

Hallow | Hollow

Caroline Lichucki

Committee: Stacy Jo Scott (chair), Jovencio de la Paz

“Given that critical pedagogy seeks to transform consciousness, to provide students with ways of knowing that enable them to know themselves better and live in the world more fully, to some extent it must rely on the presence of the erotic in the classroom to aid the learning process,” (Hooks 19).



My practice finds roots that extend towards the transient, the mundane, and the chthonic. I am informed by my training in traditional forms of drawing, painting, and sculpture. This foundation lays the framework for images and experiential nuances of the body to animate a mythopoetic relationship between the ordinary and extraordinary. In listening to soma and psyche, my artistic process invites the numinous. Throughout my work, from sculpture to drawing, I seek to speak to the spiritual both subtly and dramatically. When working in the vein of drawing and shared imagery, it is my intent to rewrite and constellate complex dynamics related to religious and mythological figures as a feminine revisioning in a patriarchal inheritance. Where my drawings tend towards the psychological and political, sculptural forms are experiential and mysterious in their gesture. They invite the senses and body's experience.

As an artist living in western modernity and the "radical monopoly" (Illich 16) of Cartesian thought, my work moves as a subversive critique of systemic, unconscious, and pervasive ways of being. By embedding material with moments of meaning and symbolism, I seek to highlight cultural norms as a means of questioning the status quo of late stage capitalism and puritanical ideologies. In an age where the image of Aphrodite has been pornographized (Hillman 39), "to understand beauty in a Platonic sense, we must understand the ancient notion of *aisthesis* (sense perception) from which aesthetics derives" (42). The ancient notion of beauty, inherently connected to eros and morality, is central to my work.



As an artist training during the Covid-19 pandemic during late stage capitalism, my process, materials, and artistry is deeply tethered to the work that has been completed during this MFA. This process entailed engaging in active imagination (Von Franz) in which highly specific imagery emphasizes both my personal endeavors with my artwork as well as archetypal imaginings of the collective imagination of which we are a part. My artwork speaks to an inner and outer journey by imbuing ordinary materials and engaging with their enchantment:



- (Figure 1)

In Spring of 2021, I used industrial objects, grocery store products, conventional salt, and gold wrapping paper to form a gridded composition that acts as a satirical cultic technology (Figure 1). By this I mean, it is a piece confronting the fantasy of perpetual growth embedded in late stage capitalism. This technology mirrors the rituals of a human-lacking capitalist culture and emphasizes the stripping away of our depth. "We are much better at admitting that humans infect nature than we are at admitting that nonhumanity infects culture, for the latter entails the blasphemous idea that nonhumans—trash, bacteria, stem cells, food, metal, technologies, weather—are actants more than objects" (Bennet 30). These actants in their blasphemous craft, debase the notion of their seemingly infinite abundance in resources through this installation's temporal pyramid scheme that inevitably ends in a landfill. In my acted craft, I am speaking to the lack of inherent sustainability, green washing, and the inevitable destruction that is occurring.

James Hillman's seminal work is titled *Healing Fiction* (1983). The words healing and fiction and their pairing *Healing Fiction* bring forth two distinct meanings: fiction that is healing and the act of healing the wound of fiction. The double valence of the title reveals an underlying thematic network. In revisioning what this underlying meaning points to, I revision its sentiment as: Our reality is created through our fictions; to be conscious of these fictions is to gain creative access to our soul's relationship to the world around us.

In using the peripheral lens of metaphor to interpret fiction, one can become attuned to that which can't be known concretely through ordinary senses. The undercurrents of metaphor within story can be used in the same way in which visual art is used as a means of relaying something that is more experiential and not solely intellectually known. It is a way of seeing that takes the symbolic seriously and as unconscious language. This unconscious language seeps through the cracks of metaphor and through an imaginal relationship

that speaks to the awareness of feelings. Yet, while the seeing is serious, there are moments of absurdity and humor that allow for a softening of the message to enter - a message that is more digestible to the conscious knower. Grandiosity and exaggeration become messengers for unconscious material to become known, or in other cases, the grandiosity and exaggeration work to make what is unknown into conscious awareness. Janet and her mythopoesis embody an intuitive process towards transformation and wholeness within coexisting opposites :

Janet is a colossal maggot that has lived inside Earth for over 2000 years. She loves basking in the accumulation of your waste and decay. She slurps dregs, sludge, and scum. When she's feeling diaphanous and frisky, she entangles herself in the roots of trees within topsoil, engorging herself on mini morsels of maggots and other meek grubs to gain beef and brawn for the great journey downward.

Once she's gained enough mass, she begins to pupate. She pummels and sloshes through subsoil, bedrock, mantle, and finally the depths of hell. The brightest lava singses her sheath, forming an impossibly thick, resilient husk around her unapologetically effusive gushing body.

She has never died, and she never will. We will never get rid of Janet.

You should know that during metamorphosis, the maggot's original body completely degenerates. An air bubble escapes the pupa, filling the puparium in order to create space for legs, head, and wings to develop. This is no painful

transformation like the butterfly in its acidic puparial bath. Janet stews in an unctuous goo of ecstasy and bliss. She awaits the emergence of her new form.

When it's time, she utilizes her own flatulence to propel from Earth's molten womb, explosively birthing herself through Mt. Etna's volcanic canal. She splashes into the ocean off the coast of Sicily and drifts to shore.

Mopping the poop deck like a good sailor, young Thomas, an Italian Navelman on the S.S. MadreVerruca, looks up from his duty and spots a mysterious yet utterly lavish bulging black mass as the ship approaches land. Janet's crusty dermis begins to rupture and shed. The naval men panic. They scramble to make way for the quaking nugget mass.

The allegory of Janet shows the interplay of Thanatos and Eros. Rooted in Greek mythology and substantiated in the work of Audre Lorde, Carl Jung and James Hillman - Thanatos and Eros collectively represent entanglements in the drives of death and love both within and without. Eros is the personification of love in *all* its forms born out of chaos. Thanatos being the representation of death, is personified through process rather than form. Janet depicts the unconscious dance between the two held in the human experience. She presents the tensions and relations between spirit and matter, an aspect of life that is deeply repressed in western thought and its inherited Cartesian paradigm. Janet represents the subjugated version of Eros in modernity. She is dammed into repulsion, assumed pure evil, and becomes a "dark fem" (Mozol 5) in revolt. She paradoxically pairs up with Death, sludging through Thanatos matter in order to be reborn and restored to her original Erotic nature.



This artwork is concerned with the question: what happens to the subjugated life that wants to live? She is a reminder that everything is temporary so that we may throw ourselves deeper into intimacy with life. She teaches in her disgust, in her filth, in her purity born of mud.

An aspect of this work is exploring the nature of alchemical vessels. Openings, tares, fear, and that which is empty. Etymologically, vessels connect to that which gives birth and that which takes birth away. Where *hollow* signifies a hole, emptiness, to take completely—*hallow* signifies being made holy, to sanctify; to honor as holy, consecrate, ordained, uninjured, whole, omen (etymonline). Hollow/Hallowed vessels gape open for beings to land into and rise out from. It is a place that lives in the vertical axis. Hollow's definition of emptiness and meaninglessness relates to the imbalance of repressed Eros in western culture. On the cultural level we all too often have become lost in our spiritual, Apollonian, patriarchal perspective. Our roots in European languages and a Cartesian worldview have led to a personal and cultural elitism that have fueled charges of racism and colonialism." (Marlan 15)

The empty hollows are visual reminders of the consequences of a society that devalues Feeling associated with sharing abundance and depth of *Eros' uncivilized and sensuous* connection to life. Hallowed, on the other hand, means to make sacred or holy - "hallowed ground" through the giving of self. We are at some point or another made Hollow through death and, if lucky, are Hallowed by life. When Eros is lacking there is no sense of Self and soul slumps, falling flat, rigid, cold, or dense. We see this in rampant cultural nihilism. There is no butter, fat, honey, milk, sap, nectar, humus, roots, mud, or soil. Only rock, bone, air and voids of space. The Bowls/Vessels in this series seek to embody this notion - freezing in time both the sensuous rising of Eros' embrace and the Death void of its lacking.

In a culture that privileges Logos/Reason over Feeling and self-knowing, the meaning of Eros is subversive to Puritanism and outdated rigid patriarchal structures. In saying this, I am not extricating Logos. Logos is needed as an integral source for structure/integrity that connects us. The perverted meaning of Integrity related to *what you should do* can quickly become propaganda for handing over autonomy and sovereignty to a Mad King steeped in individualism. Eros' integrity opens the self to sensing another's unique experience and what they have to contribute, what they need, and how the safety in one's uniqueness allows for the unfurling of individuated connection. There is an acceptance and an unconditional regard in the softening nature of Eros. In an era in which the king has been equated with logos, what does it mean to invite Eros forward?

“Beyond the superficial, the considered phrase, “It feels right to me,” acknowledges the strength of the erotic into a true knowledge, for what that means is the first and most powerful guiding light toward any understanding. And understanding is a handmaiden which can only wait upon, or clarify, that knowledge, deeply born. The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge. The erotic functions for me in several ways, and the first is in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.” (Lorde 89)

Logos in its most genuine form, represents the organization, structuring and delineation of thought and space. In its excess, it bleaches, burns, and cuts leaving no room for the unfurling of joy and the acceptance of difference to enter.

Motivated from the place that stands for the relational and the subjugated, my process and work speaks for the lack of deep understanding with Soul and orphaning of Eros within our cultural fibers. It is through my desire for relational enchantment within the matter around me, that I am driven to create for that which feels lost behind the violent rays of imbalanced light/logos.

Acknowledgments:

My appreciation and gratitude extend towards several people who have contributed their time and energy towards my work in substantial ways. Thank you to my committee, Stacy Jo and Jovencio for your supportive presence in this process, as well as your constructive suggestions.

To my dear friend Danielle for your endless support and depth of understanding. To my friends Mary and Dana for your encouragement and insights. I am grateful to have shared with you all in joy and sorrow during our academic journey together.

To my BFA program at Maharishi International University where I experienced an invaluable academic freedom through an emphasis on consciousness based education that has inspired the foundation of which I continue to work..

Works Cited

Photography by Mike Bray

Bell Hooks, "Eros, Eroticism, and the Pedagogical Project," in *Teaching to Transgress* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 19

Bennett, Jane (. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University, 2010.

Brady, Patrick. "Manifestations of Eros and Thanatos in L'Etranger." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1974, p. 183., <https://doi.org/10.2307/440517>.

HILLMAN, JAMES. *City & Soul*. SPRING PUBLICATIONS, 2021.

Hillman, James. "[Download]Pdf Healing Fiction Popular Book - by James Hillman - W7YSD35RF6TW." *[Download]PDF Healing Fiction Popular Book - By James Hillman - w7ysd35rf6tw*, <https://sites.google.com/site/w7ysd35rf6tw/download-pdf-healing-fiction-popular-book---by-james-hillman>.

Illich, Ivan. "File:Illich Ivan Deschooling Society.pdf - Monoskop." *Deschooling Society*, https://monoskop.org/File:Illich_Ivan_Deschooling_Society.pdf.

Lorde, Audre. *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*. Kore Press, 2000.

Mancini, Joe. "Using Tools for the Common Good - Revisiting the Ideas of Ivan Illich." *The Working Centre*, June 1998, <https://www.theworkingcentre.org/resource-students/2395-using-tools-common-good-revisting-ideas-ivan-illich>.

Marlan, Stanton. *Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*. Texas A&M University Press, 2008.

"Hollow (Adj.)." *Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/hollow>.