

***terms of (be)longing:  
queering the embrace and trace of print media***

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exegesis in support of practice-based thesis for  
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## **a note for the reader**

Due to the unforeseen circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to take consistent photographic documentation of my work. While some of my photos from exhibitions and installations are high quality, many of the single images of my soft-ground etchings are of a lesser quality. When I am granted access back into AUT, I will re-photograph my work and replace any lesser quality images throughout this exegesis. Similarly, some of the listings for size and scales of work are inconsistent as I do not have my work to measure over lockdown and will be amended once I have access to AUT.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma or a university or institution of higher learning.

Signed

Luca Angus Anton Nicholas

20th March 2020

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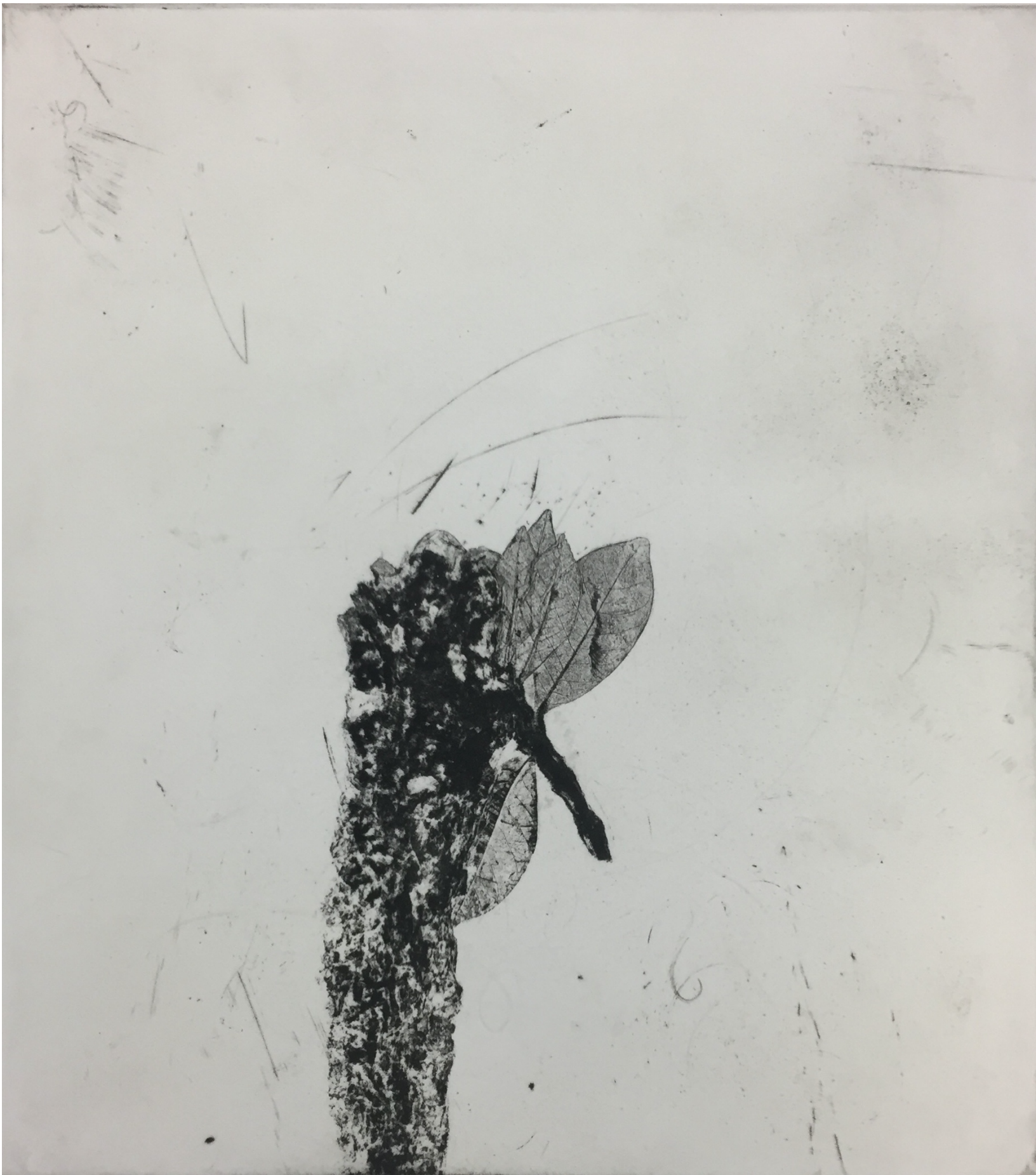
I would like to give sincere and immeasurable thanks to my supervisors, Fiona Amundsen and Monique Jansen. Their support, guidance and advice throughout the development of this project has been invaluable.

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## **ABSTRACT**

My project uses methods of intaglio, screenprinting, sculpture, and installation to explore the loss of home and belonging for queer subjects. Home is a space that is often layered with heteropatriarchal and neoliberal capitalist ideas of 'success'—ideas that do not easily fit queer bodies. When queer people gain access to dominant spaces of belonging, it is often a process that is contingent on assimilating to these hegemonic ideals. The visibility of queer experience therefore risks becoming commodified by governing bodies of power that reinforce essentialist regimes between gay and straight, self and other. Accordingly, this project explores how terms of belonging can privilege queer experiences as by us, and for us. My research queeries the contingencies of queer belonging by shifting trauma, distress, and disorientation into generative artworks that are driven by pathos, humour, and care. I enact this queerying through implicit methods of touch, embrace, and trace that are associated with printmaking. These methods offer queer bodies privacy and care. My research takes the position that queer artists and their experiences should not be beholden to a status of educator, or a form of representation that hinges upon expressing trauma to validate both their practices and experiences. My methods reveal how the accumulation of embrace and trace in print-based media, sculpture, and installation can be used to present more affirmative and caring models of belonging for queer bodies.











## Introduction: it's none of your business

*This year I said goodbye to my mother's gardenia bush. My mum has been cultivating this bush for decades. It was a thick and lush tree, occupying a large concrete pot. I could always depend on its rich, plentiful, and fragrant blooms during my summers growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand. When my family returned to Auckland after living in New York; it was still there and thriving. Saying goodbye to this bush was, in some ways, more profoundly upsetting than leaving our family home. When I consider things that ground and orient myself, when I think of home, I think of that bush: its imprint lives on in my body.*

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When I started my Master's degree, I questioned what a queer home might look and *feel* like outside of homogenised heteropatriarchal models. I enact this questioning through queering the imprint of objects and spaces that intimate home using the methods of etching, screenprinting and installation. As my project developed, however, I realized that my work was exploring the loss of home and belonging for the queer body.

Home is a self-determined and flexible space; it resists classification and emerges as a conversation. It is a site of negotiation between public and private, masculine and feminine; self and other. Home conjures ideas of nationhood, the type of family one comes from, a heteropatriarchal point of origin. Home emerges as someone or something's place of origin, or the place where they feel they belong. Queer British-Australian scholar Sara Ahmed (2007) and American theorist Anne Marie-Fortier (2012) assert that the queer nonproductive body is in a perpetual state of disorientation to the productive heteropatriarchal homeland and nuclear family model; the queer body emerges as a migratory subject. They position queer identity as one that is informed and activated by space; they explore what it means to be queer when so much of the world hinges upon hetero masculine and patriarchal signifiers. American queer theorist Jack Halberstam also attends to this sentiment in *The Art of Queer Failure* (2011); wherein they propose that the queer body might be afforded more success in turning to modes of 'failure' to heteropatriarchal capitalist ideas of 'success' and 'productivity'<sup>1</sup>.

While my experiences of being queer informs my negotiation of home and space, my experiences of being a young, white, upper-middle-class, cis-gendered man also inform this research. My project is positioned by the responsibility to acknowledge my context, and in my circumstance, privileges. I recognise that there is less urgency to share my specificity of experience as mine is one that has already been represented, performed, and in some cases, commodified. However, I am beholden to the specificity

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Halberstam, 2011, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press: UK) 4, 24.

of my experience; it makes both my world and body. My work is always going to be informed by my experience, and I want to create work that does not perpetuate already existing narratives and hegemonies. Simultaneously, there are elements of my experience that I do not want to share; I want to have the privilege of choosing when and to whom to disclose my experience. It is for these reasons that I refuse to disclose some elements of my queer experience in both this research project and by proxy my life; at least not explicitly. I situate my research around the following questions: are queer spaces of belonging contingent on models of trauma to and from neoliberal heteropatriarchal capitalist ideals of home and success? How can the accumulation of embrace and trace in print-based media, sculpture, and installation be used to present more affirmative and caring models of belonging for the queer body?

Contemporary queer popular culture primarily caters and serves a white upper-middle-class cis-male gay perspective. For me to identify with representations in popular media and other public and online spaces is a privilege. I believe it is essential to question the points in which queer spaces and representation perpetuate hegemonic structures that deny access to others. For me to opt-out of disclosing my experience is a privilege: I firmly believe that it is a privilege that all minorities should be able to possess. So long as the experiences of the “other” exist on the fringes, someone else in power stands to gain and profit off our trauma, joy, and resistance. “We have to restructure our strategies and realise that the red banner with the red raised fist didn’t work in the sixties and it is not going to work now. [...] The enemy is too easy to dismiss and attack”<sup>2</sup> My project takes the position that queer artists should not be beholden to a status of educator, or a form of representation that hinges upon expressing trauma in order to validate both their practice and experience<sup>3</sup>. I aim for a queer aesthetic that moves beyond existing models of representation that primarily focus on challenging heteropatriarchal and heteronormative bodies of power. Instead, I strive for an aesthetic that offers more privacy and care to those deemed ‘other’. By developing this aesthetic of care and privacy in methods of print and sculpture, I am developing terms of belonging that privileges queer experience as by us and for us.

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<sup>2</sup> Felix Gonazlez-Torres, 1995, “In Conversation with Robert Storr,” in *Sexuality*, edited by Amelia Jones, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press) 116.

<sup>3</sup> Several queer artists within Aotearoa operate within this space. My mind goes to: Auckland artist Daniel John Corbett Sanders’ sculpture *Outsider Artifact* (2019) in ‘4/4: Daniel John Corbett Sanders and Anh Trần’ at Artspace, Auckland. Taranaki artist Shannon Novak’s queer occupation of the public window space at Govett Brewster, *Sub Rosa* (2019) at Govett Brewster, New Plymouth, Auckland artist Ary Jansen’s video work *I hate you, I hate you, I hate you, because I don’t hate you... I love you* (2016) and three-day multi-site performance/installation/pop up kiosk *Young Left Losers Party* (2014), queer indigenous collective FAFSWAG’s occupation and decolonising of Artspace NZ in *FAFSWAG: Disruption Vogue Ball*, and Wilde Projects collaborative queer events held for *Queer Pavillion* (2020) in Albert Park, Auckland.



## 1. so, what can you do?

This chapter outlines my principle methodologies. My methodology of artistic research is informed by methods of embodied learning, tacit knowledge, and sensory and emotional perception<sup>4</sup>. I use these methods in conjunction with the tacit exchanges and forms of production in printmaking, including touch, embrace, matrix, and substrate which inform my methods of etching, screenprinting, installation, and performance. In turn, I explore how my personal experience as queer informs my practice. I adopt a methodology of queerying. In queerying, I seek to explore how the queer body is disoriented from hegemonic models of home while also attending to how queer culture might quietly uphold hegemonic structures via means of homonormativity and homonationalism. I employ queerying as a method to explore my positionality and representation, as well as to exercise accountability and care when creating work. This methodology of queerying mirrors and expands upon my methods of felt and embodied knowledge. I am bound to my specificity of experience, which my work reflects. Given this position, I explore how implicit methods of production and representation within artistic practices can point to self-determined queer models of belonging.

### 1.1 *touch and embrace*

I am interested in how implicit modes of touch in methods of printmaking and installation might be used to queery hegemonic structures that work to index, classify, oppress, and commodify the queer body<sup>5</sup>. As a Taurus, I rely heavily upon emotional responses to sensory perception: I rely upon felt and embodied knowledge and gravitate towards mediums and methods that activate metaphors surrounding touch, embrace, and other tactile exchanges, such as etching, screenprinting, and sculpture. American artist Ruth Weisburg asserts in her essay, 'The Syntax of The Print' (1986), that print is 'an embrace, the pressing of

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<sup>4</sup> My experience as an artist informs my methodology and methods. German academic Julian Klein mirrors these sentiments in his essay, 'What is artistic research?' (2010).

<sup>5</sup> My research employs a methodology of artistic research. Klein suggests that artistic research is "acquired through sensory and emotional perception [...] through artistic experience, from which it cannot be separated. Whether silent or verbal, declarative or procedural, implicit or explicit [...] artistic knowledge is sensual and physical, 'embodied knowledge'. The knowledge that artistic research strives for, is a felt knowledge" (Klein 2010, 6). My research is predicated on the intersubjective flow between conscious and subconscious that artistic practices fall within. Klein's model of artistic research is central to my positioning as the knowledge gained through artistic practice is felt knowledge: my research is embodied through my methods of making and products therein.

one body against another'<sup>6</sup> (Weisburg 1986, 55). Printmaking is the embedding of information from a matrix onto a substrate. These methods call attention to the body and self, evoking ideas of haptic touch and sight. The forms of representation elicited through the tactile exchanges of print also function as facsimiles of the real. These tactile methods in printmaking provide a reflexive status to speak to ideas of the 'real' and its facsimile, hardness and softness, masculinity, and femininity: the touch of print and cast media function as a trace or (im)print.

The trace is a mark that indicates the existence of something. Trace often denotes the past movement or action of an object/body and has secure attachments with transience. The imprint bears a similar connotation. The imprint emerges as a performative mark left when an object presses on something. It can also invoke feelings of interiority, as it can simultaneously denote an occasion when an event or experience becomes fixed in someone's memory, appearance, or being. I see trace and (im)print acting as temporal markers of performative spatial acts: they are markers of lived experience. They are also both explicit and implicit methods of printmaking and casting. While the print/object exists literally as a trace/imprint from the matrix, many of the tactile exchanges in the making of the matrix and final print/object are tacit knowledge on the side of the maker: this is not always explicit to viewers. However, I attempt to make these exchanges more known in my practice by enhancing the felt encounter by emphasizing the 'embrace' of print. The embrace occurs in my soft-ground etchings, where I etch the trace of a found object placed on a steel plate covered in an impressionable coat of beeswax. The plate is rolled through the press, and the impression is etched into the steel using acid. The impression left on the plate is the performative trace of an object as it meets pressure upon steel: the embrace of an object to steel. To print, ink is applied via a squeegee and scrim to work into the grooves of the plate. The surface ink is then gently removed through rubbing and wiping down with newsprint and tissue paper. The 'embrace' occurs again while printing. The damp fibres of the substrate atop the printing matrix are nestled underneath dense felt blankets. The print is produced via the consistent rolling pressure of the printing press: 'seducing' the ink out of the plate onto the substrate.

I also invoke this association to embrace through my methods of screenprinting. I attempt to soften the otherwise graphic nature of this medium by heightening the materiality of the substrate. The graphic nature of screenprinting speaks to ideas of the multiple and binary logics through its association to the screen/matrix. Given that my research centres around queering these binaries, I seek to soften these otherwise rigid boundaries associated with print media. I print on performative substrates like silk

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<sup>6</sup> Ruth Weisberg, 'The Syntax of The Print: In Search of an Aesthetic Context,' *The Tamarind Paper*: Vol. 9, No. 2, 1986, 55.

and velvet to evoke modes of queer transience and migration. This evocation pushes viewers to negotiate their bodies awkwardly when encountering my screenprinted work. I point to this performative spatial exchange through allusions to performance via theatrical fabrics and heightening how viewers encounter and interact with my work. For example, in *hedges* (2019), I printed a single-channel green screenprint of hedges outside my family home on a large green velvet mat. Depending on where one encounters the printed object, the image disappears entirely, leaving only a void. Again, the image is dependent upon the embrace of a matrix to a substrate. In this case, however, I was interested in challenging how a substrate might reject and accept visual information. The viewers' movements both to and from the mat inform how they are left with a transient image.







## 1.2 queerying

Just as my methodology of artistic research builds upon tacit and implicit methods of knowledge as an artist, my experiences of being queer also inform my research. This positioning is employed through a methodology of queerying. Queer theory explores indeterminate and intersubjective models of gender, sexuality, and sex in response to hegemonic bodies of power. Queerness rejects any stable form of identification; it is non-binary. As such, queer identity is a mutable and self-determined space where models of identity are recognized as being subjective and performative. In my research, I explore how the queer body arrives and performs in space and claims spaces of belonging through the accumulation of performative traces and gestures. I see my models of trace, imprint, and embrace as fundamentally queer exchanges that can allude to queer models of identity and belonging.

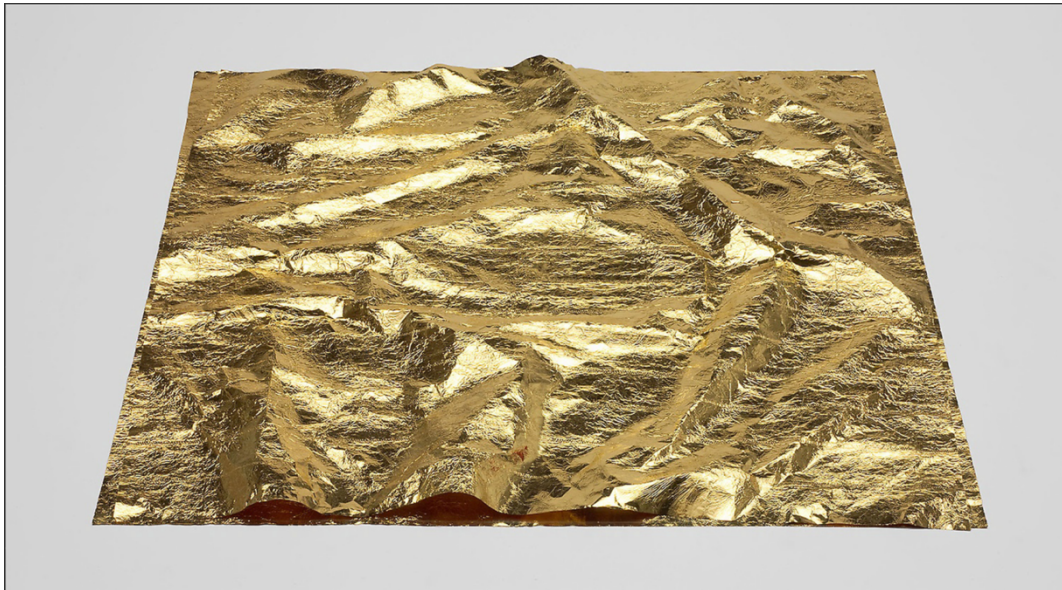
Post-structural theorist Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) suggests identity can be observed as a series of repeated social, linguistic, political, and embodied performative acts in space<sup>7</sup>. Lived experience is inherently spatial: the emergence of identity is tied to space. Queer theorist Sara Ahmed expands this idea in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) where she phenomenologically frames how the queer body arrives in space. Ahmed locates queer identity and queerness as spatial by noting that 'queer' is "...a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a 'straight line'...sexuality itself can be considered a spatial formation in that bodies inhabit sexual spaces"<sup>8</sup>. In locating identity as performative to space, it is essential to acknowledge the disorientation of the queer body to hegemonic and essentialized structures of identity and belonging. I aim to destabilize these hegemonic matrixes through questioning, or rather, *queerying* how my body arrives in space by exploring points of encounter and embrace through methods of printmaking and sculpture. I am interested in metaphors surrounding the use of screens in screenprinting, moulds in casting, and matrixes in etching/intaglio which function within methods of printmaking and installation to systematically order, trace, and index whatever it is that is being represented. In turn, I am interested in how these metaphors activate conversations surrounding hegemonic matrixes that commodify and index the queer body. Similarly, my research explores how modes of embrace and touch in printmaking and installation can function as gestures of care and intimacy.

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler, 1999, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> Sara Ahmed, 2006, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press) 67.

It is important to note how certain queer performatives stand to uphold the hegemonies of race, class, and gender expression. It is not enough to simply point and wave a finger, crying, 'hegemony!'. Accountability must be taken. As such, my research considers my privileges as a white gay cis-gendered man and attends to ways certain queer performatives quietly uphold cis-normative hetero-patriarchal ideals via means of commodification, homonormativity, and homonationalism. This queer-accountability methodology emerges in texts from theorists who attend to materialist Marxist approaches in queer and feminist theory. These texts include Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). These positions are further informed by American academic Lisa Duggan's notes on homonormativity in "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics Under Neo-Liberal Capitalism" (2002), and notes on intersectional queer Marxist theory from American theorist Peter Drucker's 'The Fracturing of LGBT Identities under Neoliberal Capitalism' (2011) and English sociologist Paul Reynolds' article 'Sexual Capitalism: Marxist Reflections on Sexual Politics, Culture and Economy in the 21st Century' (2018). These theorists argue for the importance of an intersectional approach to queer theory that acknowledges class and the impact of capitalism upon those deemed 'other'. By employing a queerying touch in my practice, I point to ways in which the queer 'othered' body might resist further commodification and exploitation, through implicit gestures of touch.



Roni Horn, *Gold Mats, Paired (For Ross and Felix)*, 1994-1995, Pure gold 1245 x 1524 x 0.2 mm, 1.8 kg, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago.

### 1.3 a queerying touch

So, how might a touch queery? In seeking to answer this question, I turn to the work of American artist Roni Horn. Her *Gold Mats, Paired (For Ross and Felix)* (1994-1995) is a perfect example of a touch that queers and queerys. *Gold Mats* is a set of two annealed sheets of pure gold. While Horn has produced similar works, most notably *Gold Field* (1990),<sup>9</sup> *Gold Mats, Paired* (1994-95) possesses a unique personal context. Horn produced these works following the death of a longtime friend and artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and his partner Ross Laycock during the AIDS crisis. Much like the artistic legacy of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Gold Mats, Paired* (1994-95) is a perfect example of the sublimation of lived experience into a series of abstract poetic gestures. *Gold Mats* speaks of the generative properties of the embrace and touch. The embrace of these sheets speaks to the ideas of loss that the mats represent while opening up a new horizon, meaning the void that exists in between these paired *embracing* mats. This void, however, is generative and emits light. It is this inversion of the void becoming generative, and whole, that is so principally queer. It completely inverts a narrative and hierarchy of loss into a generative exchange of hope and love. In my practice, I seek to arrive at the same level of care towards the objects that I print, and through the methods of embrace and trace in print media. Every work I create comes from this space

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<sup>9</sup> This work birthed a deep friendship and artistic collaboration with Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Torres encountered this work in L.A., 1990. At this time, Torres' was broken by a hopeless sociopolitical climate and the slow death of his lover, Ross Laycock, who was dying from AIDS. Torres saw this work as "... a new landscape, a possible horizon, a place of rest and absolute beauty . . . a place to dream, to regain energy, to dare." - Felix Gonzalez-Torres, "1990: L.A., 'The Gold Field'," in *Earths Grow Thick: Roni Horn*, exh. cat. (Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, 1996), p. 68.



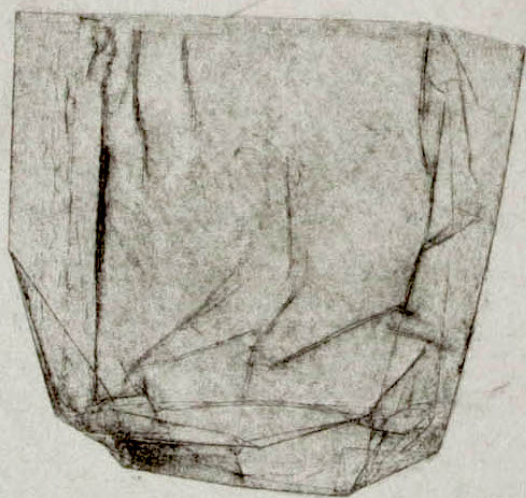
of intimacy and from wanting to turn otherwise abject symbols of trauma, distress, and disorientation into generative works driven by pathos, humour, and care.

This chapter has outlined my methodologies of artistic research and queering. In merging the two, I seek to explore how the queer body orients themselves in space through performative trace-based methods of intaglio, installation and other media. By operating from a central place of care, I intend to challenge hegemonic structures by presenting more reflexive and caring systems of belonging for the queer body. In the next chapter, *(be)longing*, I expand on the notions of embrace and touch outlined in this chapter to notions of 'trace'. I explore how the accumulation of traces is connected to neoliberal capitalist ideas of home and belonging. I argue how the queer body is disoriented against such models and explore how queering these conventions through the embrace and trace of nonfunctional objects can eschew more self-determined and liminal queer models of home.





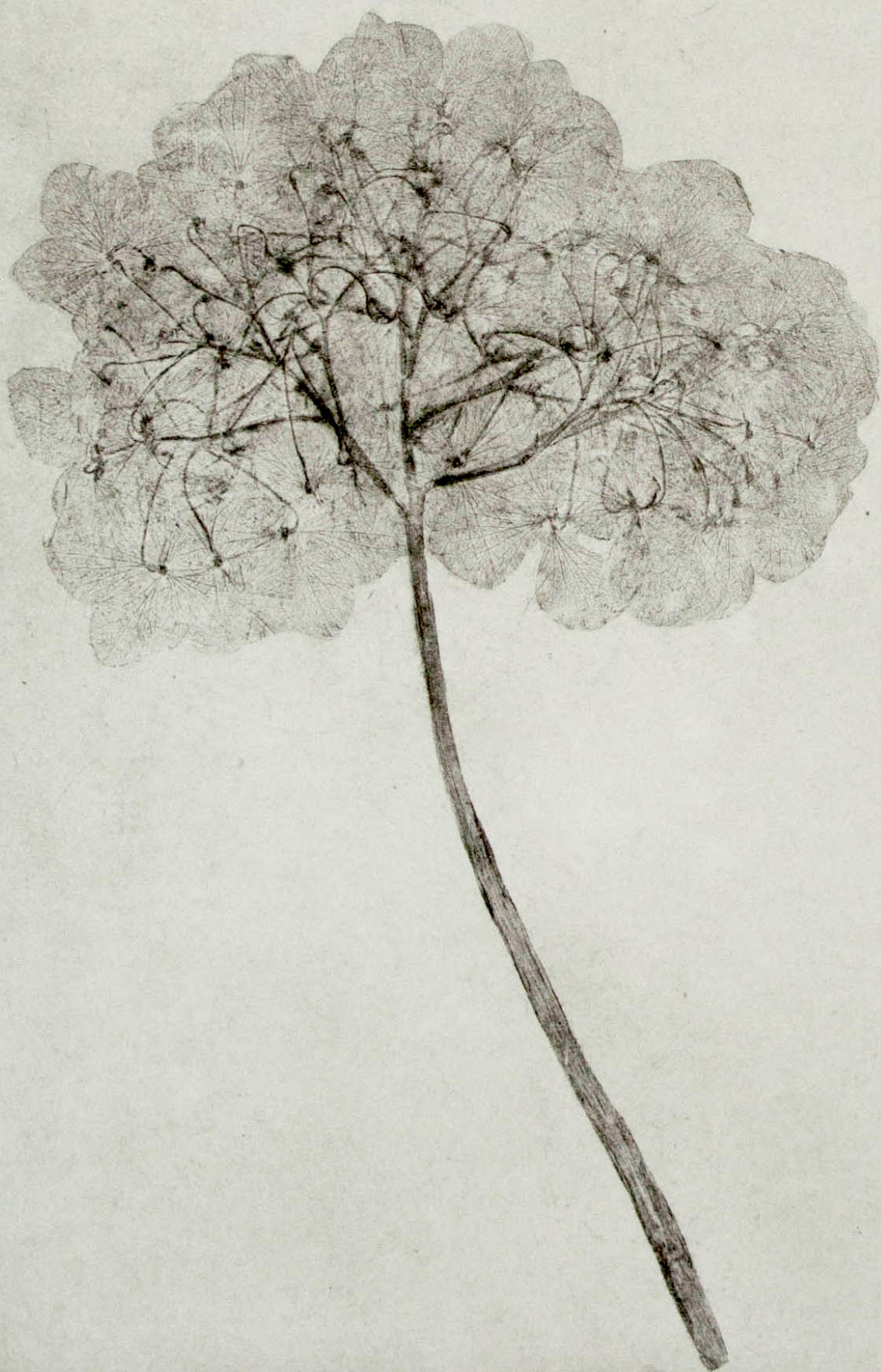




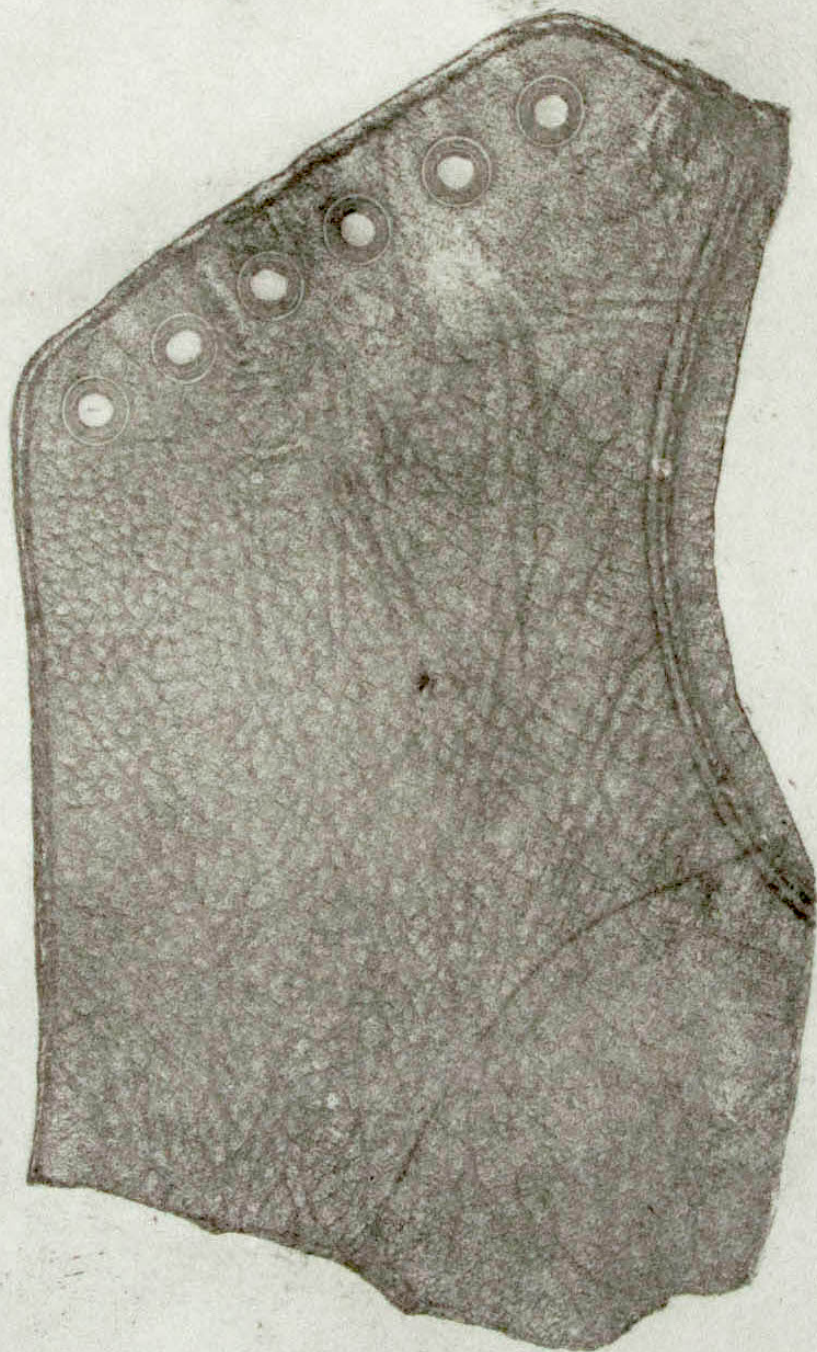
















## 2.0 (be)longing

“...you will go home and then you will find that home is not anymore... As long as you stay here, you can always think: One day I will go home... You don’t have a home until you leave it and then, when you have left it, you never can go back”<sup>10</sup> (Baldwin, 1956, 116)

To find belonging and home is an inherently political task. Occupying and identifying with place is dependent on understanding one’s own context and orientation within governing bodies of neoliberal heteropatriarchal capitalism. For the queer body, claiming spaces of belonging and home are complicated as the so-called nonproductive queer body is in opposition to ‘productive’ ideas of success and belonging associated with heteropatriarchal capitalist orders of productivity<sup>11</sup>. For the queer subject, home can hinge around experiences of estrangement and a longing for spaces that remain out of reach. I am interested in teasing out these associations through modes of trace and embrace in printmaking and other media. This intention is teased out through my work in intaglio and sculpture, where I draw upon implicit exchanges as discussed in the previous chapter. These models of trace and (im)print become essential for understanding the queer migrant body, along with where ideas of home emerge as a destination rather than a point of origin.

This chapter explores queer modes of belonging through notions of trace, disorientation, and migration. My thinking concerning ideas of trace stems from German theorist Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century’ (1969) and Belgian spatial theorist Karina Van Herck’s essay ‘Only where comfort ends, does humanity begin. On the “coldness” of avant-garde architecture in the Weimar period’ (2005). Through the accumulation of personal gestures, objects, and imprints, I argue that trace asserts an essential feeling of self and belonging. I note how the accumulation of personal traces simultaneously aligns identity with capitalist models of accumulation and consumption. I explore this notion of trace in relation to domestic space in my etching, *you gotta ride it baby* (2019). I queery these models of trace further through methods of embrace and trace in my soft-ground etchings of trash, detritus, and weeds. Through etching the impression of objects that exist upon the fringes of public and private space, I draw upon queer modes of disorientation and migration posited by Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and Fortier in her essay, “‘Coming home’: Queer migrations and multiple

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<sup>10</sup> James Baldwin, 1956, *Giovanni’s Room* (Random House LLC: New York, NY), 116.

<sup>11</sup> Jack Halberstam, 2011, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press: UK) 4.

evocations of home” (2001). Both theorists assert that queer experience is predicated on an estrangement from hegemonic models of home.

## 2.1 *traces*

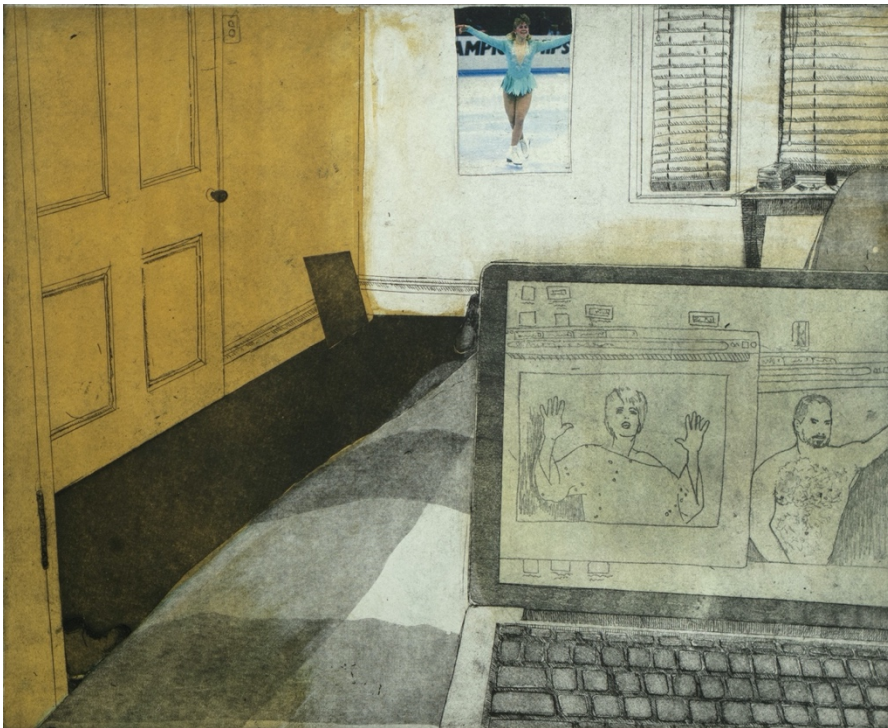
Belonging is inherently an intersubjective and self-determined feeling. Benjamin frames the emergence of modern domestic space as a private refuge following modes of capitalism and consumption. He identifies how the accumulation of commodities, the dressing of ones interior, and other performative gestures in domestic space perform as individualized ‘traces’<sup>12</sup>. He argues that the lived interior, and objects therein, act as a performative extension of self. The inhabitant ritualistically and repeatedly returns to home. It is precisely because of this return that they are reminded of their self, stripped of public and social concerns. I see Benjamin’s notes on trace operating alongside my ideas of imprint and the ways in which touch manifest within my practice. My practice explores the phenomenological ‘felt’ encounter of traces and imprints of space, object and self. Van Herck (2005) further positions the affective properties of trace by advocating that the traces of the individual in domestic space promote a feeling of *gemütlichkeit*. *Gemütlichkeit*’s closest English translation is “cozy” or “cosiness.” *Gemütlichkeit* as both an “agreeable comfortable interior [...] [and] an intimate and sociable togetherness”.<sup>13</sup> Central to this idea is the relational aspect of coziness, which emerges in the creation of an atmosphere between self, space, object, and other. Broadly, home can be identified as a *feeling* obtained from either a space or an atmosphere; a feeling of warmth, belonging, and *gemütlichkeit*. As home often bears heteronormative, patriarchal, and productive assumptions, the queer nonproductive body is either positioned outside of these models or cannot easily align with them. As a result, any feelings of warmth associated with hegemonic traces of home may instead be interpreted as feelings of abjection, rejection, or even trauma to the queer subject. I explored works of the performative traces of domestic interior spaces in my work in 2018. I was interested in the performative constructions of domestic interiors and homes through methods of trace and imprint in etching and monoprinting. I capture collisions between online and physical spaces by disrupting the diegetic flow of space via references to media from YouTube, movies, and popular culture through my methods of making and titling work.

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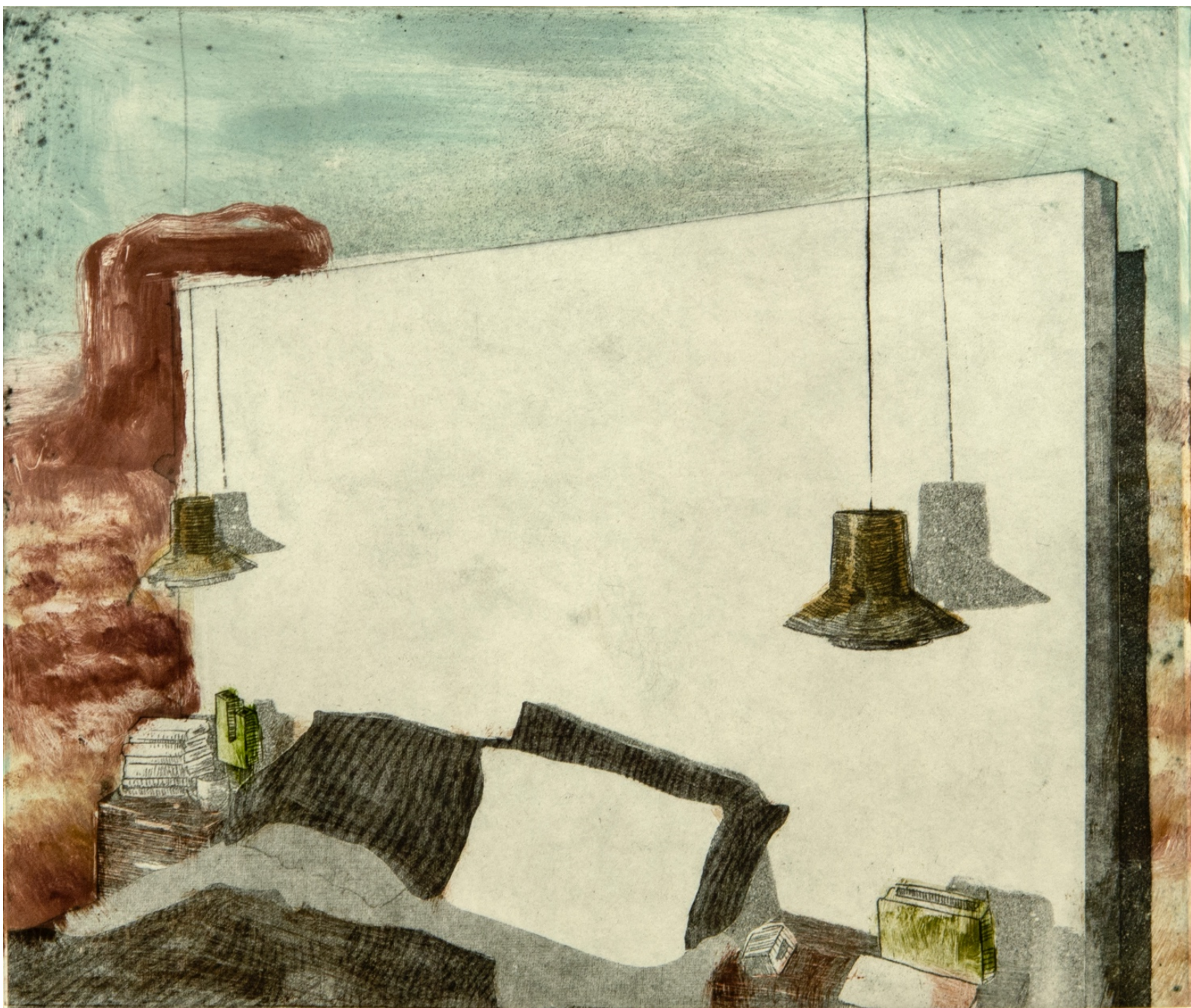
<sup>12</sup> Walter Benjamin, 1969, “‘Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century’,” *Perspecta* 12 (no. 165): 169.

<sup>13</sup> Karina Van Herck, ““Only where comfort ends, does humanity begin” : On the “coldness” of avant-garde architecture in the Weimar period,” in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, edited by Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 124.









These ideas are explored in, '*you gotta ride it baby*' (2019). This multi-plate print depicts a bedroom divorced from associated domestic spatial logic: the contents of the bedroom are instead set against a painted Western movie backdrop. My intent was to point to the performativity of space through the theatrical convention of a painted backdrop. Given the associations of the 'master bedroom' to that of a masculine space, I aimed to draw attention to this idea by alluding to a grand masculine narrative: the cowboy and the West. I was interested in enhancing the felt properties of a bedroom by drawing and tracing the edges of a room through a series of different textures created by soft-ground etching. Everything from the texture of the bed to the bedside drawers in *gotta* is made from the literal imprint of fabric, wood, and other materials. These materials are from fabric swatches of linen, strips of balsa, and calico from the print lab. They are not real traces of my bedroom, but traces of textures used to simulate the experience of the bedroom. Much like the painted set, it is a heightened facsimile of domestic space: one that is both sensual and hollow.



Above Left: Dexter Dalwood, *Jackie Onassis*, 2000, oil on canvas, 2140 x 2440 mm, Saatchi Gallery, London.

Above Right: Mamma Andersson, *Room Under the Influence*, 2008, colour spit bite and sugar lift aquatints with aquatint and soft ground etching, 527 x 908 mm, Edition of 40, printed by Crown Point Press, print. Emily York. Crown Point Press, San Francisco



*you gotta ride it, baby* (2019) is inspired by the work of artists Dexter Dalwood and Mamma Andersson. Dalwood's painting *Jackie Onassis* (2000) depicts Jackie O's infamous Mediterranean yacht hideaway. The viewers are treated to a series of signifiers of 1980's 'opulence'<sup>14</sup> and Jackie herself<sup>15</sup>. I am interested in how this painting explores accumulative models of trace concerning identity: the space he depicts functions as a portrait of Onassis without a figurative depiction of her body in space. Similarly, Andersson's *Room Under the Influence* (2008) points to the construction of domestic space by framing an interior like that of a set for stage and screen<sup>16</sup>. I was most interested in how these artists flattened personal traces by pointing to modes of theatricality and performativity. While both Dalwood and Andersson create works that are evocative of personal and individualized space, they simultaneously flatten the Benjaminian traces of personal experience by pointing to the theatric and performative nature of personal belongings and space. They explore a performativity of space that feels like a shroud of personal identity (especially in the case of Dalwood). Similarly, I was interested in exploring the accumulation of personal traces through soft-ground etching. In my figurative compositions, I used several textures and objects simultaneously to compose a single image. Instead of employing multiple imprints, however, I thought I might have more success in presenting a single imprint from the patina of an object. Moving forward, I sought to find ways to query belonging through etching the patina and traces of defunct and discarded objects. In doing so, I hoped to speak more expansively to notions of personal trace: adopting an aesthetic that favours more privacy and care to the queer subject.

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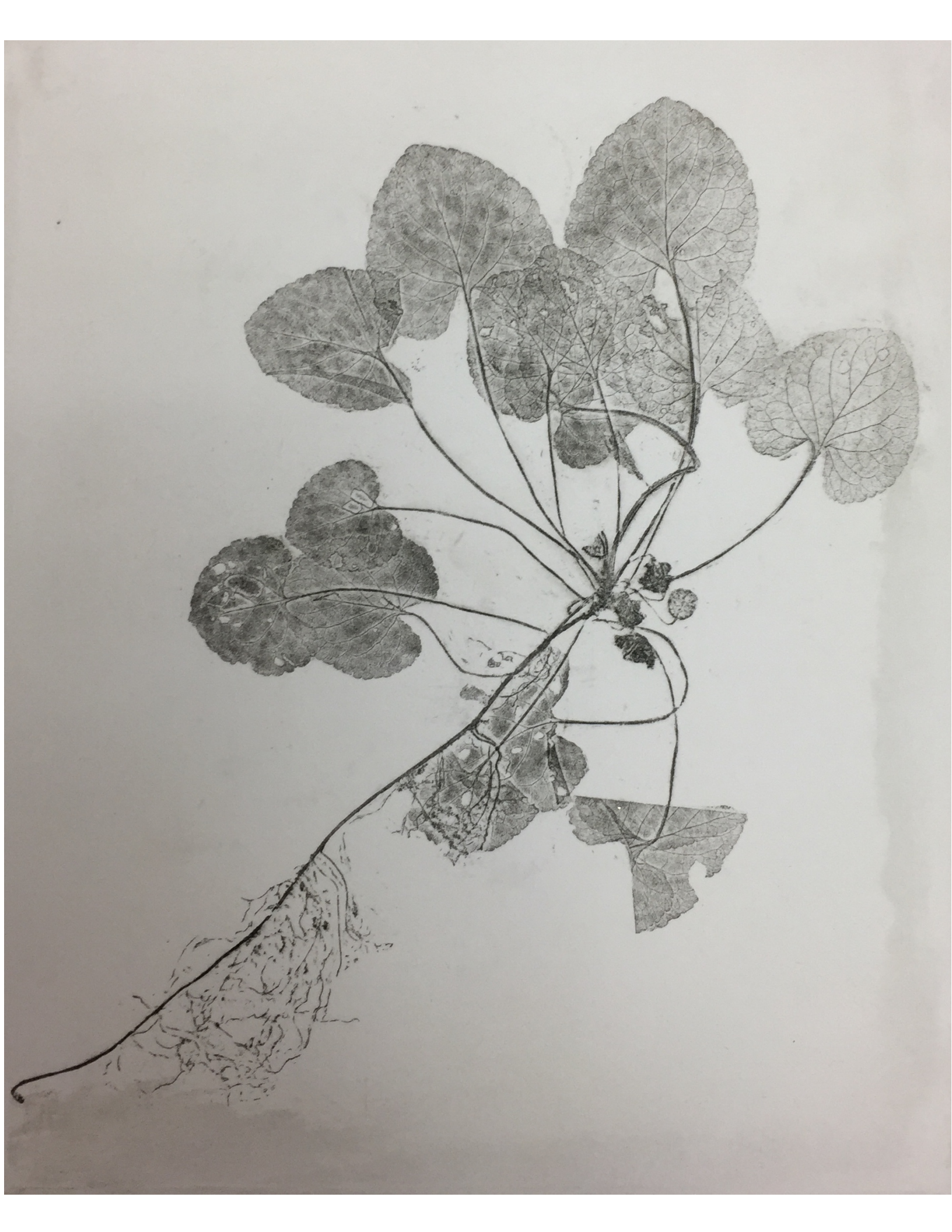
<sup>14</sup> The neo-deco lamps and furniture; that god awful waterbed.

<sup>15</sup> The soft yellow robe bearing a resemblance to a yellow silk gown worn by Onassis at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1973.

<sup>16</sup> Well, duh, Sherlock.



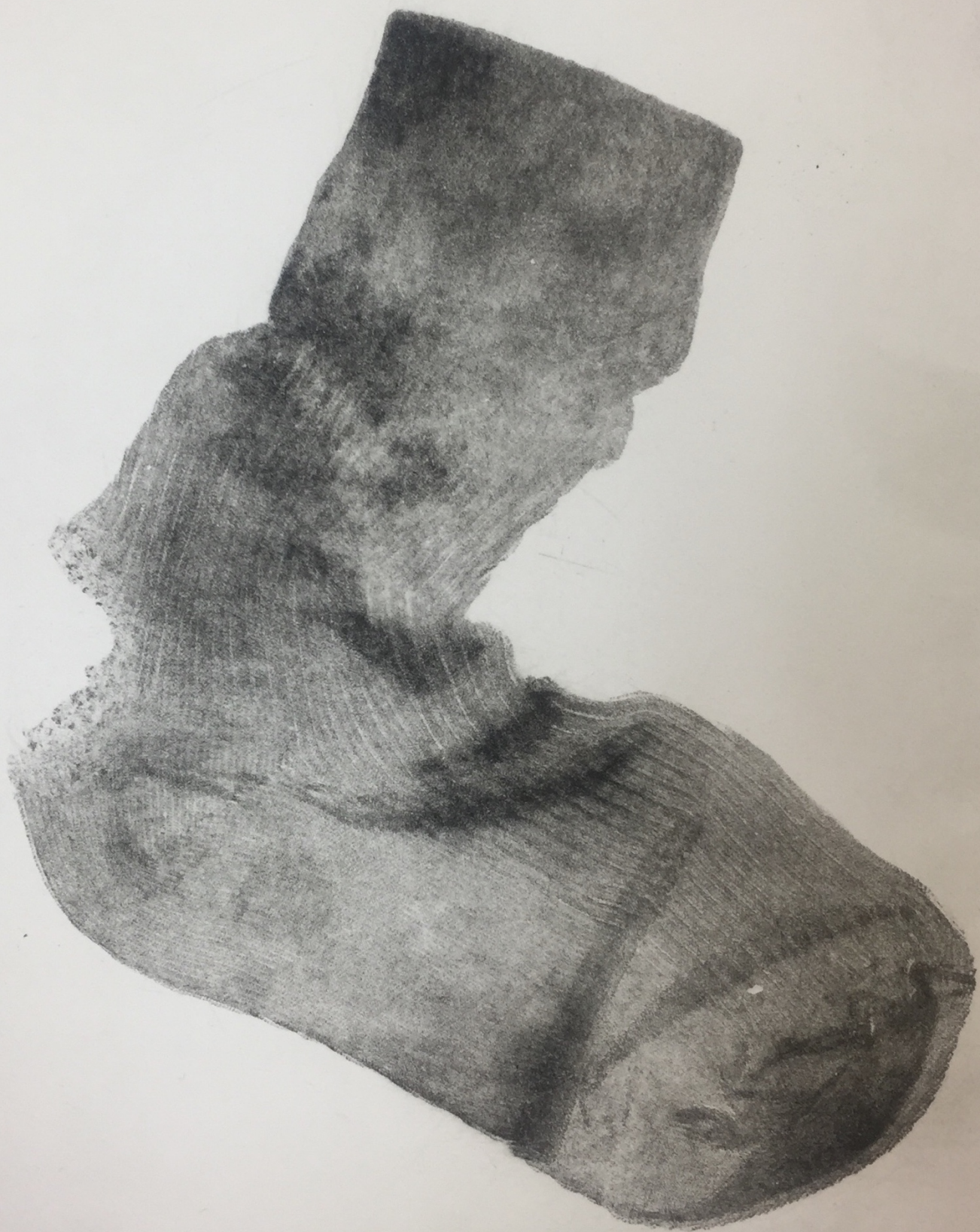














## 2.2 by the curbside

Following my earlier work, I sought to query hegemonic traces of belonging through soft-ground etchings of trash and detritus gathered on the side of the road. I developed my inquiry by etching the trace or imprint of an object placed on a steel plate covered in an impressionable coat of beeswax after it has been rolled through the press<sup>17</sup>. The printed image often resembles a photogram, but the visual information is gained through tactile means. I print objects ranging from weeds collected in gutters, wrappers of pies, and other cast-off objects.

This process of accumulating traces through soft-ground etchings emerges as a counterpoint to the earlier work of my research, which was more explicit in exploring home. In this series of prints, I was interested in employing an aesthetic of care and privacy by exploring the felt encounter of discarded objects and their inherent transience. I collect these objects from personal sites: the house I grew up in, streets that bear significance, or things collected while out with friends. These prints act as markers of my experience. However, the generic quality of the objects I print enables me greater privacy while disclosing my experience. I collected rubbish for printing every few days, keeping my eyes peeled for especially worn pieces of plastic<sup>18</sup>. I would wander down the streets and wonder how I might align myself with trash. I would gaze longingly at cigarette packets, imagining myself in their place. I was interested in how these nonfunctional and discarded objects could attend to feelings of disorientation. In turn, I took an interest in how etching the traces of these objects could function as an act of care to the abject queer body. My print, *darn it* (2019), is an example of this. This print is the trace of a worn sock. I had worn these socks for years until they were utterly broken down; leaving large holes that my heels stuck out of. Despite this, I continued to wear them for some time. Colour, aesthetics and sentiment outweighed practicality: they were a lush cadmium red marle. I could feel them break more with each passing wear and wash. These socks bore traces of my experience: my very perpetual use compromised their functionality. They did not bring any more comfort, only sore heels. I had to record the trace these socks had upon my body: they needed to be etched and recorded.

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<sup>17</sup> This is done by first sanding down a steel plate to a mirror polish to reduce any plate tone that might cloud or distract from the etch. I place the plate on a hot plate, where the beeswax is applied using a roller. Once the ground is applied, the plate is placed upon a printing press, and the object is placed on top. The plate is then rolled through the press, the object is delicately lifted off the plate, and a resounding imprint where the object lay is left on the plate. A stop-out liquid is then painted around the trace of an object to stop the acid from etching the impression of the printing blanket. I place the plate in a nitric acid bath where the acid etches the contact marks and 'traces' of where the object was on the plate.

<sup>18</sup> I started hoarding trash. I would not recommend this for everyone.

American theorist Jane Bennett explores the affective properties of trash in her essay 'The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter' (2004). She notes that trash, refuse, debris, and filth signify an anti-materiality. Bennett argues that trash speaks to a late-capitalist model of consumption: an ever-increasing accumulation of products that are churned out under increasingly shorter cycles<sup>19</sup>. I query the capitalist and heteropatriarchal logic of the accumulation of traces of capital that home and success is predicated on by inverting the logic of 'gain' by accumulating the traces of nonproductive objects that have no value. I present these etchings in small collections of five to eight. In doing so, I seek to activate Bennett's concept of 'thing-power'. Bennett asserts that the material body gains worth within assemblage or grouping with other objects: "...[a] thing gains power by virtue of its operating in *conjunction* with other things" (Bennett, 2004, 352). In isolation from its source, context, and purpose, refuse exists in an abject status of non-functionality. I seek to restore agency and power to these objects through the intimacy of embrace afforded by intaglio. I heighten this intimacy through the presentation of these prints as a collective. I see these works as an allegory for the queer subject whose experiences and desires for belonging are pushed to the societal and geographical fringes. Given the very positionality of refuse and filth as 'othered' communities that are visible along the peripheral edges of public and private space, I am interested in how trash and other objects that speak to traces of behaviour might speak to queer modes of disorientation and migration.

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<sup>19</sup> Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things: Steps Towards an Ecology of Matter," *Political Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (June 2004), 350









## 2.3 disorientation and migration

My research is further positioned by Fortier's (2001), and Ahmed's (2006) notes on queer disorientation and migration. Both theorists argue that queer experience is predicated on estrangement and migration from home towards a homeland: queer homes exist as a destination rather than a point of origin. The estrangement from hetero-patriarchal models of home becomes heightened when considering how much of architecture and private space functions within hetero-masculine signifiers. This conception of space is also noted in Spanish architectural historian Beatriz Colomina's *Sexuality and Space* (1992), as well as queer American spatial theorist Aaron Betsky's *Queer Space* (1997). In seeking more flexible models of home, Fortier points to the parallels of 'queer' and 'diaspora'. She notes how both models attend to postmodern and postcolonial anti-essentialist critiques of identity while also speaking simultaneously to a shared estrangement from 'home'<sup>20</sup>. In merging the two, *queer diaspora* speaks to the condition of exile and estrangement for the queer subject; the queer self becomes located "outside the confines of 'home': the heterosexual family, the nation, the homeland" (Fortier, 2001, 408). This sensation of migration is noted by Ahmed, who phenomenologically frames how the queer body arrives in space in a state of disorientation. I attend to these sentiments with my soft-ground object prints displacing and venerating objects that would previously have a 'low' visual status<sup>21</sup> by repositioning them through acts of making and installation.

In seeking to explore queer modes of disorientation and migration further, I questioned how I might accentuate the visual and spatial logic of my soft-ground etchings by producing a series of prints of the impressions of the sidewalk. The series of prints, *Pavement Study* (2019), were made by collecting, and then placing on large sheets of vinyl, detritus from sidewalks around the university campus. This accumulation of debris was then etched onto metal, inked up, and then transferred onto large sheets of plaster dyed in a light grey hue. I wanted to accentuate the receptive nature of pavement: pavement bears the traces of accumulated gestures and actions. In doing so, I aimed to point to the performativity of bodies within space and questioning how viewers and I might reflect upon how they walk and negotiate public space. This work drew inspiration by Piranesi's etchings of fragments of tablets that depicted early architectural plans of Rome. These diagrammatic sketches depict fragments of a city plan that is longer

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<sup>20</sup> Anne-Marie Fortier, "'Coming Home': Queer Migrations and Multiple Evocations of Home," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 4 (November 2001): 406-7.

<sup>21</sup> On account of their original positions in gutters, the ground, trash-cans, and other spaces that go amiss.



Left: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1803-1807, *Fragments of the Marble Plan of Ancient Rome*, engraving on paper, 376mm x 452mm,, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

whole: Piranesi's engravings beg us to imagine what the city might have looked like. My intent was to point to a fragmentation of experience by creating these slabs that memorialize and index sidewalks that could be anywhere. Imprinting on a semi-permanent medium like plaster further amplifies these objects' status as 'traces' of the body in public space. By having these slabs as objects, I implicate the viewers into negotiations with the object and bodies: kneeling, circling, stooping, crouching, wandering. I want the viewers to draw more attention to their body and

how they, in turn, leave traces within space.

This chapter positions the ideas of trace and imprint as a marker contingent with belonging. Following Ahmed and Fortier, my work explores how the queer body is disoriented against models of home. By recounting and recalling modes of trace through figurative etching, soft-ground etching and sculptural practices, my work seeks to both restore agency to “othered” queer bodies through modes of embrace. Simultaneously, I attend to modes of migration and disorientation by inverting the spatial and hierarchal logics through methods of print and installation. While my work attends to notions of how the queer body is disoriented, it is essential to acknowledge the orientation of queer bodies under an intersectional class analysis. Adopting an intersectional lens is essential as much of the content for LGBTQIA+ individuals is filtered through the hegemonic lenses of patriarchy, white supremacy, classism: queer visibility often hinges on the assimilation into dominant hegemonic structures.

Today, portions of queer experience are accommodated within models of neoliberal capitalism. I question and challenge modes of this visibility within the context of belonging, as such inclusion often stands to promote further white cis-male gay upper-middle-class experience and other individuals who stand to benefit from race/gender/class privileges. In short, this visibility is often contingent upon conforming or assimilating to heteropatriarchal capitalist ideals of success. In Chapter Three, *t's and c's*, I discuss how belonging for queer subjects is hinged upon submission to hegemonic performative ideals of

experience. I explore how models of commodification, homonormativity, and homonationalism work to further oppress the queer subject within our communities under neoliberal capitalist structures of experience. To critique dominant modes of queer representation and visibility in art, I explore how Cuban-American artist Félix González-Torres' notes on aesthetic infiltration manifest in my methods of art making to act as forms of queer resistance against these models.







### 3. t's and c's

All 'lesbian and gay issues' are rooted in the politics of class struggle. When ambitious, bourgeois 'community leaders' seek to divorce these issues from wider social and political concerns the lesbian and gay movement becomes atrophied ... Do we just want the same poverty traps and institutions? Seeking assimilation into what is perceived as 'straight' privilege has led many gay activists to confuse *equal rights* with *equal oppression*.<sup>22</sup>  
(Field, 1995, 172)

The sweet things in life, to you were just loaned  
So how can you lose what you've never owned?<sup>23</sup>  
(Garland, 1956, 5)

What happens when the queer body is granted more access to sociopolitical spheres of home and belonging? As outlined in Chapter Two, queer experience is marked by migration to and from sites that bear heteropatriarchal and productive assumptions. However, the terms of belonging have noticeably expanded and shifted for queer individuals under contemporary models of neoliberal gendered capitalism. Queer inclusion is often contingent upon the further promotion of class, race, and gendered privilege. It is necessary then to acknowledge how gay and lesbian assimilation into neoliberal matrixes of belonging and success simultaneously reinforce and redefine essentialist regimes between gay and straight; masculine and feminine; self and other. In some cases, queer assimilation and integration of difference can be weaponised by the nation-state as a means of promoting acceptance while denying access and care to other minorities. As such, the representation and protest of the queer body is a precarious one.

This chapter focuses on ideas linked to homonormativity, homonationalism, and pinkwashing while also exploring how modes of aesthetic infiltration can create more flexible models of queer belonging. This thinking emerges from contemporary queer theorists; specifically, Duggan (2002), American-based queer theorist Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), and Drucker (2011). These theorists argue that as new privileges are afforded to upper-middle-class cis white gay men and women, it pushes the divide between members of the LGBTQIA+ who may not have the same access to modes of belonging if they do not possess similar levels of privilege. Seeking to critique the subsuming and commodification of queer identity into neoliberal capitalist matrixes, I explore how models of aesthetic infiltration in methods of etching and sculpture can create more self-determined models of belonging for the queer body. This model of aesthetic infiltration emerges from Félix González-Torres'

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<sup>22</sup> Nicola Field, 1995, *Over the Rainbow: Money Class Homophobia* (London: Pluto Press) 172.

<sup>23</sup> Judy Garland, "Life Is Just A Bowl of Cherries," track no.5 on *Judy*, Capitol Records, 1956.

notes in 'In Conversation with Robert Storr' (2005). By abstracting personal experience into a series of poetic gestures, it allows for new models of queer representation that can avoid direct modes of commodification and essentialising binaries. In my research, I adopt methods of care and privacy for the queer body through implicit modes of touch in printmaking, installation, and sculpture; the destabilising of spatial logics through modes of pathos and humour; and the accumulation of "othered" nonproductive objects.

### 3.1 *those darn haitches and a pee*

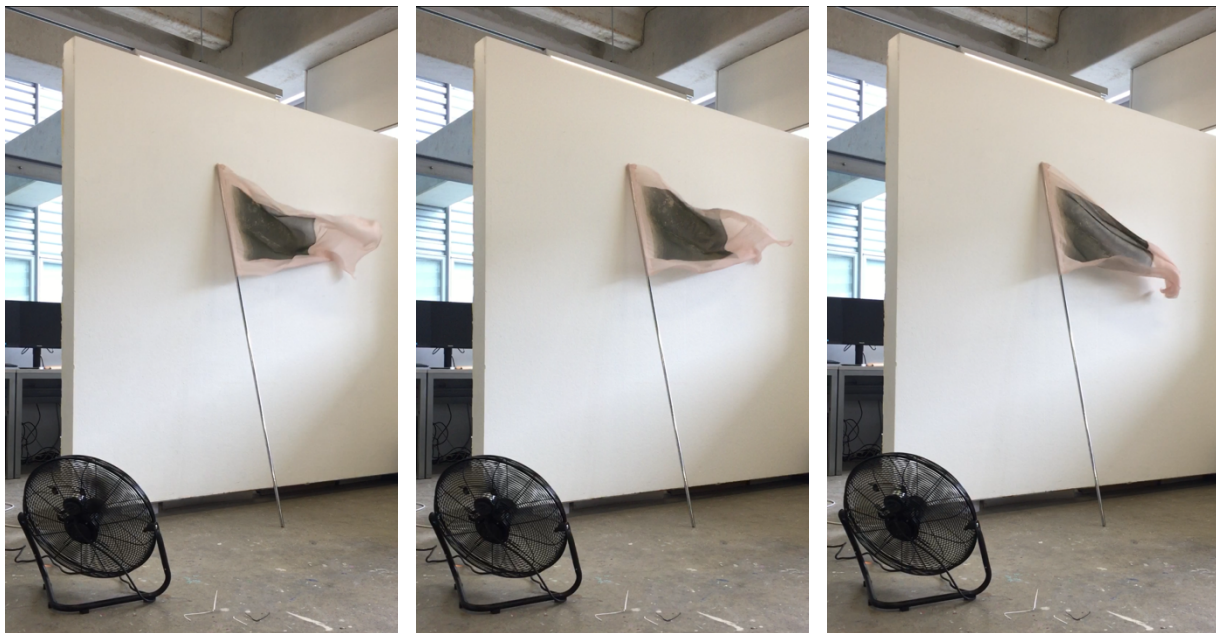
There have been considerable gains in contemporary sexual politics globally<sup>24</sup>. These gains can often appear contingent upon conforming to neoliberal realities of experience. Duggan (2002) and Puar (2007) assert that the subsuming of and integration of queer difference into hegemonic bodies of power does not necessarily speak to a marker of real progress. They argue that this integration often reinstates essentialist logics of cis-heteropatriarchy and nationalism. Duggan identifies this subsuming as homonormativity, which she defines as "... a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency and a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption."<sup>25</sup> Homonormativity privileges and sustains same-sex couples and individuals who perform alongside and within heteronormative ideals. Such performances end up promoting that the 'acceptable queer' is one that does not deviate from forms of hegemonic power. This position reinforces the productive and reproductive order of sexual capitalism. Puar extends this logic further in her analysis of homonationalism. For Puar, homonationalism describes the co-option and promotion of lesbian/gay

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<sup>24</sup> There have been ongoing artistic inquiries into queer identity within Aotearoa. *THE BILL* (2016), a research-based exhibition curated by Misal Adnan Yıldız held at Artspace NZ, Auckland, was an exhibition commemorating the anniversary of New Zealand's Homosexual Law Reform Act 1986. The show began with *THE BILL with Fiona Clark* (2016), a solo exhibition, *For Fantastic Carmen*, from Taranaki based artist Fiona Clark. The show would later evolve into a group show with a series of talks and events, *THE BILL: For Collective Unconscious*, featuring work from artists born into legal systems where LGBTQI+ identity was illegitimate. These artists commented on the judicial, social, and political shifts they have witnessed over their careers. The intersectional group show organised by Artspace NZ and Michael Lett in conversation with artist Ary Jansen, *I hate you, I hate you, I hate, because I don't you; I love you* (2017) held in multiple off-site locations in Auckland, NZ also comes to mind. This exhibition sought to break free from the gallery enclosure and queer public space: it was a call to fight for radical love against racist, misogynist, homophobic and sexist sentiment.

<sup>25</sup> Lisa Duggan, 2002, 'The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics Under Neo-Liberal Capitalism' in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalised Cultural Politics*, edited by Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 179.

rights in Western states for the service of maintaining imperialist, Islamophobic, and xenophobic ideologies<sup>26</sup>. Queer representations become weaponised as shallow means to deflect from deeper internal issues that drive and eat at the nation-state: they become tools to tame and deradicalise lesbian/gay identity. Similarly, this weaponising and ‘performance of inclusivity’ can be witnessed within businesses and corporations who seek to capitalise upon the queer body employing pinkwashing<sup>27</sup>. In recognising these forces, it becomes necessary to question how the queer body might assert themselves in a fashion that eschews more privacy and agency. Abstracting queer experience through the use of ubiquitous signifiers and objects allows for greater privacy for the queer body and an increased sense of connectivity for viewers who may be able to empathise and identify with ‘othered’ work. I am interested in how I might sublimate personal experience using ubiquitous signifiers and objects, thereby pointing to a model of identity that resists becoming essentialised, commodified, or weaponised.



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<sup>26</sup> Jasib Puar, 2007, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) xxiv, 38-9.

<sup>27</sup> Pinkwashing is a government or corporate strategy to put forward a gay or LGBT friendly image to simultaneously tap into the ‘pink dollar’ (the support of middle and upper class LGBT people) and to distract from unethical practices such as environmental destruction and worker exploitation.” - Kyra Gillies, 2017, “Think Pink: A 101 of Pinkwashing in New Zealand,” *Critic*, Issue 7, 2017. <https://www.critic.co.nz/features/article/6600/think-pink-a-101-of-pinkwashing-in-new-zealand>









In my use of flags and banners, I sought to query the commodification and co-option of queer experience by neoliberal capitalist and nationalist structures. While my work in etching already queries modes of accumulation and belonging, I wanted to draw upon a universal symbol. I was interested in how flags operate as signifiers and markers of space to denote sentiments of pride, nationhood, and orientation. Given the commodification of queer experience and co-option of pride, I wanted to create a series of shame flags. I create these flags out of impractical materials that could not hold the function of a 'flag' like silk, tulle, thermal blankets, and other materials that could not sustain any prolonged outdoor use. They often bore screenprinted images of common accidents (see *mop to spill // spill to mop* (2019)) or nonspecific sites (see *curbside* (2019)). I was equally interested in how a sense of tragedy and disorientation might become a sight gag. I wanted to use images of sights that draw immediate attention back to the body and to experience<sup>28</sup>. By turning to rejected objects and performative traces of failure, I hoped to speak to the humour and beauty of the everyday. I wanted to accentuate the futility of these performative objects by turning the representation of these into a double failure through the advent of the flag. I was interested in a representation and a performance that is beautiful, but also a bit stupid, futile, and finite.

Given that the flag is always in motion, these images cannot be seen or analysed as a static object can. Equally so, the movement of these flags is dependent upon artificial gusts of air from desk fans, overhead air conditioning, and even industrial floor fans. These flags are installed on "poles" that are placed in positions where they could topple at any moment: they are precarious and dependent upon so many other elements of staging to exist. These works were challenging and complicating representations of queer pathos. For me to disclose my discomfort is for the direct benefit of the viewers: it does nothing to subvert or upturn hegemonic structures. If anything, it perpetuates and upholds these structures.

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<sup>28</sup> This drawing attention back to the body through materiality, haptic touch, and pathos is informed by Natasha Matilia Smith's work *I Know Everyone's Miserable but How Does That Help Me* (2019) in the group exhibition *twenty-four-seven* at Te Uru Gallery, Auckland.







Above Left: Félix González-Torres, 1991, "*Untitled*" (*Perfect Lovers*), Clocks, paint on wall, 3.6 x 712 x 70 mm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of the Dannheiser Foundation.

Above Right: Félix González-Torres, 1991, "*untitled*," billboard, dimensions vary with installation. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Werner and Elaine Dannheisser. © The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation, New York. Installation view at 11th Avenue and 38th Street, Manhattan (February 20–March 18, 2012), as part of *Print/Out*, The Museum of Modern Art, February 19–May 14, 2012. Photo by David Allison

Below Left: Félix González-Torres, 1991, "*Untitled*," screenprint on paper, 161 stacked sheets, 92 x 552 x 419 mm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Saul and Ellyn Dennison, 2008,

Below Right: Félix González-Torres, 1991, "*Untitled*" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*), candies individually wrapped in multicolour cellophane, endless supply, diemnsions vary with installation, ideal weight 175lbs, promised gift of Donna and Howard Stone. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

### 3.2 *aesthetic infiltration*

Félix González-Torres points to models of resistance and visibility through what he terms aesthetic infiltration<sup>29</sup>. Torres argues that aesthetics must first be defined before they can be encountered. He asserts that dominant aesthetics act to sustain overarching structures of social class, race and sexuality and questions how representations deny certain subjects: aesthetics are politics<sup>30</sup>. Torres asserts, however, that when one didactically announces alternative political or ideological intentions through explicit modes of representation in art, the intentions become easy to dismiss by those in power. Torres comes to assert that the most affective political art is work that can sublimate political intentions *through* the aesthetics and beauty in the work of art itself: aesthetics and beauty emerge as tools of ideological infiltration. By occupying dominant aesthetics, Torres was able to transmit and express queer sentiments that would otherwise go unnoticed and neglected. In Torres' practice, his modes of infiltration are employed in the way he uses mundane and commonplace signifiers and objects like clocks, candy, photos of clouds, lists of dates, that are all rendered political via the personal context of his work.

As outlined in chapters one and two, these modes of infiltration in my practice emerge through implicit modes of trace and embrace in etching, my use of trash as a symbolic device, and the destabilising of conventional modes of installation and form. My practice explores finite gestures of pathos. For me to position and represent my feelings of disorientation within a public sphere is a futile gesture. It serves to appease the assumed dominant viewers: queer pathos in this form risks compartmentalising identity. While my work is similar to Torres in that I isolate singular objects and performances that speak to pathos, I employ a representation that is finite, not infinite like Torres. Whenever I print something, it is the only print: I do not print multiples or continuous series of images. It is the singular embrace and record of an exchange.

My methods of aesthetic infiltration also emerge in my queering of the grid when installing my etchings: I often present them in small series that are arranged in lines that break, or in larger grids where spaces are absent and where other prints might have been installed. I see my use of the grid and matrix in both making and installation as a means of infiltrating dominant modes of representation. I seek to

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<sup>29</sup> Félix González-Torres, 1995, " 'In Conversation with Robert Storr' ," in *Sexuality*, edited by Amelia Jones, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press), 114.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 114.



reclaim the grid and matrix<sup>31</sup> for the queer body: eschewing a space that might offer more privacy in their quiet occupation of space.



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<sup>31</sup> Symbols that categorically index and structure both information and bodies.

To expand upon some of these principles, I turn to my work in the group exhibition *Groundwork* at Corbans Art Centre. I presented a series of soft-ground etchings of my mother's gardenias. They were the last blooms of the summer and were etched during various stages of decay. When rolling an object through the press for soft ground, it is essential that the object is dry to retain the most amount of detail. For this series of works, however, I wanted to disrupt this convention and etch the trace of these flowers while they still retained moisture. The remaining moisture would often lead to the flower resembling a soppy mess, leaving no representation of the flower at all. I was interested in ways in which the hidden means of the process in etching might be made more explicit in these etchings. While etching and preparing the plates, I would allow for happenstance marks and accidents to emerge, leaving more traces of labour and signs of the maker. The context for these works is inherently personal and intimate, yet I wanted to make them generic enough that viewers might be able to identify with them. By abstracting personal sentiment through formal exchanges in print, the prints speak to higher sentiments of pathos, beauty, loss and care. While these works emerge from a queer space, it becomes a quiet assertion of queer identity: one that favours privacy of disclosure for the queer body.













Screenshot from “‘Rocker Wig Makeover’ 🍷 Season 2 Ep 6: Mini Challenge | RuVault,” YouTube video, 4:03, “Logo,” April 10 2019, accessed April 27 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GubQHciQdG0>

## Conclusion: it’s showtime, folks

In season two, episode six of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, the remaining queens must style a wig fit for a rock star. After the queens clamour for an assortment of sprays, dyes, and accessories, RuPaul critiques the haphazardly styled wigs. One contestant, Jujubee, presents a ratted wig adorned with glitter, blue hair dye, a large crystal necklace, a tiara, a sequin headband, a cherry: a look that is perfect for going to the deli to pick up some meat. After examining the ‘look’, RuPaul asks, “Girl to girl, when did you lose control of this wig?”<sup>32</sup> To which Jujubee replies, “When I got the wig.”<sup>33</sup> At times, grappling with an artistic practice within academia is a lot like Jujubee’s wig. At times, grappling with an artistic practice within academia and the politics of representation feels like Jujubee’s interface with her wig.

Framing my work as a structural critique on how modes of heteropatriarchal capitalism impact queer spaces of belonging is a huge task: I cannot undo any of these forces alone. I can only point to models of resistance that avoid further co-option and exploitation of queer experience. Queer identity cannot function holistically under forms of neoliberal capitalism, yet overhauling this system and applying a new one only risks a reinstitution of hierarchies. All I can do is pay attention to my experience and the experiences of others. Furthermore, nor can I deny that this thesis does not acknowledge the full range of experiences that impacted my making: nor will I disclose that. I can point to means of understanding my practice and research through modes of queer and academic theory, yet that also leaves a lot unsaid

<sup>32</sup> “‘Rocker Wig Makeover’ 🍷 Season 2 Ep 6: Mini Challenge | RuVault,” Youtube video, 4:03, “Logo,” April 10 2019, accessed April 27 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GubQHciQdG0>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

to personal experience. While I am passionate in asserting forms of queer belonging and agency through implicit notions of touch and embrace, my practice is equally fueled by other facets of my identity and personal experience.

While I cannot concretely manifest what a new model of queer belonging looks like, I will say this: I find belonging through my practice and my dedication to the craft of printmaking. Printmaking calls immediate attention back to the body. Whether I am sanding down a plate, preparing a ground, water blasting a screen, or rolling a plate through the press bed, I draw attention back to my body and the space I currently occupy. It is a meditative act, and a means to ground and orient myself. By drawing attention to printmaking's association to touch and embrace, I draw attention back to my body: using steel, acid, and the press as extensions of my body.



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