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Nips of Clairvoyance

Samantha Valdez
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are submitting a thesis statement written by Samantha Valdez entitled *Nips of Clairvoyance*.

We recommend acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

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NIPS OF CLAIRVOYANCE

A Thesis Statement

Presented to the Faculty

of the

College of

College of Visual and Performing Arts

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of

Master of Fine Art

In

Winthrop University

May 2017

By

Samantha Valdez
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Abstract

My thesis statement describes the fundamental elements of inspiration, along with the artistic references for my thesis body of work. It revisits memories, and explores the symbolic significance of bodily action, form, material and composition, as a means to expose the relationship between object and memory. The thesis exhibition, Nips of Clairvoyance, consists of an installation of a triptych of videos of performances that depict the complexity and pain of an abusive relationship. Adjacent to the videos are three sculptures that consist, of glass cylinders filled with personal objects embedded inside and placed on top of slabs of soap. While confronting capitalism’s view on women’s domestic labor as having no value, leading to violence against women, I tell my own story of domestic abuse. In the work, I explore pre-Colombian rituals, and the use of the body, connecting my work to a legacy of female artists who have explored performance art.
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Introduction

My thesis exhibition, *Nips of Clairvoyance*, attempts to free objects from the burden of history and develop a body of work focused on personal, and universal memories. The work explores both sculpture and performance art to create a relationship between destruction and creation. The thesis exhibition is comprised of an installation of three projected videos of performances that utilize objects of personal emotional significance. In each performance, my body experiences painful physical tasks and undergoes an emotional experience triggered by the actions and the memories held within the object. Throughout each work, the selected intimate object is transformed and forever changed into a visceral expression of domestic abuse. After the performance, the destroyed objects are transformed into sculptures that sit on soap slabs, adjacent to the projected films. Symbolic mementos are held within the translucent slabs of soap that seek to symbolically cleanse the past as a path to mental transcendence through corporeal action.

My work connects sculpture and performance with the object’s relationship to my past. I selected three memories of specific experiences associated with three objects and created performances that act as the embodiment of past trauma. In the videos, I record performances to highlight the process of destruction as a metaphor for depicting rage and aggression. This was a way to gain a sense of justice and empowerment by revealing the truth about my past. I reconstruct the experiences of suffocation, enduring physical pain, and contemplation of death. I utilize my body as a means to express the difficulty of life in an abusive relationship. In the performances, I inflict harm upon myself and expose my body to elements of endurance, risk, and abject behavior. The work explores a patriarchal
culture of domination against women and the treatment of the female body in society. The physicality of the acts I am performing pushes my body to the limits, but creates work that depicts me as a victim and a survivor. The audience is compelled in the performance to witness evidence of violence and due to the size of the projected image be present.

For me, objects hold a direct vein to memory, acting as a tangible manifestation of the past. My work uses the transformation of symbolic materials to evoke a progression of feelings. In order to remember my past, I use the object’s ability to trigger nostalgia, thought, and emotions, as the catalyst for this work. As repurposed objects that have become sculptures, they confront the consequences of consumption, producing physical reminders of the abundance of abandoned artifacts of capitalism as society surrounds itself in excess and abandons objects loaded with memories in storage, thrift stores, and landfills. I work to destroy my material possessions to process my past trauma and to heal.

A Story of Possession

Bell Hook’s book, *All about Love: New Visions*, discusses aspects of relationships. In her work she states, “love’s absence lets me know how much love mattered” (Hooks ix). Like Bell Hooks I was raised in a family where “aggressive shaming and verbal humiliation coexisted with lots of affection and care, because of this, I found myself in a similar position to hers in embracing the term ‘dysfunctional’” (Hooks 6). This dysfunction reentered my life upon meeting my abuser and I lay awake
facing a man who often held my life in his hands, who also loved and bruised my body. The duality and complexity of our relationship became surreal and I would often force myself to believe events were dreams, unable to see my nightmare. I tried desperately to avoid the unpredictability of my husband and walked on eggshells, but often did so in vain. When domination is the norm, psychological terrorism becomes a way to subordinate women. My husband’s abusive behavior was rooted in family dysfunction caused by what Bell Hooks says comes, “from dysfunctional families which we were taught we were not okay, where we were shamed, verbally and/or physically abused, and emotionally neglected even as were taught to believe that we are love” (6). The connection to learned behavior was apparent; he had learned to be a predator and I had learned to be a victim. We perpetuated a tradition of patriarchy, as we both preformed socially constructed roles. In his hands, I felt the fragility of my body and constant fear of death. As suggested by Freud, “The threshold between life and death becomes a space of uncertainty in which boundaries blur between rational and the supernatural, the animate and the inanimate” (Schimmel 35). The pain in my relationship created a deep tension between intimacy, vulnerability and fear.

Often, domestic abuse is minimized as a taboo. Dr. Robert Mollica, director of the Harvard program in refugee trauma at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School suggests, “After experiencing years of censorship, the acknowledgment of truth is a cathartic gesture aimed at honoring victims and survivors” (Kidder 23). Wanting to seek personal resolution, I began to ask myself questions. How does one live without a sense of control? How does one overcome a legacy of oppression, where
Physical and sexual violence affect one’s body? How does one survive? Above all, my exhibition thesis aims to meditate on these questions, for healing, not just answers. Family trauma often creates cycles of violence, as Laurie Penny discusses in her book, *Meat Market: Female Flesh under Capitalism*. She states:

“There’s a word for what happens when generations of children of both sexes are raised in environments underpinned by resentment and the control dynamics essential to getting women’s work done for nothing. There’s a word for what happens when homework in the home becomes indelibly associated with self-negation, abuse, and stifled rage, and the word is trauma” (50).

This trauma, which Penny references to, is one I am familiar with. Ultimately, in this thesis work, I am searching for a means to memorialize my survival and to give a voice to others.

**Objects in Space: A Work of Memory**

For the three works in the exhibition, I selected three haunting memories and developed video installations that act as the embodiment of past trauma. The videos record specific performances in which I create situations in which I find myself traumatized and left paralyzed by the overwhelming content, often forgetting I am in control. Performing in a clean white quotidian space creates both visual and emotional tension in the performances. Throughout the performances domestic objects are transformed and destroyed in metaphoric gestures. The direct actions demonstrate the tight feeling of physical and emotional suffocation, as the performance itself becomes a
ritual. The work presented in my thesis exhibition explores principles of change and personal catharsis. Accordingly, in each sculpture the objects stand in absence of the abuser’s body.

The first work of the triptych entitled Women Wash Dishes Men Break Them is a reconstruction of a previous sculpture (Fig.1). The sculpture perished during a domestic altercation, breaking and cutting my body. The original work took fragments of broken dishes gathered after domestic disputes, along with dishes gleaned from second-hand stores, mixing the two so that my abuser would not connect the work to our abusive relationship. The new work uses performance and functions as a visual symbol for help. In the performance I throw dishes against a pristine white wall, capturing a vehement sound and a visually aggressive scene. The fragile domestic objects and the white walls function as an element to mimic perceptions of perfection and the façade of a stable home.

The arduous act of breaking wedding china, in juxtaposition with the contemporary gallery setting, visibly reflects the heinous crimes committed against women, “which are often concealed by those in authoritative positions” (Newman 7). It recalls the authority placed over me, which aided in the continuation of my abuse. The dishes used in the performance are the remaining dishes from the abusive relationship, and their destruction is a way to heal and find empowerment through action. After the wedding china is broken I place my body in physical pain, as I kneel to gather the broken remains into a mound. As my hands glide over the broken shards, and my knees bleed, self-laceration alters the relationship between the creator and the object, for the blood and
pain are not illusions, they are parts of reality. I process my feelings by attacking my own body, and in confronting my vulnerability I begin to heal. In the work, I attempt to create a dream-like state and explore the “home’s” relationship with domestic abuse. The dream-like imagery depicted in the documentation of the performances references my dissociation disorder, a disorder I have experienced since I was a child. Judith Lewis Herman, professor of clinical psychiatry at Harvard University Medical School notes, “constriction’ or numbing may occur. In these instances, when one’s defense mechanisms completely shut down, the helpless person, unable to escape an extreme situation” (Newman 7). The negation of the reality of abuse throughout my life made my abuse relationship acceptable and allowed me to fool myself into thinking that whatever happened was not that bad. Even though detachment is a strategy of survival, it prevents healing, as acknowledgment and remembrance are needed to process trauma.

The performances are documented and edited to reference the trance-like calm often experienced during dissociation. At the end of the performance the room is left in disarray. I gather the remains and place them into a glass cylinder. In the sculptures the representation of the phallus is a cylinder. This shape rejects the patriarchy represented as a threat, and the geometric form contrasts the organic forms of the fragmented material. The tall phallic form becomes a reminder of authority placed over me during the duration of my four-year-long relationship. In each cast soap slab, personal items are placed in the soap slabs for the cylinders to sit on. I combine poems written on my ex-husband's paperwork and our divorce papers. I destroy and cast them into the composition of the rectangular form of the soap slab. The soap form becomes a literal soapbox to profess my
abuse. Placing the soap sculptures under the cylinders creates tension, much like that of an abusive relationship. The fields of color within the soap are no longer merely aesthetic, as they represent the concepts, actions, and objects. The color schemes employ color as energy, and the sharp lines of the edges of the embedded objects establish a dynamic action inside the soap.

The second work in the series, *Ophelia*, combines the mythos of marriage and the reality of many women’s experiences (Fig.2). The visceral body-oriented performance element of the work places my body in danger. Referencing William Shakespeare’s character Ophelia, I explore the pressure of gender roles, abusive behavior, duty to family and expectations of a dutiful wife. Ophelia, overwhelmed from the emotional abuse inflicted by Hamlet, her fiancé, takes her own life by drowning herself in a stream. The imagery in the performance is also influenced by Sir John Everett Millais’s painting, *Ophelia*, however I have replaced drowning with the act of suffocation (Fig.3). In both works the heaviness of the dress becomes a metaphor of constraint. The luminosity in Millais’s painting by virtue of the white background, a technique employed by the Pre-Raphaelites, is referenced in my work by the use of white space in my performance. The luminosity of the background creates a trance-like state. Dressed in my wedding dress and symbolically faced with the restrictive nature of marriage, I place my body in a large plastic bag, symbolizing a womb. Slowly as the performance proceeds, it becomes harder to breathe; my mouth communicates suffocation, as I plead for help. Fearing for my life, I puncture my cocoon with silver scissors, but that freedom does not satisfy me. I begin to vehemently and aggressively cut my wedding dress, I free myself and become naked. In
the performance, like Millais, I take a particular interest in the open mouth allowing it to create tension, both through sound and visual clues. My mouth takes the shape of a vagina, juxtaposing the phallic shape of the cylinder. The remains of the slashed wedding ensemble are placed inside the glass cylinder. The fragile glass cylinder is utilized throughout the installation to represent the lingering presence of my abuser. In the installation the cylinder is placed on a translucent blue tinted soap slab. The objects within the cylinders are broken and are no longer familiar, or recognizable. The performance takes elements from Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*, however placing the performer in a different form of danger (Fig.4). In this performance by Ono, the artist kneels in a dress, with a pair of scissors on the floor in front of her. The audience is welcomed to cut bits of her clothes off. Ono recalls of the performance, “People went on cutting the parts they do not like of me. Finally, there was only the stone remain of me but they were still not satisfied and wanted to know what it’s like in the stone” (Phelan 60). Her performance forces the viewer to confront subconscious internal savagery, which lead many in the audience to act in ways they would not normally. This performance challenged the neutrality between the art and the viewer:

“Ono presented a situation in which the viewer was implicated in the potentially aggressive act of unveiling the female body, which had served historically as one such ‘neutral’ and anonymous subject for art. Emphasizing the reciprocal way in which viewers and subject become objects for each other. *Cut Piece*, also demonstrated how viewing without responsibility has the potential to harm or even destroy the object of perception” (Phelan 60).
Unlike Ono’s performance I take sole control of the actions in the performances, allowing the viewer to be a voyeur of the resulting projected videos.

The last work, *Cenotaph*, is a performance using my ex-husband’s wedding suit (Fig.5). The work explores the domination some men have over their wives and attempts to depict the strength expressed in Frida Kahlo’s *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940 (Fig.6). As the performance starts, I proceed to lie in the middle of a rectangle made of dirt in the middle of a pristine white floor. As earth from above begins to fall over my body I become covered by it. The dirt’s aesthetic arrangement on the pristine white floor suggests concepts of death, and disruption. I place my body in a state of detached calm, as the black soil covers me. I accept my fate, and as the pile begins to grow, I aim to create an uneasy tension. The black mound grows; underneath, I begin to claw my way out, fighting the earth falling from above. As the performance progresses, I begin freeing myself from the soil that traps me. I gasp for air, finally being able to breathe, and stand tall on top of the mound of dirt that once constrained me. Then, I slowly remove the suit that once belonged to my abuser and expose a large bone hidden within the suit as a metaphor of freedom. The bone is covered in my wedding vows handwritten in calligraphy. My nude state and leaving the bone trapped in the glass cylinder symbolizes freedom. The cylinder, filled with my abuser’s suit, dirt and the large bone, is then placed on a soap slab. In accordance with Lucio Fontana’s spatial concept, I “abandoned the myth of the tradition of object making and the immortality of the painted canvas in favor of ‘the act’ of the spirit freed from the matter” (Schimmel 52) (Fig.7). Lucio Fontana’s spatial ideas consisted of a revolution in how materials and technology are used and a
transformation in the relationship between object and surrounding space. Like Lucio Fontana, I erode the relationship between art and reality, and instead of puncturing a canvas I literally cut my body in the space in which the performance takes place. Artist Cindy Nemser uses space and the body in a very similar way. She states, “Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument, and when we which to move about we do not move the body as we move an object” (Lord 243). Though my story is my own, the emotions are universal. The triptych as a whole is a dedication to collective memory, in hopes for positive change for the future. My work aims for femme liberation, removing my work from the confines of gender roles, as many images of women are nudes or present domestic depictions of women. Unfortunately, patriarchal feminine constructions thrive under the machinations of capitalism, in which women’s bodies are marginalized and create conditions for exploitation. The consequences of consumption keep people in a constant state of lacking, in perpetual desire, strengthening the marketplace economy (Hooks 40). The exploitation of women’s agency over their own bodies has led to gender-based crime and femicide. The degradation of housework therefore sees women by association as having little value and is perpetuated by capitalism. The representation of the exploitation of women’s labor is expressed in my inability to have control over my body, my environment, and my decision-making. This coincides with iconoclastic Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's statement that, “Spatial structures reify social structure” (Kidder 25). These new forms of social structures help combat immutable situations that are forgotten within the places that they are in. I utilize Lefebvre's concept to create a spatial structure in which I deal with the realities faced by victims of abuse, yet I create
social structures to demonstrate body-to-body communication, the relationship the viewer has with the body, and space. Essential to the performance, my body faces unsettling violence and self-mastery to create a visceral recollection confronting the impact of patriarchy and male domination. The physicality of my actions projected in the gallery space affects both the spatial surroundings and social structures by showing images of painful attacks on my body in a traditional gallery space.

In addition, my entire body of work takes inspiration from Suprematism, the Russian avant-garde movement. The solace and simplicity of Kashmir Malevich's *Black Square*'s compositional elements galvanized my work (Fig. 8). Like Malevich, I attempt to “free art from the burden of the object.” In the way Malevich deconstructed representation, my work deconstructs material. As in Suprematism, my work finds purpose in creating a feeling and maintaining a truth to material as I focus on conception and execution. Ultimately, I revere Suprematists' ability to see art as a magical experience in which the artist is enabled to combine an inner vision and an outer experience of the world. The geometric form of the cylinder is used to symbolize brute force and oppression.

Ordinary objects become catalysts for action and the act of creating is just as important as what is created. My work aspires to memorialize the narrative of a victim and bring awareness in a gallery space so that a survivor is heard. The audience bears witness to evidence of violence and is left observing domestic abuse in order to consider, remember, and reflect. “Art carries an implicit critique built from the unmasking of oppression, permeating this space, and giving voice to those too often unheard; to expose
personal memories and reconstruct domestic objects acquired from a past abusive relationship to remember my past” (Kidder 26). In using the drama of the body, the physiology creates a dialogue with the audience, which forces them to confront personal and political issues.

Above all the work is an ode to women in my family who have survived domestic violence. In wanting to connect to my ancestors, I used aspects of rituals and ceremonies. Dr. Cutcha Risling, member of the Hupa tribe, said, “Ceremony is a part of our old culture, which helps us to be strong, centered individuals in a contemporary world and look inward to see what decolonization looks like. It empowers women to become central part of our communities within our cultures” (Chitnis). The blood in the performance is a connection to a violent act, and pre-Columbian practices that preceded Western religion, in particular the rituals of Santeria, Ibaka, and Palo Monte. Santeria attributes blood to the female Goddess, Ochun, and is a symbol of empowered female sexuality. In my use of blood, I refer to traditions of many indigenous religions and Spanish Colonial Catholicism, which has specific ritualized qualities symbolizing power. Overall the use of my body refers to my indigenous ancestry, as I use it in a ritual of healing. The vessel of my body becomes a part of a healing ritual, providing dignity and justice in a blood sacrifice. The violation of my body becomes a myth-making action, my body representing all women past, and potential crimes committed against them. The deliberately uncomfortable performances become poetic videos, which derive meaning through images of a narrative of lingering trauma. As a narrative of abuse, my work begins to focus on action’s ability to shape feelings, and a way to surpass conventionally accepted assumptions that love can coexist with abuse. As patriarchal masculinity
requires boys and men to see themselves as more powerful and superior to women, it also insists that they do whatever it takes to maintain their controlling position (Hooks 40). A culture that often celebrates male domination of women binds love to duty, and obedience can only lead to violence. Dr. Cutcha Risling, states the importance of using culture to heal, “It’s really about how women’s ceremonies are addressing issues introduced during colonization and how ceremonies speak to foundational ideas about how we as Indigenous Peoples push for decolonization in our community. We can’t move forward until we heal the gender imbalance” (Chitnis). The act of inflicting wounds on myself represents a temporal gesture, a psycho-visual gesture that leaves traces (Schimmel 37). Ultimately, I am producing work of resistance and resilience, as a form of protest against violence.

Furthermore, for me art is a form of dissent with which I intend to evoke a response. My thesis exhibition, Nips of Clairvoyance, encapsulates domination in an abusive relationship, creating a triptych that symbolizes an accumulation of experiences and emotions. My performative actions transform objects into sculptures that become reflections on the complex symbolic meaning of the objects. The healing aspect of the piece will involve my own personal catharsis in the creation of performance. I leave behind mementos honoring and encouraging remembrance through collective memory, so the cycle of violence will finally be broken. The viewer is left in a state of contemplation and surrounded with evidence of violence.
A Breathing Canvas: An Exploration of Documentation and Performance

Performance art utilizes the body, making art and life increasingly indistinguishable. Body-based Performance art breaks sharply into the subconscious of the viewer eliminating the distinction between reality and performance:

Twentieth-century art has increasingly seen the artist as both the subject and the object of artist’s work. Bound or beaten, naked or painted, still or spasmodic: the body is presented in all possible guises, as the artist quite literally lives in his or her art either publicly, in performance, or privately, in video and photography. Extending and renewing the age-old tradition of self-portraiture, body and performance artists are part of the tradition of artists moving art out of the gallery, into unexpected spaces and media. Breaking down the barriers between art and life, visual experience and sensual experience, these artists well represent the sense of angst and individual disorientation at the close of the twentieth-century” (Warr 1).

Together with my interest in sculpture, I wanted to use performance art to create work that would use the process as a metaphor. Today, performance art remains a key strategy for critiquing a variety of social, political and economic situations and it is particularly important for artists who have survived (Newman 5). The body becomes a tool to facilitate making the line between the artist, the spectator, and the work irrelevant. Performance art suggests the transgressive potential of the body as an art medium (Hearthney 219). My work attributes a great deal to the performance and conceptual movement in Latin America since the 1960s. For many artists, performance art became a visceral way to show solidarity during moments of turmoil.
Furthermore, in my exploration into performance art, artist Ana Mendieta’s personal story, her use of the body and devotion to her country of origin has been a constant source of inspiration. Ana Mendieta émigré from Cuba after her father was jailed for treason by Fidel Castro. As Gloria Moure explains:

Mendieta experienced in its crudest form this seemingly relentless and invincible modern alienation, were it as a woman in a shamelessly pornographic, male-dominated society, or as a Cuban exile, where to be Hispanic still means to be second class citizens (21).

Throughout her career she created controversial work, which challenged the conventional use of the female body in art to explore issues of rape, domestic abuse and spirituality. In her most provocative utilization of the body in Rape Scene, in Untitled (Rape Scene), she documented a performance in her apartment in Iowa City while studying at the University of Iowa (Fig. 9). The performance was inspired by the brutal rape and murder of a nursing student, Sara Ann Otten. Mendieta’s performance invited her fellow students to her apartment where they found her in the position recorded in the police report, as blood dripped down from her buttocks, head, and stripped body bent over a table. The artist’s arms were tied, as the body displayed both sensuality and equilibrium in the face of violence and abuse. She transformed her body into a living subject rather than the more traditional view of the female nude as an object. The domestic disorder was dramatically lit, highlighting her legs, the table, and casting shadows over the wall behind her.
In the same fashion, Regina José Galindo pushes her body to the limit and creates works that depict her own reality as both a Guatemalan and a woman (Newman 5). Born in Guatemala during the Mayan genocide, or "Silent Holocaust," Galindo’s pieces unmask the realities of life in a country in a state of amnesia. She selects places with history, in relation to her motherland's haunting history. Her work invites viewers to experience violence, exploitation, and injustice. Her art considers experiences as a woman living in Guatemala, yet transcends geopolitical boundaries. In her performances, the body is used to comments on aspects of patriarchy, colonialism, and institutional oppression and corrupts spaces of everyday life. While her body pushes the viewer to take responsibility, overall she challenges her audience to rethink the significances of place and to question the complacency, inequality, and oppression (Newman 9). In her work *Caminos*, she explores spatial perspective and the significance of space (Fig.10). She places her body in a state of distress, “hidden within bushes outside of Antigua’s colonial architecture” (Kidder 27). Galindo, wrapped in a shroud taken from a fresh corpse, attached to a white spool that reaches a mile into two, makes it ultimately unavoidable to confront historical and present tragedies. The spectators are able to follow the spool or ignore it. The audience’s significant connections to the accounts of victims, survivors, and their testimony transforms the performance as a means of public communication. Although Galindo’s performances have an origin in her country of origin, her work creates a narrative that is intimate, yet reflects on a collective memory. She pushes the audience towards a deeper understanding of injustice by making it unavoidable, as she blurs the line between real life and performance.
In conjunction with performance art, the role of documentation and video art was vital in completing my work for the exhibition. The book *Video art: The Ever Moving Medium* describes video art as “a type of art which relies on moving pictures and companies’ video and/or audio data. Video art came into existence during the 1960s and 1970s, is still widely used practiced and has given rise to the widespread use of video installation (Adelaide 1). The use of video art has become a large part of contemporary art, as often it explores the relationship between technology and history. With the expansion of technology, Video art has freed images from the confines of being a square on a wall and instead transforming the wall into art. Due to performative art’s ephemeral nature, I selected video as a means to document my performances. The videos communicate with the viewer in both an intimate and confrontational way and the footage is projected using a ceiling hung data projector. In my video the imagery depicts scenes of brutality. The documentation of the performances produces a visualization of the extreme events and captures the violent movements of my body. I use videos as a lasting record of my performances. In order to create the imagery in the video, I researched 1920s Mythopoetic film, which concentrates on fixed-framed filming, the rejection of spoken narrative illusions, and repletion of shots. The size of the projections is important and in deciding to project them wall sized onto the gallery wall, it is my intention to make it difficult for the speculator to look away. The physicality and size of the projection aims to represent the importance of having a voice in a shared space that was once silenced. In an effort to heighten the viewer’s awareness I emphasize the physical space of the projections through the use of sound. My violent moans, whimpers, and crying make up the audio. The performances were captured using a Sony Handycam
CX440 Flash Memory Camcorder on a tripod. In my three videos, I used the height of the tripod and camcorder to maintain an eye-level perspective and a fixed-frame. Fixed-framed filming is a term used when the frame is shot from one consistent place. The footage was taken during a series of performances filmed in the sculpture studio at Winthrop University and then edited to create imagery reminiscent of a semi-conscious state. The filming was done by survivors of domestic abuse, who wish to remain anonymous. The light source for the videos was the overhead florescent light in the sculpture studio supplemented with a spotlight. The spotlight is used to further illuminate my body as the subject and heighten the whiteness of the space. Through the editing of the film I aim to highlight moments of tension in the performance, as a way to increase anxiety in the viewer. The videos were edited using moviemaker software and an application called glitch!. The three looped five-minute videos play over and over, simulating the way a person would experience repeated systematic trauma. The loop of the projection means that the image appears almost still – the viewer cannot easily see the beginning or the end of the film, but instead is fixed by the camera’s viewpoint in a sustained, steady stare (Trodd 2). At the end of the performance instead of the video having a traditional ending, the projected image begins to violently glitch. The videos become abstracted and the imagery becomes unrecognizable through the fragmentation caused by the glitches. Ending the videos using this technique eliminates resolution and leaves the viewer without any sense of conclusion.

Throughout my research of video art, Maya Deren became an important source. She was often referred to as the mother of North American independent cinema and used
complex imagery and cinematography, which intrigued me. Her avant-garde film *Meshes of the afternoon* filmed in 1943, depicts the dreams of a woman played by Maya Deren (Fig.11). In similar fashion relations between the object, context, films and poetic narrative create temporal and spatial art. Her films use experimental cinematographic techniques to disturb reality, along with Psychoanalytic theory used by the surrealists, portraying reality and the dream world. In an attempt to represent female repression at home and submission in married life, vision and the erotic are important to the construction of the film. While confronting the institution of marriage, subjectivity and the male gaze, the film's psychosexual tension represents the absence of female identity. To reflect personal vision, Deren uses psychodrama to develop a domestic setting and hyper-signification of domestic objects. Symbolic and metonymic resonance of a feminine form of psychosis as domestic bliss thus turns into horrible nightmares. Using video editing and cutting as a type of violence, I depict tension visually.

**Conclusion**

The search for love continues even in the face of great odds (Hooks xv). What do you do with memories that haunt you and the objects that stare back? Attending Winthrop forced me to face this question. I had left my husband merely two months before starting my fall semester 2014. In my attempts to answer these questions I gathered belongings that I once loved, as I explored body-based performance art, and further developed my work in sculpture. As testimony, *Nips of Clairvoyance* explores my trauma and relics of my personal history, as a way to process and heal. The work aims to make the viewer
present, forcing them to reflect on the violence once inflicted on my body. Performance art became the medium that best suited the work, but in conjunction, I utilized sculpture formed by domestic objects. “The invisible body of the other is made visible only through acts of aggression” (Newman 5). In pushing my body to create works that depict my reality as both a woman and a victim, I challenge commonplace inequities such as institutional corruption, daily rape, and murder. I harm my body to share in a collective moment of experience, as a way to create a dialogue about the complexity of domestic abuse, and to be a catalyst to challenge the audience.

Throughout the work, I destroy objects to dispose of them from my life in a way that did not turn them into waste. The process used to make the work is a gesture against inhumane systems that oppose women. Healing is my work, as I dedicated myself to self-awareness in efforts to strengthen and accept. After years of healing, my artwork has freed me in many ways from the fear that paralyzed me. In looking towards the future, I reflect on Bell Hooks, “We can never go back. I know that now we know. We can go forward. We can find the love our hearts long for, but not until we let go of grief about the love we lost long ago when we were little and had no voice to speak the heart’s longing” (30). This work has been a direct action against my past in order to begin healing and constructing a sense of identity and control.
Fig. 1 – *Women Wash Dishes Men Break Them*, mix-media sculpture, 4 ½” x 48”, 2012
Fig. 2 – Ophelia, Performance, 2017
Fig. 3 – Cenophy, mix-media sculpture, 4 ½" x 24", 2016.
Images of Influential Art

Fig. 4 – Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, oil on canvas, 30 × 44 in, 1851-1852

Fig. 5 – Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, Performance, 1964
Fig. 6 – Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, oil on canvas, 15 ¾ x 11”, 1940

Fig. 7 – Lucio Fontana, *Spatial Concept: Expectations*, slashed canvas and gauze, 39 1/2 x 31 5/8” (100.3 x 80.3 cm), 1960
Fig. 8 – Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*, oil on canvas, 2’ 7” x 2’ 7”, 1915

Fig. 9 – Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Rape Scene)*, photograph, color on paper, 254 x 203 mm, 1948–1985
Fig. 10 – Regina José Galindo, *Caminos*, Performance, 2013

Fig. 11 – Maya Deren, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, 16mm film (black and white, silent), 1943
Works Cited


