

The Nature of Feminine Rage: A Creative Exploration of Female Anger

by

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ABSTRACT

Women's anger is a force rarely seen but so powerful that it touches every aspect of our daily lives. Each time a woman walks into a voting booth, swipes her credit card, or uses birth control, we see the power of centuries of angry women. For this project, I created a multimedia art installation that explored the nature of feminine anger. Conceptually, I explored emotions commonly labeled as "undesirable" for women. I used plant and animal imagery as my subject matter to express these issues because of the human characteristics associated with different species throughout cultural history. Although animals have long served as vessels of human emotions, my work portrays them as champions of free expression, unrestrained by societal expectations. I used this imagery to evoke the concept of emotional freedom from anger repression and to frame female emotional expression as a natural occurrence.

PREFACE

I began this project with the intent of exploring the nature of women's anger and the role it plays in modern society. Through my creative research and exploration, I uncovered aspects of my own anger and trauma which helped connect my research with my personal story. To approach the complex theme of female anger, I created a multimedia art installation that included paintings, large-scale fabric panels, a handmade book, video performance, and a ceramic sculpture. Creating a multimedia installation allowed me to approach the intricate topic of women's anger in a multifaceted way. After months of preparation, I installed the body of work in the 210 Student Gallery in the Department of Art and Design from March 1-10, 2021. This creative project is the culmination and continuation of a great deal of my personal creative work, as I have dealt with the themes of women's anger, oppression, and injustice in previous artworks. This project has been an incredible opportunity to communicate the importance of these themes to my audience in a relevant and approachable manner.

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ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *The Nature of Feminine Rage*

This body of multimedia work is the culmination of several years of connecting my creative research with my personal narrative of trauma and growth. As I explored the nature of women's anger and the role it plays in our society, I learned a great deal about my own anger and, in turn, my healing. My inspiration for this project is multifaceted. For most of my childhood, I attended an extremely conservative religious school where I was taught damaging misogynistic ideals about my role in society as a woman. During my first year of college, I experienced a series of harmful situations with men that I blamed myself for because of my upbringing. My initial shame turned to anger; since then, I have realized that those situations were not my fault, and that my anger was a natural response to mistreatment and could even be a healthy coping mechanism. Several years later, during visits to art museums, I grew frustrated with the prevalence of women's oppression in historical art. Images of women's abduction and abuse appear so frequently, continuously feeding the narrative of women as helpless victims. I felt drawn to reframe that narrative and create a body of work that expressed the power of women's anger in the face of injustice and challenged the idea of "undesirable" emotions for women.

Last spring, I received a URECA grant to produce a series of mixed media oil paintings exploring the nature of women's anger through plant and animal imagery. I chose this imagery rather than the female figure because I thought that societal rules and expectations would be subconsciously placed on any images of female faces or bodies. In

addition, I was interested in the symbolism and associations made with different animals and plants in cultural history.

That fall, during a book arts class, I was assigned to write and perform an artists' book using vivid, descriptive language. During a brainstorming session, my personal trauma story came pouring out. For the first time, I found the words to describe my experience. Below is my note at the end of the book, *healing is (really fucking) hard*:

My freshman year of college, I was sexually assaulted by someone I considered a close friend. This book is about my pain and my healing, my survival and revival. These are the words I have spent the last three years learning how to say.

The process of creating and performing this piece was incredibly empowering and cathartic. It gave me an opportunity to voice my personal story within my exploration of female anger.

As a result of these creative works, I decided to create an immersive multimedia installation for my Honors thesis exhibition. Along with my paintings, book, and video performance, I created a ceramic sculpture and six large fabric panels which I hand dyed and sewed. I opted to use natural dyes for the fabric to thematically tie the installation works together, and I incorporated excerpts from my book on the fabric by using iron-on vinyl that I designed and cut using a Cricut cutting machine.

One of my goals for this show was to elicit an emotional reaction in the audience. I hoped that, through experiencing this installation, viewers would come away questioning their personal perception of women's anger and emotional expressions and perhaps consider how that plays a role in their lives.

CONTEXT

My idea for a body of work using animal imagery began as a page in my sketchbook about three years ago. I had just experienced a series of harmful experiences with men in which I felt powerless, and I was searching for a way to express my frustration and fear. I settled on the symbol of a snarling wolf. By baring her teeth, the wolf indicates her willingness to defend herself—a willingness I wanted to feel. This visual act of aggression represents how, when faced with harassment or other forms of oppression, an instinctual reaction would be to defend oneself from the aggressor in a similar manner.

Although such an expression of anger towards danger is a natural and necessary response to a threat, it is not always suitable for modern society and has been wrongfully portrayed as “unfeminine” and “unattractive.”

Growing up in an extremely conservative school, I was taught this outright. Other



Figure 1: Sketchbook Page

women learn this subconsciously, mirroring exemplified behaviors. Therefore, many women are unable to respond to threats in a defensive manner but instead respond with the feminine politeness in which they have been trained. Instances where women do respond in an angry or defensive manner are often criticized as “unladylike” overreactions, especially in the Bible Belt South.

This realization became the catalyst for my series. Until this point, I had never felt so enraged as when I was processing the mistreatment I experienced. However, I felt obligated to hide my anger behind a smile as I and so many other women have been taught. Hiding such a powerful and difficult emotion takes a toll on the human body and psyche. Besides being taught to hide our emotions with a smile, many women also experience what Emily and Amelia Nagoski refer to as the “Human Giver Syndrome” in their book *Burnout*. They describe the dynamic between women and men in our society as human givers and human



Figure 2: Snake Sketch

beings. The givers are expected to devote their time, energy, and affection to the others and even “give their whole humanity to the beings, so that the beings can *be* their full humanity” (Nagoski xiii).

The doting givers must be happy, calm, and attentive to the needs of others at all times, leaving no room to attend to their own needs (Nagoski xiv). This syndrome keeps women complacent in a society that has centered around preventing their “unfeminine emotions” from being portrayed. Without

other resources available to me at the time, I began to portray myself as a wolf or snake in my sketchbook to feel safer and more protected from harm. Rather than seeing myself as the scared, timid hare, I began to see myself as the wolf, bold and unapologetic.

This animalistic symbolism continued in my work, reappearing throughout my sketches over the next several years. I knew I wanted to create a large-scale body of work dealing with this imagery and topic, but it wasn't until the fall of 2019 that it solidified for me. During my semester abroad in France, I spent my fall break visiting art museums in Paris and Florence, Italy. One day, outside of the Palazzo Vecchio, I saw the sculpture of the *Rape of*



Figure 3: *The Rape of the Sabine Women*

the Sabine Women by Giambologna which really upset me. The woman's body is contorted in terror and her face is full of fear. As I continued in my whirlwind tour of art museums, I kept coming across depictions of women as helpless victims, including several variations of the *Rape of the Sabine Women* as well as the abduction of Persephone.

Finally, during my last day in Florence, I came across a painting titled *Judith Beheading Holofernes* that depicted a woman beheading her would-be rapist. The righteous anger was so present in her face as she chopped off the head of the man who was trying to seduce her and take over her city. During an Italian Renaissance Art History



Figure 4: Judith Beheading Holofernes

class, we had discussed the context behind this painting and how rare it is to see imagery of women in power over men. The artist of this painting, Artemisia Gentileschi, is one of the few known female painters of the Renaissance period. Her painting really inspired me, and I felt drawn to channel that fury in the face of injustice towards my thesis project.

Later in my semester abroad, I completed a cultural project with three other women in which we collaborated with a social activist group on campus that sought to defend women's rights on campus. We collected flyers and posters created by the group and participated in several meetings during which we interviewed active members of the group. Using the materials we gathered over the semesters, I and another student created a collage painting illustrating the goals of the organization. I really enjoyed the collage process and decided to use that as a method of producing the works for my project.



Figure 5: Cultural Project Collage

I returned from my semester abroad and began to bring my inspirations together. I decided to continue with the animal imagery I had been working with, but I wanted to include plant imagery as well, as the symbology of different plants plays an important role in Renaissance art. For example, lilies are often pictured in paintings of the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary she has been chosen to carry the Christ-child, because they represent purity. I began exploring the human characteristics that are associated with different species throughout cultural history.

Certain herbs and flowers have different meanings and uses, such as garden sage, which is used for purification and renewal, or sandalwood, which has calming properties. Animals have long served as symbols of human emotions and characteristics. Serpents, for example, have long been symbols of guardianship and self-defense, as is seen at the Angkor temple in Cambodia and the historical American Gadsden flag. I decided that my

work would instead portray animals as champions of free expression, unrestrained by societal expectations. I wanted to use this animal imagery to evoke the concept of emotional freedom from anger repression and use the plant symbolism to tie in subtle



Figure 6: American Gadsden Flag

accompanying themes. I felt for so long that anger was not an “appropriate” or acceptable feeling, and I really wanted to emphasize that, in the face of injustice, anger is the most appropriate and natural reaction.

As I continued to research these themes, I came across several authors and artists that inspired me. My body of work is influenced by *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger* by Soraya Chemaly and artists such as Kiki Smith, Alex Younger, Lorna Simpson, Beth Cavener, and Lindsey Kustus. Cavener is a ceramics artist who uses animal imagery to represent aspects of human psychology (Souza). Smith, a multimedia artist, created a series of works titled *Lying with the Wolf* that illustrates the relationship between women and animals (Young). The psychological components of women's issues, such as the physical and emotional effects of suppressing anger, are key in my work as well. My hope was that after viewing my work, the audience would leave with open-ended questions about the topic of women's anger and a motivation to consider their own personal perspectives on the issue.



Figure 7: Detail of Beth Cavener's piece "Tangled Up in You"

METHODOLOGY

To create this multi-media body of work, I explored a variety of new techniques and processes. Although I had some previous experience with oil painting and ceramics, I chose to explore several new methods and materials to expand my artistic skillset and approach the topic of female anger from multiple angles. Through this exploration of materials, I learned new painting and sculpting techniques, bookbinding and performance skills, fabric dyeing and sewing methods, and exhibit installation processes. The experience I gained through this project has broadened my artistic abilities and given me confidence to continue my creative exploration in future endeavors.

PAINTINGS: URECA Project

To create the body of work I had envisioned, I sought support from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Upon my thesis advisor's recommendation, I applied for an Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity (URECA) Grant through their office to create a small body of work. In February of 2020, I received a grant to create a series of paintings exploring women's anger through animal and plant imagery, with the understanding I would complete the project by the end of the semester. Over the next month, I began collecting the materials and preparing my ideas, planning to begin the studio work in mid-March. Unfortunately, the coronavirus global pandemic struck right as I began working on these paintings on campus. Despite losing access to the painting studio and having to extend my project through the summer, I was able to complete my paintings in August. The final body of work I completed for the URECA project helped frame my plans for the rest of my Honors thesis project.

Collage and Mixed Media Painting

To create the series of four paintings, I began by priming the panels before drawing on the composition. Once I had the composition laid out, I collected found paper from magazines, vintage books, and my own stockpile of collected scraps. I used cold wax medium, a mixture of beeswax, solvent, and alkyd resin, as an adhesive to attach the paper while still being able to paint over it. I alternated layers of collaged paper with sections of oil paint, building up the background of the paintings and laying out the animal figures. Throughout the process, I experimented with several different media to mix with the oil paint to change the consistency. To block in large areas of color, I used linseed oil, which made the paint more fluid and easier to spread. Adding Liquin, a quick-drying petroleum-based additive, gave the paint more volume and made the paint slightly transparent, which was helpful for refining details. Cold wax medium gave a thicker



Figure 8: In-process photo of An Innocent Victim

texture to the paint and created a paste-like appearance and was useful for preserving brushstrokes in the final layers. Although I faced many unique challenges due to the pandemic, including exclusively meeting with my advisor virtually and having limited space to work, I was still able to produce a body of work that acted as a catalyst for my Honors project.



Figure 9: In-process photo of Fight or Flight



Figure 10: In-process photo of Hell Hath No Fury



Figure 11: In-process photo 2 of An Innocent Victim



Figure 12: In-process photo of Rebirth

BOOK PROJECT

Writing and Formatting

In the fall of 2020, I had an assignment in my Book Arts class to write and perform a narrative artist's book using specific descriptive vocabulary. During a class brainstorming session, my story came pouring out. Using the symbolism of the hare and the wolf, I was able to describe my personal experience of trauma in vivid language. Using Adobe Illustrator, I created a mock-up of the design which I printed and constructed. After receiving feedback from my professor, I added subtle imagery to the background and adjusted the color of the text to fit the tone of the story.

Printing and Assembly

Once I gathered my materials, I began printing the pages. This took several tries as I had to adjust the opacity of the background imagery for readability. I then cut and assembled the printed pages in the double-sided accordion style, using half-letter sheets of paper attached on either side to create the accordion. This process is time-consuming because the work is completed in small sections and each section must dry before it can be attached to the next. Precision and accuracy are key to making sure the pages line up correctly.



Figure 13: Title page of healing is (really fucking) hard



Figure 14: Spine photo of healing is (really fucking).hard

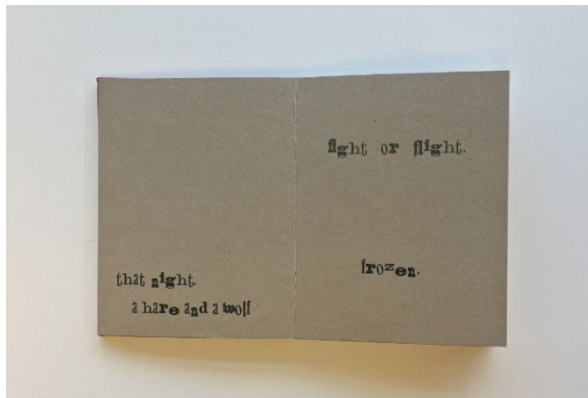


Figure 15: Photo of first page spread



Figure 16: Photo of page spread

Performance: Audio and Video Recording

To create my performance piece, I first recorded a video of myself flipping through the book using my phone camera, then recorded the audio of myself reading the book in a friend's recording studio. Using Adobe Premier, I edited the audio and video clips together to create a cohesive performance reading of the book. I created a looping video where the book-reading repeats every few minutes that played on a TV in the gallery while the audience walked through the installation.

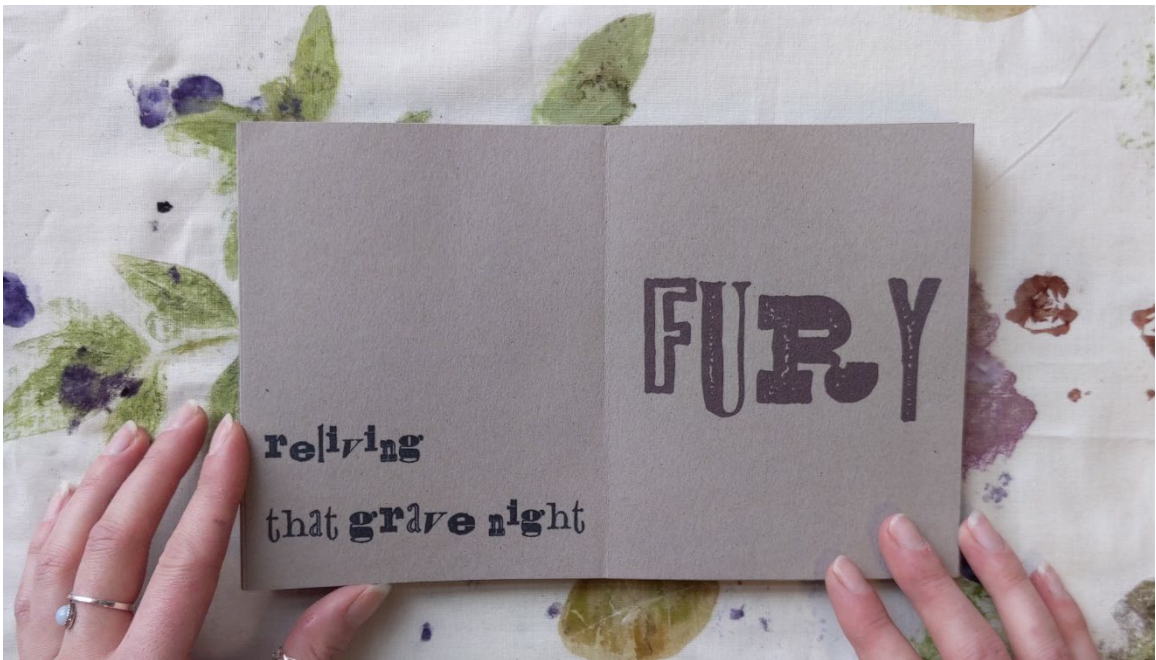


Figure 17: Screenshot of Performance Video

SCULPTURE

Construction

Like much of my Honors Thesis project, this sculpture process was entirely different from anything I had done before. I began by using an armature (a rod attached to a base) to pile on solid chunks of clay, then rough out the form of the hare bust. While the clay was still malleable, I refined the shape of the head and neck and began adding texture and mark-making on the surface of the piece. While I let the base harden a little, I formed the ears of the hare, using pillars of clay to keep them standing up while they dried (see Figure x). Once the head was at the leather-hard stage, when the clay is dry enough to support itself but still workable, I hollowed out the 25 pounds of clay that I used to build the structure of the bust. Then, I attached the 13-inch ears to the head, again using supports to hold everything in place as it dried. I let the whole sculpture dry together for several days so that the attachments would cure properly.

Firing and Glazing

Once the piece had dried to the touch, it went into the bisque kiln for about four days to completely remove the water from the clay body. After the piece was bisque-fired, my ceramics professor helped me glaze the 21-inch-long piece by dumping two 5-gallon buckets of glaze into a large plastic bin to dunk the sculpture inside. After letting the glaze dry, it went into the glaze kiln for three days. It came out of the final firing in one piece and with great results.

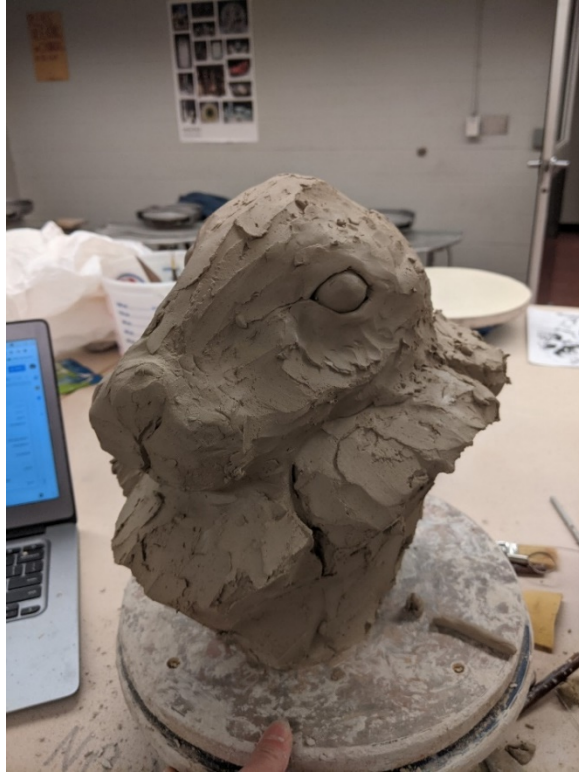


Figure 18: In-process Photo A of Forgiving the Hare



Figure 19: In-process Photo B of Forgiving the Hare



Figure 20: In-process Photo C of Forgiving the Hare



Figure 21: In-process Photo D of Forgiving the Hare



Figure 22: In-process Photo E of Forgiving the Hare



Figure 23: In-process Photo F of Forgiving the Hare

INSTALLATION

Choosing a Space

I arranged to use the 210 Gallery in the Todd building for my multimedia installation. Using the gallery layout online, I created a plan for the installation. This plan included the fabric panels, paintings, book project, video performance, and sculpture. I created a guided path to have the audience walk through to experience the exhibition since there is an intended sequence. I created the space so that, upon entering, the viewer walks through the cycle of women's anger, beginning with fear and apprehension, and moving towards rage and finally recovery.

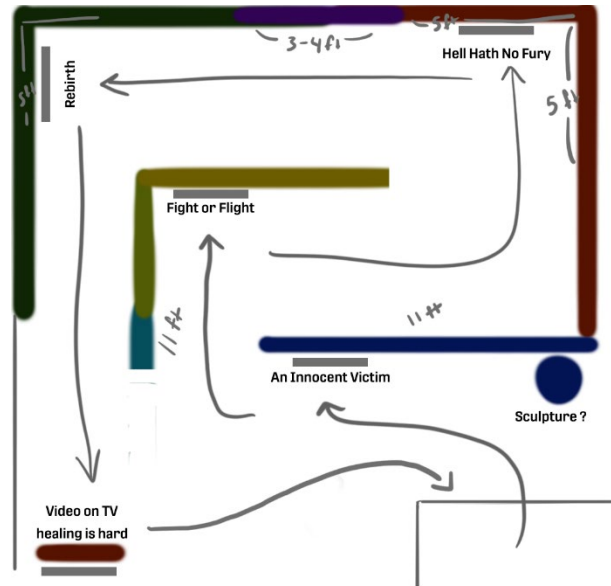


Figure 24: 210 Gallery Installation Plan

Fabric Panels

Choosing Fabric

To complement and punctuate the animal and plant symbolism in my painting series and artist's book, I decided to use natural dyes to color the fabric and incorporate a plant-pounding printmaking technique called Hapa Zome. After some research and consultation with a local artist, I discovered that I needed to use natural fabrics such as cotton or muslin to achieve the desired effect. Over winter break, I tested the Hapa Zome process and tried several different natural dyes on a variety of fabrics. I decided on a

muslin fabric that worked well with both techniques and ordered a large amount from a wholesale supplier.

Natural Dyeing

I planned out the composition of each of the six panels in Adobe Illustrator and chose seven colors I wanted to create: dark blue (black beans), light blue (red cabbage with a small amount of baking soda), yellow (turmeric), light orange (yellow onion skins), pink (beets), purple (red cabbage), and green (red cabbage with a large amount of baking soda). Each color had a unique process necessary to create the dye batch. For example, the red cabbage must be boiled for at least six hours on a low heat, but the turmeric must boil at a high heat for only about an hour. Several of the dyes, such as the black bean dye, require a mordant to bind the color to the fabric. I used alum, or aluminum potassium sulfate, which must be carefully measured and calculated by the weight of the fabric. The alum must be dissolved in boiling water first and then the fabric submerged in the boiling water for several hours to properly mordant. Each color of dye required one or more separate batches of mordanting and dyeing. Due to the limited capacity of my stovetop and garage clothing line, it took several weeks of dyeing fabric to complete all 300 square feet of panels. After all the fabric was dyed and hung to dry, I ironed it all to prepare for sewing.

Sewing

Using the plan I made in Illustrator, I cut and arranged the fabric and pinned the sections together in large 6' x 8' panels. I then carefully brought the panels to the sewing machine in the painting room where I attached all the pieces together. This was the first

sewing project I have done, so it was a great learning experience. In learning how to properly align the corners of different sections, I attached some slightly askew, causing some areas of the fabric look puckered. However, the texture adds to the effect of the final product and activates the surface of the fabric panels. Once I got the hang of the sewing process, the construction of the rest of the panels was relatively simple.



Figure 25: Hapa Zome leaves



Figure 26: Hapa Zome after pounding



Figure 77: Beet Dye Process



Figure 28: Turmeric Dye Process



Figure 29: Dyed Fabric Hanging to Dry



Figure 30: Panel 1 Process A



Figure 31: Panel 1 Process B

Vinyl Letter Application

Once the panels were sewn and constructed, I applied lines of text from my artist's book using custom cut iron-on vinyl designed in Adobe Illustrator and cut with a Cricut cutting machine. I then cut out each word or phrase from the vinyl backing and weeded them, which is taking a small pick tool to pull out the parts of the text that are not meant to print. After I prepared the text, I preheated the fabric with an iron for 15 seconds, laid down the vinyl sheet, then pressed the iron on top for another 30 seconds. This process proved to be quite challenging, and I ran into a few problems along the way. The first time I tried to cut the vinyl, the sheet was placed in the wrong direction and did not cut out correctly. Once I successfully cut out the vinyl, I discovered that certain dyes reacted with the heat of the iron. This reaction created tan sections on the fabric, acting as highlights for certain words. In the end, I was quite happy with the results of the iron-on vinyl.

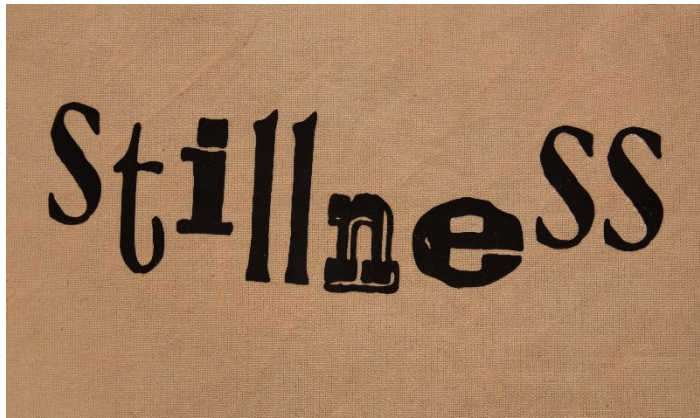


Figure 32: Vinyl Lettering Detail

Hapa Zome: Leaf Pounding

Once I applied the vinyl lettering, it was time to incorporate the Hapa Zome leaf-pounding technique. I gathered leaves and flower petals of varying colors and sizes and pressed them between two sheets of fabric. Using a mallet, I pounded the leaves until the veins of the leaves broke and released the chlorophyll into the fabric underneath, leaving an infused print of the leaf silhouette. I completed several fabric pieces using this technique over winter break when I was experimenting with different processes, and I was able to incorporate those, which included a larger variety of plant leaves, in the final panels.

Gallery Installation

Once I completed the fabric panels, I began to install my work with the help of my thesis advisor and the gallery preparator. I started by suspending the three main fabric panels from the ceiling of the gallery using PVC pipe and fishing line. The last three panels were attached directly to the walls of the gallery using flat thumbtacks. To suspend the paintings, we had D-rings installed on the back of each painting. This allowed us to hang them using fishing line, aligning them with the designs on the suspended fabric.

For my artist's book project, I needed a way to showcase the physical book and the recorded performance. I had a shelf installed in the gallery that I used to display the physical book and a TV in the corner to display the video performance. I hung my URECA project poster next to the book project in the corner, along with the MTSU

undergraduate research magazine in which I was featured this spring. As a final touch, I added title pieces for the show and the book project.



Figure 33: Gallery Install A



Figure 34: Gallery Install B



Figure 35: Gallery Install C



Figure 36: Gallery Install D

ART INSTALLATION: EXPLICATION OF WORKS

An Innocent Victim

As the viewer enters the gallery, on the right is the title, *The Nature of Feminine Rage*, printed using vinyl on fabric dyed with red cabbage. Next, they approach the first blue panel, dyed with black beans and red cabbage, which is 11' x 6', making it a total of 66 square feet. Then the viewer arrives at the first painting in my URECA series of a hare, titled *An Innocent Victim*. It is 16" x 20" and consists of a cool color palette, mostly blues, a little bit of yellows and some oranges for accents. This painting features the European hare, *Lepus Europaeus*, which is considered a natural prey to many animals. In this painting, the hare represents fear and victimization. I incorporated the common mullein flower (*Verbascum thapsus* L.) in this painting for its protective properties, illustrating how fear and anxiety can be useful to protect oneself. Personally, this painting represents the feeling of being stuck, scared, and alone and not knowing where to go. The texts that I included in the collaged background discuss anxiety and depression, even relapse. Within the body of the hare, I wrote "I don't feel at home in my body anymore," referring to the feeling of disembodiment that comes along with trauma. The healing process can be painful at times, and often I ended up reliving my trauma, feeling vulnerable and alone. This painting expresses the emotions of guilt, grief, anxiety, fear, and a sense of disembodiment.



Figure 37: Gallery Shot A



Figure 88: Gallery Shot B



Figure 39: Gallery Shot C, Panel 1



Figure 40: Gallery Shot D, An Innocent Victim



Figure 41: Detail shot of An Innocent Victim



Figure 42: An Innocent Victim

The second panel, which measures 8' x 6', consists of fabric dyed with turmeric, black beans, and onion skins, as well as a Hapa Zome panel that I completed last fall. This panel included more brightly colored fall leaves than the ones I did in February. The book excerpt on this panel says, "there are worse things than death." This line refers to my struggles with mental illness throughout my adolescent and adult life. The assault I experienced my freshman year exacerbated my depression, leading to suicidal thoughts. While dealing with all this trauma and grief, I felt that I would rather die than feel that way or go through that pain again. The concepts of depression and death tie into the imagery and content of *An Innocent Victim*, emphasizing the sense of victimization so many women experience.



Figure 43: Gallery Shot E, Panel 2

Fight or Flight

Next is the yellow and orange panel, dyed with turmeric, beets, and onion skins, which measures 9'x 6'. It begins with the second painting in my URECA project, *Fight or Flight*. Here the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), eyeing her attacker, is a warning sign of danger and represents the moment of fight or flight in a dangerous situation. East Indian Sandalwood (*Santalum album*) is featured in this piece for its sedative effects. These soothing properties can calm the emotions, providing mental clarity for a moment of decision-making. Within the layers of collage in the background, there are quotes about paralysis, fight or flight, shock, fear, anger, adrenaline, and assault. I included a quote from an article discussing how young women are often unsure if the word "assault" applies to them, particularly if they know the offender personally.



Figure 44: Gallery Shot E, *Fight or Flight Panel 3*

This painting is not only about the fight or flight response, which is a psychological term that refers to the body's hormonal response to stressful situations, preparing the body to either physically fight or flee, but is also about the ambiguity of defining your experience.



Figure 45: Gallery Shot F, Fight or Flight

Women are often taught to give men the benefit of the doubt or excuse inappropriate behavior as “boys being boys,” and this piece wrestles with that learned self-doubt versus gut feeling. Learning not to blame ourselves for the violence and oppression we experience is key in growing and healing from our trauma. Following the painting, the excerpt from the book on the panel states, “fight or flight, frozen, as if stillness could save me. DEVoured.” Here, I’m referencing the fight or flight response

but recognizing that in the moment, I did neither. I felt frozen, paralyzed by fear like the hare in the first painting. I was so unsure of how to respond that I simply didn't react. This is a common experience for many women; we are taught to doubt our instincts and therefore are scared to overreact (or are simply unsure of how to react) when a trusted friend or colleague treats us inappropriately. Instead of risk the overreaction and being accused of "crying wolf," we choose to ignore it.



Figure 46: Gallery Shot G, Panel 3 Detail



Figure 47: Fight or Flight



Figure 48: Fight or Flight Background Detail



Figure 49: Fight or Flight Eye Detail

Hell Hath No Fury

The fourth panel measures 4'x6' and includes fabric dyed with beets, turmeric, and red cabbage. I used a warm color palette in this piece, mostly pink and yellow with some warm-toned purple. The excerpt from the book included on this panel is, “wanted to TEAR the skin from my flesh,” which references the snake imagery later in the URECA series. Here it's meant to be a visceral, emotional, graphic reaction to the feeling of being violated. This natural, violent response was my anger turned inward towards myself.

Women often repress anger because we are not taught to express it, but this repression leads to a strong, violent emotion being pent up inside us and turning inward. This particular panel was very cathartic to create because I incorporated a lot of Hapa Zome prints, which allowed me to express frustration through the pounding process.



Figure 50: Gallery Shot H, Panel 4

The next panel features *Hell Hath No Fury* framed by Hapa Zome leaf patterns. This painting was the most emotive for me to paint because the wolf truly embodied the natural vengeance that I felt. I had no other way to describe it except that I wanted to be a wolf lashing out in self-defense. The words and imagery that are included in this painting center around danger, death, and putting a game face on. I had to get myself into the mindset of aggression to combat the fear I was feeling, and that played a lot into this piece. Feeling anger can be empowering because it is a personal defense emotion. Anger acts as a reset button when you find yourself in a situation where your boundaries are being violated. Anger is the emotion that pulls you out of the mindset of people pleasing and the “Human Giver” syndrome and allows you to become your full self. Being wholly feminine includes expressing oneself fully, through anger or otherwise. I used a lot of heavy imagery and symbolism in this piece to emphasize the complex nature of female anger.



Figure 51: Gallery Shot I, Hell Hath No Fury Panel

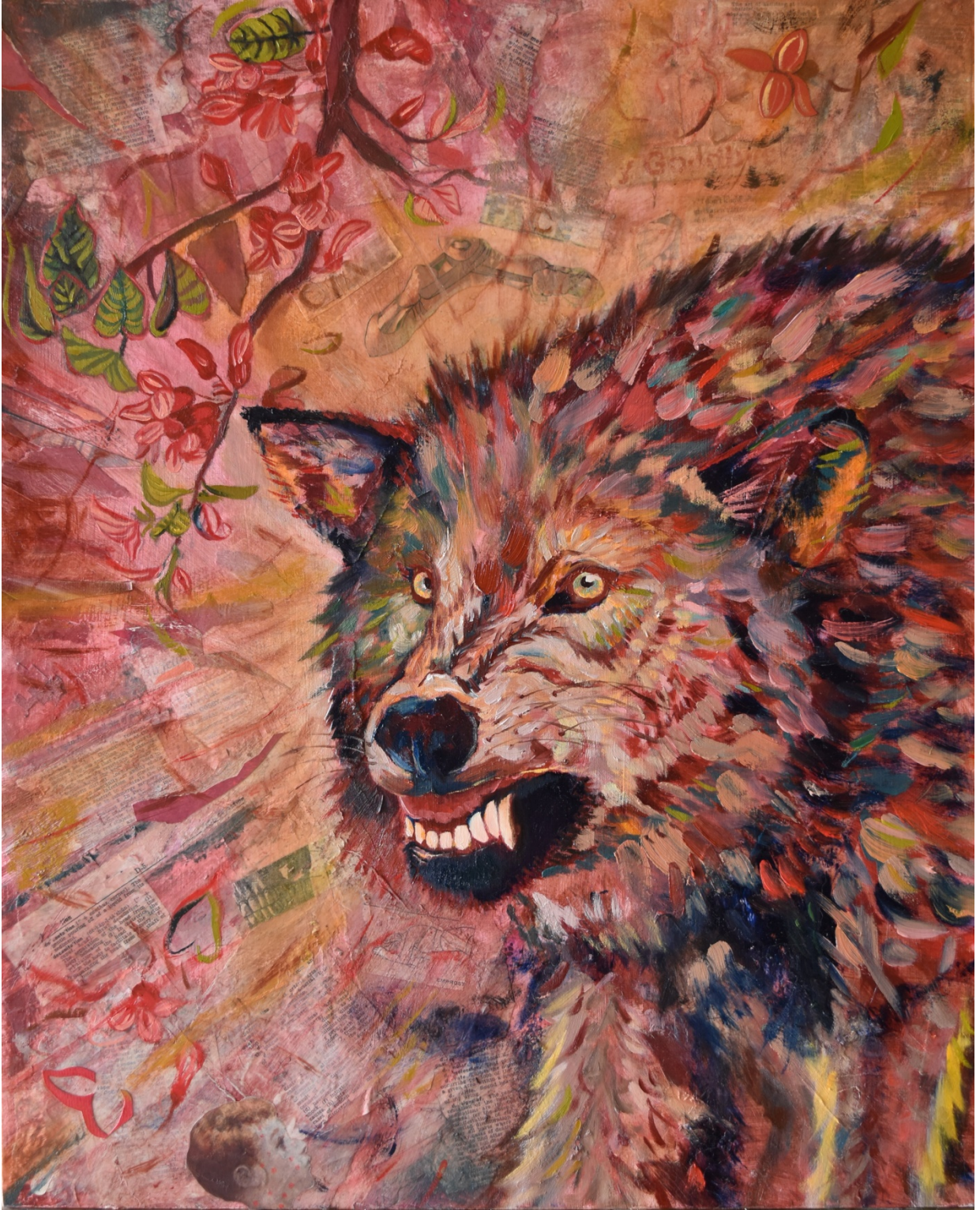


Figure 52: Hell Hath No Fury



Figure 53: Detail Shot A of Hell Hath No Fury



Figure 54: Detail Shot B of Hell Hath No Fury

Rebirth

Finally, the viewer approaches the last fabric panel, which measures 5' x 6' and includes mostly greens and purples. I selected these colors to represent growth and rebirth. I included several lines of text from my book, such as, “shed it all off / a new body, untouched.” This follows the line on one of the previous panels, “wanted to TEAR the skin from my flesh,” and refers to what is perhaps the strongest sensation that I experienced while processing my trauma and anger: the feeling of wishing I could shed my skin like a snake and be in a different body to cope with what I had been through.

Along with this panel is my final painting, *Rebirth*, which features a serpent and garden sage. I selected the sage for its restorative and healing properties, indicating a new beginning. I chose a snake shedding its skin partially for the imagery previously mentioned, but also as a symbol for rebirth. Unlike a butterfly after metamorphosis, the snake is still the same being on the inside and is simply losing an outside protective layer that has served its purpose but is no longer necessary. Many women learn to put up walls after experiencing trauma to protect themselves, and this refers to being ready to let those go and return to oneself



Figure 55: Gallery Shot J

again. While the snake in the final piece is still not as innocent and trusting as the hare, it is not as armored or on edge as the crocodile, nor as aggressive and guarded as the wolf, either. The imagery and text in this piece refer to rebirth, metamorphosis, self-protection, and restoration. My favorite quote in this piece is, “Learning to live again following a severe depression,” which is a process that involved accepting my anger as a part of healing. The symbolism in this painting is truly the culmination of my healing and learning to live with myself again.



Figure 56: Gallery Shot K, Panel 6



Figure 57: Gallery Shot L by Felix Taylor



Figure 58: Rebirth



Figure 59: Rebirth Background Detail



Figure 60: Rebirth Detail

BOOK PROJECT

Including the video of my book-reading performance along with the excerpt printed on the panels became a critical part of my installation because the viewers hear the book being read in the background as they experience the exhibit. Having the artist's book on display allowed viewers to engage with the material in another dimension. To the left of the book display, I hung a poster that I made for my URECA project that explains all of the animal and plant symbolism in my paintings, as well as the article that was published about my project in the MTSU Research Magazine. I included vases of flowers in the exhibit as a comment on femininity, but also as placeholders for a sculpture that was not completed before gallery was over.



Figure 61: Gallery Shot M, healing is (really fucking) hard on display

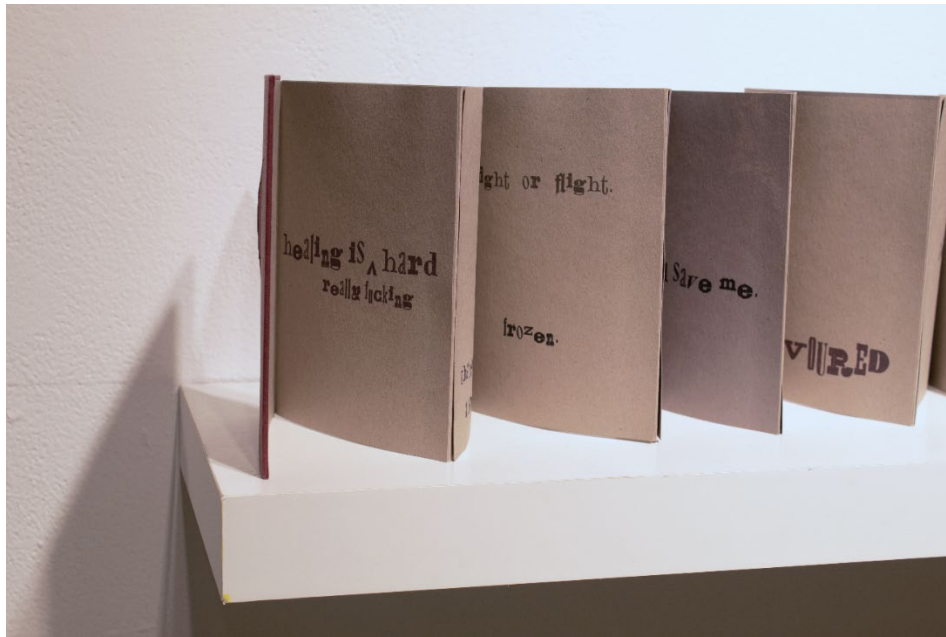


Figure 62: Gallery Shot N, healing is (really fucking) hard Detail



Figure 63: Gallery Shot O, healing is (really fucking) hard Detail



Figure 64: Gallery Shot P, Video Performance



Figure 65: Gallery Shot Q with Dean Vile and Dr. McRae

SCULPTURE

I created this sculpture as a monument to the complex processes of and emotions involved in the exploration of female anger. I used textured mark-making to activate the surface of the hare bust, which I titled *Forgiving the Hare*. The method of mark-making I used on the surface of this piece mirrors the brushstrokes I incorporated in my painting series. Although I was not able to complete it in time for the exhibition in early March, I believe that this sculpture offers another layer of depth to my body of work. The bronze glaze masks the ceramic material and makes it appear like a metal statue, giving it a sense of importance. The symbol of the hare takes on a different role in this piece than in *An Innocent Victim*, appearing here more regal, resigned, and calm. Even with the softness of



Figure 66: *Forgiving the Hare A*

the rabbit's fur, there is a sense of strength to this piece that did not appear in my previous works. The fearful, timid hare is no longer the victim, but instead is able to summon a new strength.



Figure 67: Forgiving the Hare B

RECEPTION

From the day I opened my show on March 1, I began receiving personal messages from students who had seen my work. Several women shared their similar stories of trauma and expressed their gratitude to me for bringing to light such a taboo topic. I felt humbled by these messages and honored that my art had a meaningful impact on others. On March 8, International Women’s Day, I invited my family, friends, classmates, and professors to view my work in the 210 Gallery. The positive response was overwhelming. The affirmation that my audience understood and related to my work gave me confidence to continue sharing my story. The feedback I received was incredible, and I was

particularly impacted by the comments from women thanking me for giving a voice to survivors of assault. Having the opportunity to share my work with a receptive audience and witnessing the impact my project has on their lives was a powerful experience that I will hold with me for the rest of my life.

Visitors' Register

DATE	NAME	COMMENTS	ADDRESS	EMAIL
3.03.21	Marteen Ebrahim	So powerful! And complex!	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3/3	Chedea Gardiner	Introspective & Profound. A sense of healing	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	Excellent!
3-3-21	Susan Lyons	Beautiful!	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3-3-21	Matthew Hibdon	Thank you for sharing your story	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3.3.21	Maggie Strahl	Really powerful. Love your process Very intentional	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3.4.21	Adam Harris	Incredible work Paintings are beautiful Very interesting	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3.4.21	Kathryn Scott	check full of symbols Beautiful. Thoughtful Just like my sister-in-law	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3.4.21	Calvin Scott	Holy Shit	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
2/1/21	Maddie Harlin !!!!!!!	Your story is so incredibly powerful!! you are so strong, thank you for using your work to give a voice to assault victims!!	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3/4/21	Audrey Welshans	I remember when you read this in class, & the gallery has really brought it to life.	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	His so beautiful.
3/5/21	FELIX TAYLOR	THANK YOU FOR YOUR VULNERABILITY IN SHARING. POWERFUL	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3/5/21	Tibyan Ahmed	So amazing + beautiful + powerful! The detail and symbolism is amazing.	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3/5/21	Angela Mentag	Beautiful + powerful!	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3/5/21	Kelsey Keitt	that's my cousin friend	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	
3/5/21	Fiona Chambers	Dept + Healing!	STREET CITY STATE TIME IN TIME OUT	

Figure 68: Page of Comments from Visitor's Register



Figure 69: Gallery Shot R



Figure 70: Panorama Shot of 210 Gallery

CONCLUSION

I created this multimedia installation so that the audience could see my work not as a series of individual paintings on a blank wall, but as a connected concept that materializes through an immersive gallery experience. For this reason, I displayed my art in a guided pathway through the exhibit to allow the audience to explore the work in a multi-sensory way. I intended to create a link between the isolated experience of viewing the work and the daily lives of the participants. After viewing my exhibition, I wanted the audience to leave with a new perspective on their own emotional expression and how they perceive the voices and expressions of others, particularly angry women. For me, this project has been an experimental exploration of various media and techniques as I continued to progress in my artistic skillset. It has been incredible to see this project come to life. It's been very healing and emotional and has been a useful tool for me to use to talk to my family and friends about my personal experiences. Combining my creative research and exploration with the narrative of my own healing and trauma has made my multimedia art installation more relatable to the audience and allowed for a greater impact.

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