



Undergraduate Thesis

BFA Drawing and Painting Candidate

Spring 2018

Introduction

The art to which I respond to most comes from a very raw, intimate place. As an artist, it has been important to me to make art that reveals the most private and personal experiences of myself. I use my artistic practice as a means to voice what words cannot suffice to say, to confront my own intimate vulnerability and create a visual language that resonates with those thoughts. The time I spend in my studio is focused on making work that others can connect to emotionally, an expression of my inner existence presented to the world. My hope is that the response to my work leads to empathetic conversations about human emotion and experience.



Figure 6. *His Chair Diptych*, mixed media on paper, 2017

Our Distance

Our Distance is the title of my most recent series, consisting of mixed media drawings and paintings, as well as ceramic works. This body of work was begun in August 2017 and will be continued through my undergraduate thesis exhibition in April 2018. For the

first set of works in this series, I wanted to continue exploring the idea of showing emotion using inhabited spaces and domestic objects void of the people feeling those emotions. In addition, I also wanted to tell a more specific narrative and create a documentation of my emotional evolution, rather than simply representing generic emotions outside of any context of their origins.

Over the summer, my partner, whom I had been living with at that point, graduated and moved out of state to attend graduate school. The transition from intimately living with someone on a daily basis to being separated by such a distance—both physically and even, at times, emotionally—was intense from the beginning. I used images of our shared spaces, as well as objects that I associated with him—such as the chair he would always use when he sat in my studio (fig. 6)—to document my emotional narrative. I did this over the course of the

whole Fall semester. Depicting the now-empty spaces and unused objects, I wanted to create a sense of loneliness and loss, both of the person, as well as a home and place and time in my life.

I decided to use my artistic process as a means to chronologically document my experience. Traditionally, the bed is a symbol of intimacy, of home and rest, and our bed is where we spent a lot of our time. Using the imagery of our shared bed, repeated and drawn over and over again, almost ritualistically, I wanted to show the myriad of emotions I experienced while dealing with this transition.



Figure 7. *Our Bed Series*, oil paint and mixed media on paper, 2017

First, I painted the bed as-is, seen in *Our Bed* (fig. 7 top left). This was meant to be how other people would see it, as a simple object with no meaning other than its function. I wanted this representation to be domestic, to show the use and absence in it, with the wrinkled sheets and wadded up comforter. I repeated the same image of the bed to emphasize that these emotions are all related to this single space and event.



Figure 8. *Our Bed VI*, oil paint and mixed media on paper

For Our Bed VI (fig. 8), I developed the full bed, but pulled an aggressive, dark streak down the center of it to physically separate our two sides. I created a cool, wistful ground for a dream-like atmosphere, one that felt more like a memory than a present space. The white dots on the left of the bed represented the number of days until I can move to be with him.

There are dark dots on the lower right,

which are the number of miles from New Albany, Indiana to Athens, Ohio. This piece was made after finally being able to visit him after a particularly long separation. The top center of the bed has white tick marks counting the number of days between my last visit and that one. The three gold streaks represent the three days I was able to spend with him. Finally, the red marks on the bottom of the bed are the number of days until I would be able to see him again.



Figure 9. *Our Rooms Diptych*, mixed media on Canson blue paper with gouache ground, 2017

In addition to the repeated depictions of our bed, I drew rooms from the house we lived in together, the spaces we have lost. To start, I used a gouache ground, creating a watery, unstable looking space, upon which I placed supposedly stable rooms and objects. This ground



Figure 10. *Where I Am Outsider* (left); *My Sanctuary, My Isolation* (right), graphite and mixed media on Canson

created a place which could dissolve and run out and be lost. I began realistically rendering the spaces, such as seen in the bottom left corner of *Our Living Room* (fig. 9 left). However, I allowed room for the space to dissolve into the ground such as the bottom half of the composition of *Our Bedroom* (fig. 9 right). I then chose media which I felt described my emotional association with the room

Thesis: *Our Distance* continued

For the next body of works

in this series, I moved from depictions of the places lost to the actual separation between us and where we currently are. I did two large-scale drawings of our separate bedrooms (fig. 10), meant to tower above the viewer and visually invite them to enter our spaces and experiences. These drawings are also done on the watery gouache ground. I fully rendered the bed in both of our rooms, linking back to that intimate symbol earlier discussed. I then allowed the room to simplify and fade into the gouache washes.

These pieces are hung in space back to back, facing away from each other. Between them are nineteen looped porcelain chains physically separating them (fig. 11). These chains each represent two weeks of time, together equaling the thirty-eight weeks since he left to the time of the opening of the exhibition *Past the Threshold*. Each chain has



Figure 11. *The Weight Of Distance And Time: 257 Miles and 38 Weeks*, high-fired porcelain

257 links, representing the miles from my house in New Albany, Indiana to his apartment in Athens, Ohio.

I also did four painted portraits of my partner and me, two diptych sets. I wanted to reintroduce the figure back into my work. My initial desire to remove portraiture and figurative



Figure 12. *Once You Were By My Side* diptych, oil paint and graphite on Arches Oil Paper

depictions was because people got caught up in trying to understand the person telling the story. Rather, what I wanted from my earlier work was for them to relate the story to themselves. However, this series is such a personal experience, I felt showing the humanity behind the emotions was needed.

These paintings depict us going about our daily lives, in one, texting each other, the most prevalent form of connection we have; the other, preparing for our separate days (fig. 12). Each set has us back to back, facing away from each other. I left the space around the figures empty and isolated. I wanted to describe daily life separated—going about our daily rituals, which we used to do alongside each other, but now do apart.

This series led me to investigate new artists, who I would not necessarily have before. One such artist is Antonio López García (fig. 13 left). García was one of the first artist whom I actively began



Figure 13. *"The Bathroom"* Antonio López García (left); *"Scars That Speak"* Clara Lieu

following as a reference for my own practice who did not depict the figure. He paints empty spaces, which have such a sense of loneliness and history to them. He showed me that I could create a sense of humanity and emotion without having to depict the figure.

Another artist whom I follow is Clara Lieu (fig. 13 right). Lieu is an active artist and instructor. Her concepts and ideas are relatable to my own. She is a figurative artist. Her current series *Scars That Speak* are drawings on tissue paper that she physical tears and sculpts to show the actual rips and scars which we endure as individuals. Her processes and ideas inspire me to try things outside of the traditional. These artists are only a few that have greatly influenced my own artistic method.