in nature, have been the visual guide to not only the methodology behind my practice but also in how I have learned to make sense of unimaginable emotional pain. By examining each visual and material ingredient that goes into my process, I reveal my imagined world and the systems of power that influence the “situationships” between each object. This paper aims to reflect the essence of my process and art, where chaos is embraced and the precarity of life hangs in the balance.

Situationships:

Creating Situations and Relationships for and with Material

By

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B.F.A., Alfred University, 2013

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Studio Arts.

Syracuse University

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I was cracked, split, splintered, broken, mangled, fractured, crushed, smashed, shattered, and shredded beyond repair. Fragments of my earliest memories are scattered throughout my consciousness after experiencing the injustices of life at just five years old. I put these pieces back together as well as I could at that age and created a new version of myself. This new edition understood empathy and pain transcendently. I shed the husk of who I was, adapted to this new reality, and transformed into something more unruly, colorful, bold, and unapologetic. After major alterations in my life, I found myself in a completely new environment, isolated from the hustle and noise of the city. My tiny town was fifteen minutes away from the nearest gas station and surrounded by the chaos of the wilderness. This unfamiliar terrain was thrilling and simultaneously terrifying with the new knowledge of the fragile and unpredictable nature of life. This new expansive property full of bubbly red sumac, twisting freezing streams, intertwining trees, twinkling wildflowers, fluffy puffballs, abandoned barns and farm equipment, and invasive bamboo allowed me to investigate the strangeness of the world around me.

What piqued my curiosity has always been the clash between natural elements and human structures and objects. In the spring the stream behind our house would flood, slowly shifting the pattern of the flow to the entire space. This would expose the massive garbage hole the previous owner had used for decades. Rust would mix with dirt and be taken over by greenery as soon as we cleared out as much as possible. Areas overtaken by humans and abandoned became overgrown with vines and weeds as if to reclaim that manipulated space. Weeds would spike through the pavement of our driveway in defiance. Maybe I am a weed too, sprouting through the garbage and the weight of the human pavement to take over and reclaim the space that is mine.

Curiosity was not my only reason for wandering into the wilderness. These open-air spaces allowed me to escape the walls of our house where I felt trapped; trapped in my feelings, in routine, and in a new normalcy that was difficult to navigate. The lack of control that I had over the world and my circumstances left an impression on me. I have obsessive-compulsive tendencies likely brought on by this and one of my go-to coping strategies has been escape. I turn to books, nature, tv shows, games, music, audiobooks, podcasts; essentially whatever that is available to me. I will use just about anything to distract myself from those spiraling thoughts. This behavior is reflected in my artistic practice by my constant need to create safe spaces for myself where I have full control in every aspect of the space and over each object that goes into it.

Alternative Representations (Non-Objective Forms)

In day-to-day life, I often feel like what I can only describe as a saturated sponge. I constantly absorb everything around me, and I find it difficult to function if I am unable to wring out those experiences in the studio. I create experiences to be consumed and sensations to be felt in the body. My experiences throughout the day both in-person and online are where I get the ingredients for each abstracted object. For a long time now, I have been visually stimulated by objects from every situation that I find bizarre, unexpected, or alien.

In creating handmade abstract objects and environments, it is fascinating to me how the immediate tendency for most audiences is to visually place each object and to define it. Representational methods of making allow viewers easy access to artwork, but I find myself bored when approaching work in this way; it feels extremely limiting. The urge to create my own visual language stems from an inability to effectively communicate complicated emotions and events. There is no guide in the interpretation of these spaces; they must be felt. Part of the

reason for this is due to the vast amount of information that I absorb, which saturates each project.

List of ingredients: Deep-sea creatures with their bioluminescence and shimmering veiled membranes floating around in unexplored terrain; itty bitty diatoms under a microscope with their thin membranes and intriguing shapes floating through an unfamiliar space; bright blue digital screens acting as a window or portal to the digital terrain; the life cycle of plants with continuous rebirth and renewal throughout the seasons; globs of mold that grow on dead fruit and transform the color and structure; trees harboring a bacteria or virus completely morphing the bark in strange ways; sap spilling out of a hole in a maple tree; slimy long moss on stones in the lake near my home; the patterns in the biological systems within the body and larger social systems that people have used to function; social hierarchies; the refraction of light through a crystal, under water, or within digital space; polished petrified wood and the intensity of colors hidden deep within these million year old trees; snapchat filters and the ability to transform a face and implant digital objects into our world; watching TikTok videos and being transported into the lives of millions of strangers; sci-fi movies and dystopian dramas that are attempting to reach past the familiar to reveal something that could potentially be; epigenetics and how the way our DNA is read in the body and alters after trauma; stage props; children's toys & their bulging eyes, soft sparkling fur, and iridescent skin instantly sparks a visual sensory overload; sensations in different parts of my body and my limbs, phantom pains; the rectangular eye of a cuttlefish; exotic fruits; gardening tools as an extension of the body; crusty scabs and burns on the body; rapid evolution through trauma and a continuous need to adapt in an ever changing world.

These reflections are most evident in my material choices and how I modify and transform those materials.



[Figure 1. *Extra*, mixed media installation, 2020]

Material

“We maintain that as the intellectual barriers erected to keep people out of nature dissolve, it becomes clear that in a physical sense people – even when cultural – are always natural too. Unfortunately, it seems that it is difficult to hold that thought. It appears awkward, slippery, and thinking tends to reject any notion of our physical ties to materials and leaps back to separation and a human exceptionalist focus.”

Body Matters – Luci Attala & Louise Steel

Materials have their own frequency in the world. When I observe physical objects, I do not understand them with my mind, I sense them in my body. This visceral reaction is brought on by the material; the way that the form expresses itself in space, the way it feels when I touch it, and the way the colors create instinctive sensations in me. When thinking about using any material, I make a connection between the human form, naturally occurring forms, and human

made forms. Determining which combination of materials will create the efficacy needed in each project is most important. I consider how Deleuze saw the impact of art, and how art's "affect" requires intimacy with each of these materials in a physical capacity.¹ This holds true for me; if I can understand materials with my body then my mind follows, and I can uncover why it is that I gravitate to a particular material in the first place. It is impossible for me to remove prevalent associations embedded within these materials. I use this to my advantage by responding to those connections along with my underlying sensations with the material itself in order to work through each concept.

With sheets of polystyrene foam insulation, for instance, I think of accessibility, the home, hidden protection. It is easily manipulated with basic tools, lightweight so that I can carry it and build large objects and it is easy to transform using joint compound and paint. It has a dystopian quality as it provides benefits for human comfort, yet it is terrible for the environment and my body as I continue to use it. Due to the harsh chemicals used to create it, if inhaled over a long period of time it could eventually cause an allergic reaction or worse. I consider the use of polystyrene as the hidden bone structure to many of my pieces. In a practical sense, it helps keep the shape of the form and can be moved and manipulated to create a large constellation of forms. The duality in this material being a two-dimensional flat surface as well as a three-dimensional object also reflects my experience living in a physical body but escaping into digital spaces.

I use wax to reference uncontrollable bodily fluids, some that heal wounds, some that rid the body of unneeded materials. Wax is an attractive organic material that can be both liquid

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Percept, Affect, and Concept*, write: "Art does not have opinions. Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions affections and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects and blocs of sensations that take the place of language. "Affect is described as: an ability of art to affect and be affected. A non-conscious feeling of intensity.

when activated by heat and solid when it's room temperature. There is a certain amount of chaos while using it to mimic open wounds. The heated wax exposes further structural damage within the material, sometimes pouring out through the back of the wound or running off the side when the area becomes oversaturated.

Using joint compound creates an illusion of unity with the combination of different pieces and it hardens into a bright white, which adds to the bonelike sensation of the objects. Looking at objects like this makes me uncomfortable. They are naked, cold, sad, and have no life to them yet. I think of this material as a protective membrane around the polystyrene, much like skin: yet another layer of separation between what we can see and the true nature of this material.



[Figures 2 -3. *Open Gash*, polystyrene, wax, & acrylic paint, 2020]

Transmitters:

Unraveled yarn, electroluminescent wire (EL wire), and long plastic tubes are used as transmitters within the space, sending and taking energy and information between various objects. This is a physical simulation of how everything is connected either literally or by energy.

I see the unraveled yarn acting in various ways. Visually it acts like a vine or an invasive species because of its ability to overpower and obstruct how an object is understood. It also acts as a connector between multiple forms and spaces. Though lightweight by itself, it adds quite a bit of visual and physical weight in large quantities. I have been using this material as a reference to a metaphorical unraveling based on what I see going on at this particular juncture in history. When taken out of its original form, these small threads of unraveled yarn become very delicate and soft to the touch. Feeling the large bunches of threads simulates an experience I had many times as a child when I found complete satisfaction with an object; I could pretend it had long hair or that I could completely wrap myself in the material and hide. There is something extremely gratifying about that sensation for me. Even now those long tendrils of yarn in their thickness, softness, and weight stimulate my senses in a way that I am not yet able to completely understand.

I think about the EL wire as wired veins inside a house or a person, or the root system of a plant buried deep under the surface of the earth. Using this material, I bring what is hidden out into open space. They can blink or remain lit, giving a sense of the physical state of the objects that these wired lights are born out of. The effect is similar to the traditional use of neon lights in businesses or even the pulse of a heartbeat. Using this material in the work acts as an automatic way to attract attention and lure people into the space. These El wires also mimic creatures

within the deep ocean and their bioluminescence. Creatures like the mantis shrimp, for instance, use colorful lights to communicate everything. For me, the blinking of these wires is a way to communicate the life force of these objects.

Clear tubing is also used as a way to simulate a transference of energy but not necessarily with helpful results. I use thin plastic tubes that you might see in a hospital room. My intention with this material is to create dynamics that replicate the damage that our healthcare system causes each year -- between 210,000 and 440,000 deaths are caused by medical mistakes despite physicians' intent to heal. Filling the tubes with paint I connect two different sculptures together in space to debate this relationship. By connecting two sculptures with paint-filled tubing, the question becomes whether this relationship is parasitic or symbiotic.



[Figures 4- 5. *IV*, found objects, acrylic paint, plastic tubing, iridescent mylar, 2020]

Perception Manipulation

I use iridescent mylar and vinyl as a colorful mask to alter perception much like how people curate their lives on digital platforms. This material is also one of my favorite ways to play with light and manipulate the surface of a material. The color changes depending on how the light hits the object as well as when you move around it. I associate this material with the digital because of the luminescent quality and its ability to alter perception. When mentioning visual perception, I am referring to how information and reality are now perceived within the context of a digital algorithm on the internet, which shows you one version of reality or a manipulated version of reality based on your preferences. Social media provides a platform where we can curate our lives for our social circles in order to portray a version of ourselves that is ideal to the outside world. I think of Facebook and Instagram, and how each post is static, living in the cybersphere forever, yet also constantly evolving and changing to update the world on why we matter, why we are interesting, and why you should follow along for the journey. This duality makes it difficult to discern what is authentic from what is fiction.

It is also important for me to mention color and paint as a material but, scientifically, it is just the reflection of light off a surface that then reflects into our eyes. We cannot truly define it because it is a sensation we perceive. Because of this, I associate color with a way to manipulate perception by creating a “mask” to allow whatever interpretation of that object that one chooses. There are a variety of ways to do this, one is to look at how it changes the physiology within a person. The color red for instance, has been known to increase a person’s appetite and to some species it signifies a testosterone-driven dominance. There is also Baker Miller Pink which studies have shown causes a decrease in violence and strength, so much so that it was banned from the opposing team’s locker rooms when used for sporting events. Color also serves many

practical functions in nature. Male birds use their vivid colors to attract a mate and poisonous frogs use color as a defense to ward off predators. Color can indicate decay and rot in plants and in the body. Octopi and chameleons use color to camouflage themselves. It is also important to consider color in the context of unearthing a precious stone and discovering unimaginable color combinations and forms. In all of these ways, paint and color can be used as a way to mimic associations that are already within the subconscious psyche.

In my own work, I use color in all these ways. I think about color as a way to grab attention and in effect lure the viewer in to investigate more. I do this by using obnoxiously loud colors paired with muted subtle tones. I use color and paint as a defense to hide and obscure open wounds in my objects by using light and iridescent mylar to manipulate how each form is initially interpreted. In my work *IV* [Figures 4-5], I use color to signify decay, rot, and lifelessness by using muted and dull tones that fade into a white grey. I also create moments of discovery with color, especially in the installation work. The objects within those installations have an otherworldly essence to them that sparks a particular kind of curiosity and investigation. Color is my most powerful way to initialize a gut instinct and establish a tone in the work.

Color combinations have a specific mood. In my life, I recognize patterns within my color sensibilities. By combining both vibrant and muted tones, I reference both aspects of my life experience as a woman in a world that does not reward my opinion or my voice -- I reject that notion and give it anyway. After reading Glennon Boyle's book *Untamed* I was able to recognize another pattern in what I refer to as untamed color and unlearning the lessons that the world teaches a woman. These concepts can be seen in my transition between painting a flat canvas and expanding into three-dimensions. I now see the importance of what I make as taking

up space and demanding acknowledgement. For too long my experience with my own art practice was practical, small, and easily digestible. This entire transition has allowed me to see the underlying manipulation inherent in my experience as a woman, which is reflected in the creation of my installation work and results in a more authentic version of my practice as well as myself. There is another part of me that considers the inherent need to transform, fix, or recreate an object as yet another reflection of this experience. The need to be a chameleon to be what the world wanted me to be was drilled into my head even as a young girl. I also consider the fact that having little control over how I am perceived or treated in a male dominated world has led me to create a space where I have total control over these objects and spaces.

Found Objects

Using found objects that other people no longer have use for has been yet another vital development in my practice. I always pick objects that I can transform and manipulate or use as supports etc. I am not interested in using objects because I claim them as my own. By separating them from their common contexts and associations, I can transport the viewer into uncharted territory. Using found objects in this way runs parallel with my use of color and light to mask the true nature of that object's original history and intended function. It has been interesting trying to explain what exactly I look for in these objects. What motivates me when I come across a found object is not what it is but rather the potential of what it could be. I itch for control over the object to bring it into my new visual experience and breathe new life into it.

I find myself thinking back to the old, rusted farm equipment in my backyard growing up. It is really shocking and tragic how much waste we accumulate. Plastic is now everywhere, in our water, the food we eat, everywhere. This is yet another reason I have found myself gravitating towards found objects. While using just the polystyrene insulation foam, I was

disgusted with the amount of waste I was producing with this material, so much so that I began to gather the scraps in homes so I could use every bit of that material.



[Figure 6. *Self-Sabotage* (Detail), polystyrene, joint compound, wax, acrylic paint, 2020]

Healing/Resilience/Evolution

The intriguing thing about trauma is that it either makes you look outside of yourself to develop empathy for the world and all of its living beings or the alternative, turning in towards the self to focus on the self. After the election of Trump, I recognized that reality as I understood it was a straight-up delusion and this triggered another time in my life when the world felt unstable. I observed how much of the turmoil in the world meant nothing unless he could make it about himself. Observing his behavior caused me to develop an obsession toward politics. I needed to understand the impact of each major change made by this administration as a way to feel more in control despite the chaos that he stirred. As aforementioned, these fixations serve as distractions from the things in my own life that will never have a resolution. Witnessing trauma all around me, I began to wonder what happens to the body after something awful happens to a

person. Through my research I came across the study of epigenetics², where there is evidence that stressors physically alter our DNA, thus altering both our bodies and our minds. It does make me wonder, how did my own DNA change after what I have gone through? How would the Trump administration and its failings impact our collective DNA?

Perhaps it was through the alterations of my own DNA, or perhaps it was just through necessity, that my life experience thus far has helped me establish my own system of healing all of the parts of myself that I hid away. I know for certain that the only time I feel one hundred percent free is when I am in the studio working and become completely absorbed in a new project. While my mind is distracted with music or a podcast, my body is focused on the action at hand and I start to form a rhythm. It is a meditation of sorts. I can evade my giant web of orbiting thoughts and be completely in the moment, mind and body working together, lost in the task at hand. It is a bit contradictory, but I gain momentum by both the need for control and the total openness to my own chaos and play in the studio. My work acts as a tool to communicate thoughts and ideas I have not fully processed consciously, leaving visible evidence of the history of what has happened, what I have done, to each object.

The act of working material with my own body transfers the many things I have absorbed and transform them into objects. I have taken to ripping, smashing, and breaking these objects only to put them back together. Generally, this is brought on in times of extreme stress to not only release the energy that is stored within my body, but also to act out my own traumatic experiences then take back my control as I heal the wounds that I inflicted. So far, the work

² Epigenetics is the study of changes that occur within an organism after a traumatic event. Gene methylation changes after these events, changing the way DNA is read within the body. Thus, altering behavior and can open up the possibility for disease and other genetic illness to occur.

never fully heals; each piece reveals the history of the experience inflicted upon that object with big open gashes, waxy wounds, and iridescent voids. I do not yet know if this work has the power to heal others, but I am confident that the intense vulnerability of exposing my own open wounds would be powerful enough to the right people to reach some of their own wounds, which is ultimately what drives me to want to share this work with other people.

To sum it up, I create fragmented forms out of polystyrene, plaster, paper mâché, and/or wire and I envelop them with fabrics, joint compound, and acrylic paint. I then configure their orientation in space and breathe life into my ambiguous biomorphic objects all while continuously adding and taking away material. This process can take anywhere from a day to a few months due to the instinctive way that I adjust and modify each object in the space until I get the sensation that I want. I slice, cut, stab, hammer, throw, smash, peel, rip and cut deep holes into these “toys” I lovingly create. At this point, I have generated an object that needs “fixing”. I use wax, glue, paint, foam, painter’s tape, and fabric to repair and imitate the healing process within these objects. The history of the original material peeks out through these wounds, revealing the trauma I have inflicted upon it. Bits of the original color of the blue, purple, and pink polystyrene are left exposed to remind the audience that these objects are in limbo between the reality of their origins and the imagined life I have given them.

Each new project has at least one component from a previous work that evolves with me into the new piece. The evolution of an individual form with each new iteration of work mimics the cycle of birth, trauma, and rebirth within the making of the piece, the installation, and the uninstallation of the work.

Investigations & Play

Play has just as much importance in my practice as the reenactment of my own trauma and healing cycle. I consider the ability to let loose and play a sort of superpower that most people grow out of. It is a release from my own internal critic. My process is childlike in the way that it comes about naturally with objects and materials that are within my vicinity. I experiment and mix and match objects with each other until I feel an internal spark. The grunt work in my studio involves the initial making and selection of the objects that I will eventually play with. Each new project bounces back and forth between play and intention.

In Ester Harding's book *Psychic Energy*, she describes different processes in archeology. There were two ways of approaching these new discoveries. One was to impose ideas onto found broken mosaics to give them new meaning. In the other example, the true nature was established by recording their exact placement and reassembling them to see the original intent. Having a preconceived notion of an unfamiliar object kills the magic of unveiling unknown truths inherent in that object. She goes on further to say:

“Strangely enough, when the scattered fragments of the psyche are gathered up, an exactly similar discovery is made. If, with similar respect for realities, preconceived ideas can be kept out of the picture, as the pieces are fitted together, bit by bit, the true form of the individual will begin to take shape, and it will become apparent. Often to his own great amazement, that his personality is actually built on a pattern. Its precise form may be dissolved or overlaid but it exists fundamentally, and therefore cannot be replaced simply from imagination or wishful thinking.”

There are incalculable connections that I have uncovered in the studio that would not have been possible through other modes of making. If I have a project totally figured out in my head, I never make it because there is no room for discovery or further investigation; the idea feels set in stone. All of the magic and excitement I gain from working is in the process of

unearthing new mysteries and questions, which generates more art making. This act of play has also allowed me to generate my own visual language.



[Figure 7. *The Conversation*, high density foam, polystyrene, velvet, wire, acrylic paint, 2019]

A substantial portion of my research takes place outside of the studio. As mentioned earlier, part of my coping with life is by distracting my inner voice and consuming visual experiences. The majority of this consumption takes place online or out in nature. These spaces are the mental and physical escapes that I draw from to create new alternative realities and forms in the studio. Noteworthy experiences stick to my subconscious. These experiences tend to be situations where I feel the need to make sense of the pain I witness in the world, pain that I empathize with because of my own experiences.

The progression of my work in the studio, as well as my research outside, is both erratic and linear in nature. It is similar to playing tennis. Sometimes you are in control and can aim the ball to a specific place on the court and other times the rapid pace forces you to react and hope

the ball goes somewhere on the other side of the net. It is a fluid back and forth between play and conscious decision making to the point where what I make evolves past what I could have ever imagined.

The installation process within the gallery space echoes the preliminary stages of this work. I begin investigating and playing with each object within a space to get to the point where I uncover the conversation that needs to be had. Oftentimes, pieces fall and break during this process and require a revisit through the healing process. It is not until these objects are in a space and engaging with one another that they “come alive” and create something new. Understanding the space itself is a dance. Balance plays an important role in the way that the objects fill the space and inform one another. There is a tension that I witness while engaging in these spaces due to the fragility in the way the objects are made and arranged. They are activated not only by color but also in the way that I both can and cannot engage with them in order for them to remain intact.

The way that each object is installed within the space can be interpreted either as a system of reliance and harmony or as parasitic, depending on how you relate to the individual objects. These conflicting moments within the space and between the forms themselves are reliant on one’s own personal perspective. The manipulation of that perception is a reflection of how the world now works and operates in small algorithmic digital worlds, offering one narrow perspective on extremely complex and tumultuous issues. The first example that pops into my mind is the 2014 election. Facebook algorithms created a system where you only saw content that you were more likely to engage in. The lack of diversity in information readily available on the platform suppressed the critical thinking process adding fuel to conspiracy theories and misinformation campaigns.



[Figure 8. *If You Touch Me, Things Will Fall, And I Will Die*, polystyrene, joint compound, acrylic paint, 2019]

Activation & Experience

The work does not end with me. How I use these objects is comparable to the use of objects filling space within a virtual game. In this way, the spaces themselves act as an alternative world where this game can be initiated. The activation is when someone decides to enter this world and be in the space.

In my piece *If You Touch Me, Things Will Fall, and I Will Die* [Figure 8], I created rudimentary objects similar to something you might see if the visuals of a game were to glitch, where all of the objects then become strange obscure shapes. This installation was completely reliant on the balance of each object within the space. Partially due to the title, those who entered the space were automatically more aware of their body and the potential impact they could have if they were to accidentally bump into the work. The potential for chaos and destruction in this piece created a tension that has had the most consistent reaction. This piece is a metaphor for

how engagement in both the digital and actual world has impact, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.

The level of understanding in these metaphors within their environments is dependent upon each person's ability to perceive sensory information in material, the "situationships" between the forms, and the associations that relate to the use of color. I like to think of it as embedding code within the objects themselves; the challenge is then whether or not the audience can decipher the layers of meaning in the work. It is impossible to conceive that everyone will have the same experience in an ambiguous foreign environment. At the very least I can always rely on capturing attention with visual sensation to draw someone into my space. I want the work to stick inside the mind as both an escape from the world and as a reflection of the opposing forces that occupy it. The work exists in the peripheries of pain and joy, ominous and inviting, saturated and muted, soft and gritty, playful and terrible.

These extremes can be seen in my work beyond just the physical objects. In projects like *Extra* and *Wires & Veins*, instead of creating fully painted autonomous objects shown in traditional gallery lighting, I used colored LED bulbs alongside the EL wire. [See figures 1 & 8] This not only transformed the traditional interpretation of the white cube but also the understanding of the material itself. In *Wires & Veins* specifically, I used tomato cages, a lamp shade, additional wire, and fabric alongside the lights to create hanging pods. One piece is open, exposing cool colored EL wires, and one is closed, emanating warm light from within the object. This combination is reminiscent of dark city spaces, night clubs, or late-night neon lights reflecting in the empty streets. Being in this space alone produces many sensations, the intensity of the colors attracts the eye, yet the darkness indicates a sense of danger and vulnerability. The lights inside of the hanging objects in the space give them a life of their own. The pods

themselves evoke visual temptation. I consider this work similar to mysterious fruit found in nature, or digital tokens to signify a reward during various states of a video game. They also symbolize the overindulgence in our hyper materialistic society where digital applications feeding off our need for constant stimulation.



[Figure 8. *Wires & Veins*, fabric, el wire, wire, tomato cages, rope, LED lamps, 2020]

My artistic process has given me the authority to create my own world, which reflects my experiences and interpretations within it. It has allowed me to take those shattered pieces and rearrange them into an alternative space of my own, where I can explore and understand the deepest parts of my psyche along with the paradox of life. I invite the audience on my journey of curiosity and self-discovery as they immerse themselves into my world. There is an ancient Tibetan Buddhist meditation called Tonglen. This practice has been translated to mean giving and taking or sending and receiving. In this practice, one inhales the pain and suffering of the

world and then transforms that pain by exhaling positive intention back into the world. I deeply resonate with this. In my own practice, I, too, absorb the suffering around me and then transform that energy into environments that incite childlike wonder.

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