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NOWHEREPERFECT

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

Garrett Charles Pointer

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2018

The thesis of Garrett Charles Pointer is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California San Diego

2018

DEDICATION

For my dad, my mom, my sister, my Nandee and my true love, Christina.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

NOWHEREPERFECT

by

Garrett Charles Pointer

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California San Diego, 2018

Professor Ruben Ortiz-Torres, Chair

Here presented is the research of Garrett Charles Pointer for the project “NOWHEREPERFECT”. An investigation of an artist practice of studio sculpture, drawing and installation work that explores themes of abjection, masculinity and popular culture. Discussed within, are the inspirations and motivations of the artwork, as well as, theoretical concepts that relate to the work and art historical precedents. Explanations

of process, materials and subjects add on to the canon of art, which I build off of. This is one pursuit of a greater understanding of art and the world itself.

INTRODUCTION

Masculinity pervades Garrett Pointer's work from the sources of inspiration and resulting subjects, to the scale, materials and presence of the hand, smearing a mark of counterrevolutionary bravado. However, masculinity is just a fragile shell that holds a sincerity, vulnerability and grief, or maybe it is the other way around. An onslaught can uncover poetry, romance and heartbreak through a physical violence enacted upon things, spaces and people. Garrett Pointer perpetually stays a clown entranced by a comedy of horrors, but remains nevertheless and always the victor.

Hey, I'm Garrett Pointer and this paper will discuss me being an artist, how my work is smart and why I do the shit I do. Be lonely and die in a room full of rotten fruit.

I work to find the elusive abject hilarity in the corruption of the human animal, a futile effort, intended to ultimately dismantle structures of power.

Themes and a bombastic aesthetic are cultivated through the consumption of popular culture iconography. Categorically, an inspection of male traits glorify the absurdity there in, while idolizing what becomes the principle. Perversely bastardizing images, conflating references and compressing time through marrying generational-specific iconography with decadal stereotypes, in an effort to highlight an impotence, and greater, a failure of communication that evokes the finitude of life and the human foible.

Working in a parody of a male artist with common materials in a large scale and creating environments that act as a repository for counterrevolutionary themes that are conveyed through immediate sculptural gestures and the mark of the hand, a truth. Humorously displaying a vulnerable bravado that pursues honest exposure, a meeting and understanding between artist and viewer.

Goth Sprinkles is the term that I invented that permeates the ethos of all my being. Goth Sprinkles serves as my alter ego as well as a term that describes my process of finding feeble strands of abjection in the world and how I strip them of their power by making them humorous. A reaction that Julia Kristeva explores in "Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection". "Laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection" (8).

Goth is a morbid tragedy, and Sprinkles is a salvaged happiness. Abjection is everywhere. I rob abjection of the horror, rendering it as feeble and temporary, placing it with humor and inviting laughter in the corrupted state where we redundantly grasp our finitude, a ploy where we are the victims of a faceless cigar puffing monster, whose job it is to orchestrate fear, through political agendas and roadkill. What options are left? In my work it is not denial, but disbelief and the reaction to laugh. This idea within abjection of repulsion as a reaction and humor as a way to, maybe, place it correctly is an element that I engage. A push and pull, a coaxing humor and “repulsive gift”, that I play around with in my artwork through ideas, icons and metaphors that I implement and, also, through my treatment of the materials. In recognition of the state of affairs on this planet, I work to wrangle the elusive abject hilarity in the corruption of the human animal.

Dicks. Meat sticks, dangling, dangles, getting stiff, demanding a task that ends in catastrophe. Ejaculation is the life affirming abjection males experience. Life affirming only from the witnessing of a death, repulsive, blasting cum onto the shower tiles, a travesty hits soap scum, the hot water turning colder, within a slapdash fantasy, fading in and out, primordial humping is the hallmark that centers the masturbatorious zen, a frown, protruded tongue and a ripping discharge as the outcome, abjection, shower boiled cum sticking to the bottom of your sole, a disgusted delight, “a repulsive gift”. A wish that missed ever being born, simply divine, die in a room full of rotting fruit.

As Garrett Pointer says, “Goth Sprinkles”. As Julia Kristeva says, “Defilement is the stopping of life; sexuality without reproduction” (85).

The sincere poetics within intellectual romance and carnal desire in primordial lust are dichotomous factors that propel conceptual musings on the male normative system of codes and autonomous deciphering within the exploration of conduct and assertion of will. The system of codes are bound in the exultation of moments of male glory. These observations spill out in the subjects, themes and tones of my art work.

In the book *Under the Big Black Sun: A Personal History of L.A. Punk* Chris D of the *Flesh Eaters* states, “For me punk is about sexual politics, trying to determine what love between two people truly represents” (85).

My work explores feelings and emotions, that were conditioned to be repressed and unspoken by males through societal pressures. My thoughts endure a fascination witnessing how power and weakness is rewarded and shamed in American society; a fascination that gazes at moments of male glory or heroism, and contrary, the things that become pathetic and taboo. My work flops back and forth in the embodiment of this predicament.

The pace of my making is influenced, for one, by the pace set by music of the first wave of Los Angeles based punk rock and roll. The musicianship of a band like the *Germs* is akin to the attitude I embody while working with a material. The *Germs*, a legendary band that continue to serve as a pivotal influence on artists, actually crafted an impressive catalog of songs that contain a catchiness of a mainstream pop song,

appropriating, like much punk music did, the structure of classic 50's rock and roll, like Elvis. The structure, like the blues progression embedded in a Chuck Berry song, one-four-five, is essentially sped up to create something new out of something old, leapfrogging a musical period concerning itself with ideas of luxury, excess and partying, in denial of messages that instill skepticism in the listener. A classic staple, like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich within the annals of Americana. A classic structure that references and works with a near history, effectively collapsing the small gap of time between the two movements, a gap that at the same time dwarves a typical lifespan, an idea that reminds how time and the lives trapped within it pass quickly and with little progression or relief from oppressive states. A hamster on the wheel. Time repeating itself, like the chords of a song repeating, hands executing repetition. Repetition being a method to transfuse energy into objects, charging them through the handling and through chants, prayers or songs. I engage in this process through repetition, handling material and song. Like the Germs cover of "Sugar, Sugar" off the live album *Germicide*, Darby Crash, surely intoxicated, slurs the lines of this love song, forgetting words, then anxiously leaping into a verse upon realizing the musical cue, only to become lost once again after improvising a sarcastic snarling take off of one word, as the crowd heckles and Pat Smear retorts, accosting with a impassioned curse, at one moment vocalizing how badly they are fucking up the song, "You're fucking it up!", reply, "I know!"

In “Out of Order, Out of Sight: Volume 1 Selected Writings in Meta-Art

1968-1992” Adrian Piper commands:

Just as Easy Listening Music is music that is meant to be listened to rather than heard, similarly, Easy Listening Art is art that is meant to be looked at rather than seen. Like Easy Listening Music, Easy Listening Art is serious art, often drawing on the canons of a particular aesthetic genre—minimalism, pop art, realism, expressionism, conceptual art, surrealism, and so on. It relies on familiar compositional idioms that are manipulated in an engaging or subtly distinctive way. Easy Listening Art provides enough compositional sophistication to engage or titillate one’s visual sensibilities, but its impact is deliberately muted. It is suggestive rather than explicit, soothing rather than demanding. Easy Listening Art occupies its own modest niche in one’s consciousness and does not divert one’s attention for more pressing or immediate pursuits. It does not make trouble; instead it makes nice (176).

“Sugar, Sugar” represents wholly what my work strives to achieve. Appropriating and exploring accustomed notions of love, with sexual undertones and gender roles didactically relayed from the stain of an imperial patriarchal system. I celebrate the privilege of manhood while revealing a precarious masculinity based off of ideas of what makes a man, by way of bastardized rituals that emerge from the void of American culture and society, empty in their importance, yet symbolizing a glorious transition into a greater state of manhood, a rite of passage that in place of what is absent and real. In all it’s absurdity, including such moments as: fist fights, touching boobs, losing virginity, obtaining a driver’s license, killing an animal, notching a belt, graduation, marriage, fathering a child, hoisting of the Lombardi Trophy, obtaining a career, becoming a champion, building a house, painting a self portrait, buying a motorcycle, killing a man, giving an orgasm to a woman, doing drugs, loving a woman, becoming a rockstar, buying a fancy car, catching a fish, buying nice bath towels, winning a fight, having a

dog, digging a hole, shooting a buck, lifting weights, running fastest, changing lanes without signaling, chopping down a tree, dunking a basketball, buying a jet ski, grilling hot dogs and burgers, mowing the lawn, carving the Thanksgiving turkey, cannonball, riding in a convertible, peeing in a urinal, road trips, graduating college, buying a house, eating ribs, concealing pain, riding a bull, inventing a tv stand, loving your mom, finding personal accomplishment in a sports team victory, finding religion, becoming a soldier, hitting the G spot, getting arrested, turning 18, repressing feelings, making love, doing a backflip, turning 21, opening a door, poker, becoming dignified at 40, brewing your own beer, loving a child not of your own, spitting, beating your kid, pilgrimage, protesting, souping up your car, hustling, making your name known, carving wood, scoring a touchdown, eating bacon, drinking whiskey, wearing a cowboy hat, manscaping your pubes, wearing another hat, firing a gun, trimming nose hairs, placing a bet, smoking a cigar, making it into a newspaper, writing a book, saving a life, identifying with Marlon Brando, standing up for what's right, buying a woman a beer, hitting a home run, shaving a beard, touching BIG boobs, harpooning a whale, groping booty, rushing into a fire, laying a coat in mud, rescuing a cat from a tree, wearing a suit, getting old, fucking a model, changing your oil, belching, breaking your arm, proposing, softball, divorcing, getting a tattoo, chest hair, abusing your power, paying bills, rapping, eating a lot of hard boiled eggs, buying a big tv, watching the Super Bowl, being seen as something better based off of how history has represented your gender, calling someone a faggot, keeping stuff in all your pockets, going to war, growing your hair out long, writing a poem, welding, hanging a door, killing a snake, swimming with the sharks, a feat of strength, getting famous, running with the bulls, backpacking through Europe, hacking a

motherboard, surfing, sculpting, meeting your girlfriend's folks, asking her Father for her hand(double-stroke!), going on safari in Africa, having a tool belt, buying a boat, retiring, shooting pool, fantasy football, eating a hot pepper, gun fight, getting a leather jacket, voting, becoming a DJ, winning at blackjack, tricking a person, stealing, confidently wearing pink, front row seats, and limo rides.

In the essay *Foul Perfection: Thoughts On Caricature* Mike Kelley speaks on embellishing figures through humor: "The genre of caricature we know today—a portrait that deliberately transforms the features of its victims so as to exaggerate and thus expose their faults and weaknesses" (21).

My work strives for a one-to-one meeting, while embracing physicality, to leave marks of the hand. I find it to be an abject exercise to use the temporal strength of my privileged body, making marks in a series of actions that act as journal marks, documenting time in the dead actions of the hand. This attraction to physicality was realized in my time working on a farm and assisting a concrete mason. These jobs called for digging, a lot of it, and wheel-barreling tons of sand. Like Chris Burden sought, the satisfaction had to be found in the paradoxical relationship to "Honest Labor" (1979). The labor produced cramping, lactic acid and exhaustion. Digging with the nose of the shovel into the earth, dripping, I reminded myself of the games in a season of baseball, 162, telling myself that I'm Ty Cobb. Cobb transformed baseball from a vaudeville spectacle into a sport with it's own history, of which he tenaciously sought to stand atop of, still standing as an all time leader in such statistical categories as hits, runs and stolen bases. His masterful prowess and talent for baseball was

matched with his cunning and nasty competitive streak, leading him to treat his counterparts as mortal foes. As Charles Conlon illustrates on the back of my baseball card “When Cobb stole, he STOLE.” Surely, his stolen bases involved his misuse of his cleats, as he would spitefully “spike” his opponents, ripping flesh, drawing blood. The other major influence within my fascination for physicality is the wrestler George “The Animal” Steele. The Animal wielded a primordial fury, filthy with it, creating unprecedented onslaughts of violence with no ties to traditional professional wrestling maneuvers, instead relying on his brute strength and maliciousness. The attacking abjection is “immoral, sinister, a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles” (4). Additionally, every George Steele match featured a moment where The Animal would interject his own intermission where he’d wander to the corner to shred the turnbuckle cover, emptily gazing to the heavens, hearing a calling, before gnawing and shaking the stuffing out, styrofoam bits clinging to his body hair, a misanthropic terror. My hand embodies these predecessors.

In “Mythologies” Roland Barthes illuminates: “In wrestling nothing exists unless it exists totally, there is no symbol, no allusion, everything is given exhaustively; leaving nothing in shadow, the gesture severs every parasitical meaning and ceremonially presents the public with a pure and full signification, three-dimensional, like nature” (23).

As Barthes grants, the spectacle of wrestling can take on qualities that evoke classic narratives, while delivering a complete product capable of stirring empathy, vitriol and exuberance. Moreover, wrestling obtains a magical quality within its own specialized spectacle, suspending disbelief and generating energies through the

performed actions. The maneuvers of the wrestlers require a bodily sacrifice and often times the ritual of bloodletting. The trope of being able to suffer injury and still come out as the victor is a classic male virtue that is rewarded in wrestling and also a trait I carry in my studio work. The choreography, the costume, the pyrotechnics, the entrances, the songs, the characters, the storylines, produce a “full signification” in wrestling. In my studio, the performative acts culminate in a complete object, ripe with my energy through the materials manipulation.

The physical nature of my sculpting takes on an aggressive, fast paced, system of repetitive mark making, that is decorated with immediate and expressive gestures. Like the brush strokes of Van Gogh, the action I take on a material displays a transparent physical manipulation that strives to meet the viewer eye to eye, through its visceral nature, a language that art provides. The evidence of one persons act upon a material strives for a greater understanding, personally, and shared collectively with the viewers. The representations of objects do not strive to replicate, but instead interpret with one’s sincere admiration, impulse and experience of creating the form. Like Pollocks drips and cigarette ash, or, the accumulated debris of the studio process present in a Paul McCarthy sculpture or a Jason Rhoades installation, the physicality involved transfers an energy to an object that permeates space, resulting in constructions that more resemble an installation, or simply a vehicle of an experience, offered for an experience. My work originates from a morsel of inspiration that isn’t replicated, but is explored, elaborated upon and represented in a new context to be digested separately, in the shadow of what preceded it, while intending to eliminate the

known worth and dismantle power, stripping monuments naked with a humorous iconoclastic panache, to express this foible of us.

Further, as Al Hansen states in “Life in Destruction” from Paul McCarthy’s “Lowlife Lowlife Tidebox Tidebook”:

The only path to the unique and personal art product is through the door of experimentation. Why so many people in the art industry fight experimental work and call it anti-art always puzzles me. Experimental work is the highest form. It is the mannerists who are the anti-artists! Destruction is a perfectly logical arena to perform in. To begin one must decide what and how, then where, then up to the attic or down to the cellar or out into life to get something to ruin (33).

Duct tape is a Warholian prophecy, Orwelian fabric, it is James Dean’s Spyder, Dean’s detached jaw hanging broken like demolished pieces of concrete on a couple strands of rebar, lifted by an excavator. Duct tape is the prop for Dad’s shenanigans. The materials seek to communicate with viewers directly with familiar materials that serve better to transparently display action and ingenuity, perhaps, a similar ingenuity employed by the viewer themselves, in the universal language of the hand, visceral actions from one illuminate for the viewer, you can do this too, so then, providing an avenue for the viewer to better understand the art work, form and idea. A meeting of two individuals.

Pilfering inspiration from the codes disseminated through pop culture, destroying worth and principles, physicality and representing marks of the hand as signifiers of time and action are the main components of my work. And digging dirt, a place where I first became Ty Cobb and George “The Animal” Steele. I continue to be them working in the

studio, clawing. Goth Sprinkles. My actions are the limitations of the body, like the slow motion replay of a double play, the hurried scoop to the second baseman, cradling the ball into the palm of his glove, grabbing it out and tagging the base before leaping over the approaching opponent, gritting his teeth and sending it to the first baseman, for a bang-bang play. As if, this is glorious? The human body and it's limitations, amen.

In conclusion, I have the heart of a poet and the chest of a 70's porn star. Today, I am the greatest artist ever. Thank you.

Like most of us, I believe that these characters are not entirely sure of their own motivations. I am fascinated by that lack of clarity. The human mind is not a "normal" computer, and people are often unaware of their own motives. In some ways, that is the essence of life for me: We want things desperately, but we don't know exactly why we want them. I think that we are propelled by ideas and motivations that are often beyond our consciousness. We cannot pin these hidden drives down. You cannot say exactly what it is. It is as if there is no "real" reality. There are many realities (19).

So said, Paul Verhoeven in "Showgirls: Portrait of a Film"...

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