Dawn

Hanna Newman

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DAWN

by

HANNA NEWMAN

Under the Direction of Christina A. West, MFA

ABSTRACT

*Dawn* is an exhibition combining fragmented figurative sculptures, altered objects taken from the home, projected video and ambient audio to create an environment that merges physical and psychological spaces. This exhibition uses my ongoing experiences with sleep paralysis and the entanglements produced by my nighttime adventures to situate the viewer in the liminal space that I regularly revisit. In *Dawn*, fragments of figurative self-replicas and fragments of a bedroom become screens for projected imagery that reflect the disorientated feelings associated with moments of transition. Window blinds disrupt projected video of dust floating in the light like stars and murmuration’s passing through the trees in my backyard, obscuring the figure that lies behind the blinds in stripes of light shifting with time. Together in a space, these works are a
lens through which I examine my mental state as a liminal space, like that experienced in a state of sleep paralysis.

INDEX WORDS: Sculpture, The figure, Sleep, Liminal, Photography, Video, Installation, Projection-mapping, Dawn
DAWN

by

HANNA NEWMAN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Fine Arts in Ceramics
in the College of the Arts
Georgia State University
2021
DAWN

by

HANNA NEWMAN

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Georgia State University

May 2021
DEDICATION

For my mom, Dawn, thank you for knowing me, and what’s best for me, better than I know myself. I wouldn’t have done any of this if it wasn’t for you teaching me that I could.

For my dad, Jim, for your unconditional love and for reminding me to toughen up.

For my sisters, Kayla, your honesty has always kept me in check, and Mary, your wisdom constantly inspires me.

For my brother, Derek, thank you for always supporting me, encouraging me, and challenging me.

For Phred, thank you for pushing me to be advantageous and for helping me to realize that I am an artist. I miss you every day.

For Josh, my studio soul-mate. I’m here because of all the time we spent in the studio together.

Thank you to all of my MFA friends that have embraced and endured along with me. The memories we have made will be in my heart always. I’m forever grateful for the family that I inherited through this program.
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1 INTRODUCTION

My sister Kayla and I shared a room in the house where I spent most of my upbringing. One night, I woke up with my eyes closed and a weight on my chest. I was terrified, paralyzed in my bed, struggling to expand my chest with the shouts of panic I felt within myself but could not release. From under my closed eyelids, I could see the bedroom in its haziness. Kayla was asleep in her bed on the other side of the room next to the window that faced the street. The streetlights travelled through the cheap vinyl window blinds and cast stripes that masked her blanketed form along with the walls that surrounded her. I screamed calls to her that never left my still, closed lips. My attention shifted to the open door adjacent to my bed. A shadowy, unrecognizable figure took a single step into the room, looked around, and then stepped out and continued down the hallway. I woke up a minute later. I grew accustom, but never comfortable, to these episodes over the years, not knowing until my late teens that what I had been experiencing was sleep paralysis.

My experiences with sleep paralysis continued throughout childhood and into my adult life. The liminal space that I revisit in this state leaves me feeling separate from my body, trapped within a dwelling of which I can’t control for several minutes, hallucinating the room around me. Shadows take the form of figures and move around the room, growing tauntingly closer and closer to me. In these moments I feel as if my body is not me, but detached and other, and I am in a struggle for reattachment. While my mind is consciously aware of my environment, my body is still stuck in a dream state within the REM cycle, inducing a hallucinated perception of reality. It is difficult to articulate the sounds that pulsate in my head, the movement that occurs within the patterns and shadows that animate an otherwise stationary room, the anxiety I feel in the fight to force out the sounds of my voice through lips that are no longer receiving the
information. As a result of this, I grew up doubting my grasp of reality at times and have questioned the fragility of my mentality as I have further examined my sleep disorders. Sleep paralysis, insomnia, sleepwalking, sleep talking, nightmares and night terrors, repeatedly waking up naked on the couch or in my roommate’s vacant bed, finding the shower dial turned on full heat but the water running cold in the morning, seeing (or not seeing?) shadows morph into forms that linger on the walls and the trees mocking me as they shapeshift through the blinds; all of these experiences have led me to question if what I am experiencing is “real,” or if it is fiction bred from a dream or sleeplessness.

This state of altered reality, this liminal space, is a place in which I situate my figurative sculptures. They exist as I do, in an in-between state as beings that are not fully present yet not fully absent.

2 REALISTIC PERCEPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

My bedroom has always been where I have felt the most in touch with myself and the most out of touch with myself. It is, as it is for most people, consistently a place of comfort, as well as refuge, isolation, and leisure. While it is a place that I associate with my most calm moments of the day it is also closely tied to the stressful and uncomfortable moments I experience in the night. My bedroom, a historical site that by day commemorates my comforting moments and by night condemns those moments in the wake of night terrors and parasomnia, has transformed from a material location to a psychological one.

Sleep paralysis occurs at the onset of sleep or waking up, causing a temporary inability to move. This brief loss of muscle control is known as atonia. Typically, atonia, preventing dreamers from moving during REM, ends upon awakening. Researchers believe that during sleep
paralysis both atonia and mental imagery of REM sleep are occurring at the state of being or becoming aware (waking up), creating a mixed state of consciousness that blends both wakefulness and REM sleep. Those experiencing sleep paralysis remain aware during the episodes, which are frequently accompanied by visual hallucinations of their immediate environment, auditory hallucinations (most commonly consisting of voices, whispers, humming, hissing, zapping, and buzzing sounds), the sensation of suffocation (claiming to be caused by a weighted evil on their chest) and, most notably, immense feelings of fear or panic.1

Whether or not one remembers his or her eyes being open while experiencing sleep paralysis, the immediate environment is often realistically perceived. Each experience varies but all are unified in the general symptoms that tie this occurrence to folklore, art history, and modern psychoanalysis (Fig. 1-6).

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Figure 2. Screenshot of post on subreddit r/Sleepparalysis, 2021.

Figure 3. Screenshot of post on subreddit r/Sleepparalysis, 2021.

Figure 4. Screenshot of post on subreddit r/Sleepparalysis, 2021.
Sleep Paralysis Poem - So this is a poem on sleep paralysis (or is it?) that I penned down during quarantine. I'd love to know what your thoughts on it..

_Skeletons In My Closet_

Quarter past ten, "Jesus Christ, Amen", falls off the lips Couple of sips, clouds dance across a lunar eclipse Faucet drips, as I rip, open the last dose of strip Outside the autumn leaves drop, as if to eavesdrop On every teardrop, shed on a checkered tabletop

Eyes of a sharecropper, stares at a doppelganger An image grotesque - bony, scrawny and angular By no means a stranger, such a figure in the mirror Wisp of smoke, leaves the final flickers of a candle flame Darkness evoked, night bird croons through a shattered window frame

Half past midnight, cold whispers from a door left ajar
Such is my fright, as I sight a creature so bizarre Of demonic height, moulded from the blackest of tar Shadow with eyes hollow, hellish attire of barbwire Bellows as darkness billows, desires to set me afire

Concrete pressure on my chest, by another midnight guest She cackles in jest, cursing me more as I protest Such is her zest to molest, to possess me is her quest 'Tis the old hag, with gargoyle wings and bony fingers Eyes are jet black, I whimper, as the sounds of bone cracks linger

Two and a quarter, sounds of children's laughter from a corner One of which the devil's daughter, smirks at me with a revolver Wicked taste for murder, hellfire sent for my soul's torture Murmurs I now hear, by a man faceless, traceless and shapeless Whispers in my ear, "Soon you'll rest", with the lightest caress

Crawling up my benumbed shin, is the devil's assassin Behold the gremlin, wearing a heinous grin and prickly skin Much to my chagrin, is conscious of my every sin Pleasure and joy he derives, with every slash of the flesh With his blood-stained medieval knife, stabbing me afresh

Hour hand at three, body defenceless and a soul sleepless Paralyzed to the vilest degree, lone witness to such blackness illusion of a breakfree, sweeps over with crystal vividness As the sound of my brother's voice, faintly echoes at my bed But short-lived is my feeble rejoice, my brother is long dead

Skeletons in my closet, tread slowly towards my bed Blood dripping down the socket, critters of the undead Kissing me, hugging me, telling me, "You're not ready yet..." "We'll come back when you are..", My doctor once said, "It's all in your head.." Or maybe the demons in my bed, just want me to think that

_Figure 5. Screenshot of post on subreddit r/Sleepparaylsis, 2021._
I find a connection between these perceptual experiences of sleep paralysis and the way the surrealists depicted the world. The artists and writers of the Surrealist movement were also inspired by sleep and often looked to sleep and dreams for inspiration by tapping into the unconscious. They were influenced by theories of the unconscious developed by psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung that suggested an accordance with dualistic conceptions of the relationship between the mind and body. They sought to bring to light the forgotten and the repressed by using an intuitive approach to creating and using an otherworldly-like aesthetic. The interplay of opposites and the hints at realities undergoing a shift is a prominent characteristic of artists in the era of Surrealism. In Andre’ Breton’s subsidiary definition of surrealism, he states “I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality.”

This resonates with me as I so often find myself amidst a state of mixed-consciousness paralysis. It is where my ideas are born and where the resulting artwork lives.

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3 THE MATERIAL BECOMES THE PSYCHOLOGICAL

I insert obtained objects into my work to create an environment that reasserts the element of the “real.” When I say, “real,” I am thinking about materiality, objects, situations, and things that the mind already knows, just like the artists from the Surrealist and Dada movements that used ready-mades. (Fig. 7). Representational objects from everyday life, banal objects, are immediately identifiable and have the potential of carrying cultural context and symbolic weight. In addition to the context they carry within their materiality, they also create an environment when positioned within a space together.

I often integrate domestic objects such as pillows, sheets, blankets and beds, window blinds, etc., within my sculptures, photographs, and installations. These objects suggest the intimacy of a private setting and blur the boundaries between interior and exterior spaces. I combine them with sections of the figure to explore the unification of the two and the resulting body that they create together. I return to the question I often ask myself: “How can the material stand in for the psychological?” These objects serve as stand-ins for, or extensions of, the psyche; they carry psychological context as their materials blend with the figure. For example, in Unrest, a portable bed folds over onto two ceramic feet that are positioned in an upright position, alluding to the motion of resistance. The blue and white striped fabric of the bed merges with the surface of the ceramic feet, blurring the transition between the material and unifying the two as a singular whole, or a unified body (Fig. 8).

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3 A “ready-made”, also known as “found object”, is a term coined by French artist, Marcel Duchamp, to describe the works of art he made from manufactured objects.
Figure 7. Marcel Duchamp, Bicycle Wheel, New York, 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913).
Figure 8. Hanna Newman, Unrest, found object and ceramic, 2019.

The bed is a recurring symbol in my work, appearing in pieces Law of Closure, and Threshold, featured in my thesis exhibition, Dawn (Fig. 9-11). Not only is it the site for my nightly parasomnia and my daily destress, but it has also become a psychological extension of myself. In Law of Closure, the figure is photographed on a bed. Made up of disparate parts, these body fragments come together to suggest an embracing of multiples. I don’t think I could communicate this soft, loving gesture without having the bed as the site. Beds are associated with feelings of comfort, intimacy, love, and rest. It’s where we lay our heads down to sleep,

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4 Parasomnias are characterized by undesirable physical or verbal behaviors such as sleepwalking or talking, sleep terrors, nightmares and sleep paralysis.
hold the ones we love close (as well as ourselves), and reflect in comfort on the day. The two pillows in this photograph suggest a resting space for two separate heads, although it is being occupied by one figure. I’m trying to hint at the multiplicity that takes place within the self that for me takes place most particularly, and most frequently, in the bed. For me, the bed space and the head space (i.e., the psychological space) intertwine and combine. This idea is conveyed in a slightly different way in *Threshold*, which uses a real bed that sits upright, ninety degrees from its intended orientation. On one side of this upright bed are figurative fragments, held tightly to the bed defying gravity. The bed and the figure become one, and the weight of the two pressed together reminds me of the feeling of pressure on my chest felt in sleep paralysis. This piece is a darker take on the bed as a site for discomfort, fear, and anxiety.
Figure 11. Hanna Newman, Threshold, altered bed, resin, projection, paint, 2021.
4 THE STRIPED LIGHTS

Through the lens of my camera, I extract abstract qualities from the real, physical world. In *Streetlights through window blinds*, I look back to my experience of the moon light cast through the blinds that night in the room I shared with Kayla, where I experienced sleep paralysis for the first time. In this image, the blue and orange stripes that fill the wall next to the bed capture a moment that lasts only for a few minutes. In this moment, the room glows with colorful and decorative patterns that don’t exist in the daylight hours. They remind me of the shape my environment takes at night and portray an aesthetically pleasing picture of an hour that I only experience in my episodes of insomnia (Fig. 12).

*Figure 12. Hanna Newman, Streetlights through the blinds, digital photograph, 2020.*
This photograph, inspired by the memory of Kayla and the streetlights through the vinyl blinds that night as a child, influenced the installation, *Time’s Relentless Melt*, exhibited in *Dawn*. In this installation, I projection-map\(^5\) video onto vinyl blinds that are suspended in the space in front of a resin cast figure (Fig. 13-15). The translucent quality of the vinyl allows for the lights to pass through the blinds while also holding the image, making it the ideal screen. The light from the projected video travels through the cheap vinyl blinds and masks the figure behind them (Fig. 16). The blinds act as a mediator, disrupting the footage before it hits the figure and its surroundings. The blinds play an important role in situating the viewer within a bedroom and the participatory role that the viewer plays within it. Standing outside of the blinds, one can take on the role of the spectator, looking in at the figure from the “outside.” Standing on the “inside” of the blinds, viewers can situate themselves alongside the figure with the video projected on their bodies.

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\(^5\) Projection-mapping is a technique used to project video onto irregular shapes.
Figure 13. Hanna Newman, Time’s Relentless Melt, installation combining mixed video projection, vinyl blinds, resin, fishing line, 2021.
Figure 14. Hanna Newman, Time’s Relentless Melt, installation combining mixed video projection, vinyl blinds, resin, fishing line, 2021.
Figure 15. Hanna Newman, Time’s Relentless Melt (detail), installation combining mixed video projection, vinyl blinds, resin, fishing line, 2021.
THE UNCANNY

It may be true that the uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and the emerged from it.

Sigmund Freud

In Freud’s essay, “The Uncanny” (1919), he associates the uncanny with the bringing to light of what was hidden or secret, defining it as “that class of the terrifying which leads us back to something long known to us, once very familiar.” The uncanny is regarded as a physical sensation tied to the act of remembering, described by Freud as a feeling that is somewhat
familiar but also foreign. It’s often related to experiencing a moment of déjà vu and produces a somewhat muted sense of horror or confusion, producing goosebumps or “spine-tingling” sensations. These experiences are related to “out-of-body” experiences, where one becomes bodily aware and reminded of mortality. Examples of objects said to evoke an uncanny reaction include waxwork figures, artificial dolls, mannequins, puppets, and automatons. In this essay Freud also cites Ernst Jentsch, who located the uncanny in “doubts” about “whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate.”

The figurative sculptures I create are cast fragments of my own body, representing my body in hyper-realistic detail while isolating those fragments from the rest of the body, evoking feelings of the uncanny. I use a silicone rubber called body double to take molds of my own body which allows me to capture every goosebump, scar, risen tattoo, fingerprint and wrinkle on my skin (Fig. 17-19). The resulting molds are like photographic negatives in that they are indexical impressions and allow me the capability to produce multiple replicas. From the molds I reproduce resin casts that act as three-dimensional photographs in the form of fragmented body parts. They are simultaneously a piece of the imaginative-interpretive realm and a piece of the material world, “something stenciled,” as Susan Sontag said, “directly off the real.”

Casting creates an interstice at the surface, a plane of difference that can never actually be

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occupied. The imprint is created by proximity but not separation from one surface to another: a distance, however infinitely small, is always implied.\(^8\)

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Figure 17. A rubber mold of my face, 2019.
Figure 18. My arms covered in Body Double-SILK, process shot of life-casting my arms to create a rubber mold, 2021.
Figure 19. The resin casts made from the molds shown in Figure 9, 2021.
For me, it carries great weight to know that these casts were created by direct physical contact with my body. It’s like looking at yourself in the mirror, searching your reflection for anything that might be unfamiliar. The likeness they have to my skin, yet otherness they convey through their detachment, produces within me feelings of the uncanny as described by Freud, reminiscent of the feelings I associate with my sleep paralysis-induced moments of self-detachment. In these moments my mind feels separate from my body; it is like my consciousness is rustling around a cage, unable to break the boundaries of skin and let free. I get a jarring feeling when I look at these life-casts of myself, these anatomically accurate hollowed fragments. They’re certainly uncanny reminders that while my body serves as my dwelling it can also serve as my cage.

I get a similar feeling in my gut when I see old photographs of myself. Like these casts, and like the photographs I make of these casts, when I look at old pictures of myself I get a weird, sort of, “out-of-body” experience. It reminds me of my mortality. The casts are a moment of myself captured in time, a moment that is gone that I will look back on and say things like, “wow, look at how young I looked back then.” Susan Sontag insisted that all photographs are both a “pseudo presence and a token of absence.” Every photograph’s poignancy is inextricably involved with time’s passing. “All photographs are memento mori.” To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) morality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.” A life cast functions in this same way, as it is a negative, an impression, of a person in a specific

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9 Memento mori, Latin for ‘remember that you [have to] die,’ is an artistic or symbolic reminder of the inevitability of death; an artwork designed to remind the viewer of their mortality and of the shortness and fragility of human life.
moment in time. Through the fragmented life cast, the absence of the original subject is dragged into the viewer’s presence.\textsuperscript{10}

I point to the relationship between the photograph and the life cast by placing pieces, \textit{Law of Closure} (Fig. 9-10), and \textit{Law of Past Experience} (Fig. 20), across from each other in the gallery space. These works are iterations of one another, one being a large photograph printed onto fabric and the other being a pile of figurative fragments on the floor. Though they differ in scale, material, and arrangement, they are constructions of the same resin casts existing in different forms yet occupying the same space. They sit across from each other in the space, facing towards one another like a mirroring reflection, an ode to Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage.\textsuperscript{11,12}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}


\end{thebibliography}
Figure 20. Hanna Newman, Law of Past Experience, resin, 3’x3’x1’, 2021.

6 THE FRAGMENTED SELF

“All sorts of things in this world behave like mirrors”

Jacques Lacan

“The ‘self’ is plural, variegated, polyphonic, and multi-voiced. We experience an illusion of unity because of the mind’s capacity to fill in the blanks and forge links”.13 Research in cognitive psychology, neurophysiology, and child development indicates that the brain, the

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mind, and the self are normally multiple and that the idea of the unity of self is an illusion. According to Daniel Siegel, psychiatrist, author and clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA, “studies in child development suggest, in fact, that the idea of a unitary, continuous ‘self’ is actually an illusion our minds attempt to create…” Each version of the ‘self’ has a state of mind or mental state as a building block. Siegel defines a state of mind as the “total pattern to activations in the brain at a particular moment in time.” “These basic states of mind are clustered into specialized sub-selves, that have an enduring pattern of activity across time… When a state of mind is repeatedly activated, it may become a ‘self-state’ or specialized self.”

According to Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist that was referred to as the earliest experiences of the body are of the fragmented body. Infants experience themselves as separate parts or “turbulent movements.” They see their hands, feet, legs, and other skin surfaces isolated from the rest of the body, understanding the self as an assemblage and not a whole. When the infant becomes a child and is introduced to their reflection in the mirror, they begin to recognize their image and understand themselves as a unified body. In this moment, which Lacan calls the mirror stage, the previously fragmented experience of the self is pieced together in the reflection of the unified whole. Lacan believes that because the child first saw its body as ‘a collection of discrete part-objects, adults can never perceive their bodies in a complete fashion in later life'. The idea of the ‘normal’ body is the body that is developed later, the one that we develop and become familiar with. The ‘normal’ body is in effect a Gestalt, a unified wholeness, that Lacan would place in the realm of the Imaginary,

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15 Gestalt refers to the form or shape of something and suggests that the whole is the greater than the sum of the parts.
which is characterized by a wholeness and completeness that figure a return to the original state of being; it is a dream-state, a realm of fantasy.\textsuperscript{16}

I’m interested in how the self can be made up of disparate parts, and how those separate parts come together to suggest a whole yet celebrate the fragmentations that make it up. In my photograph, \textit{The Law of Closure}, I explore the notion of the body, and of identity, being made up of separate parts that the mind perceives as a unified whole. The resin casts within these photographs, when positioned within proximity to each other, create the illusion of a whole. The title of the piece is inspired by one of the five laws of perception in Gestalt psychology. Gestalt theory is based on the idea that human beings experience the world in meaningful patterns or as organized wholes because of their cognitive tendency to combine isolated ideas and stimuli into meaningful, complex arrangements. As a result of our mind’s tendency to “seek completion,” we see people, flowers, and so forth as opposed to the fragments of patterns and colors that make up the wholes. You’ve likely experienced this when you looked for a shape in a cloud or identified a constellation in the stars or even saw a face in the grain of wood. The Law of Closure, in Gestalt's five Laws or Perception, describes our tendency to look for unity in objects in order to pair them as a single unit. Our minds will fill in the breaks between objects, or negative space, in effort to perceive a series of objects as a whole.

I’m interested in the ability of the fragmented body and absent body to communicate psychological distress. In my second year of graduate school, I began to use my life-casts in photography to animate them in a way I felt wasn’t achievable through sculpture alone. In a series of photographs titled, \textit{Me and You}, I situate fragmented replicas of my body within my

living space and document their relationships with each other within my own living quarters. (Fig. 21-24). For example, *Me and You (in bed in the morning)*, appears to be the hands of two individuals embraced in a moment of isolated love (Fig. 21). However, in this photograph I used two halves of a single cast of my arm and situate them together on my bed. The proximity between the base of each arm-half suggest that they are separated bodies that come together in caressing hands that hold one another atop the pillow, mimicking two lovers in embrace.

Unknown to myself at the time of creation, this series allowed me to project the loneliness I was feeling amidst the Covid-19 quarantine period onto substitute bodies. Through this work I realized the desire I felt for self-love and companionship with myself that I wasn’t aware was lacking and was effecting my mental health.

*Figure 21. Hanna Newman, Me and You (in bed in the morning), inkjet print, 10”x8”, 2020.*
Janine Antoni explores similar concepts of relationships with the self in *Lick and Lather*. In this body of work, Antoni used a life-cast of her head to make a series of self-portraiture busts, with seven cast in chocolate and the other seven cast in soap. Antoni re-sculpted her image by licking the chocolate busts and washing herself with the soap versions (Fig. 23-24). In an interview about *Lick and Lather*, Antoni stated,

“A lot of times, there’s this element of destruction, that we have to kind of unmake in order to make, and that interests me very much. And, also, working from very basic materials. I’m also thinking a lot about this idea that there’s this kind of relationship between me and her, that I’m literally feeding myself with myself and washing myself with myself. So, there’s this circular narrative that’s happening.”
When I am arranging these body casts with one another, other objects, and/or within a space I am thinking about this idea of destruction pointed out by Antoni; elaborating on this concept of unmaking in order to make, Antoni goes on to say,

“I think that because the process is so, sort of, gentle and loving, there is some kind of idea of self-love. You know, of trying to come to terms with that surface being you. I think that—and I don’t know about you, but—when I look in the mirror, I don’t really recognize myself. I somehow see myself as I was as a little girl or in other manifestations of myself. So, it’s always this contemplative moment, of trying to come to terms with what I see and how that relates to what I feel inside and trying to bring those two things together. So, I think with this whole process, you can imagine how jarring it is or how peculiar it is to lick yourself. It’s like being your own lover, like putting yourself in the position of your lover and trying to understand what they’re seeing when they look at you.”¹⁷

Figure 23. Janine Antoni. Lick and Lather (detail), 1993. 7 soap and 7 chocolate self-portrait busts; 24 x 16 x 13 inches each.
7 BOTH SIDES OF MY BEDROOM WALL

In my most recent works, I explore the use of time-based media to speak to interiority. The video becomes the psychological as it is projected onto the surface of the fragmented figures. Video simultaneously creates a sense of time and extends my interest in altering imagery extracted from the physical, real world.

The source material for the projections used in *Threshold*, and *Time’s Relentless Melt* was video footage I made while in my bedroom and in my backyard, just on the other side of my bedroom window. I recorded floating specs of dust, illuminated by the afternoon light that passed through my bedroom window, settling slowly like constellations in the wake of night; a murmuration of birds that flew as individuals but traveled through the trees, well-choreographed
and with effortless precision, as if they were one; the early morning sun rays that passing through the peaks between the rooftops and the pines, abstracted by refractions when seen through my eyeglass lens. I edit these videos, enhancing the colors and slowing them down to heavily emphasize moments that otherwise pass by too quickly or go unnoticed. My alterations imbue the footage with a dream-like feeling of serenity, obscured by lens-shifting blurs.

Figure 25. Hanna Newman, *Time’s Relentless Melt*, vinyl blinds, resin, video projection, fishing line, dimensions vary, 2021.
In *Threshold*, I project onto the back of the vertical bed a compilation of footage that includes the rising sun seen through my eyeglass lens; a crystal object that dangles in the window; clouds passing each other at different rates, overlapping in their horizontal or vertical paths across the sheet; home videos that focus on a group of birds at the park; and a glass sphere, turning the world upside before disappearing into the sheet like a moon in the night sky. The video loops, starting again with the rising sun seen through my eyeglass lens. While the front of the bed illustrates the body at rest with the figurative casts that are attached to it, the back of the bed speaks to the interiority of the figure on the other side with its projected imagery.
Figure 27. Hanna Newman, Threshold, bed, paint, resin, video projection, 5'x5'x6.6', 2021.

8 AMBIENCE

In *Dawn*, I collaborated with AV engineer\(^{18}\) and musician, Christopher Brooker, to create the audio element that uses a collage of field recordings and synthesis to enhance the ephemeral feelings associated with my sleep disorders. The field recordings were gathered from environments from daily life such as back porches, art galleries, and voicemail inboxes (Fig. 29). These sounds include birds singing, airplanes passing above, late night voicemails, a distant train horn, and a reworked melody from Erik Satie’s Gymnopédie #1. The melody aids in the sense of time passing and adds to the dream-like feeling of the space as a whole. Using lengthy fades, it weaves elongated samples in and out, evoking feelings of time slowing down and speeding up.

For this piece I thought a lot about the sounds that keep me up at night and how they transition into the sounds of morning. I have the kind of mind that will take off once my head hits the pillow. I replay conversations from the day, memories from when I was a kid, remember a text I forgot to reply to from a week ago, and obsess over every thought until they all overlap, intertwine and repeat.

\(^{18}\) The “AV” in “A/V engineer” refers to Audio/Visual, Audio/Video.
Figure 29. Documentation of filed recording process using a Zoom H6 recorder.
9 DAWN

Dawn creates a realm where the viewer can reconsider physical spaces as psychological ones (Fig. 30-35). This exhibition combines four mixed pieces to create an installation that blurs the boundaries between interior and exterior spaces.

When approaching the space, viewers can either enter from the right or the left side of the gallery. When entering from the right side of the gallery they are confronted with a bed standing upright with the headboard on the floor. On the surface of the bed attached at eye level are two feet, while two arms and shoulders lie at the bed’s headboard. The figure, or what is present of the figure, appears to be lying on its stomach in a slumber. Whether or not the figure’s absence is indicating its descendence into sleep or if its presence is implying an awakening is unclear; it is somewhere in-between. When viewers walk around to the back of the bed they experience the reveal of the projection on the back of the box spring.
Figure 30. Installation shot of thesis exhibition, Dawn, 2021.
When entering from the left side of the gallery viewers approach a set of three vinyl blinds, suspended in the space mimicking a household window. The blinds float next to one another, creating a large rectangular wall the resembles the scale of *Law and Closure*, which sits against the opposite wall. Video is projection mapped onto the set of three blinds, creating three individual projection screens that display three different videos, periodically coming together as one to from a singular video stretched across all three of the vinyl screens. The videos projected onto the blinds interchange between footage captured from within and outside of the walls of my bedroom. The projected imagery shifts scenes and colors, casting its light onto the blinds and traveling through them, surfacing the walls and the figure that lay on the other side with stripes.
of shifting light. Viewers can observe the blinds from either side, choosing to stand on the outside of the blinds and look in at the figure or to join the figure in the striped room.

**Figure 32. Installation shot of thesis exhibition, Dawn, 2021.**

In between the two mixed media installations sits a pile of figurative parts, apparently in the midst of either coming together or coming apart. Across from the figure is a photograph of the figure itself, at its best. Printed on fabric and delicately hanging from the ceiling, the photograph is the mirrored reflection of the pile. They face each other as familiars and as others. Their scale, material and existence take completely different forms, yet they are merely renditions of one another.
Figure 33. Installation shot of thesis exhibition, Dawn, 2021.

The show is tied together by the audio that plays at an elevator music level and serves to further allude to a mixed state of consciousness. All of these components of the show work together to create a space inspired by the moments I experience during sleep paralysis.
Figure 34. Hanna Newman, Law of Closure, inkjet print on poly silk fabric, 10'x6.6', 2021.

Figure 35. Time’s Relentless Melt, film still, 2021. https://vimeo.com/533693546
10 CONCLUSION

*Dawn* became a body of work that coalesced the multiple forms of artmaking I’ve explored while relating back to my childhood and ongoing experiences with sleep paralysis and my fascination with the liminal environments it instigated. The memory of my hallucinated room and Kayla adorned with streetlight cast stripes that night was the launching of my fascination with mixed states of consciousness. This entrapment between my mind and body catapulted my questions around my perceived identity and environment. This work begins to bring to the surface questions about mental well-being that were previously repressed. It’s helped me to look more closely at myself and think harder about what has brought me here.
Through the research, experimentation, and creation of this work, I confronted versions of myself that previously lay dormant. Of all the work I made during my graduate education, *Dawn*, connected the most to my background and childhood; it travels through the deepest reservoirs of my personal memories, my mental well-being through a time imbued with isolation inflicted by a global pandemic, and fragility inherent to the relationship with myself.

My graduate experience here at GSU may end with this exhibition but my career as an artist starts with it. I plan to continue this body of work that combines figurative and mixed media sculpture with video projection to create installations that use my personal history, environment and experiences to approach questions around perceived realities and liminal spaces.
REFERENCES


