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Formerly Known as Nasty: from womanhood to enlightenment

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Master of Science in Communication and Digital Media: Media Technologies
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“For most of history, Anonymous was a woman.”
On Womanhood & Enlightenment

The documentation of history, for the most part, cast out female participation. Whether in grand scale events or within the simplicity of home, to be a woman is to be silenced. I understood this from a young age. For the past eight years, the focus of my work has centered around the female experience under social, or personal anxiety. Today, however, I am interested in articulating the censored voice. I cannot speak for all women, for many don't feel identified; and my intent is not to create a homogenous representation of women. The body of work compiled in this portfolio partakes with the extensive feminist wave of the twenty-first century. It also aspires to create a narrative that benefits ourselves. "Formerly Known as Nasty" invites a diverse dialogue about the struggle between tradition and progress based on historical events and various Buddhist teachings.
Buddhism acknowledges that, “Voice does the Buddha’s work.” These words profoundly resonate with me. A Buddha is an ordinary person who attains enlightenment; and an enlightened person is one who awakens to the universal truth of life and is capable of manifesting courage, wisdom, and compassion regardless of circumstance. Doing this without changing one's essence or form is known as attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. In the context of this portfolio, to go from womanhood to enlightenment means to let go of a transient identity built under the domain of patriarchy. It is to reveal a truer self that flourishes with the freedom coming from an inner light.
“Formerly Known as Nasty” offers a multimedia gallery which includes diverse photographic portraits, a six-minute film, numerous illustrations, and a two-minute animation. The work was completed during Lynn Master's Program for Communications: Media Studies; and I added an independent study to strengthen the conclusion. This project strives to be the conceptualized fusion of media theories with new media technologies. The portfolio is organized into four chapters: Identity, Discrepancy, Equality, and Femininity. Each chapter engages with topics such as gender identity trans awareness, social inequality, and self-worth. A selected amount of pieces for this collection are presented as one-on-one interviews. This technique helps me create an intimate atmosphere for revelation.
Identity
Sociologist Stuart Hall views identification as a construction, a process never completed. Featuring fractured stories of a single moment of life, “Identity” records crucial junctures through the life of three individuals. Some moments are subtle or spontaneous; while other require more planning or medical procedures, like in the case of Connor, a special guest in this series. Another person I photographed, with whom I open this portfolio, is Jannette. When I met Jannette, she was wearing a forced smile on her face. She was jobless, almost homeless, and running out of money by the minute. At forty, her 15-year relationship had come to an end. She had never been married.
Hopeless, ashamed, and heartbroken, she took an opportunity to work in the United States and moved, leaving behind a 22-year-old son and a 3-year-old grandson. For this she was criticized by many. Only two weeks after her arrival, she was told that they could not hire her. Her luck was such, that even her overpriced-used car let her down on the highway several times. We often talked about having dreams. Jannette didn’t know what her dreams were, but she was willing to fight for at least one. In terms of her identity, she knew she was a mother and a woman, but she didn’t really know who she was as an individual. I knew I had to take her picture and capture the essence of her “tragic story.” Not because I pity her, but because on some level I praise her courage to start afresh. Although forced, her smile wasn’t fake; I have seen it in women of all ages, I have seen it in the mirror.
Aesthetics of Digital Photography

GVC 530
Digital Storytelling

GVC 570
Discrepancy
The illustrations in this chapter play with the aesthetics of the Eighteenth Century which is known as the Age of Reason and Enlightenment. Although most literary work insinuates that women are designed to possess a docile blind obedience and sweet attractive grace, this intellectual period advocates freedom and democracy. Even when perceived as knowledge, enlightenment remains a male privilege. Among the few female philosophers from this era, Mary Wollstonecraft stands out. She noted that what is recognized as “deficiency” in women is not an innate condition; rather, is the lack of formal education limiting their intellectual development. The characters in this chapter respond to “light” in the way that best befits their circumstances. One is submissive; the second one is direct due to privilege; and finally the third character unflinchingly refuses to be demeaned and looks away.
Drawing & Design Theory

GVC 535
Equality
Similarly to other religions, Buddhism makes use of stories and parables to convey messages. One, for example, is the story of the Dragon King’s Daughter. She is introduced in chapter twelve of the Lotus Sutra as a half human half dragon eight-year-old; according to the story, she dwells in the depths of the ocean. Teachings previous to the Lotus Sutra believed that women weren't eligible to attain enlightenment and instead, were encouraged to pray and hope to be reborn as men in future existences. Because of her natural features of being female, half reptile, and half human, she’s unqualified to possess enlightenment. She refuses this idea and her sincere wish to do so becomes the main cause of her attaining enlightenment.
The Dragon King's Daughter tale is the inspiration of two final pieces included in the portfolio, Dragon Lady and Mafalda's Sick Sad World. From Image Making, Dragon Lady is my personal interpretation of the original character as a grown woman. Adapted from Argentinian cartoonist, Quino, Mafalda's Sick Sad World is a short animation featuring a seven-year-old girl with a critical perspective on current sociopolitical events. Although fully human, Quino's creation of a young girl to voice concerns and challenge social norms embodies the spirit of the Dragon King's Daughter. In my animation, Mafalda's eloquence is reconstructed into a more sinister look to fit the tone.
Image Making as Expression

GVC 575
If not NOW, NOW

when

when
Animation & Motion Graphics

GVC 580
Quino’s Mafalda
In the same way that women are not limited to display feminine attributes, femininity is not exclusive to the woman experience. For the last chapter of this portfolio, I decided to create an independent study to commend the courageous individuals out there in society bending and refining social norms. In many cases, they are the ones with the ability to encourage women to be their best self. Because sometimes they wear it better than me, *Femininity* is dedicated to them.
Current Work
POETRY

Yuki Jackson

A Mini-Chapbook