

PAREIDOLIA

Seeing things in things

By

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Abstract

My thesis surrounds the witnessing and amplifying of pareidolias that I encounter in my everyday life, and how they are personified and materialized in attempt to further connect with my surroundings and achieve a sense of groundedness. I reflect on how pareidolias have helped me navigate my own physical and mental health struggles (including my recent epilepsy diagnosis, anxiety, panic attacks and agoraphobia) and how they have transformed the way I interact with my environment; both through the act of looking and the act of making.

Key Terms: Pareidolias, Groundedness, Mental Health, Epilepsy, Agoraphobia

Acknowledgements and Dedications

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Table of Contents

COPYRIGHT NOTICE……..…2

ABSTRACT…….3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATIONS……4

LIST OF FIGURES…….…….8

MY FAMILY……11

INTRODUCTION…..…….……...…13

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW……18

INTRODUCTION……...……18

WHAT IS PAREIDOLIA?……..18

TYPES OF PAREIDOLIAS……20

PAREIDOLIA BIASES……..22

PAREIDOLIA LINK TO CREATIVITY……23

PAREIDOLIA ARTISTS..……...…25

PAREIDOLIA IN ARCHITECTURE..……...…33

EPILEPSY AND PAREIDOLIA……..…34

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES…….……37

INTRODUCTION……...……37

MEMORY AND STORYTELLING……...……38

GROUNDEDNESS……40

INTUITION……42

MATERIALS…….44

SCALE……45

CHAPTER 3: STUDIO BASED PRACTICE……..….47

INTRODUCTION……..47

LOOKING AND RECORDING……48

MATERIALIZING PAREIDOLIAS……..…49

MY WORKSPACE..……52

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PAREIDOLIA..…….……54

LOCATIONS……..……57

LOCATION 1: BATHROOM..……...…58

LOCATION 2: HOSPITAL SETTING…….…59

LOCATION 3: PUBLIC SPACES……62

PRESSURE AND DECOMPRESSING…….…63

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION……..66

INTRODUCTION……..66

PEMA AND THE PURPLE CRAYON……...…67

COMMUNITY……71

EXHIBITION……...……73

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION……76

WORKS CITED……..78

APPENDIX……..84

List of Figures

Figure 1: Salvador Dalí, *Visage paranoïaque (Paranoiac Face)*, 1935……..…25
Figure 2: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* and Saint John the Baptist, c. 1499–1500 or c. 1506–1508……..….27
Figure 3: Max Ernst. *Wheel of Light*. 1926 Collotype, after frottage, printed in black……..……..…28
Figure 4: Vorja, Sanchez. *Time to Connect,* 2020……..….30
Figure 5: Andy Goldsworthy, *Windfallen oak branches, England, 2023*…..…..…..

Figure 26: From left to right: *Lip Snail*, 2024, Duvet cover, stuffed with polyester fibrefill. *Critters*, 2024, Clay on fabric covered canvas……..….91
Figure 27: *Lip Snail*, 2024, Duvet cover, stuffed with polyester fibrefill……92
Figure 28: *Critters*, 2024, Clay on fabric covered canvas……..…92
Figure 29: *Shadowed Flight*, 2024, Modelling paste and acrylic paint on photo print……93
Figure 30: *Shadowed Flight*, 2024, Modelling paste and acrylic paint on photo print……93
Figure 31: *Shadowed Flight* Inspiration photo, 2024……..……94
Figure 32: *Tiles of Bathroom Tiles*, 2024, Paper transferred on wood squares, on egg cartons…….95
Figure 33: *Tiles of Bathroom Tiles* work in progress, 2024……..…95
Figure 34: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024…….……96
Figure 35: Setting up the exhibition, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024…….…..97
Figure 36: *The Devoted Duet*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas……98
Figure 37: *The Devoted Duet* inspiration photos, 2024……..…96
Figure 38: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024……..…99
Figure 39: *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas……..…..100
Figure 40: *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas……100
Figure 41: Back side of *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas..…….……101
Figure 42: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024……..102
Figure 43: *Ephemeral Aura Visions*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas…….……..……..……102
Figure 44: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024……...…103
Figure 45: *Scan Man*, 2023, Modelling paste on canvas……..…104
Figure 46: *Scan Man*, 2023, Modelling paste on canvas…….……..104
Figure 47: *Scan Man*, 2023, Modelling paste on canvas…….……..105
Figure 48: *HeartFelt Creatures*, 2024, Thread stitched on felt……..106
Figure 49: *HeartFelt Creatures*, 2024, Thread stitched on felt…….……106
Figure 50: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024..……..107
Figure 51: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024..……..107
Figure 52: Entrance of gallery show, *Pareidolia, 2024,* artist statement, brochures, and keychains for visitors to take home……...…108
Figure 53: Entrance of gallery show, *Pareidolia, 2024,* brochures, and keychains for visitors to take home……..……109
Figure 54: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024…….…..110
Figure 55: Entrance to the Show, *Pareidolia,* at 205 Richmond, July 2024……..……111

Figure 56: Entrance to the Show, *Pareidolia*, at 205 Richmond, July 2024……..……111
Figure 57: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Brochure, 2024……...…112
Figure 58: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Poster, 2024..…….……113
Figure 59: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Cardboard Model Plan, 2024……114
Figure 60: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Cardboard Model Plan, 2024……114
Figure 61: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Labels, 2024……...…115

My Family

During my early childhood, I lived alone with my mother and grandmother, Ingrid Short and Beatrice Short. Artistry ran deep in my grandmother's lineage. Our home was adorned with art pieces crafted by her and her artistic relatives. My grandmother had a particular fondness for exploring various mediums, including collage and mixed media art, in addition to painting. She also hated being referred to as my ‘Grandmother’ because it made her feel old, so we all refer to her as Bz. Bz would attend a weekly art class with her friends, and I was always inspired by her passion and commitment to creativity. She made a gallery wall in our living room which is still there today, and one of my favourite pieces has always been her watercolour painting of cows looking through a fence. She did a lot of abstract art, and while my younger mind didn’t quite grasp this concept, I was always enamoured by it. I used to say, “when I grow up I want to paint *nothing* like Bz”. This made her and mom laugh because of my interpretation of the word ‘nothing’, relating it to the abstract. I would follow up by saying “but nothing is still something”.

Bz and my mother were both excellent sewers, and seemed like they could fix anything. Bz converted one of the bedrooms into a studio room, and I would often go use her sewing machine, observing and learning a lot from my mom. This room was filled with art supplies, canvases, and an old wooden desk where the sewing machine laid on top of. In that room, Bz did a lot of sewing projects. She sewed denim car seat covers made out jeans, which is honestly JEANius, I would totally borrow that idea if I had my license and a car. She also made denim bean bag covers to cover up coffee-stained corduroy bean bags from the 70s, which eventually disintegrated, because she said they were too comfortable and 'peoples boyfriends kept falling asleep in them’ so they got worn out. She and my mom sewed curtains, clothes, etc. and one of my personal favourite pieces made by Bz was her quilted denim curtains. She cut out square patches of old jeans and sewed them together, and for a long time they were the curtains for the

basement of our chalet, right next to the bunk beds where the kids slept. I myself incorporate lots of denim into my artworks, but it only clicked recently that I have been constantly around these creative denim projects, so I have Bz to thank for that subconscious introduction to the material. I appreciated the love and personal artworks embedded within our home and felt enveloped in the endless creative projects and artistic solutions they were producing. Their plethora of creativity shaped and skyrocketed my artistic confidence and limitless mindset, telling myself "I can do that" or "I can make that" because that's exactly what they did.

My mom and grandmother equipped me with the materials I needed to make whatever I wanted, or rather I would go into BZ's closet/studio space where she kept her art equipment and help myself. I loved sewing and felt enormous satisfaction in making my ideas come to life almost immediately, and not having to wait for Christmas or a birthday to add to my (very large) plushie collection. When my forever dad, Rudy Hogan, entered into my life at 6 years old, he was also extremely creative and when I was a teenager he was often in the garage working on some type of wood project. From the time I was young, he frequently complimented and reassured my skills and talents, and made me feel like I had the greatest gift, even though in hindsight definitely it wasn't the best. I made "the Rudy Doll" for my Dad when I was 8, from an old sock, a tennis ball, and some of his discarded dreadlocks when he was giving his hair a trim. He still has this doll and the value that he has placed in that simple creation has stuck with me. I always felt supported by my family, and their love and appreciation for my artistic abilities validated me in a way that always drove me to make more. I can easily recognize that my passion and drive for creation came from watching them make their own works, but also by their tremendous support in helping me explore mine.

Introduction

I have always been fascinated, inspired and drawn to my encounters with pareidolias. Pareidolias are the faces, images or creatures that we see in random things, like seeing a face in the clouds, or a cat in woodgrain.[1] This fascination started when I was a kid. I found that once I discovered glimpses of these 'creatures', they would become lost in time and memory. As a result of their temporariness, I would forget them in a matter of minutes. In my mind, I started referring to them as 'creatures' rather than pareidolias, because I felt like the term creatures emphasized their presence as individual living beings, rather than diminishing them to a phenomenon. The pareidolias that I saw ranged from faces to animals to body parts to objects, so the term creatures felt the most fitting as it welcomed the breadth of things I was seeing. Each pareidolia had its own spirit, its own aura, and they felt like life-like creatures that existed amongst me. However the presence of these creatures was briefly acknowledged before swiftly dissipating—a fleeting exchange of greetings before life resumed its course.

The past couple years have been very challenging for me; dealing with the loss of my good friend, having seizures and getting diagnosed with epilepsy, dealing with anxiety and depression, all snowballing into agoraphobia. I felt like the world was starting to collapse on me. It all became so overbearing, the thought of leaving my house haunted me. I just wanted to be at home, safe in my little cocoon. Because of spending so much time at home, I felt like I got to know my apartment well. I familiarized myself with all its nooks and crannies, maybe not by choice, but because of my unwavering loyalty to home. I spent a lot of time in the shower to cope with my anxiety and drown out the overwhelming thoughts. I'm the type of person who usually needs some sort of visual content streaming in the background, like the tv running or YouTube playing on my phone…whether that be while washing the dishes or doing work. I usually have SpongeBob playing on the living room tv on mute, just so there's

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[1] Cambridge, "Pareidolia definition", n.p.

something colourful to look at in the background, while sparing myself from his annoying high-pitched voice. But when I'm in the shower, it is just me and the walls and the water. During this time, I grant my eyes the opportunity to look everywhere, and not just straight at a screen or the task at hand. The serene atmosphere allows my mind to clear, allowing myself the freedom to let my gaze wander across the tiled walls. In the shower, looking becomes my new task. I have 20 minutes of uninterrupted time to look at the walls, obviously taking a few pauses to locate the soap, shampoo and conditioner when needed. Every time I stepped into the shower and entered this state of mind, I noticed an increasing number of new creatures emerging before me. In the past, I had noticed pareidolias on the walls in there, but I started to become more intentional with my 'looking', finding new ones every time I went in the shower. While I would find new pareidolias, I would also remember and look for the old ones that I had seen already, and it started becoming this interesting, almost daily routine. I had eventually developed and extraordinary repertoire of pareidolias in my shower. I started to expand my search beyond the shower, looking for them in other places in my home. I started seeing them on the floors, on the balcony, in the sink, in my paint palettes, in food, etc. I felt like I was subconsciously training myself to be able to see them better—the more time I spent looking, the faster I found them.

This past year I got diagnosed with epilepsy, and I would experience grand mal seizures where I would lose consciousness and have no recollection of the event as well as aura seizures (where I was awake and fully conscious). During my aura seizures, I first start experiencing an overwhelming sense of déjà vu, and it feels like my mind is replaying a scene from a dream that I've had before. I experience extreme derealization, where my surroundings and my body seem surreal, as if I'm in a dream. Once the déjà vu is over, I often grapple with an overpowering wave of fear and tend to fix my gaze intensely on a specific object or point. After this, my vision usually stars to blur or turn white, so I find somewhere to lie down quickly so I don't faint and get a black eye…which has happened before. Getting a black eye from fainting on to the toilet is a very humbling experience to say the least. The scariest part of the experience

for me is not the beginning or the end of the seizure, but when I start to feel intense fear at some point in the middle. During this moment, I usually stare at something very intensely and for some reason it helps to stabilize my body and mind. There is so much internal chaos going on, staring at something still maybe acts to counteract my racing mind, but it is hard to know if staring is a symptom of the seizure or a coping strategy…or a bit of both. I started noticing that during these moments, I usually stared into the floor, and often, it was at a pareidolia in the tiles. The same thing would happen during panic attacks. I would just stare at a pareidolia somewhere in my house, and for some reason it really comforted me. I even started researching how I could use pareidolias to strengthen my associative memories, affected by my seizures and frontal lobe abnormality. By looking at these creatures and triggering my associative memories, I began simultaneously using pareidolias to mentally cope with seizures (especially during aura seizures), while also physically strengthening my associative memories. I started recognizing pareidolias as integral components of my physical/mental health episodes that occurred in the bathroom (which was a lot).

As a result of my epilepsy and anxiety, I began struggling with agoraphobia, as leaving the comfort of my home became increasingly difficult. The search/discovery of pareidolias outside started becoming a necessary coping tool for leaving home and confronting my agoraphobia. I would seek out creatures outside of my home, and their presence calmed me and welcomed me back into the world.

Not only were my experiences with 'looking' at pareidolias helping me cope with my physical and mental health struggles, but 'making' became equally as important to me. Transforming these pareidolias into tangible beings that I could touch and hold felt therapeutic, and felt like I was extending their lifelines into my own physical world. Using textiles to bring them to life evoked feelings of nostalgia, feelings that I had not felt in a long time. I used to make stuffed animals as a kid and would enter this deep state of entrancement, but I stopped in my early teenage years because I felt 'too grown up' to be making toys. The ways and methods that I used to materialize the pareidolias became another

way to navigate and cope with my physical and mental transformations and added to the everlasting list of how pareidolias have changed me and the way I experience my environment. The presence of pareidolias have comforted me across of breadth of challenging circumstances, and the process of looking and finding them became a routine for helping me navigate those difficult moments. My thesis explores how the search and discovery of pareidolias, as well as how I materialize them, has shaped the way that I interact with my environment and navigate personal struggles. Because of these experiences, I have decided to investigate the relationship between pareidolia and mental wellbeing. **My research questions are as follows:**

1) *How does witnessing, amplifying, and the rematerializing of organic forms transform the way I interact with my environment?*

2) *In what ways has Pareidolia helped me to navigate my own mental and physical health struggles (including agoraphobia, my epilepsy, anxiety/depression, panic attacks)? Supplementary questions include: How has pareidolia impacted my relationships? What are the connections between epilepsy and pareidolia?*

In the following chapters, I will discuss my creative processes of identifying, befriending, and rematerialising pareidolia. In Chapter 1, I will review the literature, which addresses the definitions and historical understandings of pareidolia. I highlight research on the types and biases of pareidolias, and pareidolia's links to creativity as well as epilepsy. In Chapter 2, I introduce my research methodologies, and explain my studio-based research method. I explain the significance of memory and storytelling, as well as groundedness and intuition as methodologies. I further explain my methods regarding material and scale. In Chapter 3, I explain my studio-based practice, and discuss how recording and materializing pareidolias are significant to my practice. I then describe my workplace, and my personal relationship/ journey with pareidolias, and talk about three specific locations which have significantly altered and contributed to my practice. Chapter 4 is the discussion section, where I describe how working on

pareidolias might be a good way to build community with others living with epilepsy, agoraphobia and anxiety. I reflect on how working on/with pareidolias has affected my capacity to manage epilepsy and my other conditions, and possible help others in similar situations. In the following section, I describe elements of my exhibition including exhibition planning and reflection. The final chapter is the conclusion, where I reflect on my journey and discuss opportunities and ideas for future research and creation.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To situate my research, I first introduce definitions and historical understandings of pareidolias. Throughout this section, I highlight research on pareidolias, including various types of pareidolias that exist, and pareidolia biases. In much of the research, pareidolias are linked to creativity and I further discuss other pareidolia artists, as well as pareidolias in built environments. Since my research focuses a lot on pareidolias regarding mental/physical health, it is also important to highlight pareidolias in relation to mental health, as well as epilepsy.

What is Pareidolia?

Have you ever seen a porcupine looking at you in your bathroom tiles, a woman smiling in the clouds, or an angel in your wooden floors? According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, pareidolia is defined as the "*tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern, it is the human ability to see shapes or make pictures out of randomness*."[2] This phenomenon derives from the Greek words "para," (beside), and "eidolon," (image or form).[3] Whether people are familiar with the term or not, pareidolias are something that the majority of us have encountered throughout our lives and this experience is, in fact, very common. Most people are acquainted with the idea of seeing faces in the clouds, in their floorboards, or whatever other objects in their day-to-day life, whether purposefully looking for them, or stumbling upon them at random. In a paper titled 'The visual system as a constraint on the survival and success of specific artworks'[4] by researchers David Melcher

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[2] Merriam-Webster, "Pareidolia definition", n.p.

[3] Sima, "See What I See", n.p.

[4] Bacci and Melcher, "Visual System", 351.

and Francesca Bacci, they believe that the ability to perceive pareidolias most likely is a result of the evolution of our visual system. This adaptation has enhanced our ability to perceive and identify potential predators and has kept humans alive longer. Despite being presented with missing visual information, such as maybe seeing a pair of eyes behind some trees, our brains allow us to fabricate a full image out of the information presented, supplementing our visual perception with the missing pieces.[5] Pareidolias were in fact once considered exclusively a symptom of psychosis and can also be associated with schizophrenia symptoms (such as paranoia, delusional thoughts, and hallucinations)[6], but is now recognized as part of the normal human experience. In fact, in a study conducted by Masaharu Kato and Ryoko Mugitani, exploring pareidolia in infants, the researchers propose that infants as young as 8 to 10 months start developing the perception of pareidolic faces through sound association.[7]

Pareidolias have been historically perceived and utilized in numerous ways, one being the creation of constellations—groups of stars that form recognizable patterns. Constellations are frequently named based on their resemblance to familiar objects; for example, the 'Great Bear' (Big Dipper) resembles a bear, Taurus 'The Bull' resembles a bull, and so on. These patterns appear to have been devised primarily as mnemonic devices to aid in remembering star arrangements, which were beneficial for navigational and timekeeping purposes.[8] While the origins of constellation patterns aren't known for certain, it is known that the ancient Chinese and Egyptians have used symbolic sky maps, and the ancient Greeks established star patterns, many of which we all know and still use today.[9] Constellation pareidolias

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[5] Wisher, Pettitt and Kentridge, "Conversations with Caves", 321.

[6] Pepin et al., "*Processing Visual Ambiguity", 3*.

[7] Masaharu and Mugitani, "Pareidolia in Infants", 1.

[8] Royal Observatory, "Constellations", n.p.

[9] Royal Observatory, "Constellations", n.p.

were used in this case thousands of years ago as reference points in the sky, however pareidolias have also been utilized across many other fields of study throughout history, including psychology.

Types of Pareidolias

While it is apparent that visual pareidolias exist, there are other types of pareidolias that people can experience. Auditory pareidolia can be described as the auditory perception of familiar sounds that people can hear from static background noise, or seemingly ambiguous or meaningless noises.[10] Some common noises that can propagate experiencing auditory pareidolias include; fans, background hums, noises in a forest, and engine, etc. Auditory pareidolia is very similar to visual pareidolia in that they both stem from the misinterpretation of real objects or a real sounds. This is not to be confused with hallucinations from something not present. Dr Neil Bauman, who runs the Center for Hearing Loss Help, has also done research on auditory pareidolias, and claims that this type of pareidolia has been presented in historical medical literature as 'musical ear syndrome'.[11] Musical ear syndrome however is known as a condition where you hear music or singing when none is present[12], so it differs from auditory pareidolia in the sense that auditory pareidolia stems from misinterpreting a real noise, whereas musical ear syndrome is more of an auditory hallucination that doesn't come from any noise. Andrew King, director of the Centre for Integrative Neuroscience at the University of Oxford[13], has stated that auditory pareidolia occurs as a result of our "*brains constant attempts to make sense of and find patterns in the world around us. Utilizing a process called contrast gain control, our brain adjusting the sensitivity of brain cells that respond to auditory and visual data so they can adapt to the constant input.*"[14] Auditory pareidolia

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[10] Turner, "Names Called in Woods", n.p.

[11] Shaw, "Auditory Pareidolia", n.p.

[12] Pietrangelo, "Musical Ear Syndrome", n.p.

[13] Oxford Neuroscience, "Andrew King", n.p.

[14] Turner, "Names Called in Woods", n.p.

research has also received less attention from neuroscientists compared to visual pareidolias. This is largely due to the inconsistent triggers that can lead individuals to mishear certain sounds, which contrasts with the more consistent and predictable nature of visual pareidolias.[15]

Another manifestation of visual pareidolias that I have noticed is when I close my eyes; I frequently see faces and intricate patterns, as if watching a movie unfold behind my eyelids. I later learned about the phenomenon known as 'closed-eye hallucinations' or 'phosphenes[16]', which present as moving images when my eyes are closed. As a result of the constant activity between neurons in the brain and your vision, your retina continues to produce electrical charges, so even when you close your eyes, you can experience phosphenes[17]. When closing your eyes in a well-lit room or outdoors under sunlight, you can notice visual effects due to the presence of residual light. Additionally, using a blindfold or sleep mask against your closed eyelids may enhance the likelihood of perceiving various colours.[18] In an article titled 'One in four people fail to perceive phosphenes during early visual cortex transcranial magnetic stimulation'[19] by According to Phivos Phylactou, Artemis Traikapi, Nikos Konstantinou, it is clear from its titled that 75% of people experience this phenomenon, so the majority of people can experience phosphenes. I frequently see faces behind my eyelids, but it is because of this research that I started to understand them and recognize them as pareidolias.

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15 Turner, "Names Called in Woods", n.p.

16 Merriam-Webster dictionary defines phosphenes as *"an impression of light that occurs without light entering the eye and is usually caused by stimulation of the retina (as by pressure on the eyeball when the lid is closed) or by excitation of neurons in the visual system (as by transcranial magnetic stimulation)"*.

17 Cherney, "Closed-Eye Hallucinations", n.p.

18 Cherney, "Closed-Eye Hallucinations", n.p.

19 Phivos, Traikapi, and Konstantinou, "Fail to Perceive Phosphenes", 23.

Pareidolia Biases

Having recorded over 250 pareidolias myself for this master's research, it's also important to consider if there are any pre-existing biases that impact/explain why I'm seeing what I see. In a 2021 publication by Susan G. Wardle, Sanika Paranjape, Jessica Taubert, and Chris I. Baker called *'Illusory faces are more likely to be perceived as male than female*', as indicated in the title, the researchers explain how social perceptions exist including age, emotional expression, and gender, which can manifest themselves into our pareidolic perceptions.[20] The study shows that we are more likely to interpret pareidolias as male, explaining that female faces usually require additional features beyond just facial detection. Even though the participants were offered a gender-neutral option, there was still a bias to perceive pareidolias as male over female/neutral. They also didn't find any links between the participant's gender and the gender they attributed to the pareidolias, meaning the bias was shared by both sexes and was a ubiquitous result amongst everyone. The report speculates on the possibility of our being more prone to associating male gender to pareidolias because of conceptual/linguistic origin as a result of men being the default gender in social communication. There is also a possibility that males are the default gender for a face, as for some reasons, we require additional specific traits such as eyelashes, long hair, trimmed eyebrows, etc. for them to be considered female. The study raises questions about the linkage between how social norms and biases can impact visual perceptions. What was interesting was that specific emotions participants saw in the pareidolias also had a correlation to gender—happy faces were more likely to be identified as neutral/female pareidolias, and ones that portrayed anger and disgust were more likely to be seen as male. This may be due to existing reports of associations and biases that exist on gender and emotion—men are viewed as angrier, and women as happier. [21]

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[20] Wardle et al.,"Illusory Faces", 1.

[21] Wardle et al.,"Illusory Faces", 4.

The research conducted on gender biases that exist when looking at pareidolias was interesting and in support of this area of research I also focused on whether there were any cultural biases present in the recognition of pareidolia. While there wasn't much research done on this topic, a publishing titled, *"Do subtle cultural differences sculpt face pareidolia?*" investigated if pareidolia is affected by subtle cultural differences—comparing participants from Northern Italy and the Southwest of Germany.[22] Researchers Valentina, Alexander, Andreas and Marina concluded that subtle cultural differences/ backgrounds didn't sculpt face pareidolia, however like the other study, females were found to be more face-sensitive than their male peers, and had greater face response rates.[23]

Pareidolia Link to Creativity

Even though I am looking more towards investigating how pareidolia can be used as a tool for navigating mental health, I think it's important to include pre-existing medical/scientific research done on pareidolias impacts, one being their impact on creativity. While the discovery of new pareidolias are seemingly entirely organic, we can also consciously cultivate these habits of mind, and in fact use pareidolias to enhance creativity. In a study done by Xiaofei Wu, Xiaojing Gu, Hao Zhang on *The Facilitative Effects of Ambiguous Figures on Creative Solution in 2016*[24], the researchers found that highly creative individuals demonstrate a quicker and more frequent recognition of pareidolias. In a similar study done by Antoine Pepin, Yan Harel and Jordan O'Byrne titled 'Processing visual ambiguity in fractal patterns: Pareidolia as a sign of creativity' in 2022 [25], it is suggested that prior exposure to pareidolias greatly enhanced the participants' performance regarding fluency, flexibility, and originality compared to those with no exposure. In this research, they make a space to articulate how studies done on

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[22] Romagnano et al., "Cultural Differences Sculpt Face Pareidolia", 1.

[23] Romagnano et al., "Cultural Differences Sculpt Face Pareidolia", 1.

[24] Wu, Gu, and Zhang, "Effects of Ambiguous Figures on Creative Solution", 44.

[25] Pepin et al., "*Processing Visual Ambiguity", 3*.

measuring creativity often focus heavily on how people **think** differently, however they wanted to look at how highly creative people **see** differently.[26] They highlight how often too much emphasis is placed on the conceptual/coming up with ideas phase but explain how the creative process starts way before that. In their study, they also reference Flowers and Garbin's research[27], who suggest that creative people are more apt to connecting unrelated elements, and how they in fact process external sensory stimuli differently. Not only did they discover this correlation, they also discussed how pareidolias actually allow opportunities which could possibly result in 'conceptual expansion'—explaining that ambiguity can serve as a catalyst for creative thinking and the generation of new concepts or understandings.[28]

Journalist Annie Murphy Paul similarly touches upon this, explaining that creative people are able to spend a longer time in the ambiguity and indeterminacy, as this open space allows for us to "*draw out material from inside of us*"[29]. She suggests that we supply the missing parts of the puzzle ourselves (projected from our unconscious), which we can then creatively and physically manipulate/work with. In her research, Annie discusses how actively searching, contemplating, and using pareidolias, even in your own work, can all enhance creativity. In *The Extended Mind: Thinking outside the brain* [30], she uses the example of renowned architect, Frank Gehry, and cites that 80% of his newer ideas have come from the reinterpretation of his older pre-existing drawings. Gehry's creative process, as outlined in the book, highlights the importance of revisiting and reinterpreting older drawings as a source of innovation, suggesting that Gehry's ability to reimagine and repurpose elements from his past designs plays a central

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[26] Pepin et al., "Processing Visual Ambiguity*", 3*.

[27] Flowers and Garbin. "*Creativity and Perception*", 147.

[28] Flowers and Garbin. "*Creativity and Perception*", 148.

[29] Paul, "Do You Experience Pareidolia?", n.p.

[30] Paul, "*The extended mind*", 114.

role in the evolution of his architectural vision. Annie has demonstrated that the discovery of new patterns is everlasting, overlapping and how inspiration can be found even beneath your own feet.[31]

Pareidolia Artists

There are various artists who have explored and employed pareidolias within their artistic practices, many of whom have similar techniques and processes to my own. Many prominent artists like Paul Klee and Salvador Dalí have both shared their experiences with finding pareidolias, both recalling having encountered them as children—Klee saw faces in his uncle's restaurant marble tables, and Dalí would find them in the stained plaster while gazing at the ceiling of his classroom.[32]



Figure 1: Salvador Dalí, *Visage paranoïaque (Paranoiac Face)*, 1935, 18.5 x 22.5 cm

[31] Paul, "Seeing Things That Aren't There", n.p.

[32] Paul, "Seeing Things That Aren't There", n.p.

In Leonardo Da Vinci's notebook, the artist actually touches upon pareidolias, suggesting that you can actively seek them out through the process of intentional looking. Da Vinci's excerpt reads:

> *"I cannot forbear to mention among these precepts a new device for study which, although it may seem but trivial and almost ludicrous, is nevertheless extremely useful in arousing the mind to various inventions. And this is, when you look at a wall spotted with stains, or with a mixture of stones, if you have to devise some scene, you may discover a resemblance to various landscapes, beautified with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys and hills in varied arrangement; or again you may see battles and figures in action; or strange faces and costumes, and an endless variety of objects, which you could reduce to complete and well drawn forms. And these appear on such walls confusedly, like the sound of bells in whose jangle you may find any name or word you choose to imagine. Do not despise my opinion, when I remind you that it should not be hard for you to stop sometimes and look into the stains of walls, or the ashes of a fire, or clouds, or mud or like places, in which, if you consider them well, you may find really marvelous ideas. The mind of the painter is stimulated to new discoveries, the composition of battles of animals and men, various compositions of landscapes and monstrous things, such as devils and similar things, which may bring you honor, because by indistinct things the mind is stimulated to new inventions"*[33]

Da Vinci claims pareidolia to be "a new device for study" to "arouse the mind" in which you would find "what you choose to imagine"[34]. The notion of 'choosing' to see sparked my interest. I questioned if pareidolias are something that just arose from thin air and seen by chance due to our evolutionary visual system adapting. Da Vinci insinuated that pareidolia was in fact a device, a choice to see, and a way to arouse the mind. This suggests that while there is undoubtedly a large aspect of chance

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[33] Rawlins and Richter, "Selections of Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci", 95.

[34] Rawlins and Richter, "Selections of Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci", 95.

at play, there is also a strong element of intentionality and conscious looking. For Da Vinci, this was a crucial element to his practice, even making his motto “Super Vedere”, meaning “knowing how to see.”[35] In some of his works, hidden faces are integrated within rocks, plants, and landscapes. Moreover, in certain paintings, groups of figures or elements transform into a larger portrait when viewed from different angles. [36] A great example of this is ‘Virgin and Child with St Anne and St John the Baptist (The Burlington House Cartoon), charcoal heightened with white chalk on paper, mounted on canvas. At first glance, one can instinctually see the image as two adult figures alongside two children, however you can notice an obscure face under the child’s arm, and if rotated ninety degrees, there appears to be another face. Da Vinci alludes to how intentional representation (what you initially see) can coexist with pareidolias, specifically in his artwork, and how this can contribute to new modes of interaction.[37]



Figure 2: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* and Saint John the Baptist, c. 1499–1500 or c. 1506–1508, 141.5 cm × 104.6 cm, charcoal, black and white chalk on tinted paper mounted on canvas, Photo by National Gallery London. The original photo is on the left, and on the right I drew on top of the image to showcase the pareidolia.

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[35] Thinkerarium, “Leonardo Da Vinci”, n.p.

[36] Marcblog1, “Da Vinci and Pareidolia”, n.p.

[37] Pepin et al., "Processing Visual Ambiguity*”, 17*.

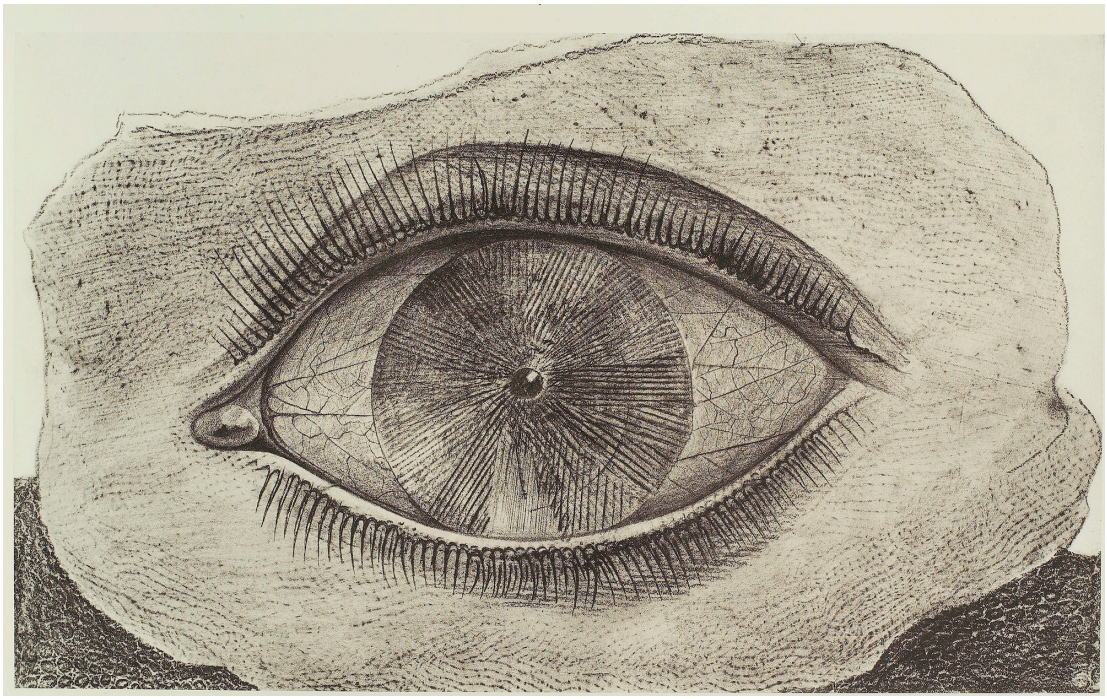

Figure 3: Max Ernst. *Wheel of Light*. Collotype, after frottage, printed in black. 10 1/2 x 17 inches. From "Histoire Naturelle" Paris, 1926. Plate 29. Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division, New York Public Library. The New York Public Library / Art Resource, NY © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Max Ernst is another example of an artist who implements elements of pareidolia in his artworks. Ernst is a Dada and Surrealist painter, sculptor, and printmaker and is known for invention and coining the term 'frottage'—a technique he created in 1925 where you place paper over a textured material (such as wood grain, bark, leaves) and rub it with a pencil or crayon to achieve various patterns and effects.[38] This technique is fascinating because the spontaneous and uncontrollable patterns which emerge allow him to "*be a spectator at the birth*"[39] of all his works—highlighting the beauty of chance and conscious collaboration. Soon after, Ernst created 'grottage' in 1927, which employs a similar technique, however it involves placing these textured objects underneath a canvas that is covered in (wet) paint, and scraping

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[38] Friedman, "Max Ernst", n.p.

[39] Ernst, "Beyond painting", 9.

the cavas to reveal a pattern.[40] By applying pressure to the canvas over the textured objects, he uses a palette knife to scrape off layers of paint in order to relay a 'negative' image of the texture onto the canvas. The patterns created by his technique inspired strange, surreal and hallucinatory landscapes, animals and objects.[41]

An artist who employs a similar method of discovery and engaging with pareidolias is Vorja Sanchez. Sanchez is an artist that lives in Barcelona, Spain and creates fantastical creatures based off organic designs that he gathers directly from the forest.[42] A portion of Sanchez' practice involves drawing and illustration, and in his recent print titled 'Ancient Pottery', inspired by ancient ceramics, he transforms and illustrates them into animals and mythological beings.[43] His work is captivating because each ceramic distinctly portrays a creature, with its form and body seamlessly integrated into the ceramic itself, prompting speculation about whether the ceramic inspired the creature or vice versa. It reminds me of when I see everyday utensils or ceramics, and they unintentionally look like the body of a creature. I first came across Sanchez work in his series titled 'Interventions[44]', where he photographed clouds in high altitude mountains and then digitally drew over those photos to bring the clouds to life. Sanchez draws over the images with a fine digital brush, and without editing or overly manipulating the photograph, he adds features such as eyes, hands and fingers in order to personify the clouds. Sanchez presents these works as a series of photographs, allowing a collaboration between his illustrations and nature. Sanchez has said, "*I really enjoy looking at the creature in front of me. There are cases in which it is very clear when its shape is perfectly defined and I just have to finish giving it life with a few lines. The magic is in*

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[40] Berger, "Collage, Frottage, Grattage", n.p.

[41] MoMa, "The Fugitive from Natural History", n.p.

[42] Myartisreal "Clouds Turn into Otherworldly Creatures", n.p.

[43] Mothes "Vorja Sánchez Ancient Pottery", n.p.

[44] Myartisreal "Clouds Turn into Otherworldly Creatures", n.p.

nature, not in the drawings!"[45] He also mentions how the cloud creatures seem to follow him throughout his hikes, even describes them as 'chasing' him. I really resonated with this feeling of being followed by the creatures themselves as opposed to you following/discovering them, as attributing this agency to them somewhat brings the creatures to life.



Figure 4: Vorja, Sanchez. *Time to Connect,* 2020. Photo by Vorja Sanchez

[45] Myartisreal "Clouds Turn into Otherworldly Creatures", n.p.

Another artist whose practice is not only is inspired by nature, but actually works in nature is Andy Goldsworthy. Born in 1956, Andy is a British sculptor and photographer who creates site specific artworks using found natural materials and objects.[46] Having grown up in West Yorkshire and working on a farm at a young age, Andy has developed a heightened awareness and appreciation of his surroundings, which allowed him to find beauty in the transient and temporary nature of landscapes.[47] While Andy's sculptures and artworks are temporary and exist only within natural sights, a large portion of his practice involves photographing the sites—before, during, and after the creation of his artwork. Andy describes nature as being a 'co-author' of his work, highlighting how his works emerge as a collaborative process with nature.[48] Naomi Blumberg wrote about Goldworthy in Arts and Culture for Encyclopaedia Britannica, and said that he "*uncovers the essence of his materials and determines what they are capable of…a process that requires patience and flexibility (when sculpting with ice, for example, he would have to wait for the temperature to drop low enough)*"[49] What appeals to me about Andy's method is his refusal to merely record the organic form through tracing or photography and then replicate it elsewhere. Andy finds inspiration in nature, and then uses that same site he found inspiration in, to transform it with other local natural objects. This approach feels very authentic, as he honours the forms that inspire him by seamlessly integrating them into their natural context, in the same place that he found them.

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[46] Artnet, "Andy Goldsworthy", n.p.

[47] Artnet, "Andy Goldsworthy", n.p.

[48] Artnet, "Andy Goldsworthy", n.p.

[49] Blumberg,"Andy Goldsworthy", n.p.



Figure 5: Andy Goldsworthy, *Windfallen oak branches, England, 2023*. Photo by Mark Brooks



Figure 6: Andy Goldsworthy, *Last year's nettle stalks, Dumfriesshire, May 1, 2024*. Photo by Andy Goldsworthy

Pareidolia in Architecture

A 2022 study called "*Pareidolia in a Built Environment as a Complex Phenomenological Ambiguous Stimuli" in 2022* investigated pareidolias regarding the architectural design of houses and facades. The purpose of this study was to determine people's sensitivity and reactions towards pareidolia in the built environment, specifically at 6am, 12pm, and 2am [50]. Chen, Liangcheng, Yiyi, Lincoln and Carry found that people were more likely to identify pareidolias in built environments in the early morning and midnight and suggested that this had to do with fatigue/exhaustion. People also reacted to seeing pareidolia at different times of the day—attributing characteristics like "funny" to pareidolias perceived in the morning vs experiencing more fearful and "scary" emotions towards the pareidolia at night. Other conclusions drawn from the study included the inference that smokers, drinkers, and long-term medicine users are more sensitive to pareidolian images in the built environment. They also determined that respondents sensitivity to identifying faces increased with age in the 11–40 age group and were more likely to have pareidolia than those over 40. Like the other studies, they also found females were more able to identify pareidolias, and even referenced a study done by Pavlova on how females are more likely to detect faces in arrangements of food on a plate.[51]

Reflecting on Chen, Liangcheng, Yiyi, Lincoln and Carry's study and being woman and experiencing constant exhaustion and fatigue myself, I guess I am the perfect candidate for experiencing pareidolias in the built environment. It's interesting to me however that I have never been fearful or scared of pareidolias, whether it be at night or during the day, I usually see them as little friends, even if they look a bit feisty. After having reflected though, I believe my experience is much different from people perceiving pareidolias in the built environment outside at night. Being outdoors in the darkness is scary enough, and seeing faces alongside this is probably the cherry on top to this already existing fearful/

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[50] Wang et al., "Pareidolia in a Built Environment", 1.

[51] Pavlova, Scheffler, and Sokolov, "Gender Differences", 6.

uncomfortable state. Me however, even at nighttime, I am in the comfort and safety of my own home and in my shower, where I have access to bright lights.

Epilepsy and Pareidolia

While research has explored epilepsy and visual hallucinations, there has been limited investigation directly linking epilepsy with pareidolia. In a 2017 study done by Masahiko Takaya, Masahiko Atsumi, Kazunari Ishii, and Osamu Shirakawa titled "*Pareidolic Illusions of a patient with suspected late-onset, sleep related epilepsy*", researchers studied the case of a 68-year-old woman who was experiencing pareidolias at night time.[52] They mention that while visual hallucinations often occur in epilepsy, they are usually not 'concrete', meaning they are usually not vivid and clear visual perceptions (such as pareidolias). In the study they began by referencing the 'face version of the noise pareidolia test (FVNPT)', test which evokes visual hallucination-like illusions.[53] This test is commonly employed in cases of dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB) because visual hallucinations are a prominent feature of this condition. It plays a crucial role in distinguishing DLB from other types of dementia and in predicting treatment outcomes.[54] Their study notes the absence of previous reports on FVNPT results in epilepsy patients, however their study presents a case of a patient with suspected late-onset, sleep-related epilepsy exhibiting pareidolic illusions as revealed by FVNPT.[55] The elderly patient who participated in the study, claimed that over the past year she often vividly saw human faces on her ceiling while she was lying awake trying to fall asleep and was fully aware that she was having visual hallucinations. Her husband noticed that she was sleep talking and displaying abnormal behaviours during her sleep, and she had no significant past medical history that would explain what she was going through. After a series of

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[52] Takaya et al.,"Pareidolic Illusions Sleep Epilepsy", 495.

[53] Takaya et al.,"Pareidolic Illusions Sleep Epilepsy", 495.

[54] Mamiya et al., "The Pareidolia Test", 2.

[55] Takaya et al.,"Pareidolic Illusions Sleep Epilepsy", 495.

neuropsychological tests, they diagnosed her with suspected late onset, sleep related epilepsy. They were however unable to fully conclude that she had this form of epilepsy over non-REM sleep parasomnia.[56]

According to EyeWiki, Maxwell, Andrew, and Aroucha say that during seizures, individuals may experience auras, muscle jerking, automatisms, altered consciousness, and convulsions.[57] They list some characteristic ophthalmologic (relating to the eye) signs of a seizure which may include visual hallucinations, illusions, visual field loss, eye deviation, nystagmus, eyelid automatism, and myoclonia.[58] It is important to note the difference between complex visual illusions vs hallunications. In 'Atlas of Epilepsies', Panayiotopoulos highlights that "*complex epileptic visual phenomena include visual illusions (mistaking one object for another) and hallucinations (seeing objects or scenes that are not there)*."[59] EyeWiki specifically mention how visual hallucinations can range from shapes, colors, and strange patterns to more complex hallucinations such as people, animals or scenes.[60] They highlight how these symptoms can be a result of occipital lobe seizures, and the complexity of hallucinations can be attributed to ictal spread to the temporal lobes. The occipital lobes, located at the rear of the head, manage visual perception, encompassing color, shape, and motion[61], so seizures originating there can lead to visual symptoms. When the seizure spreads to the temporal lobes, a part of your brain that involves memories, language, the processing of emotions, and complex perceptions[62], it can intensify and diversify the nature of the hallucinations experienced by the individual.[63]

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[56] Takaya et al.,"Pareidolic Illusions Sleep Epilepsy", 496.

[57] Maxwell, Lee, and Vickers, "Ophthalmologic Manifestations of Epilepsy", n.p.

[58] Maxwell, Lee, and Vickers, "Ophthalmologic Manifestations of Epilepsy", n.p.

[59] Jobst and Panayiotopoulos. *"Focal Seizures with Visual Hallucinations", 457.*

[60] Maxwell, Lee, and Vickers, "Ophthalmologic Manifestations of Epilepsy", n.p.

[61] Queensland Health, "Brain Map", n.p.

[62] Cleveland Clinic, "Temporal Lobe", n.p.

[63] Maxwell, Lee, and Vickers, "Ophthalmologic Manifestations of Epilepsy", n.p.

In a study by Brent Elliott, Eileen Joyce, and Simon Shorvon titled *"Delusions, illusions and hallucinations in epilepsy: 1. Elementary phenomena"*, the researchers share how occipital seizures can lead to simple illusions—where objects may appear to change in size (macropsia and micropsia), shape (metamorphopsia), or lose colour (achromatopsia).[64] They identify that delusions, illusions, and hallucinations in epilepsy stem from abnormal spikes or waves of activity in specific brain areas or networks.[65] They describe how the the occipito-temporal cortex makes the hallucinations more complex and vivid in color.[66] They shared a study done by Palmini et al. (1993), who investigated 8 patients who experienced seizures—unclear whether originating occipital or temporal lobes—with depth electrodes.[67] One experienced sudden vision loss as the aura, another saw colours of separate objects blurring together, and another had fully blurred vision. While it is clear that people with epilepsy experience visual illusions as well as hallucinations—visual, auditory, olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and somatic (touch)[68]—not much research has been performed on epilepsy and pareidolia in specific.

In this chapter, I have presented current literature on different types of pareidolias, pareidolia biases, pareidolias link to creativity, pareidolia in architecture, and pareidolias regarding epilepsy. In the following chapter, I will describe my research methodologies and studio-based research.

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64 Elliott, Joyce, and Shorvon. "Delusions, Illusions and Hallucinations in Epilepsy", 169.

65 Elliott, Joyce, and Shorvon. "Delusions, Illusions and Hallucinations in Epilepsy", 164.

66 Elliott, Joyce, and Shorvon. "Delusions, Illusions and Hallucinations in Epilepsy", 169.

67 Palmini et al., "Occipitotemporal Epilepsies", 84.

68 Elliott, Joyce, and Shorvon. "Delusions, Illusions and Hallucinations in Epilepsy", 168-169.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

I would describe my research as emergent, studio-based and practice led. I am using my artworks to inform my research, while simultaneously using my research to inform my artworks. Through this method of research creation, I am gathering knowledge through art and vice versa, facilitating the adaptation of new ideas and unanticipated findings, which then accumulates into a cohesive and conjoined body of research. In publishing by Janinka Greenwood titled "Arts-Based Research", the researcher suggests that art-based research *"encompasses a range of research approaches and strategies that utilize one or more of the arts in investigation. Such approaches have evolved from understandings that life and experiences of the world are multifaceted, and that art offers ways of knowing the world that involve sensory perceptions and emotion as well as intellectual responses."*[69] In the study "The use of arts-based methodologies and methods with young people with complex psychosocial needs: A systematic narrative review"[70], researchers Sally, Michael, Jonathan, Jacqueline, Natasha and Patricia describe how arts-based research uses storytelling, visuals, sound, and hands-on activities, to help uncover potentially hidden knowledge, as participants interpret their experiences in ways that go beyond just talking or writing. I find that my studio research typically follows these steps: Crisis/traumatic event, use pareidolia to cope, make art from pareidolia to try and understand, research, understand, make art again, and then the cycle repeats itself. In this chapter, I describe memory and storytelling, groundedess and intuition as research methodologies, and explain my methods in terms of material and scale.

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[69] Greenwood, "Arts-Based Research", 1.

[70] Nathan, "Arts-based Methodologies", 796.

Memory and Storytelling

After recognizing and using pareidolias as coping and navigational tool for my own mental/ physical health, I discovered an artist that utilized pareidolias in a similar way. Pat Bernstein resides in Baltimore, Maryland, and describes herself as a nature pareidolia expert, and collects photographs of her pareidolia sightings while going on nature walks.[71] Upon her first hike in nature after undergoing an invasive medical procedure, she was greeted by a pareidolia. Her description of this encounter, using words like 'greeting' and 'welcomed' by the trees really moved me, because she is showing that these creatures/objects are alive and really can speak to us.

> *"After months of recovery, I passed the tree set by the entry to a nearby trail and was literally frozen in front of it. Tears streamed from my eyes. To me, that tree was putting its arms out and welcoming me back. Not 10 feet past there was a root wrapped around the base of another tree that, for me, became a snake pointing towards the direction of the trail. For the first time, I began to recognize alternative images that nature creates on trees, rocks, and mud piles and photographed them. That became my passion for the next nine years."*[72]

Through Pat's own excursions and seemingly therapeutic experiences with pareidolias as a tool for coping with her mental health and medical under goings, she began opening up her practice to teach and guide others to experience it too, undergoing her 'Blink To See' initiative[73]. She set out some guidelines for how to experience pareidolia: including using your five senses to enhance perception, pressing pause and allowing our minds freely roam around, saying all of which can be enhanced in

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[71] Nature Sacred Guide, "Vimeo: *Blink To See", n.p.*

[72] Falligant, "Possibilities of Perception", n.p.

[73] Berstein, "Blink to See", n.p.

nature.[74] She offers guided tours to the public in order to assist in experiencing pareidolia, which she claims provoke imagination, stimulate creative thinking, and invites intergenerational collaboration.

In a video introducing her practice, Pat says "*When I go into the woods and I see something that looks like a face or a formation, something happens. It's like I get excited, my imagination sparks, I'm making up stories where I imagine things that created this. There's a whole different aura that the walks get because I'm finding something that nature created*." [75] Her mention of 'making up stories' was something that I relate to, attributing all types of stories, personalities and traits to each pareidolia that I come across. As a result of most of my pareidolias being found at home, in the same environment I'm in all day, I am able to re-connect with already discovered pareidolias over and over again, and repeating and expanding their stories each time I came across them. On her website she also lists 'side effects' to experiencing pareidolias including: great means for physical exercise, builds confidence, triggers associate memories, encourages creative writing, stimulant for all ages, medical benefits, satisfaction in identifying images, and inspires inventive activities.[76]

After reading this list, 'triggers associate memories' has really stuck out to me because of my own relationship to memory, and how my memories have been/are impacted by epilepsy and anti-seizure medications. Pat's mentioning of stories associated with pareidolias and how they can impact and trigger associative memories, have really opened my eyes and has allowed me to delve into a new area of research. Epilepsy and anti-seizure medications are recognized for affecting memory and concentration. In my case, the abnormality in my frontal lobe exacerbates this impact, as the frontal lobe plays a crucial role in memory formation and cognitive processes such as categorization and discrimination between

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[74] Berstein, "Blink to See", n.p.

[75] Nature Sacred Guide, "Vimeo: *Blink To See"*, n.p.

[76] Berstein, "Blink to See", n.p.

items.[77]. The Epilepsy Society explains that "*abnormalities in the temporal or frontal lobes of the brain are the most common reason for memory problems in people with epilepsy, and may make it difficult to recall events from the past*."[78] Not only does my epilepsy impact my memory, associative memories can also be negatively impacted by depression and stress.[79] While my epilepsy has an impact on my memory, there are also ways to improve associate memories including "*practicing the retrieval of associations (which helps strengthen synaptic connections in the brain and enhances their ability to be activated more quickly)*"[80]. They suggest that in order to improve this type of memory, creating stories with many associations, as well using imagery and memory triggering devices (such as the pareidolias around my house) are all good ways to strengthen it.

By looking at these creatures and triggering my associative memories, I am simultaneously using pareidolias as a means to mentally cope with seizures (especially during aura seizures), while also physically strengthening my associative memories, which are impacted by the seizures. Pat's list of beneficial side effects sparked a new sense of appreciation for my relationship to pareidolias, especially as a result of their positive effects on memory, which is something that I struggle with.

Groundedness

An important component of my process that relates to my feelings of groundedness, is feelings of nostalgia. Sitting on the ground while making art is something that I used to do ever since I was a kid and was something that I continue to do even up to this day. In an article by Elizabeth Marlin titled "The Life-

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[77] Villines, "Frontal Lobe", n.p.

[78] Baxendale, "Epilepsy May Affect Memory", n.p.

[79] BetterHelp, "An Overview of Associative Memory", n.p.

[80] Cuncic, "What Is Associative Memory", n.p.

Changing Magic of Sitting on the Floor"[81], she mentions how sitting on the floor and being close to the ground can help to feel more connected to your environment, allows for better blood circulation (in comparison to sitting on chairs), and also strengthens and stabilizes your core muscles. These physical benefits also allow me to work for prolonged periods of time due to the physical comfort I feel while sitting on the floor, which is an important part of my process, because I enjoy working for long periods of time and getting lost in my own creations. I feel as though breaks sometimes interfere with my process, and allowing myself to work for a long period of time lets me really decompress. I can describe the feeling like 'runners high'. After a certain point during a long run, your body releases endorphins you enter this headspace of deep relaxation and euphoria[82], and it feels very similar to working on my art for a long time. Regardless of its numerous benefits, sitting on the ground is a very important aspect of my methodology because in simple terms, it makes me feel like a kid again. When I was a kid, I did not have any artistic responsibilities or due dates, I didn't have any art projects that I needed to submit for school, I simply created out of pure enjoyment and curiosity. During this time I felt so free and felt no boundaries of my creations, and always remember feeling very 'locked in' and not wanting to take breaks until it was over, something I still do. Even though I can't go back to being that age, go back to that specific environment, I feel as though sitting on the ground emulates my childhood environment, and evokes a strong sense of nostalgia because of it. Sitting on the ground while working on art, no matter where I am, always grounds me back to my childhood, triggers memories of comfort and helps unleash my free-spirited and explorative mindset. Nostalgia isn't only encapsulated through sitting on the ground, but also through the materiality. While I have created all sorts of art on the floor throughout my life—drawings, paintings, collages, mixed media, etc—I distinctly remember being the most fulfilled by my stuffed animals and 'soft' projects. I loved pinning up my works on the wall, or the bulletin board of my room, but making pieces out of textiles and fabric was always my favourite. Art that was pinned up always felt

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[81] Marglin, "Benefits of sitting on the floor", n.p.

[82] Linden, "Runner's High", n.p.

complete and like I had nothing else to add or any other way to interact with it besides looking, but stuffed animals allowed me to play with them and continue immersing my imagination and creativity even after I was done sewing. I would play with them, build storylines for them, sleep with them, make clothes, outfits and accessories for them, and always appreciated the 'after' experience I had once finishing sewing them. I created the toys with an enjoyment for the process, but mainly for the enjoyment I would feel once they were complete and I could play with them.

Intuition

A large portion of my research/creation methodology revolves around intuition and allowing the pareidolia to speak for themselves. In a paper titled "A Philosophical Perspective on Intuition as a Method within Artistic Process", researchers Felix, Tania and Andreia write "*intuition is commonly understood as knowledge acquired directly, immediately, self-referentially, non-conceptually, without the intercession of the intellect, unmediated by academic or scientific methodologies, or formal, disciplined, logical discourse*."[83] They explain intuition as a method rather than an outcome, and suggest that it happens as a result of the movement of thought that occurs in a particular way.[84] A lot of my processes are unplanned, unexpected and arise in a seemingly organic way. As an example: in my yarn stitched on canvas piece with the dozens of pareidolias, I would sift through my camera roll and a creature would stick out to me so I would stitch it on the canvas without drawing, just letting my hands organically follow the image, even if they got kind of distorted. I would then sift through more images, and another one would stick out to me and seem to mesh well with the other pareidolia that were already stitched on the canvas. While stitching on these creatures and allowing them to form an organic, cohesive body of bodies, I would consider the element of balance, but the rest follows a natural, spontaneous and intuitive methodology.

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[83] Palazuelos, Fonseca, and Oliveira, "Intuition as a Method", 1.

[84] Palazuelos, Fonseca, and Oliveira, "Intuition as a Method", 6.

In all aspects, including the selection of the materials to the actual assembling process, this 'organic' methodology felt fitting for multiple reasons:

1) I felt as though it paid ode to the initial way in which the pareidolia in organic materials appeared to me. The organic shapes and forms seem to come to my attention in a natural, unplanned way, and by allowing them to materialize in this way as well, felt like I am continuing the natural cycle, and paying homage to how I got them in the first place. These pareidolias, acting as teachers and possessing creative agency, guide my artistic process, enriching my connection to the natural world. I think it's important to note the role of nature itself in supporting my 'organic' methodology. I find that my approach is very similar to Andy's in the sense that he is 'collaborating with nature'. It's as if nature gifts you with an initial spark—a random creature or idea discovered in an organic shape. The collaborative aspect comes into play when you have to find ways to bring that spark or discovery to life, transforming it while preserving its original essence. While there's an element of chance in encountering these creatures and moments, (such as finding/experiencing a pareidolia), the artist is the one who transforms these interactions and fleeting moments into tangible, living, breathing beings. One artist who allows pareidolias to manifest in unplanned and natural ways and enriches their connection to the natural world is Max Ernst. As previously discussed, Max uses frontage as a technique in his work, and is fascinating because the spontaneous and uncontrollable patterns which emerge allow him to "*be a spectator at the birth*"[85] of all his works—highlighting the beauty of chance and conscious collaboration. My process differs from Max in the sense that he transfers organic shapes to canvas, hoping to find inspiration afterwards, whereas I gather and record pre-existing pareidolias and record what my brain already sees. In a sense mine and Max's processes are inverse to each other, yet both still heavily rely on chance and

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[85] Ernst, "Beyond painting", 9.

intuition. Max intuitively selects materials and patterns in hopes that textures will later inspire his already materialized artwork, however for me, the element of chance arises at the initial stage of discovering the pareidolias in their natural environment and I later intuitively figure out how to materialize them.

2) This intuitive and organic methodology was also very important for navigating my mental health, just as the process for searching pareidolia was in the first place. Allowing myself to create with no guidelines, explore with no limits, and allowing my body and brain to ride the wave of the process felt very grounding and a release of stress. I feel as though sometimes having too harsh/ rigid of a plan to follow gives me a lot of anxiety, as there is a certain pressure to finish the project exactly as intended and leaves a lot of room for error.

Another element of my 'organic' and intuitive methodology in creating my works involves taking inspiration from older projects and transforming them into new ideas. Similarly to what Annie Murphy Paul was saying earlier about the Frank Gehry finding 80% of his newer ideas came from the reinterpretation of his older pre-existing drawings[86], I feel as though I work in this manner as well, constantly getting inspiration and reinterpreting older ideas. My process almost seems like a giant snowball, constantly growing and evolving as a result of previous works, with no anchored/ pre-determined direction.

Materials

The materials I employ in my artworks are notably unique and hold considerable significance for me. Denim/jeans stands out as one of my key materials, playing a crucial role in an intuitive process that

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[86] Paul, "Seeing Things That Aren't There", n.p.

threads through the majority of my creations. I source all of the denim that I work with in thrift stores, and while I'm sorting through the jeans section, I consider their textures, unique patterns, various washes, (and obviously price plays a factor). I intuitively select ones I think stand out to me, and ones that I think would be interesting to work with, while also considering if they would mesh well with one another. I don't go to a fabric store and have the fabric laid out in front of me, instead I sift through and interact with hundreds of jeans, one at a time, and allow them to speak to me. It feels very authentic to my process, in the way that I allow the pareidolias to speak to me, similarly to how I allow the jeans to speak to me and grab what feels right.

Scale

The scale of my artwork is an element that has become increasingly important to my work. While engaging with pareidolias, whether in my house (mostly shower), or outdoors, I feel encapsulated in their presence. Especially in my shower, pareidolias exist all around me, on all the walls around me, and I feel as though I am physically encompassed and exist 'in their world' as opposed to them existing in mine. I really want the viewers to 'get lost in a world that I created by getting lost in', and a huge aspect of my getting 'lost' in the first place is by being physically engulfed by their presence. I think scale is very important, because it intensifies the viewers experience by allowing them to also feel surrounded and encompassed by the pareidolias. I think it also encourages the viewer to really spend time intricately looking, whether that be from closer up or from farther back…all perspectives allow for unique experiences because the image's larger size encourages and fosters this interaction. Not only does the large scale make it unique for the viewer, but it also ties back in with the feeling of groundedness. During the making process, the materials are spread out all and surround me, and I feel engulfed in my own work, almost as if I am a part of it. The large nature of the pieces really intensifies this experience, because there is so much material that surrounds me and I feel as though I am completely physically enveloped and

immersed in my work. This feeling makes me feel as though I am co-existing on an even plane with the pareidolias, and this is especially comforting when engaging with the ones that have helped me get through really hard times. Being able to physically interact with the large-scale versions of these creatures that comforted me during panic attacks, seizures, or mental breakdowns, feels very healing. They have had such an impact on me in their small scale, 2-dimensional forms, and seeing them transform into big creatures which I am able to touch and feel, feels as though your imaginary friend has come to life and you can give them a hug. Their scale I think is very important, both for the viewer, but also for myself as the creator.



Figure 7: Left to right. *Denim Dreamscape*, 2023, Denim jeans and hot glue. *The Devoted Duet, 2024,* Yarn Stitched on Canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan, image to show scale of artwork.

Studio-based practice is a key component to both my artistic and research methodologies. Through this method of research creation, I am gathering knowledge through art and vice versa, facilitating the adaptation of new ideas and unanticipated findings, which then accumulates into a cohesive and conjoined body of research. Memory and storytelling, intuition and groundedness are all methodologies that facilitate and drive my art-based research practice, and allow me to create, learn and produce knowledge altogether. In my next chapter, I will introduce my studio based practice, and describe my studio practise in more detail. I describe my artistic methods, my workspace, and share how I have built relationships with pareidolias and how I materialize them.

CHAPTER 3: Studio based practice

Introduction

Throughout this chapter I will be describing my studio-based research practice, and share my processes, research and experimentation that takes place in my studio. I describe my processes for finding and recording pareidolias and reference other pareidolia artists who have done similarly. I explain my process of materializing pareidolias and share elements of my workspace as means to further highlight my processes. I describe how I have built relationships to pareidolias and follow this by sharing three distinct locations which have made significant contributions to my research and art creation. I then explain how pressure and decompressing is an important aspect in my practice, which emerges as both a method and a reflection of my studio practice.

Looking and Recording

A large portion of my practice involves the act of looking and extracting pareidolia. Before even considering how to make and transform them into tangible artworks, I must first find them, or rather they must find me. Vorja Sanchez also mentions this feeling of being followed by the creatures themselves as opposed to you following/discovering them, as attributing this agency to them somewhat brings the creatures to life. While the act of searching and finding these creatures are tools for me to cope and navigate during times of distress, the act of materializing them is equally as important to my practice and mental health. While the search and discovery of pareidolia can momentarily help me to feel grounded and offer a sense of companionship, in the back of my mind I am also constantly thinking about how these can be transformed into artworks, and that starts with taking photographs. I have a folder on my phone of all the pareidolias that I've captured both from in my house and when I go outside. The majority of the photos have been taken in my house. While I use them as an archive to look back on when making artworks, the act of photographing them in the moment gives me another layer of interaction with them. Photographing them almost feels like an acknowledgement, a moment where not only my eyes can see them, but their presence can also be acknowledged and recognized on another plane. With a few exceptions (like if I'm in crisis mode), I often draw over the image right away using the pen tool accessible phone so that I don't forget what I saw. By 'crisis mode', I am referring to when I experience a seizure or a panic attack. I always make two copies though, 1 photo I leave as the original, and then the other one is the one I draw on top of. At times, I'm unable to capture or draw the pareidolias I see due to experiencing a seizure or a panic attack too intense for me to use my phone. However when possible, I trace out exactly what I see over the photograph, yet ensuring I have the original for comparison. It's fascinating to revisit a photo I've drawn on later and compare it to the original—I often notice entirely new details or new pareidolias from the same photo, prompting me to create another copy and add further variations.

An artist that uses photography to capture pareidolias is Vorja Sanchez, who I previously introduced in my literature review. While Sanchez presents his final artworks as photographs which have been developed through digital drawing, we both use photography as a means of capturing pareidolias that we see in nature, and later go in the studio to continue shaping them and finding ways to bring them to life. Vorja utilizes the actual photographs in his work, however I mostly utilize photography and drawing on top of the photographs as a vessel to transform my work, without using them in my final renditions/art pieces. I thoroughly enjoy how Sanchez illustrates on top of his photographs, particularly in his cloud series. He gives them a very mystic, childlike, and sometimes comedic essence in his work. I feel as though my work also contains a lot of humour and cartoonish like characters, which brings me immense amounts of joy, so I can appreciate how Sanchez employs this in his own work. His photographs are very impressive to me, because not only does he capture moving objects (clouds), he also has to take very successful and clear photos of the landscape to use in his final work. Personally, this intimidates me so much as a process, because you don't get endless time to sit with the object and study it intimately before recording it, he almost has to do it in a pressured hurry. This makes me curious about all the moments he wasn't able to capture because he didn't have a camera on him, he wasn't quick enough, or the photo wasn't good enough to use. There have been some 'moving' moments I've personally captured, such as the bubbles while draining a bathtub (being swirled around), where I had to quickly grab my camera and capture it…however the photos are awful and blurry…but that doesn't really matter to my process. Vorja's method and approach is very applaudable because of the somewhat time restraining and pressured nature of his work—but he is still able to beautifully capture those moments.

Materializing Pareidolias

My first piece that I had done was the denim tapestry, where I made individual creatures inspired by pareidolias found in my bathroom shower walls. I then stitched these creatures to a larger piece of denim, and filled in the gaps between them with more denim to make the creatures more ambiguous. I

liked the idea of ‘people getting lost in a world that I created by getting lost in’ by offering the chance to the viewer to enter a similar mindset that I experienced when in the shower. I really wanted to foster an interesting dialogue between the viewer and my works, and rather than telling them what to see, they had a significant amount of autonomy in the process and would allow for interesting conversations. After this initial project, it inspired me to continue working with denim, and to create an installation piece that took individual pareidolias and morphed them into 1 larger form.



Figure 8: Foreground: Jean Guys, 2023, Cardboard and denim jeans. Background from left to right: *Tiles of Bathroom Tiles,* 2024, Paper transferred on wood squares, on egg cartons. *Denim Dreamscape*, 2023, Denim jeans and hot glue, at 205 Richmond St W OCAD gallery, photo by Tallulah Hogan

I became interested in the process of merging pareidolias together to create new forms. In one of my older projects before writing this thesis, I started experimenting with stitching yarn on canvas, and really enjoyed both the process and the results. These older pieces are hanging up in my house, and while working on my thesis, I would always see them, and remembered how much I enjoyed the process and medium. I began toying with how to integrate this technique into my new studio work and created a piece where I combined two pareidolias together using yarn. Keeping this in mind, I wanted to find a way to combine the technique of stitching yarn on canvas, while also layering and obscuring the creatures to offer the viewer to see new things. I made a new piece merging both of these concepts, stitching dozens of pareidolias layered on top of one another. I find that in my process, I often re-imagine techniques/ideas from past works which inspire and guide me for future works.

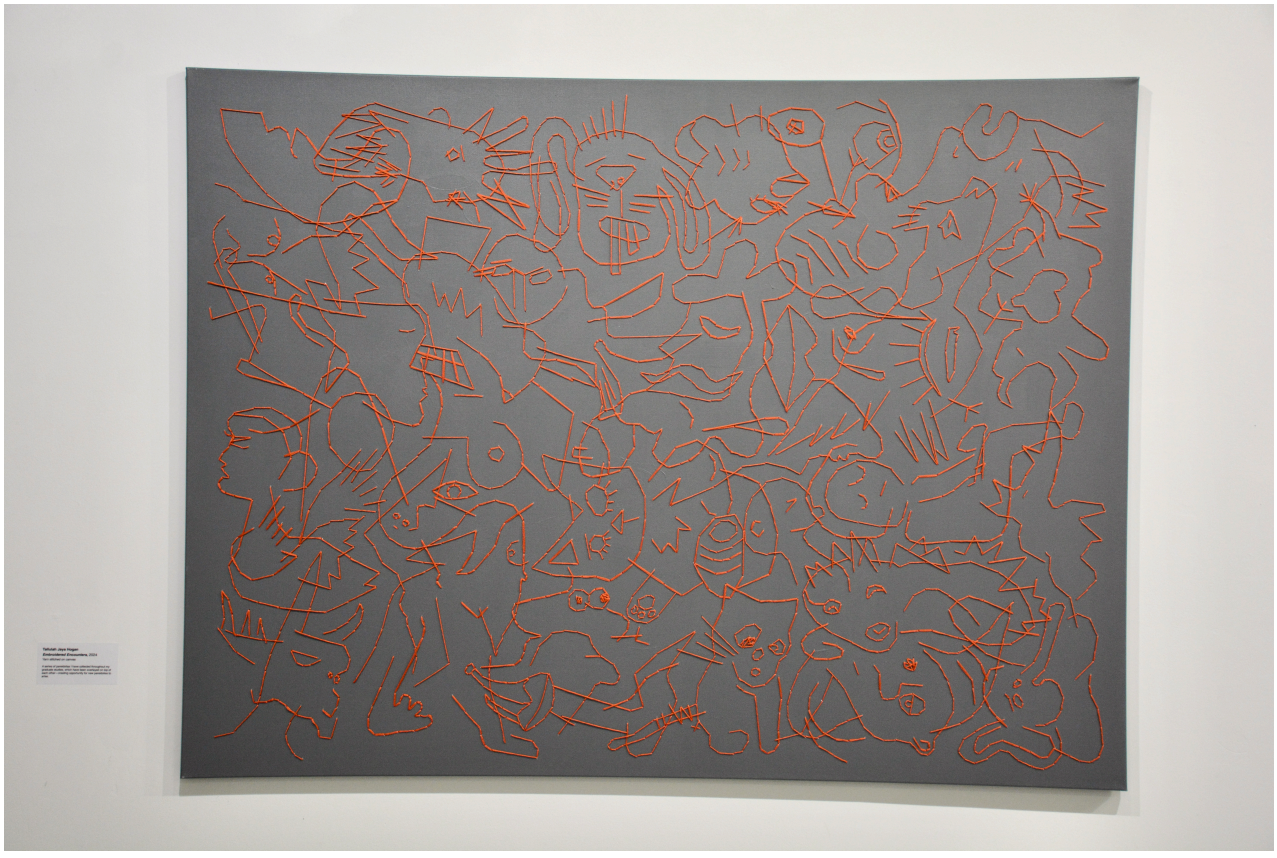

Figure 9: *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan

The element of touch is so important to me, as it draws me in to continue interacting with the toys and creating with them, as opposed to letting them collect dust on a shelf. I feel as though continuing to explore and create with textiles in my work today gives me that same feeling of fulfilment, because once they are done, I am still very inclined to touch them and interact with them. My denim tapestry alongside my denim installation both reside in my bedroom and have for quite some time now…and I still touch them every day. The textures, patterns, and element of softness are alluring to the hand, and I feel like I can continue to physically engage with them, long after they have been completed. This physical interaction that I still share with many of my works builds this unique intimacy between me and the art, as I am not only physically engaging with them throughout the making process, but long after they are done.

My Workspace

Using pareidolia to navigate my mental and physical health through the act of seeing/searching is very important, but equally as important is the way I materialize them, including descriptions of the materials and my physical way of working. Throughout my entire life, I can probably count on both hands the number of times I have worked on any artwork on a table/desk, besides during art class at school. I am always working on the floor, and the seemingly limitless area of working (besides furniture or walls that exist) feels very freeing and grounding. This has been my way of working ever since I was a kid, I remember sewing on the floor of my bedroom, mind you it was carpeted…probably not the best place to accidentally lose a needle. Working on the floor was something that I have continued throughout my life. The lack of physical boundaries feels like it translates itself into the lack of artistic boundaries and felt like I could let my imagination and my artworks run wild and take on whatever form they wanted, without being limited to space. While sitting on the actual ground is an important part of my process, the concept of groundedness in my case is twofold. I am not only sitting physically on the ground itself, but however process of creation feels very *grounding* and calming, which allows me to really integrate myself into the process. Pieces of fabric, my glue gun, the yarn, and all my materials are spread out all and

surround me, and I feel engulfed in my own work, almost as if I am a part of it. Most times I am covered in fabric, I have paint or glue on my legs, there are micro scraps of denim in my hair and in my nose (probably not the best for my physical health but it is what it is), and it feels like my art has both mentally and physically woven through me.



Figure 10: A photo of my workspace at home, 2023, photo by Tallulah Hogan

Building Relationships with Pareidolia

Over the past year or so, I have recorded roughly 250 pareidolias in my house, and I have given each one a story, a name, and a personality. For example; there is a pareidolia of a man on my floor that is smoking, that I often see while I am experiencing seizures—his eyes are open and it looks like he is staring at the smoke rising up in front his face. I'm not sure why, but I call him Steve, and I think about the veins in his eyes and how tired he looks…probably uses smoking as a vice for some problem he has in his life. His eyes also seem to be kind of bulging out of his head while smoking, and I imagine all the pent-up smoke inside creating a pressure that makes his eyes pop out. I can see the wrinkles around his lips…probably formed from all the collagen breaking down after years of smoking. This also makes me think about how drinking from straws can cause wrinkles around the lips too, so I should probably stop drinking from those or I'll end up like Steve. I think Steve is a dad, a smoking dad, whose kids constantly worry about his health, but Steve chooses smoking as a coping tool over something potentially worse. Regardless, I love Steve and he's always just chilling, smoking and decompressing while I'm right next to him usually going through a crisis.

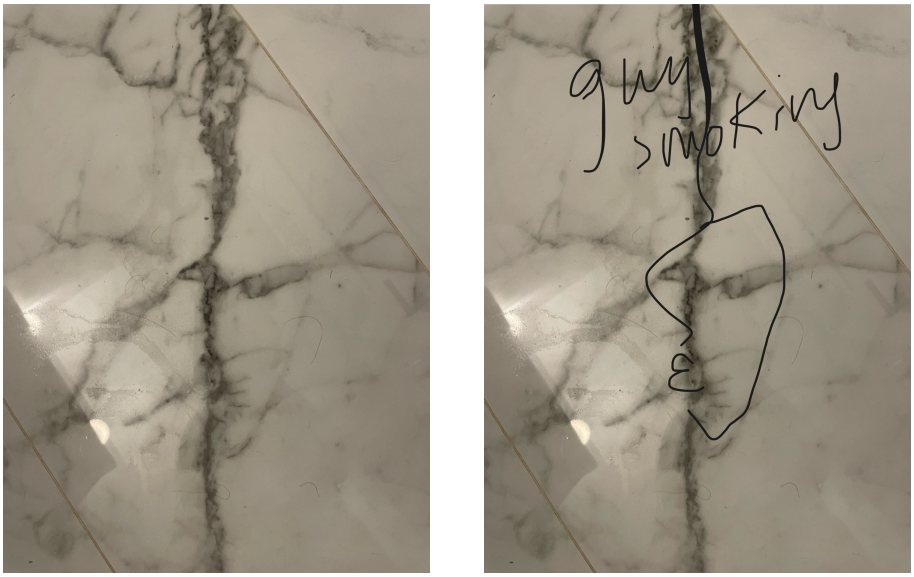

Figure 11: A photo of my bathroom floor depicting 'Steve', 2023, photo by Tallulah Hogan

In the beginning of graduate school, in the IAMD program, we took a graduate course on research methods. In this course, we were tasked with proposing, documenting and scheduling a routine activity. At this point in time, I was starting to become increasingly aware of the presence of pareidolias around my house. The discovery of pareidolias immediately clicked as the perfect activity for this research assignment. I decided that my scheduled routine activity would be to look for pareidolias in the shower/ bath. Every time I bathed; I resumed my search. I eventually began expanding the boundaries of my search, consciously seeking out new pareidolic forms, not only on my shower walls, but everywhere in my house—in the floors, on my balcony, in mugs, in the clouds, in shadows, etc. I transformed some of the pareidolias that I saw into 3D stuffed toys, and this additional layer of interaction (beyond just sight, but now touch) added a whole other dimension to my relationship with them. After the contemporary research methods finished, I felt like I had almost come to build a relationship with these creatures because of my time spent studying, sketching and sitting with them, and they became very special/ calming presence—a presence that I knew would be there no matter what. These pareidolias became stable and their stability comforted me. And the more creatures that I found around the house to add to my archive, the more I felt encapsulated by their warming presence.



Figure 12: Four photos of my bathroom tiles which inspired by stuffed animals made at the beginning of grad school, 2023, photo by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 13: Four photos stuffed animals inspired by my bathroom tiles, 2023, photo by Tallulah Hogan

Interestingly enough, after looking through my large archive of pareidolias, I started to notice I had similar results to the pareidolia gender biases research by done in the 2021 publication by Susan G. Wardle, Sanika Paranjape, Jessica Taubert, and Chris I. Baker called *'Illusory faces are more likely to be perceived as male than female'*[87], as well as Valentina, Alexander, Andreas and Marina's research study called *"Do subtle cultural differences sculpt face pareidolia?"*[88]. Unless I saw female body parts, long hair, full lips, eyelashes, traits of mothers (like holding a baby or breastfeeding) in the pareidolias, I gave them male identities. I would estimate that 75% of the pareidolias I was seeing were predominately male and only a few were gender neutral. I also noticed that the 'mean' or 'scary' pareidolias I recorded and perceived as male—examples including; an angry fox, a smirking devil, a man appearing as the 'joker', someone screaming, a burglar, a devious looking puffer fish, and many more. When I record the pareidolias, I often write a quick caption on top of the image to better remember later what I was seeing, and I would tend to specify gender… "scary **man** screaming", "burglar **boys** stealing", "angry smoking **guy**", etc. Examples of how I captioned the photos of 'women' pareidolias include: "puppies sucking on **mom**", "**woman's** side profile", "swan **lady**", "tree bark **lady**", "**female** torso", "**girl** crying", etc.

Locations

My experiences with pareidolias have been diverse, and I came to realize that they are each uniquely tied to their environment. While my initial connection with pareidolias blossomed in my bathroom, their manifestations have extended to various locations and contexts. My connection with pareidolias expanded beyond the confines of the bathroom, and they began helping me in coping with my new medical diagnosis of epilepsy. This newfound relationship with pareidolias in a medical/hospital setting prompted me to categorize them and contemplate how they vary across different contexts and environments. In response to developing agoraphobia due to anxiety and epilepsy, pareidolias began to

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87 Wardle et al.,"Illusory Faces", 1.

88 Romagnano et al., "Cultural Differences Sculpt Face Pareidolia", 1.

play a pivotal role in facilitating my outings, particularly when leaving home and entering public settings. It became clear that varied environments cultivated unique connections with pareidolias, leading me to categorize them for a deeper comprehension of their individual influences. Each pareidolia in their distinctive setting has helped me to navigate through my physical and mental health, in some way shaping my interactions within these spaces.

Location 1: Bathroom Setting

I take extreme comfort in taking baths and showers as a way of coping with anxiety, and during those moments of clear-headedness my eyes often freely wonder around the walls. I am often overwhelmed and overstimulated by life in general, so taking showers and baths feels like a way to decompress and calm the noise. In this particular headspace and setting, I always saw little creatures/ faces/forms on the tiled shower walls, and I found that every time I would encounter this mental/physical occasion I would see more and more new creatures emerge. I had eventually developed an extraordinary repertoire of pareidolias in my shower, and I became more conscious towards my engagements with them. One of my most precious and helpful creatures resides on my bathroom floor which appeared as a cat, and while in these moments of fear/stress, I would always seek him out floor. During times where I was completely alone and scared especially during seizures, the cat was always present no matter what. I would focus on it and make eye contact with it, and I use this cat almost as a ritual for helping me get through whatever I was experiencing in those moments. The cat reminds me a lot of Eeyore from Winnie the pooh—he casts a gloomy and anhedonic yet blameless innocent facial expression. In some strange way, especially during difficult times, the cat and its expression has made me feel less isolated and somewhat understood. It feels like the cat is going through something with me, and we are mutually comforting each other. During aura seizures, I would find solace in staring at the cat, and it has started to become an unwavering, comforting presence, which would ground me both mentally, and physically (especially from the dissociation).

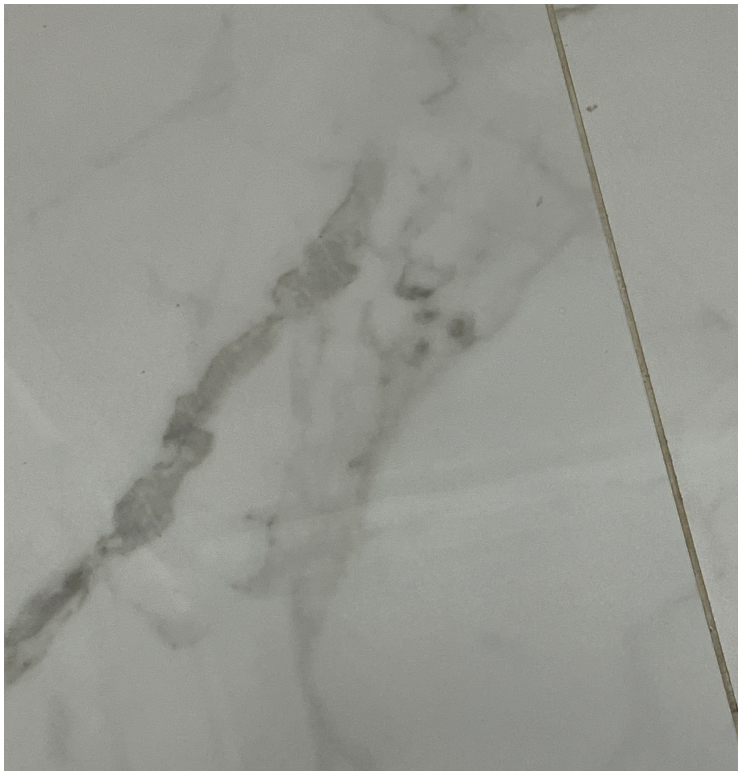

Figure 14: Photo of cat that reminds me of Eeyore from Winnie the pooh, 2023, photograph by Tallulah Hogan

Location 2: Hospital Setting

Exploring pareidolias also began to manifest in novel forms, such as coping with my epilepsy diagnosis. After doing my MRI, I received access to dozens of images of my brain scans before my neurology appointment through this app called 'Pocket Health', and was frantically going through them and trying to google what they meant before inevitably meeting up with my neurologist. During this process, I found myself getting distracted by the amount of faces that I saw in my scans…not seeing my actual face in the scans, but pareidolic faces that would appear from images of my brain. I had already been diagnosed with epilepsy at this point and they had already found a brain abnormality through my EEG, but wanted to conduct an MRI to to ensure nothing else was directly contributing to my seizures. I saw one particular face that almost appeared like a man screaming, and this scan really stood out to me. The expression on the brain man's face encapsulated one of the many emotions I felt through grappling

and navigating with this new diagnosis, and I decided to make an art piece out of it. Through the process of making, it felt like a tangible way of digesting what was happening to me—it allowed me to study the scan in a way that didn't feel medical, but in a way that encapsulated my emotions regarding the diagnosis. In this piece, I used a palette knife and modelling paste. The combination of the subject matter I was creating (man screaming) alongside with the materials I was using, felt really therapeutic. I resonated with the man screaming, as I felt like I was screaming just like him inside my head, and frantically smearing paste on a large canvas felt very freeing and like a physical way of expressing this frustration. It was also interesting that when I showed up at the appointment having already started working on this piece, and out of the hundreds of scans, my neurologist paused on this same image (of the man screaming) and said, "wow this looks like a face, could be cool to make as artwork", knowing nothing about my thesis or research. Something about it felt like fate.

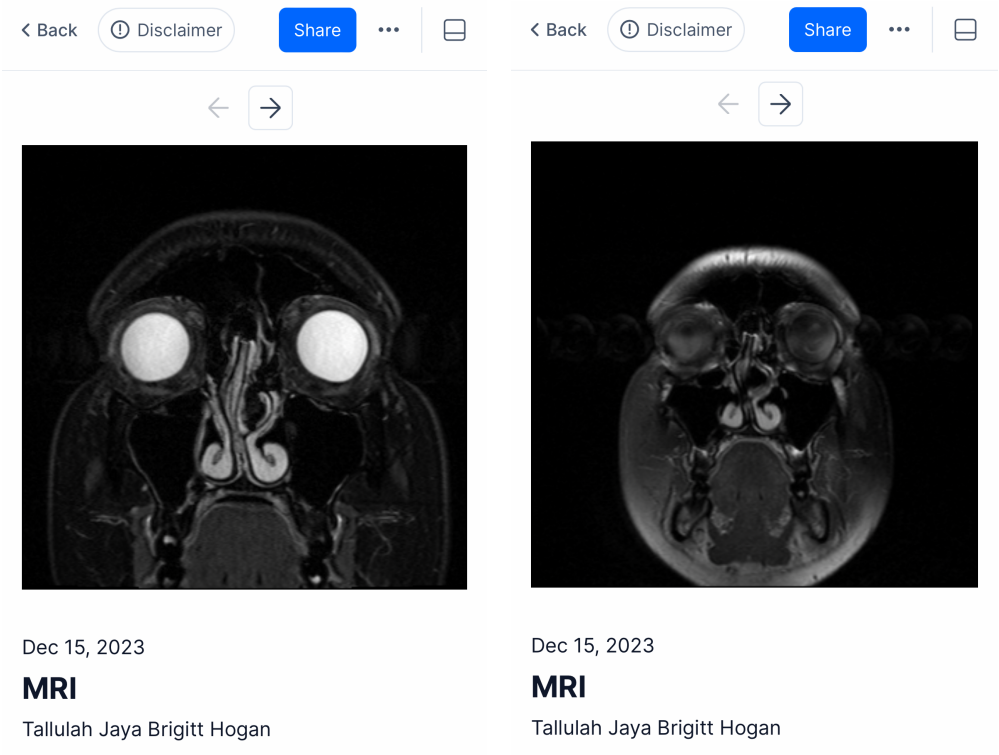

Figure 15: Screenshots from my MRI brain Scans, December 15 2023



Figure 16: *Scan Man,* Modelling paste on canvas, 2023, photo by Rudy Hogan

Location 3: Public Spaces

As a result of my mental and physical health struggles, I found it increasingly hard to leave the house, in fear of leaving my 'safe space' and having public episodes (whether that be seizures, fainting, panic attacks, unexplained nausea etc). I remember specific instances like having a public panic attack on a train (where a stranger was rubbing my back to console me), vomiting all over a restaurant table while at lunch with my dad, fainting during a school play, collapsing on the floor in front of a police officer, having (mostly aura) seizures in public, and many many more which have all contributed to this seemingly everlasting list of reasons to never leave the house. Due to my developed agoraphobia and lots of time spent at home, I felt an extreme sense of disconnect and discomfort with the outside world, which is something I still struggle with today. As a result of all the time I spent at home searching and discovering new pareidolias, I felt as though I was constantly training my brain and improving my ability to recognize these creatures everywhere. The little times that I did leave the house, I began noticing pareidolias outside of my domestic sphere, and out 'in the wild' (downtown concrete Toronto…the furthest thing from the wild). This recognition has allowed me to feel a new sense of comfort during moments of uncomfortableness that I feel as a result of being away from home. I knew something bad wasn't going to happen every time I left the house, but the intense anxiety that engulfed me whenever I considered leaving felt overwhelming and paralyzing. However, when I would leave home (mostly out of pure necessity), creatures felt like a home away from home, and helped me feel a sense of calmness—the creatures are there supporting and watching out for me no matter where I am, and it's just up to me to find them.

In "How to Overcome the Debilitating Panic of Agoraphobia'[89] author Dr Sharie Stines includes a list of coping skills to help deal with agoraphobia. She mentions implementing exposure therapy, where she emphasizes the need to 'face the panic', and doing so often so that you can build up a tolerance. She

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[89] Stines, "How to Overcome Agoraphobia", n.p.

also lists counting as a coping tool, suggesting that counting in patterns (like counting in multiples, etc), or counting items of certain things in the room by category (like counting everything blue that you see, etc). But most interestingly, she mentions 'locating patterns', suggesting that the location of patterns can help to divert your attention, specifying hat you can write lists or draw patterns on a piece of paper. This method has resonated with me quite a bit, as I also recognize and look for patterns (in pareidolias) and also draw them on my phone in order to record them.

As opposed to seeing world as a place of limitlessness and fear, pareidolias have welcomed me back into the world and allowed me to seek solace in new environments. I compare the feeling of finding pareidolias, especially in public, to the feeling of a weighted blanket (physically encompassed by pareidolias everywhere) vs the exposed and vulnerable feeling of a lightweight sheet. Not only does the discovery of pareidolias outside give me comfort, but assigning myself the 'task of searching' has become a nice distraction from overflowing and overwhelming thoughts. Training my brain to see pareidolias more easily at home, helped trained me to see them outside, and using this time battling with agoraphobia granted me with a new sense of inner trust, because spotting pareidolias became a reliable coping tool I could bring with me everywhere.

Pressure and Decompressing

A recent graduate from the same IAMD program that I'm in, Milosh Rodic, discusses this methodology in his thesis paper 'Our Bodies are Supernal in their Bionic Dynamism Research in Performance, Drawing, Painting, Photography and Music Through Processes Involving Automatic Corporeal Gesture in a Flash ACG'[90]. He discusses automatism in art, which the Tate Museum defines as, "*creating art without conscious thought, accessing material from the unconscious mind as part of the*

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[90] Rodic, "Our Bodies Are Supernal", 1.

creative process"[91]. Milosh explains this phenomenon in a beautiful way, so I feel it necessary not to paraphrase:

> *"Automatism is trance work. It behooves the practitioner to be able to transition well between consciousness states, between different maintained sustentions of oscillatory levels of being. Automatism like ACG (Automatic Corporeal Gesture in a Flash) is like how the Blues are often created, where you sing and invent your song spontaneously. The inventing and the performance are influencing each other as they happen at the same time. Here the performer is a juggler. Actions must be done on the fly to get very fresh gestures, to get out of your head, to stop thinking, stop overthinking, and to just respond."* [92]

In an earlier section, I described my research as emergent, studio-based and practice led—using artworks to inform my research, while simultaneously using my research to inform my artworks. Through this method of research creation, I create knowledge through art and vice versa, facilitating the adaptation of new ideas and unanticipated findings, which then accumulates into a cohesive and conjoined body of research. Milosh's comparison of automatism to the creation of the Blues really resonates with me, and I feel as though my process for creation is very similar—"inventing and performing influence each other as they happen at the same time."

Allowing myself to create with no guidelines, explore with no limits, and allowing my body and brain to ride the wave of the process felt very grounding and a release of stress. I feel as though sometimes having too harsh/rigid of a plan to follow gives me a lot of anxiety, as there is a certain pressure to finish the project exactly as intended and leaves a lot of room for error. Working intuitively, letting the creatures speak to me along the way and making decisions as they come, allows for an almost

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[91] Tate, "Automatism", n.p.

[92] Rodic, "Our Bodies Are Supernal", 18.

relaxing process, without having to live up to the pressures that I have set for myself during 'planning' phases. Another example of intuitively selecting materials is my usage of egg cartons in my 'wooden tiles' project. I was walking downtown and there was a pile of empty egg cartons on the sidewalk, and for some reason they caught my eye so I decided to grab them. I didn't even consider how/if I would include them in any of my artworks, however they jumped out at me for some reason so I took them home and kept them at the bottom of my closet. While assembling my wooden tiles, I needed a structure to display them on top of, and I thought about merging all the egg cartons to create a base. I did not initially seek out the egg cartons, however they caught my eye for some reason, and later they naturally worked their way into my work.

I think another element that contributes to this feeling of 'lack of pressure', also comes from my choices in materiality. I have always felt that with drawing, painting and other mediums, there needs to be more of a 'plan' and if I didn't live up to it, I felt a sense of disappointment. I'm not the type of person who can just paint freely without a plan (or an underdrawing), or draw something without a plan in mind first, I must always sketch and then erase and then sketch and erase until I have something that I kind of like (and usually end up hating it). While I still enjoy those mediums, those processes and materials feel very constraining to me, and I tend to feel apprehensive about messing them up. Working with textiles has always granted me with a sense of flexibility and fluidity, allowing me to not care so much about 'messing up', and rather lets me focus on the process and lets me focus on the moment. Textiles (in my work anyways) also have a very repetitive process—stitching, cutting, stitching, cutting etc. This repetition also feels like a soothing motion, by doing it over and over and over gives a tranquilizing effect because of the predictability of movement.

The search for pareidolias is equally as important as their discovery, and allowing my eyes and hands to freely wonder feels like a process of meditation and a way to decompress. By giving myself the

grace to allow my eyes, hands, and thoughts to evolve alongside the process of making, feels like another way of decompressing and allowing myself to fully immerse into the project without the need for worrying about the future. It allows me to connect to the present moment exactly as it arises, just like how I use the search for pareidolia to cope with anxiety/struggles/things exactly as they arise in the moment, letting go of all anxiety regarding the future.

Throughout this chapter, I have delved into my studio-based research practice, offering insights into my creative processes, experimentation, and the meticulous documentation of pareidolias. In essence, my studio practice serves as a dynamic arena where creativity flourishes, ideas materialize, and meaningful connections with the world around me are forged. The next section is the discussion chapter. I discuss community, and how working on pareidolias can be a good way to foster community with others living with epilepsy, agoraphobia and anxiety. I also discuss how pareidolias can provide encouragement during moments of discomfort, and can act as an object for meditation.

CHAPTER 4: Discussion

Introduction

For me, working and creating with pareidolias has contributed copious amounts to my healing and ability to navigate many personal hardships. Pareidolias have the possibility to build community with others, especially those living with epilepsy, agoraphobia, social anxiety, or a combination of them all. Pareidolias have not only allowed me to strengthen my associative memories (which are impacted by my epilepsy) but have assisted in managing my seizures and panic attacks by providing comfort and stability during moments of fear and stress, and have even provided me a mechanism to manage and confront my agoraphobia. While there are many other strategies and elements that have helped me cope with anxiety,

agoraphobia and epilepsy, I believe pareidolias have drastically contributed to my healing, and have the possibility for others to do so as well. In this section I also discuss author Pema Chödrön, who was recommended to me by my primary advisor Peter Morin. Pema taught me that in moments of transition, uncomfortableness, and fear, that my process of meditation through the act of searching for and finding pareidolias no matter where I am, is always available. I would have never found Pema's teachings without Peter, so I think it's necessary to also acknowledge how community and the sharing of knowledge is an indispensable part of research discovery and creation, and how it can lead to new and exciting areas of research. Community building is so important for the generation and dissemination of knowledge, because like myself at the beginning of my research, I had no idea the strength and tools that pareidolias provided, which could be implemented across a breadth of situations and hardships. Using pareidolias as a multifaceted tool for coping with various challenges in my life has been profoundly rewarding and enlightening, and I believe I would have never realized it's power and value without building and discovering communities.

Pema and the Purple Crayon

'When Things Fall Apart: Heart advice for difficult times"[93] by Pema Chödrön was a book that I was recommended towards the beginning of my thesis and during my initial explorations with pareidolia. The book speaks a lot about moving towards pain instead of running from it and suggests how becoming intimate and compassionate towards our pain can reveal things we never knew. Throughout reading of this book, I experienced it and digested it and understood it through the lens of my own mental/physical health struggles and how I was using pareidolia to cope. At the beginning of the book, Pema said "*If we commit to staying right where we are, then our experience becomes very vivid. Things become very clear when there is nowhere to escape"*[94].The fear, discomfort, and pain that I experience can be so

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[93] Chodron, "When things fall apart", 1.

[94] Chodron, "When things fall apart", 2.

overwhelming and it feels as though my mind is clawing at an immediate relief/escape, but as Pema reiterates through her book, the movement towards pain is where we can make some of the most remarkable discoveries. I resonated with the clarity she expresses that arises when there is nowhere to escape, in terms of finding clarity and comfort in searching/discovering pareidolias.

Pema also describes meditation techniques, suggesting that most of them use an '**object of meditation**' that you can return to over and over again no matter what's going on and where you are [95]. She highlights how breath is a common and specific object of focus that many can use, but I discovered that pareidolias have become my object, as I was/am able to return to them over and over no matter where I am. The act of searching and allowing my eyes to freely wonder is my object, even if I can't see any pareidolias where I am, the 'journey not the destination' cliche is very much real in this case. She says, "*Right from the beginning its always important to remind yourself that meditation is about opening and relaxing with whatever arises, without picking and choosing*" [96] and I think allowing myself to be completely open to new creatures and letting them find me without picking them is a very meditative process. The ability to fully open up to the unknown, to glare at your surroundings not knowing what you will find, and allowing yourself to discover organically without any force or projections feels synonymous to the experiences of life as a whole. You cannot pick and choose what life offers or what pain you will experience, but allowing yourself to openly welcome whatever arises, whatever creatures arise, feels very liberating. She says "*In the middle of the worst scenario of the worst person in the world, in the midst of all the heavy dialogue with ourselves, open space is always there"*[97] and I interpret it in the literal sense—physical open space is always there, your ability to search for and find pareidolias are always there, and the act of looking is always there. During times of transition, uncomfortableness, and fear, I know that my

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[95] Chodron, "When things fall apart", 20.

[96] Chodron, "When things fall apart", 22.

[97] Chodron, "*When things fall apart*", 27.

process of meditation through the act of searching for and finding pareidolias no matter where I am, is always available. Through the acceptance and welcoming of the unknown forms and creatures, this helps me to also welcome and become comfortable with the unknowns of life.

Becoming comfortable opening and relaxing with whatever arises became an important coping tool for me, and I began seeing its beneficial applications in everything. In the 1995 children's picture book "Harold and the Purple Crayon"[98] written and illustrated by Crockett Johnson, it follows the journeys of a young boy called Harold and his magical purple crayon[99]. Harold is able to draw anything with the crayon, essentially creating a world of his own through his own drawings and imagination. In the tv show based on the book, an episode called 'Blame it on the Rain'[100], Harold is helping two squirrels find their nest, so he decides to draw and climb a ladder to the moon in order to get a better view of the forest. While climbing the ladder, he becomes scared and starts to question if he would be able to make it to the top. The episode then says "*…then Harold spied the moon, beaming with encouragement, and Harold felt that maybe he could climb just a little higher after all*"[101]. The wind then blows him and his squirrel friends off the ladder and they began falling out of the sky, and rather than panic, Harold draws a bird which was able to save them from plummeting to the ground. Despite it being a children's book, it really resonates with me immensely for a couple reasons. Harold is able to find solutions to problems exactly as they arose; he was drowning so he drew a boat, he was hungry so he drew pies, the path was too long so he drew a shortcut, etc. Being able to cope and deal with situations exactly as they arise feels similarly to how I cope with agoraphobia, especially regarding pareidolia. I'm outside and on an adventure and I'm scared, so like Harold, I use my imagination and my search for pareidolias to deal with

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98 Crocket, "*Harold and the Purple Crayon", 2*.

99 Wikipedia, "Harold and the Purple Crayon", n.p.

100 Greenberg et al., "*Blame It On The Rain", n.p*.

101 Greenberg et al., "*Blame It On The Rain", n.p*.

the overwhelming feelings exactly in the moment they arise, similarly to what Pema was saying. Harold's interaction with the moon 'beaming with encouragement' and allowing him to find the courage to keep going, also reminded me a lot of my own personal journey experiencing pareidolias outside, and how they offer me encouragement during moments of discomfort (even if nobody else can see or hear them). Physically speaking, it is impossible for inanimate objects to speak with us or communicate words of encouragement, however pareidolias still appear as little signs telling me it's okay.

I also want to mention that my grandmother Bz found this book at the store (Harold and the Purple Crayon) and sent it to me in the mail, so there's an additional layer of value that I hold in this book. Without even being aware at first, I have come to realize just how much my family and friends have become involved in my work somehow, and the community that my work has created. I would speak on the phone with my parents or mention my research/practice/artwork to friends and family, and they always got involved. People would send me pictures of pareidolias they have seen recently, tell me stories about seeing pareidolias in weird places, and reminiscing about their first times experiencing pareidolias as kids. In the case with my grandmother, towards the beginning of my thesis writing process, I was explaining how Harold and the Purple crayon was inspiring me and how it potentially related to my work. She then said she came across the book at the store, so bought it and decided to ship it to me. While she wasn't purposefully looking for the book, our conversations surrounding pareidolias and my practice was in her subconscious, and hence, she bought the book. I came to realize just how much these conversations and the sharing of experiences has contributed to my work, and how my integration and honouring of those interactions and moments into my work further contributes to more dialogue and opens up a sense of community.

Community

A particularly enjoyable aspect of my thesis involves sharing the original images with others (as I discover and photograph them) and inviting them to share what they perceive. With my family residing overseas, I frequently find myself sharing these original images with my mother and inquiring about her interpretations. It's so interesting to compare what we see and offer new perspectives to each other. She will also draw on top of the original photographs and send them back, and it feels like a very intimate exchange in regard to sharing the minuscule details/daily observations we encounter. She sends me photos of patterns she observes in rocks, on walls, and usually things she notices outdoors (since they reside in Jamaica and spend much time outdoors/near nature). Conversely, I reside in downtown Toronto and rarely venture outside, so I frequently share pareidolia occurrences from around my apartment with her. The images that we send to one another in many ways describe our days, describe the environments in which we live, and encapsulate the small details of our spaces without having to use words. These details are typically never shown or discussed in normal life or interactions…because why else would I just randomly send my mom a random photo of my bathroom tiles or my floorboards? It feels like a cool way of sharing the often unnoticed and overlooked details of our lives in order to connect to each other's environments in a unique way.

Despite having a community to share experiences with pareidolia, there was a part of me that still felt isolated, because it felt like my experiences with pareidolia were so intrinsically tied to my mental and physical health. I wasn't sure if there were other people with anxiety, agoraphobia or epilepsy who experienced pareidolias in a similar way as me. After finding research which supported a link between pareidolia and epilepsy, I wondered if there was a community of people who possibly shared similar stories or encountered pareidolias the same way I do. Upon speaking to Ayumi Goto, my secondary thesis advisor, she also brought to my attention that she had struggled with epilepsy as a child and had vivid memories of experiencing pareidolias and watching them come to life. Having these shared experiences

(having epilepsy and both seeing and documenting pareidolias) seemed like an odd coincidence and made us both question whether there was any research support a connection/causation between the two. When I looked up 'pareidolia and epilepsy' to see what came up, I came across a Reddit thread titled 'Describe your aura' [102], and a couple of people were describing seeing pareidolias during/after seizures. One commenter said:

> *"First thing (during an aura seizure) is a feeling like my soul is trying to rise up out of my body, Like a spectral thread is pulling me skyward. Then there's Deja Vu. I feel like I know what's about to happen because it already has. Sometimes I'm right. Then the fun part. The faces. I start seeing faces. They're everywhere, coming out of every surface. When I was a kid it scared me, now it inspires a lot of my artwork. I have come to enjoy them. It's like getting a free dose of a mild psychedelic. Often my auras die down and I stabilize after the faces."* [103]

Someone else responded with:

> *"This is really interesting to me. When I was younger I had a few experiences where I would almost visualize faces in the walls and hear voices. To the point where I would be horrified for my family. It didn't really happen often, but it's engrained enough for me to recall it. It wouldn't be another 15-20 years until I was diagnosed with epilepsy, though my auras are quite different now. I'm curious if that's what I was experiencing at a young age."* [104]

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[102] ReallyTheMilkMan, "Describe your aura", n.p.

[103] Chalkarts, "Describe your aura", n.p.

[104] CornDoodler, "Describe your aura", n.p.

It can feel so isolating and confusing to have such niche experiences, however discovering reddit threads of people sharing their intimate experiences and being able to relate to one another is a very cool feeling. Often times, research publications or academic writings highlight scientific data and empirical research on topics such as epilepsy and pareidolias, however reading individuals testimonies, stories, and shared experiences, all make it seem more 'human'.

I actually found a reddit thread called 'Pareidolia'[105], which currently has 942K members and hundreds of posts of people sharing pareidolias that they encounter. It's fascinating to observe not just the content and images that people share, but also the myriad comments on every post that offer fresh perspectives on pareidolias, share observations, or even come up with humorous captions. This inherent tendency we have to share our discoveries intrigues me. Humans can be so cute sometimes.

Exhibition

In terms of exhibition planning and curation, I would say that my final curation didn't heavily differ from my original plan (See figures 59 and 60). In my exhibition, I knew that I wanted my denim sculpture 'Jean Guys' and denim tapestry 'Denim Dreamscape' to be the focus of the exhibition, and to be the first thing that catches peoples eyes when they first walk in. These two pieces were some of the first ones I had made throughout my thesis journey, and I think their large size, matching materials, and corresponding subject matter communicate my theme and intentions of the exhibition. These pieces were so important to me and I used them as inspiration for many other artworks that followed them, I even decided to make them into take home keychains for visitors to take. The keychains were placed near the entrance of the exhibition, and were made up of individual creatures that can be found in 'Denim Dreamscape'. I wanted 'Jean Guys' to be placed in the middle of the room, since this artwork was

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[105] Reddit, "R/Pareidolia", n.p.

intended to be viewed from all sides, and I wanted ‘Denim Dreamscape’ to be placed in close proximity, and on the main wall that is seen from the entrance, so the two pieces are able to be seen together.



Figure 17: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Tallulah Hogan

I also knew that I wanted ‘Tiles of Bathroom Tiles’ to be placed next to ‘Denim Dreamscape’, because many of the photographs of pareidolias found in Tiles of Bathroom Tiles are used as inspiration for my other artworks, and particularly for the tapestry. I wanted viewers to be able to look back and forth between the two pieces and see if they could notice resemblances, or notice photographs which have been used in the other piece. In my exhibition, I wanted to give room for the viewer to go back and forth between the pieces and possibly notice recurring creatures that exist within them. Another example of this is choosing to place ‘Lip Snail’ next to ‘Critters’. While both of them visually fit nicely together as a

result of their similar brown material, ‘Critters’ is an artwork that encompasses thirty one creatures inspired by pareidolias that I have photographed and collected throughout my graduate studies, and one of those creatures is of ‘Lip Snail’. The viewer can recognize the lip snail made out of clay, and see right next to it the large textile installation variation of it. Next to critters I also placed my piece titled ‘Shadowed Flight’, which is a photo of a dried piece of paint I peeled off my paint palette, because this bird-like creature also appears as a clay critter which you can see right next to it.

Many of my pieces are based on pareidolias which I have encountered and photographed, so I created a brochure, which includes original images which some of the pieces are based on. For example: ‘Scan Man’ is an artwork based on my brain scans, so the brochure contains two images of my brain scans that I screenshotted from my MRI results page. Another example is the ‘The Devoted Duet’, an artwork inspired by two recurring pareidolias which I often fixate on during my aura seizures in the bathroom. I included two images of the pareidolias in my bathroom, so viewers could see my original inspiration behind the piece. I organized the brochure so that viewers could follow in chronological order the corresponding image to my artwork, if they move around the room from left to right.

In this chapter, I have emphasized community building with regard to pareidolia, epilepsy and belonging. In this next chapter, I will share some concluding thoughts on my thesis journey and reflect on my relationship to pareidolia.

CONCLUSION

A few years ago, I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety, and came to realize that the search for pareidolias has always brought me an enormous sense of peace—allowing my eyes to freely wonder as a way to calm/distract from anxious thoughts. Over the past year, as I started having seizures, and after EEG's detecting abnormalities in my frontal lobe, I was eventually diagnosed with epilepsy. I would experience grand mal seizures, where I wasn't awake and have no recollection of them, but also experienced aura seizures, where I was awake and fully conscious. During my aura seizures, I would feel extremely disconnected from my body, numbness, blurred vision, déjà vu, intense fear, and would often stare intensely at something. These aura seizures would predominantly occur in the bathroom for some strange reason, and I started noticing that during these episodes I often stared into the floor. In one bathroom, there was a figure shaped like a cat on the floor, and in the other bathroom there was a distinct image of a man smoking, as well as a fox. During not only my aura seizures, but also panic attacks and breakdowns, I was always in close proximity to those creatures, and I started recognizing them as integral parts of my physical/mental health episodes that occurred in the bathroom (which was a lot). The creatures started developing into a sense of comfort and consolidation, they were there for me no matter what state I was in, and I could always rely on their presence.

Bz, my grandmother, was diagnosed with cancer towards the end of my thesis, and while she got most of it removed during surgery, her cancer was stage three and spread to a nearby lymph node, so she continues to fight. She underwent surgery to remove the cancer in July, so my family and I spent a couple weeks with her in Ottawa as she healed. After surgery, she was mostly in bed recovering for the next few weeks, so we spent time napping, watching the olympics, and doing crossword puzzles. Bz's home in Ottawa is the same house my mom grew up in, and where I was raised in too. Majority of the furniture in

Bz's room is custom wooden pieces, which she inherited from her parents. Bz even joked that her current bed belonged to her parents, and she was probably conceived on it. Her room hasn't changed since I was born, so being in there, and spending time with her in that space, always feels nostalgic and special. When we were lying in her bed one day, Bz told me to go downstairs and look in her art portfolio and to choose a piece to take back home to Toronto. I chose a nude, still-life painting she did while at OCAD in 1958, but I also saw a blank sheet of watercolour paper so I grabbed that too, and went back upstairs. We talked more about that still-life art class, her art, her experiences at OCAD, then about graduating and meeting my grandpa. She asked me to get her photo albums from the closet to look at old wedding pictures, and we went through them together. She told me about each photograph, pointed out the names and faces of ones she knew, and told me about all the intricate details of that special day. Bz also brought out a portfolio she was keeping in her closet, and it was full of my drawings I had made throughout the years. She kept cards, drawings, paintings and collages that I made since I was a toddler. Most of those drawings I hadn't seen in years/never knew existed. It was beautiful going through so much of my childhood art and feeling like I'm looking at it for the first time, even though I made it. It is really special that she kept all of it.

Bz then asked me why I brought up a blank piece of watercolour paper, so I told her I thought it would be fun to do some drawings together. She told me she wasn't feeling particularly creative or inspired in that moment, so I suggested that we just draw things we saw in her bedroom. We drew her 'get well soon' balloon, a bouquet of flowers gifted to her by my uncle, her night-light in the shape of a car, her cookies that she was eating due to her weak stomach, her alarm clock, etc. My mom and two sisters eventually entered the room and also contributed to the art piece, by drawing things they saw in Bz's room as well. While the collective drawing that my family and I had created wasn't necessarily tied to pareidolias in any way, it had a similar essence and process. By taking the time to look and absorb all the details of my grandmothers room, alongside her presence, it felt like you were discovering little creatures

inside her bedroom and uncovering a new depth of interaction with her space. This is her space of healing, her space of rest, her space of comfort, and taking the time to absorb all of it's tiny details feels like a privilege and like building a new layer of connection. In my paper I spoke about how both looking and materializing pareidolias contribute to a sense of groundedness and help me navigate my mental/ physical health. Being able to realize this entire process from looking (around Bz's room), to materializing (drawing them on paper) together, felt extremely healing and beautiful. Using paper to transcribe all of our perspectives, interpretations and love that we experience in the room, to create a collaborative and tangible art piece is very similar to my process with pareidolias. When I see that collective artwork, I see all of the hands, minds, and souls which have touched that paper, and the intertwining of experiences, creation, and healing. Not only is this process special and healing to me, however the process of art making can be extremely healing and relaxing especially for someone like Bz, who was ill and almost bed ridden.

While I have analyzed how pareidolias have helped me personally navigate my mental/physical health, it's important to note art making's role in general on mental health. There are many studies on the health benefits of visual art making, including a study called "Reduction of Cortisol Levels and Participants' Responses Following Art Making" by researchers Kaimal, Ray and Muniz[106]. In the study they found that art making resulted in significantly lower cortisol levels and patients reported the art-making session to be "*relaxing, enjoyable, helpful for learning about new aspects of self, freeing from constraints, an evolving process of initial struggle to later resolution, and about flow/losing themselves in the work*".[107] Cortisol is also referred to as the 'stress hormone', because when your body perceives stress, your adrenal glands create and release cortisol into your blood stream.[108] This can cause an increase in

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[106] Kaimal, Ray, and Muniz, "Reduction of Cortisol Levels", n.p.

[107] Kaimal, Ray, and Muniz, "Reduction of Cortisol Levels", 74.

[108] Premier Health, "Beware High Levels of Cortisol", n.p.

heart rate and blood pressure, and can cause side effects such as fatigue, irritability, intestinal problems, anxiety, depression, etc.[109] Struggling from anxiety and depression myself, and Bz experiencing immense amounts of emotional and physical stress, as well as having had surgery on her stomach, art-making can serve much more than a simple afternoon activity, but is a healing one.

Something that particularly surprised me throughout this entire thesis process was just how much pareidolias contributed to my battle with agoraphobia. My fear of leaving the house gets better the more I expose myself to uncomfortable and unfamiliar environments, however I never really knew just how much pareidolias played apart in this. To this day, every single time I leave home, I look for pareidolias as way to cope with my anxiety of leaving home, and I'm surprised by how many times it has saved me from a panic attack. Pareidolias have become one of my main meditative techniques for anxiety, and I think there is much opportunity to continue researching and exploring pareidolias links to anxiety and agoraphobia.

I want to return to one of the guiding questions put forth in this thesis: *How does witnessing, amplifying, and the rematerializing of organic forms transform the way I interact with my environment?* Pareidolias have not only changed the way I interact with my environment, they have changed the way I interact with myself. I have always been fearful of the things I cannot control, like the things in my body, my brain, my soul, my environment, etc. Pareidolias have taught me to embrace the unknown and that I can create my own consistencies amidst the ever changing, inconsistencies of life. Pareidolias have become a stability for me that I carry with me everywhere I go, and they have shown me to look and appreciate life's finest details. The world can be a big, scary, overwhelming place, but there is so much beauty to be uncovered when you take the time to really look.

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[109] Premier Health, "Beware High Levels of Cortisol", n.p.

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Appendix



Figure 18: Denim Dreamscape, 2023, Denim jeans and hot glue, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 19: *Denim Dreamscape*, 2023, Denim jeans and hot glue, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 20: *Denim Dreamscape* work in progress, 2023, Denim jeans and hot glue, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 21: *Denim Dreamscape* individual creatures, 2023, photo by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 22: *Denim Dreamscape* bathroom tile photos and drawings, 2023, photo by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 23: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 24: *Jean Guys* work in progress, 2023, photos by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 25: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 26: From left to right: *Lip Snail*, 2024, Duvet cover, stuffed with polyester fibrefill. *Critters*, 2024, Clay on fabric covered canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 27: *Lip Snail*, 2024, Duvet cover, stuffed with polyester fibrefill, photo by Rudy Hogan.



Figure 28: *Critters*, 2024, Clay on fabric covered canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 29: *Shadowed Flight*, 2024, Modelling paste and acrylic paint on photo print, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 30: *Shadowed Flight*, 2024, Modelling paste and acrylic paint on photo print, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 31: *Shadowed Flight* Inspiration photo, 2024, photo by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 32: *Tiles of Bathroom Tiles*, 2024, Paper transferred on wood squares, on egg cartons, photo by Rudy Hogan

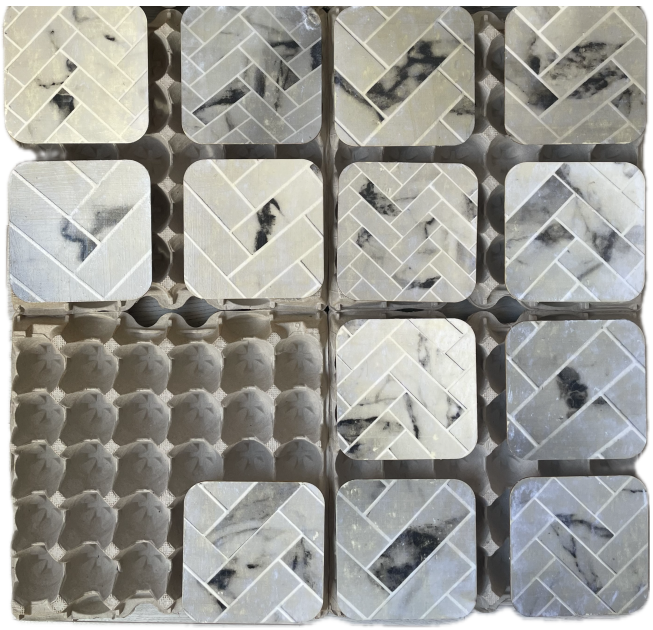

Figure 33: *Tiles of Bathroom Tiles* work in progress, 2024, Paper transferred on wood squares, on egg cartons, photo by Tallulah Hogan



Figure 34: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 35: Setting up the exhibition, *Pareidolia*, at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 36: *The Devoted Duet*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan

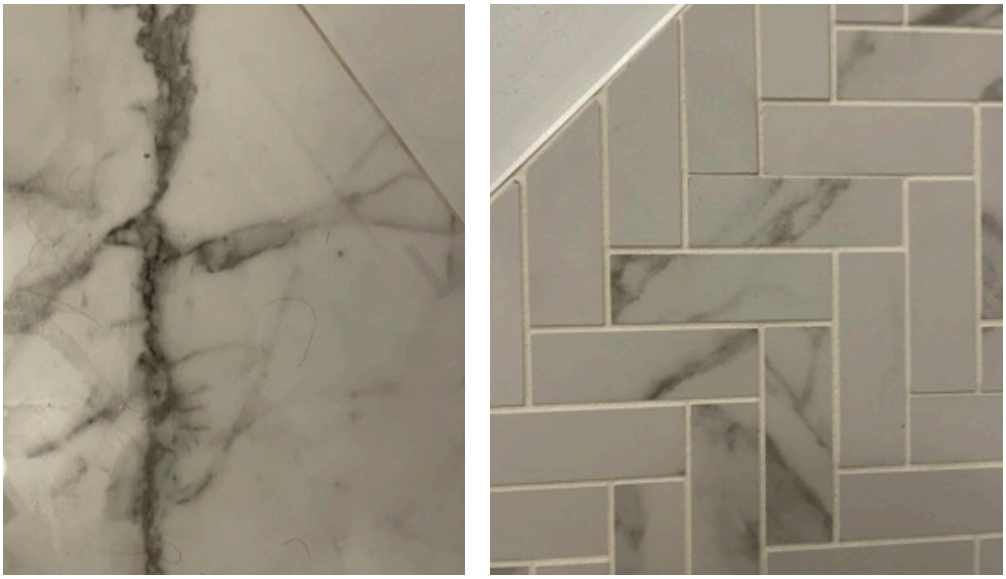

Figure 37: *The Devoted Duet* inspiration photos, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 38: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan

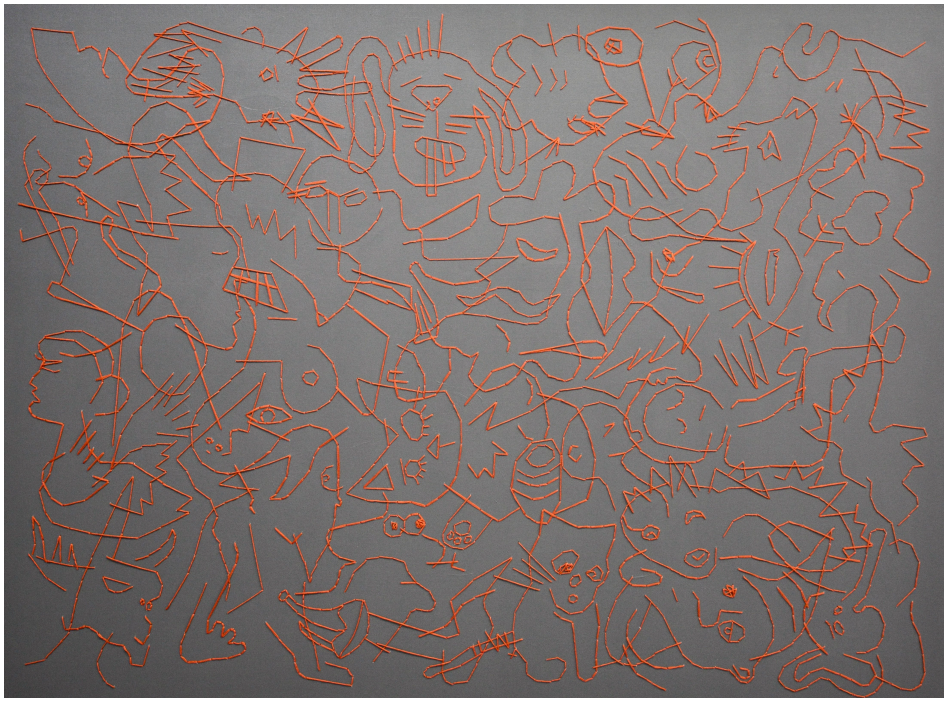

Figure 39: *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 40: *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 41: Back side of *Embroidered Encounters*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 42: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 43: *Ephemeral Aura Visions*, 2024, Yarn stitched on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 44: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan

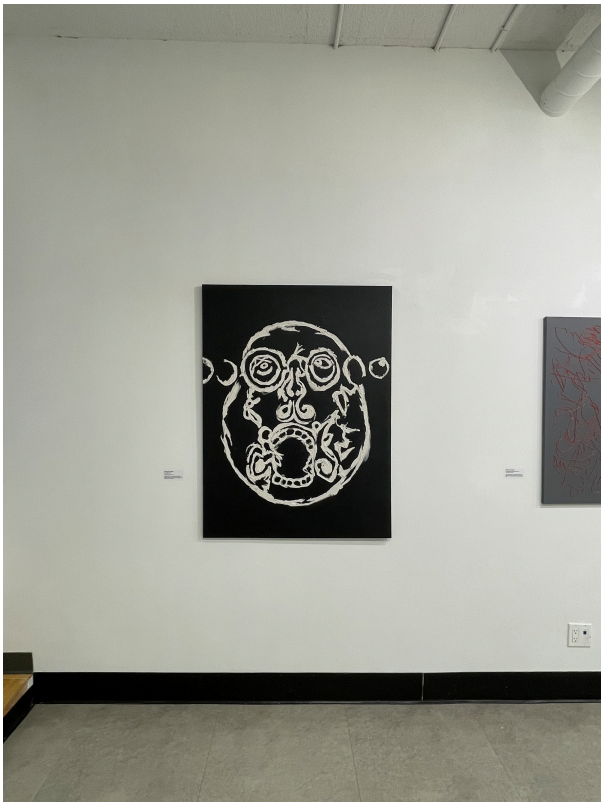

Figure 45: *Scan Man*, 2023, Modelling paste on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 46: *Scan Man*, 2023, Modelling paste on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan

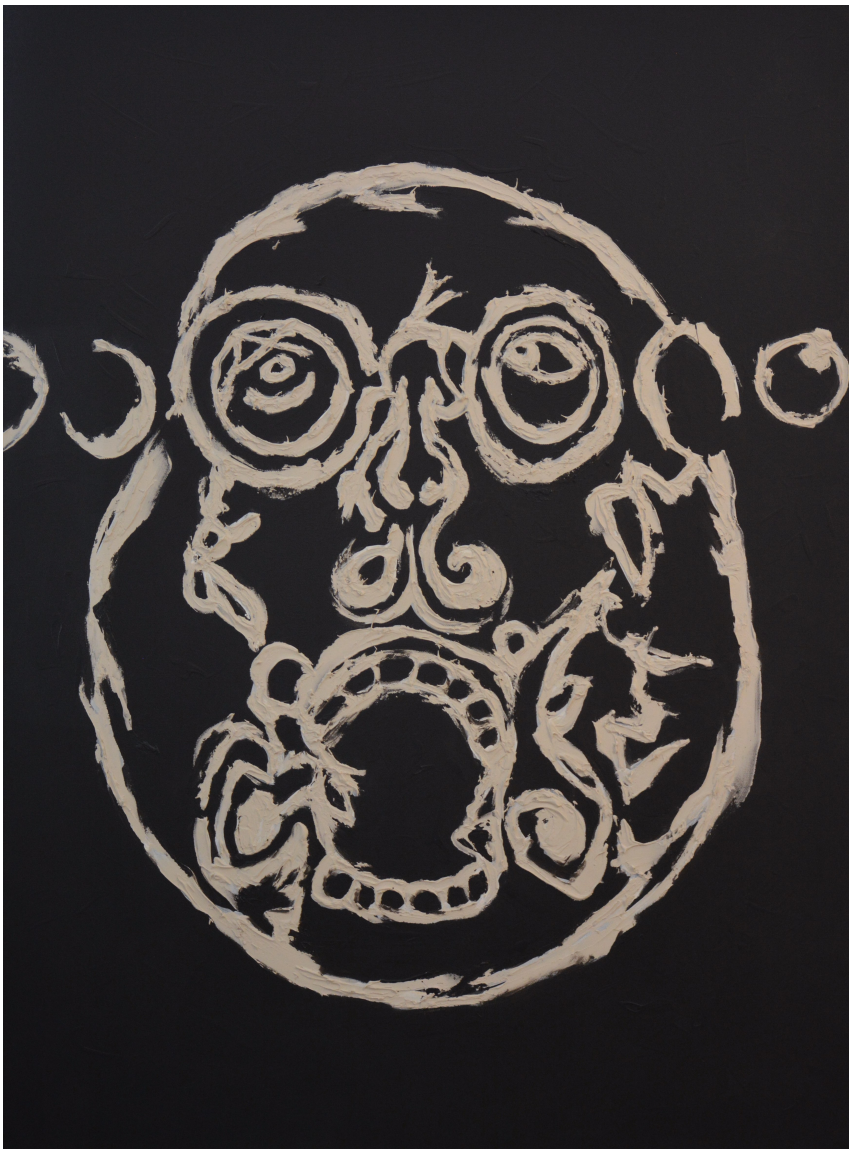

Figure 47: *Scan Man*, 2023, Modelling paste on canvas, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 48: *HeartFelt Creatures*, 2024, Thread stitched on felt, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 49: *HeartFelt Creatures*, 2024, Thread stitched on felt, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 50: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia*, at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 51: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia*, at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan

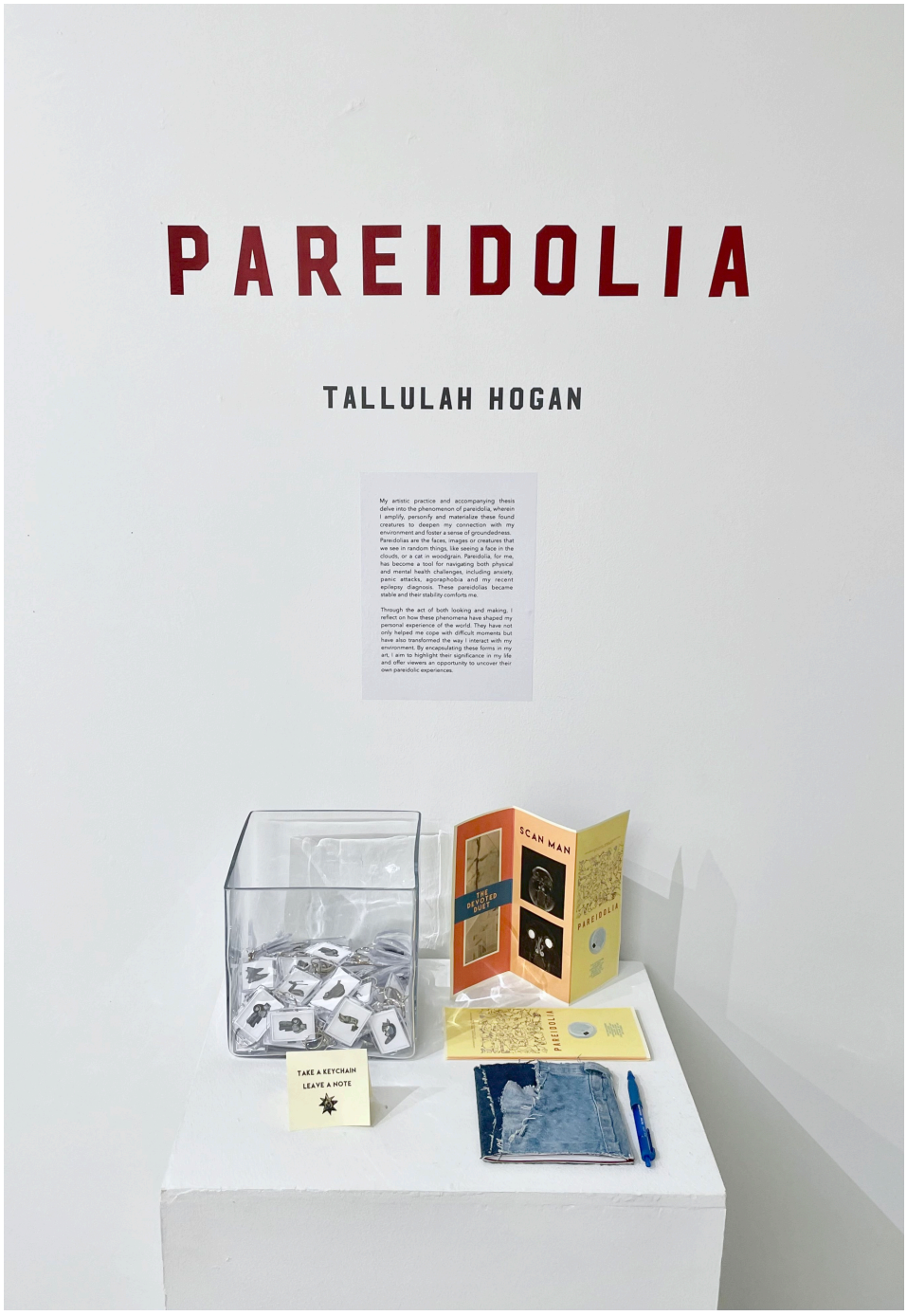

Figure 52: Entrance of gallery show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan, displaying my artist statement, brochures, and keychains for visitors to take home.



Figure 53: Entrance of gallery show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan, displaying my brochures, and keychains for visitors to take home.



Figure 54: View of the Gallery Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 55: Entrance to the Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 56: Entrance to the Show, *Pareidolia,* at the 205 Richmond St W gallery, July 2024, photo by Rudy Hogan



Figure 57: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Brochure, 2024

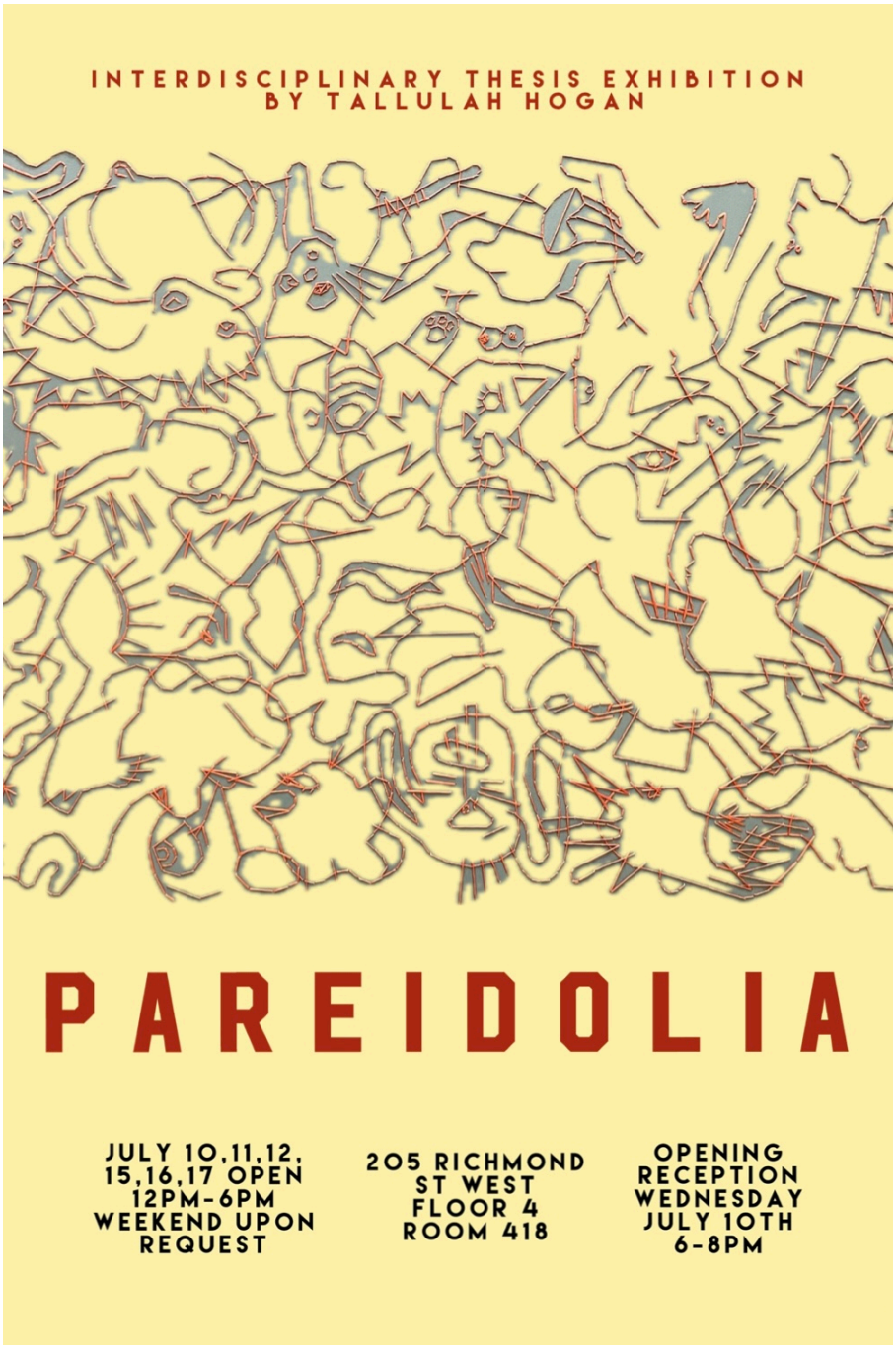

Figure 58: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Poster, 2024



Figure 59: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Cardboard Model Plan, 2024



Figure 60: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Cardboard Model Plan, 2024

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Critters, 2024
Clay on fabric covered canvas

Thirty one creatures inspired by pareidolias that I have photographed and collected throughout my graduate studies.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Scan Man, 2023
Modelling paste on canvas

Inspired by an MRI scan I completed while getting my epilepsy diagnosis. The scan resembles a person screaming, which perfectly emulated my feelings towards navigating my new diagnosis.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Tiles of Bathroom Tiles, 2024
Paper transferred on wood squares, on egg cartons

Photographs of pareidolias seen in my shower tiles, transferred on to wooden tiles. Many of the pareidolias found in these tiles are used as inspiration for my other artworks.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
The Devoted Duet, 2024
Yarn stitched on canvas

Inspired by two recurring pareidolias which I often fixate on during my aura seizures in the bathroom.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Embroidered Encounters, 2024
Yarn stitched on canvas

A series of pareidolias I have collected throughout my graduate studies, which have been overlayed on top of each other—creating opportunity for new pareidolias to arise.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Ephemeral Aura Visions, 2024
Yarn stitched on canvas

A depiction of my experience having an aura seizure. As my vision blurs and lightens (hence the colour gradient of the canvases), I rapidly gather pareidolias from around the room as a coping strategy.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Shadowed Flight, 2024
Modelling paste and acrylic paint on photo print

A photo of a dried piece of paint I peeled off my paint palette.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Jean Guys, 2023
Cardboard and denim jeans

Inspired by three pareidolias from my other artwork 'Denim Dreamscape', I transformed them into three dimensional beings, which together form an entirely new creature.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Lip Snail, 2024
Duvet cover, stuffed with polyester fibrefill

Inspired by a pareidolia on my bathroom shower tile wall.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
Denim Dreamscape, 2023
Denim jeans and hot glue

Inspired by pareidolias from my bathroom shower wall tiles, this textile piece is composed of fourteen pareidolias and gives opportunity for new pareidolias to arise.

Tallulah Jaya Hogan
HeartFelt Creatures, 2023
Thread stitched on felt

Inspired by pareidolias that I have photographed and collected throughout my graduate studies.

Figure 61: *Pareidolia* Exhibition Labels, 2024