



Feeling the Flesh of the Other

by

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Master of Arts

in

Painting

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The flesh of the other is present.
It comes in many forms.
Lingering, hiding, manipulating you.
You cannot control it.

It alters you.
You become someone else.
Someone out of reach.
You become It.

It is deceiving, looking like you.
Lost within your own flesh, you are not here or there.
Only a form of who you once were.
Left in pieces,
Left in parts.

-A.M

Diagnosed in 2009 with Multiple Sclerosis, my mother's mental and physical health deteriorated at a rapid pace. The person who raised me was altered, becoming someone who was less confident in her abilities and saw her disease as a defeat. I grew to resent this new person, seeing her as the other; as someone who is no longer what she once was. The fear of losing yourself, of becoming another, or of being destroyed by the other is present within my work. We experience anxiety in the face of something uncertain and indefinite, but in spite of this, I choose to speak about the effects this disease has had on my mother, family and self. By combining methods of collage and painting, I attempt to create a visual correlation of my mother's physical and mental states with my own experience of the disease.

Multiple Sclerosis affects the immune system by attacking and destroying myelin cells that surround the nerves, which distort or blocks the messages travelling along it, weakening the transmission to the muscles in the body. The severity of this disease has deformed my mother's body physically. Due to MS, my mother is seen as abject. A rejection of society's ideals of classical beauty due to her saggy skin, wrinkled face, and curved spine becoming a spectacle of horror. The transformation of her middle-aged body reveals the bones and tiny frame of a woman who has experienced trauma and has decayed into something most healthy bodies fear.

I am reflecting on embodiment in these works, on impermanent definitions of the self. Within my practice I am using photography and collage as a way to unveil new identities of myself, mother and siblings that reflect upon our fears of the disease and not being able to rid ourselves from it. Focusing on a biological aspect of matrophobia, I have taken distinctive features of my mother that we share and made disturbing portraits that represent one possible future of our flesh and hers. We belong to her, we come from her flesh, and we now face the possibility of becoming her, of becoming the other. The physical act of removing the collaged transfers of our portraits presents an uncanny experience of my mother to me. Her image becomes disturbing and also familiar because it is presented as her, but is not her. We are presented as her, but we are not her or ourselves. When I reveal the new identities of each of us, I encounter memories of the woman we came from, but then face the reality of whom she is now and who we may become, the diseased mother, the diseased flesh, that I find difficult to engage with fully.

Externalizing the internal disease, I have created bodily forms in a tangible way that act as the metaphors for the disease on both the canvas and in space. These forms, which have taken on a life of their own, reflect the marks, bruises, and anxieties of something uncontrollable and out of reach. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that only through mourning can a separation take place that is a necessary to the development of the individual. Freud thought that mourning is based on a process through which an object could only be given up if in some sense it became part of the subject's self. By projecting the other self of my mother into these forms, I attempt to heal and to rid myself of the unwanted part of her that is seen as vile, haunting, and grotesque.

Color serves as an emotional response that describes affective qualities of itself. I use color in two ways: it serves as a way to speak to my mother's cognitive reasoning and my encounter with the other as plastic and cold. When choosing the colors, I focused on using high chroma colors to reflect the undesirable side effects of prescription medication my mother was on, which altered her perception of everyday life. As well, I chose colors that are not seen in our daily life, becoming another form of this alternate reality both portraits and beings exist in. Color becomes

a distraction that presents a joyful façade, attracting the gaze to confront the darkness of our situation through a seemingly paradoxical vibrancy, boldness and embellishment.

The “other” is unknowable, incapable of being known by the self. I choose to embrace my relationship with my mother, acknowledging the difficulties it poses to our family. Through my vulnerability, humility, and acceptance of her, I am able to speak about living with someone who has multiple sclerosis and the fears we face alongside it. By working in a collaborative effort with my mother, I am able to translate the journey of her illness and better understand her as she is now.

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Marino_001 **Your flesh through my eyes; acceptance** 2017 Acrylic, gel transfer, pins thread and yarn on canvas 152.5cm x 152.5cm x 4cm



Marino_002 **Your flesh through my eyes; anger** 2017 Acrylic, and gel transfer on canvas 152.5cm x 152.5cm x 4cm



Marino_003 **Your flesh through my eyes; denial** 2017 Acrylic, and gel transfer on canvas 152.5cm x 152.5cm x 4cm



Marino_004 Installation shot of **Your flesh through my eyes; acceptance** and **Your flesh through my eyes; denial** 2017 Acrylic, gel transfer, pins thread and yarn on canvas 152.5cm x 152.5cm x 4cm



Marino_005 Installation shot of **Your flesh through my eyes; acceptance** and **Your flesh through my eyes; denial** 2017 Acrylic, gel transfer, pins thread and yarn on canvas 152.5cm x 152.5cm x 4cm



Marino_006 Installation shot of **A Conversation Amongst Burdens and The Veiling**, 2016-2018

The Veiling 2016 Acrylic paint, spray paint, yarn, gel transfer 152.5cm x 122cm x 4cm

A Conversation Amongst Burdens 2016-2018 Various fabrics, acrylic paint, tie dye, spray paint, thread, pillow stuffing, chairs, marble table, marble and glass lamp Installation dimensions variable



Marino_007 **The Veiling** 2016 Acrylic paint, spray paint, yarn, gel transfer 152.5cm x 122cm x 4cm



Marino_008 **A Conversation Amongst Burdens** 2016-2018 Various fabrics, acrylic paint, tie dye, spray paint, thread, pillow stuffing, chairs, marble table, marble and glass lamp Installation dimensions variable



Marino_009 **A Conversation Amongst Burdens** 2016-2018 Various fabrics, acrylic paint, tie dye, spray paint, thread, pillow stuffing, chairs, marble table, marble and glass lamp Installation dimensions variable



Marino_010 Installation shot of **Her body, Their body and She who once was; is now only a memory, Tina**

Her body, Their body 2016 Acrylic paint, spray paint, thread, fabric, pillow stuffing, yarn, gel transfer 213.5cm x 91.5cm x 6cm

She who once was; is now only a memory, Tina 2017 Acrylic paint, gel transfer. 182.5cm x 152.5cm x 4cm



Marino_011 Installation shot of **He who once was; is now only a memory, Peter; She who once was; is now only a memory, Angela; She who once was; is now only a memory, Tina** 2017



Marino_012 Installation shot of **He who once was; is now only a memory, Peter; She who once was; is now only a memory, Angela; Concealing her** 2017-2018



Marino_013 Installation shot of **Unrecognizable, Unidentifiable; The Hysterical Attack; Embrace the other, the first encounter** 2017

Unrecognizable, Unidentifiable 2017 Acrylic paint, spray paint, poly-acrylic, inks, gel transfer, thread
213.5cm x 213.5cm x 4cm

The hysterical attack 2017 Acrylic paint, spray paint, poly-acrylic, inks, gel transfer, thread, white pencil, pins 213.5cm x 213.5cm x 4cm

Embrace the other, the first encounter 2017 Acrylic paint, gel transfer, spray paint, poly-acrylic, inks, thread 213.5cm x 213.5cm x 4cm



Marino_014 **The hysterical attack** 2017 Acrylic paint, spray paint, poly-acrylic, inks, gel transfer, thread, white pencil, pins 213.5cm x 213.5cm x 4cm



Marino_015 **Unrecognizable, Unidentifiable** 2017 Acrylic paint, spray paint, poly-acrylic, inks, gel transfer, thread 213.5cm x 213.5cm x 4cm



Marino_016 **Embrace the other, the first encounter** 2017 Acrylic paint, gel transfer, spray paint, poly-acrylic, inks, thread 213.5cm x 213.5cm x 4cm

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