

# PLAY House:

The Art of Finding Queer Pleasure in (Private & Public) FUN + PLAY

by

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LOCATED ON THE UNCEDED, TRADITIONAL, AND ANCESTRAL xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (MUSQUEM),  
Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (SQUAMISH), AND səlilwətaʔl (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) TERRITORIES

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Welcome :)

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Thank you, Reader.

## Abstract

Utilizing a TRANSdisciplinary and iterative process, with a focus on collage and installation, I am investigating identity & Private spaces in relationship to the Public spaces of the Art Gallery & Internet. My thesis project, [\*PLAY House\*](#) (2021), comprises three installation works that occupy, whether physically or digitally, the same three-walled room. [\*Holliday Home \(Glitch of the Heart\)\*](#) (2020), [\*MySpace.jpg\*](#) (2020), and [\*PLAY Room\*](#) (2021) were all created during the Covid-19 pandemic and explore intimacy, collaboration, isolation, and self-reflection with a focus on transforming a Public space. These installations act as self-portraits that aim to invite the viewer into a Private space as a means of creating understanding and connection between the artist & the participant.

As my work is autobiographical, my positionality as a Canadian Queer Disabled '90s Kid is key to unpacking my methodology of FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) art, terms I've invented for the purpose of this thesis. While both FUN + PLAY evoke child-like pleasure, FUN(ny) is one's experience with pleasure, and is a synonym for something humorous, while PLAY(sure/ful) is the thing that activates one's experience with pleasure and a synonym for sexuality. Ideally, FUN + PLAY activate Queer Pleasure (Pride & Joy), which decreases Queer Pain (Shame, Anxiety, and Depression). FUN + PLAY are essential to our survival, culture, learning and innovation (Koster, Huizinga, Brown). Queerness & Disability drive me to engage in FUN + PLAY and dictate my choice of a Colourful, Campy, Maximalist, DeSkilled or "BAD," Dada, POP Art aesthetic. This hybridized aesthetic is funneled into my research on private space as self-portraiture & its relationship to the public art world (e.g. Vincent van Gogh, Robert Rauschenberg, Tracey Emin, and Erica Stocking). Through my research & practice I conclude that Queer Pleasure & FUN + PLAY are essential in how we connect to ourselves and others in an uplifting way that is generative for learning, creativity, self-love, and community building.

## Research Questions

Using a TRANSdisciplinary approach to Queer Pleasure, how can I create an inviting & Personal space in a Public Art<sup>1</sup> context with imbedded activities that stimulate PLAY and maintain FUN for participants?

Simultaneously, how can I create a research document that explores the concept of Finding Queer Pleasure through FUN + PLAY in a form that is authentically FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful), while still remaining comprehensible to a reader.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While Public Art traditionally refers to artworks that are placed in a public setting outside the gallery context, here I am using Public Art to mean any Artwork that is shown in a Public Space. Public Space in the context of *PLAY House* is Emily Carr University of Art + Design and the Internet but expands to anything outside the Private Space.

<sup>2</sup> Let it be noted here that the original document was too Absurd, Bad, and Cluttered for comprehensibility. Game developer and theorist Raph Koster would call it too complex, too noisy. He states that “When we meet noise, and fail to see a pattern in it, we get frustrated and give up” (25). But there is also a danger in over simplifying something to the point of it being boring (19), such as tic-tac-toe (5); (**Glossary** – Active vs Passive FUN + PLAY).

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All figures have been used with the artist(s) permission.

## Reader Discretion is Advised

Before you continue reading this document, I need you to know that I am deeply devoted to the seriously silly study of Queer Pleasure (FUN + PLAY) in Art + Writing + Education + (physical & digital) Life. As such, the form must match the content. Thus, I utilize Poetry-PLAY to pursue this document with the FUN it ignites (**Glossary** – PLAY(sure/ful)). Here, I present my research through a non-binary expression of Queer Pleasure (FUN + PLAY) in the form of a liminal language that moves between and outside of academic jargon & colloquial meme culture. Therefore, Times New Roman, **Comic Sans**, Footnotes<sup>3</sup>, occasional 🍌 Emojis 🌈 and [Hyperlinks](#)<sup>4</sup> marry in a single text.

This document deliberately Queers the standard MFA thesis, bringing Queer (dis)Pleasure to the reader(s). Some may feel that this divergence from the norm through various acts (including red herrings, jokes, etc.,) is uncomfortable, annoying, and frustrating, whereas others may feel that it is refreshing, inclusive, and liberating. Both of these reactions support the normie vs Queer dynamic (**Glossary** – normie). If the reader is open, they will experience pleasure from this Queering of conventions.

Moreover, I aim to create a FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) experience through the use of Maximalist abundance in my source material and final product(s) (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – Maximalism) that resonates with a liminal online/IRL lived existence [See footnote 68]. Searching is part of the FUN + PLAY of this document as well as the artwork described, so the act of flipping through pages, clicking on links, and scrolling activates this element. *Enjoy!*

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<sup>3</sup> Henceforth all footnotes will be typed with my toes. #PerformanceArt #ActionWriting #JustTrolling

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ>

## Introduction

I use Queer as a term that simultaneously means *odd* and LGBTQIP2SAA+ (**Glossary** – Queer); therefore, Queer Pain is what we experience when we are *othered* by society. Society expresses distaste in our<sup>5</sup> difference by rendering us invisible, silencing our voices, and shaming us into conforming. I offer Queer Pleasure as an antidote to this systemic oppression. Queer Pleasure is the celebration & love of difference, not as a form of tokenism, but rather genuine empathy and understanding. FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) art is a tool in eliciting Queer Pleasure in the artist & (potentially) the viewer. Through my research I have discovered an aesthetic formula that leads to the confrontation of Queer Pain and the discovery of Queer Pleasure:

Queer = FUN(ny)

Pleasure = PLAY(sure)

FUN + PLAY = Queer Pleasure

This formula provides a foundation of understanding into why FUN + PLAY, and FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) Art, Writing, Education, & Existence, are essential to unlocking Queer Pleasure.

The juxtaposition of Queer Pain & Pleasure in *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)*, *MySpace.jpg*, and *PLAY Room* echoes an authentic Queer experience. Additionally, as Queer Pain is externally derived, but internally maintained, I create a liminal space between my domestic (Private) space and the external (Public) space of an art gallery &/or website to emulate this relationship. The installations are self-portraits (Private) as well as collaborations (Public). They express both the individual and collective experiences of everyone involved to create a diverse and inclusive space.

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<sup>5</sup> The “our” in this text refers to anyone who identifies with being Queer, whether that means being part of the LGBTQ+++ community or in some way *different* or *othered*.

I utilize FUN(ny) aesthetics to generate humour through (dis)comfort, which resonates with Queer identity and the refusal to conform. Appropriation is used as a tool to simultaneously situate the artwork in a particular place and recontextualize it through a process of Queering. And, PLAY is activated through the reconfiguration and fluidity of elements and ways of being.

Acts of generosity and hosting are both present in PLAY House: I bring people into Personal spaces, feed them, and try to make them feel comfortable as they are confronted by potentially uncomfortable content. My approach to hosting is highly rooted in lived experience and is something I've reflected on more deeply through readings, such as Dale Jacob's essay "The Audacity of Hospitality." In this text Jacobs discusses the power of hope, reciprocity, and loving a stranger to TRANSform spaces. His text is influential in how I think about hospitality and treating others in places where I hold power. When I create installations &/or when I tutor/teach, I hope to dismantle inherent hierarchies and work collaboratively to foster an inclusive environment. In his discussion of hope, Jacobs states:

Hope is, as Freire contends in *Pedagogy of Freedom*, "a natural, possible, and necessary impetus in the context of our unfinishedness" (69). Hope isn't blind optimism; hope is the possibility of connecting individuals to each other in order to intervene in the world around us. It's a linking of the individual to the community, a communion directed always toward the future. (565)

His statement about "unfinishedness" resonates with my practice of DeSkilled or "BAD" art—i.e., art which is *Queer*, as it may appear unfinished by conventional standards, those validated by the normie historical canon of Art &/or Literature (**Glossary** – normie). Moreover, the way that I express Queer Pain & Pleasure simultaneously in *PLAY House* mirrors the sentiment that "hope isn't blind optimism." Because Queer Pain & Pleasure coexist in *PLAY House*, instead of

only showcasing Queer Pleasure, I simultaneously recognize the current state of the world and hope—through FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) Art & Writing—for a brighter future for everyone.

*PLAY House* is a Private and Public practice of listening and empathising with all voices. It is a collaborative effort in creating an inclusive space of unconditional love and acceptance.

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## Positionality

Hi, my name is Vee CR and I exist.<sup>6</sup> However, my identity is not properly represented in the cisheteronormative world we currently live in, and I want to change that through Art + Writing (& Education).<sup>7</sup> In relationship to my art, my identity can be broken down into four bite-sized pieces. While these pieces do not encompass my whole being, they will suffice in contextualizing my practice. Here I present myself as a Canadian Queer Disabled '90s Kid. These identity markers serve as touch stones for understanding my heritage, my feelings of *otherness*, my emotional & cognitive struggles, and how I use the Queer Pleasure found in FUN + PLAY to cope with Queer Pain (Shame, Anxiety, and Depression).

To summarize my Euro-Canadian identity: my father, Ernest Chorabik (Tata) moved to Canada from Poland alone in 1980 and my mother's father (Didi) moved from Croatia to Canada in 1931. My mother, Louise Barich (Mom),<sup>8</sup> her mom (Grandma), my brothers (Cohen and Dylan), and I were born in Canada. In 1992 I was born in Grand Prairie, Alberta. We moved to Dawson Creek, British Columbia in 1998. When Cohen and I were young, my Polish grandmother (Babcia), who didn't speak any English, and my dad raised us, so my first language was Polish. My mom was always worried about money and constantly worked overtime, so I didn't speak English much at home. I remember that during those years my thoughts were in Polish too. But then school changed my relationship to language. Attending French Immersion with English speakers and going home to a Polish household was challenging because I was juggling three languages in my mind. It was exhausting and I was ridiculed by teachers & peers when I misspoke or mispronounced words. I was made to feel ashamed of my father tongue, my

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<sup>6</sup> "We're here! We're Queer! Get used to it!" (*The Simpsons*, 1989 - S13E09).

<sup>7</sup> "The Personal is Political" a 1970 essay by feminist Carol Hanisch establishes the importance of our personal spaces and experience in relationship to public spaces and bodies.

<sup>8</sup> We jokingly call her "Mother" when we're going for that Horror Movie vibe.

Queer tongue. This Queer Pain seemed unnecessary, so I consciously assimilated and lost my language. A part of me broke off. This experience was my first sense of *othering* but overtime I have only snowballed into a big puddle of *otherness*.<sup>9</sup>

I am a Queer, Non-Binary, Pansexual, Polyamorous, TRANSgender, Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB) human. I have been Queer my whole life and it has been a burden and a blessing. Growing up I was constantly harassed by peers, teachers, and strangers; first, because of language, and then because my appearance and behaviours didn't match those of their mental construct of a "girl." One time in elementary school my teacher banned me from having recess with my friends because she refused to accept that I came to school in "boys" clothes and denied me freedom to PLAY until I changed into feminine clothes... It's fair to say that I didn't PLAY that day.

This trend of being *othered* for my gender expression continued. In middle school as I was exiting the women's change room, I was physically assaulted and verbally humiliated by a group of boys chanting "he-she" at me. The only way I got them to stop was to *perform*. When they called out "he-she" I bowed and made myself a star. Their attitude toward me changed instantaneously. They no longer treated me as a victim to be mocked or teased but someone to be celebrated. I remember on one occasion they actually started clapping. Witnessing this transformation from bullies to engaged audience members may be where my love of Camp comes from (**Glossary** – Campy).

Shame is a tool for society to oppress and control individuals, but Pride is a way of taking back control in a universally positive and non-violent manner.

While I have had a lot of awful experiences because of my Queerness, it has also been so liberating and joyful to find an understanding of myself as someone who moves fluidly within

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<sup>9</sup> *Otherness* has a relationship to Queerness (**Glossary** - Queer).

and outside of the boundaries that humans have placed on sex, gender, and sexuality (among other things).<sup>10</sup> I've also found so much love from others—and the right kind of love: the love that accepts you for who you are and isn't conditional on looking or acting a certain way.

Unfortunately, sometimes even if that love comes from an external source, if it isn't met with an internal love it will be rejected. Mental Health is a war on one's self. As someone who struggles with Mental Disability, I am constantly fighting the battle with Anxiety & Depression. I'm crying as I write this at 1:41am because my brain is ruminating about how I am a meaningless waste of space and resources. It is telling me that I should give up, burn my belongings, and die. It is exhausting and because my brain is on overdrive my ability to focus and create diminishes.<sup>11</sup> However, one thing that often gets me out of the Anxiety & Depression funk is a good story or activity. Noticing this pattern sowed the seeds for my theory of Queer Pleasure through FUN + PLAY.

As a kid, I had an avid interest in comic books, cartoons, video games, etc. They were some of my main experiences with FUN + PLAY. These were spaces where anything was possible, and the world was bright and Colourful. They were safe spaces to explore ideas, get weird, and escape the world of the normies (**Glossary**). These early experiences establish a particular aesthetic lens on my artistic practice of FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) Art (**Aesthetic Sensibilities**). Thus, my expression of Queer Pleasure has a '90s–'00s nostalgia quality to it.

Moreover, the relevance of my current experience of living through the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be dismissed. I live in a small one-bedroom apartment with my partner, Bonnie, and our bunny, Cecil. The pandemic creates a disembodied Digital & Domestic experience that seeps into the very fabric of my Research + Practice. Because my art is an

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<sup>10</sup> This fluidity in my experiences is why the TRANSdisciplinary approach is natural to my practice (**Glossary**).

<sup>11</sup> Research finds that Anxiety & Depression negatively impact Focus & Memory (Kizilbash, Vanderploeg, Curtiss).

expression of my Private identity in a Public space, it encapsulates a life lived; in Rauschenbergian terms: Art = Life.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Rauschenberg uses assemblages, Combines, to express the intimacy between Art + Life ([Khan Academy](#)).

## Glossary

- **TRANSdisciplinary**<sup>13</sup>

The TRANSdisciplinary approach moves across, between, beyond, and outside all existing disciplines, creating its own unique form of holistic discipline. “It traverses all possible disciplines... crisscross[ing], zigzag[ing], and move[ing] laterally from side to side... with the objective of ... understand[ing] the present world, in all of its complexities, instead of focusing on one part of it” (McGregor 2). Because the TRANSdisciplinary approach resonates with my Queer Identity & Experience, and because it is simultaneously broad and specific, it makes the most sense in terms of my research into Private & Public expressions of Queer Pleasure.

- **Queer**

Various dictionaries, including the Oxford and Merriam-Webster’s dictionaries, define Queer in two ways. First, as something that is strange, odd, weird, funny<sup>14</sup>, or unusual; and second, they define Queer as offensive slang for a gay or homosexual person. Interestingly, most dictionaries don’t give a third definition of Queer, which is the reclamation of the word and its use as an umbrella term for the LGBTQIP2SAA+ community. Moreover, the term Queer is preferred by many in the community instead of the term LGBTQIPSAA+ because it reduces hierarchy, and also acknowledges that we are all uniquely Queer.<sup>15</sup>

For me, it is important that Queer is associated with *odd* because it rejects becoming society’s idea of *normal* and instead embraces that we are all different and that acknowledging

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<sup>13</sup> TRANSdisciplinary is the Queer cousin to multi/interdisciplinary.

<sup>14</sup> Queer is literally defined as FUN(ny)!

<sup>15</sup> Also, nobody can remember what, and subsequently who, comes after the first Q.

our difference is essential in also understanding that we all deserve equal respect and love because of, rather than in spite of, *differences*.

- **normie**

A normie is whatever the human *norm* is in that particular society. Currently in Canada, the normie might be represented by a Healthy Wealthy White Cisgender Monogamous Heterosexual Neuro-Typical English-Speaking Male<sup>16</sup>. This normie is not defined by statistics, but rather by what is seen as the ideal, an almost unachievable goal. Thus, those who are Disabled, Poor, Racialized, TRANSGender, Polyamorous, LGBTQQIP2SAA+, Neuro-Divergent, Non-English, and/or Female experience a common sense of Queer *otherness* from the existence of a normie.<sup>17</sup>

- **Queer Pleasure**

If Queerness is defined not only as the LGBTQQIP2SAA+ community but anyone that is *odd* or *weird* by societal standards, then Queer Pleasure is the love and acceptance of that *oddness*, not as a form of tokenization, but rather a form of communal celebration of difference.

Moreover, as with Sianne Ngai's concept of 'Ambivalent Feelings,' Queer Pleasure coexists with multiple—often opposing—feelings simultaneously. In *Our Aesthetic Categories: cute, zany, interesting*, Ngai uses Ambivalent Feelings in discussing Art + Writing where cuteness, horror and sexuality live harmoniously (71-77).<sup>18</sup> In my practice FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) methods and themes cannot be separated from their roots in Queer Pain because that erasure would invalidate why FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) Art + Writing is necessary for Queer Survival.

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<sup>16</sup> My peers have brought to my attention that females might be considered normies... only took until 2021.

<sup>17</sup> There is nothing wrong with being Healthy Wealthy, etc. but creating an idealized normie is harmful to everyone.

<sup>18</sup> Ngai discusses how juxtaposing seemingly oppositional forces generates a foil where they amplify one another (53-109). Ngai states that "this paradoxical doubleness is embedded in the concept of cute from the start" (85). Queer Pleasure functions similarly in *PLAY House* as it exists alongside Queer Pain.

- **Queer Pain**

Queer Pain is the antithesis to Queer Pleasure. It comes from the creation of an idealized normie that is used as a measurement tool. Queer identity is in cognitive dissonance with this normie and this creates a basis for systemic oppression that manifests as Shame, Anxiety, and Depression on an individual and global scale.

Normies can't experience Queer Pain or Queer Pleasure. They can experience pain and pleasure, but their pain doesn't derive from systemic oppression that attacks them for their identity, and their pleasure doesn't come from overcoming this oppression, finding love and accepting oneself and others for their Queerness.

- **FUN(ny)**

FUN(ny) combines FUN with FUNny.

FUN(ny) combats Queer Pain (Shame, Anxiety, and Depression) through an engaged, child-like and sometimes humorous experience. FUN is the experience of PLAYing which engages someone in the experience of flow (Koster 98). Art + Writing that is FUN(ny) creates a space of comfort and/or laughter. FUN(ny) is also directly linked to things that are Queer; i.e., things that are seen as *absurd*, *odd*, or *different* in relation to what is seen as *normal*.

- **PLAY(sure/ful)**

PLAY(sure/ful) combines PLAY with PLAYsure (i.e. Pleasure) and PLAYful.

PLAY(sure/ful) combats Queer Pain (Shame, Anxiety, and Depression) through an active, child-like, and sometimes sexual or romantic experience.

This concept of PLAY(sure/ful) is ignited by PLAY Theorist, Johan Huizinga's iconic 1938 text *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. In this text, Huizinga discusses the role of different forms of PLAY in developing culture such as Poetry-PLAY (119-135),<sup>19</sup> "battle-play" (40-41) and "love-play" (43). My Art + Writing uses these forms of PLAY to find Queer Pleasure in a world of Queer Pain.

Huizinga notes that "[l]anguage normally distinguishes between love-play and copulation," as copulation tends to be the reward to PLAY as one must "win over" their mate (43)... *maybe this is why we call it (be)foreplay, not duringplay?*<sup>20</sup> Additionally, there is a Queerness to the term PLAY regarding sex, as "[t]he term 'play' is specifically or even exclusively reserved for erotic relationships falling outside the social norm" (43). This differentiation between love-PLAY and copulation, and the idea of winning over one's mate, is incredibly heterocentric and simplified yet it is common for people to distinguish between foreplay and sex (as defined by penetration) in this way. The space of Queer Pleasure is all love-PLAY. With Queer Pleasure the lines between love-PLAY and sex are blurred as sex is not explicitly defined by penis and vagina penetration. Thus, PLAY or Queer Love/Sex is always fluid and cannot be precisely pinned down to a singular event or moment.<sup>21</sup> I believe this Queering of Love/Sex is beneficial for people of all sexual orientations, including heterosexuals, as this PLAY is defined by the participants involved rather than external preconceptions of what Love/Sex is.

Moreover, PLAY is the process of making (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** - DeSkilled or "BAD" art) and can express embodiment through rolePLAY regarding Gender + Identity & Performance (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – Campy).

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<sup>19</sup> Sianne Ngai in *Our Aesthetic Categories* says "poetry [is] as indirect [a] language as sex" (72).

<sup>20</sup> While I am making a joke here, I am also making a point about the term foreplay and its relationship to love-PLAY and courting as the common use of the term PLAY in a romantic and/or erotic sense, as opposed to PLAY referring to sex itself.

<sup>21</sup> PLAY can be: a kiss, the touching of feet, a long embrace, or a series of spicy texts (Hardy & Easton 243-245).

***Active vs Passive FUN + PLAY:*** To achieve a state of FUN the PLAY must match the participants individual likes and dislikes. Some people prefer high levels of control in their PLAY because it offers them unlimited possibilities, however it does take up more cognitive energy. Some people prefer passive forms of PLAY as it is more relaxing and has less energy output on their behalf. Most people move between passive and active PLAY, so ideally the game or activity has multiple entry points with varying levels of energy output for the participant.

***Creating an Environment for FUN + PLAY:*** Humans, like most creatures, are driven by survival. To create a fully immersive experience of FUN + PLAY it is important to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs where basic needs come before creativity. Thus, if a participant is too hungry or tired, they will have a challenging time engaging in FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) activities, therefore basic needs must be addressed. Interestingly, if the FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) activity imbeds our basic instincts we are more likely to engage (Koster 66 - 69).

- **Private**

The Private space is closest to the individual; the mind and domestic space are Private.

- **Public**

The Public space is closest to the collective; the normie has most control in the Public space.

*PLAY House* is a self-portrait of Queer Pleasure overcoming Queer Pain and an invitation to collaborate by hanging out in a FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) space. By making the private accessible to the public, the public may begin to change through understanding and celebration of the individual and collective.

## (My) Aesthetic Sensibilities of Queer Pleasure and FUN + PLAY

While FUN + PLAY are subjective, the following aesthetics induce FUN + PLAY in me.

Likewise, Queer Pleasure is different for all but has some universal symbols such as the rainbow.

- **Colourful = Primary & Rainbow**



Fig. 2: Sidney Teodoruk, Artist Studio, 2021. Instagram Post [\[x\]](#).<sup>22</sup>

The Aesthetic Sensibilities of FUN + PLAY are Colourful, like the colour palettes that are present on children's packaging (bright, bold primary) and/or the pride flag (bright, bold rainbow). Colour is used as a tool to embody Child-like Joy & LGBTQIP2SAA+ Pride. I'm positioning my Colour palette choices<sup>23</sup> alongside contemporary artists like Erik Jones and Sidney Teodoruk, whose Colours evoke a '90s-'00s nostalgia in me that activates the Queer

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJhjXv2nLOe/>

<sup>23</sup> My Colour palette is often bright, bold, and as multi-coloured as a rainbow or a box of crayons.

Pleasure of FUN + PLAY. On December 14, 2020 Sidney Teodoruk posted a photograph on Instagram of his studio with a caption discussing his relationship with Depression & Colour. He states that he was “Bed ridden by depression and unable to move with a crook back, [he] passed the time and started drawing again, like some form of therapy.” He continues by saying, “Art saved my life. It still does.” This anecdote resonates with my relationship with Art & Depression and creates a solid foundation for why FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) art is often Colourful.

Moreover, the symbolism behind the rainbow Pride colours cannot be dismissed in a discussion of Colour and Queer Pleasure. The original Pride flag designed by Gilbert Baker contained eight symbolic colours: pink, red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, indigo, and violet; these represent: sex, life, healing, sunlight, nature, art and magic, serenity, and spirit [x].<sup>24</sup> The contemporary design by Daniel Quasar adds white, light pink, light blue, brown, and black to create a more intersectional Pride flag that also embraces TRANS and BIPOC folks [x].<sup>25</sup> With my practice, I think about the history and meaning behind these colours as well as the meaning behind the rainbow, which is a symbol for surviving the rain and experiencing life’s bounty.

- **Campy**

Camp is sometimes synonymous with kitch, theatre, and B movies. As Susan Sontag writes in *Notes on Camp*: “[a]ll Camp objects, and persons, contain a large element of artifice (3)” and “[t]he whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious” (10). In this way, “Camp sees everything in question marks. It’s not a lamp, but a “lamp”; not a woman, but a “woman” (4). This Campy questioning of categories can be understood as “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” (4). With this sense of performativity in mind it becomes clear why “the dandy” or Queer Culture has often had an

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<sup>24</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_bzpr2jalQ&t=150](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_bzpr2jalQ&t=150)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.dezeen.com/2018/06/12/daniel-quasar-lgbt-rainbow-flag-inclusive/>

affinity for Camp (10), as Queers are often acutely aware that we are being coerced by society to PLAY a role. We<sup>26</sup> recognize that “we’re all born naked and the rest is drag” (RuPaul).<sup>27</sup> Drag is a Campy way of saying that fixed societally generated identity is a joke (Dawson and Valinette [x]).<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, “Camp taste transcends the nausea of replica” and Oscar Wilde can be noted as the father of this taste when he states that “a doorknob [can] be as admirable as a painting” (11). Via this logic, we can deduce that Wilde’s Campy notions of furniture as art contribute, however minutely, to the creation of the Ready-Made (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – Dada) and POP Art.

I position my Camp along with Baz Luhrmann’s *Moulin Rouge* and Dorian Electra’s *Flamboyant* as they both embody FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) art through their focus on humour and sexuality. However, while they both portray the dandy, my expression of the dandy is more akin to Electra’s non-binary embodiment.

- **Maximalism**

The Maximalist slogan is “more is more” and more is better. For me, Maximalism is a tool to express Queer Pleasure & Digital boundlessness. Ingrid Fetell Lee, a Designer focused on the Aesthetics of Joy, suggests in her article “The Joy of Abundance” that we should embrace abundance and that “too much of a good thing can be wonderful” (47). Through evolution, we have been programmed with a “pleasure instinct” that motivates us to seek out sensory input (50); this instinct was passed down by our ancestors as “those who reveled in abundance were more likely to survive” (48). Moreover, this Maximalist abundance showcases the diversity of Queer identities & experiences.

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<sup>26</sup> “We” here refers to those of us who see behind the veil of performativity.

<sup>27</sup> RuPaul’s sentiments resonate with Judith Butler’s 1990 *Gender Trouble* and Lady Gaga’s 2011 *Born this Way*.

<sup>28</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/rupaul-rupauls-drag-race-mainstream/story?id=39075322>

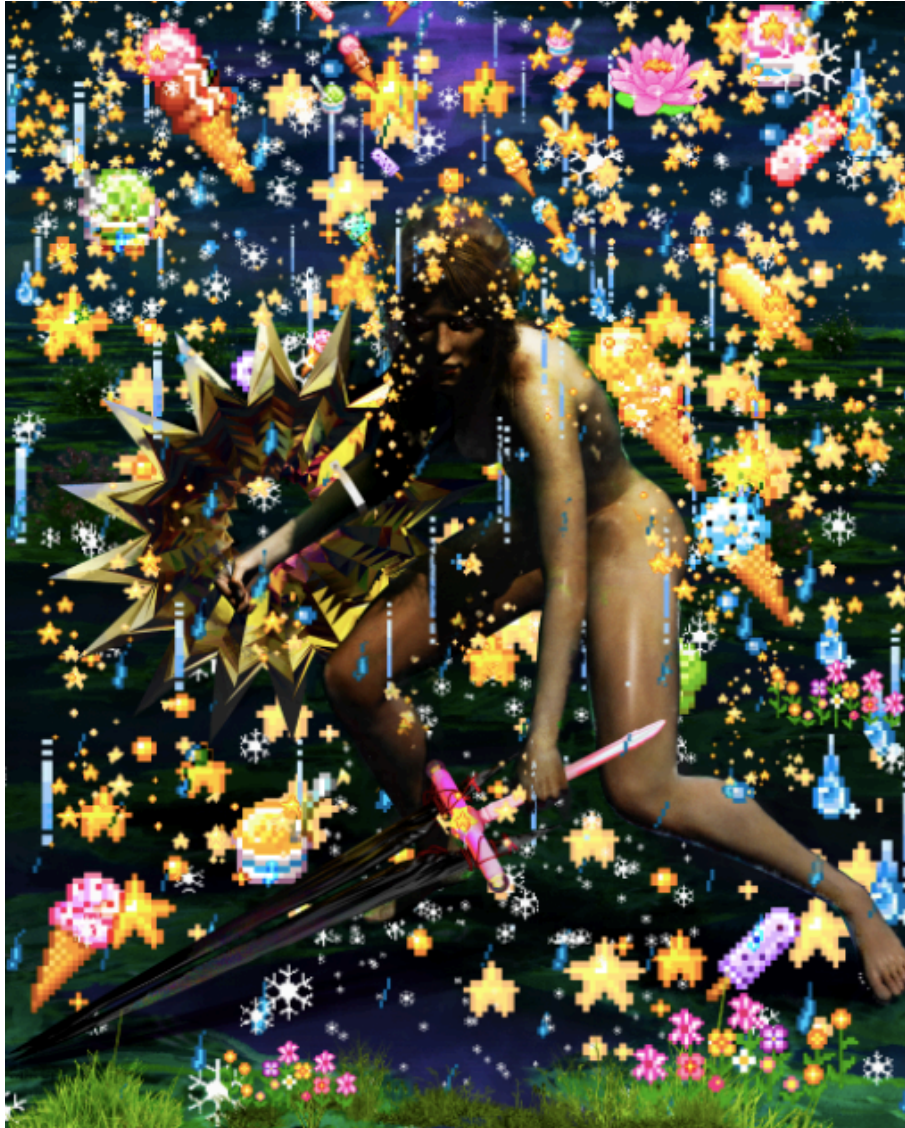


Fig. 3: Antoine Lortie, ★*Champion Of The Abyss ( Rencontre )* ★, 2020. Digital Painting [x].<sup>29</sup>

When thinking about Digital Maximalism, Antoine Lortie's art comes to mind. His work is abundant in emojis and depth. Many of his works require the viewer to zoom in and out of the artwork to experience it fully. This boundlessness applies to the liminal Private/Public space of the internet. Sometimes this Digital &/or Physical Maximalism can lead to feelings of anxiety and distress, as one may feel swamped or weighed down by the information and clutter (Kondo).

<sup>29</sup> [https://superrare.co/artwork-v2/champion-of-the-abyss-\(-rencontre-\)-16653](https://superrare.co/artwork-v2/champion-of-the-abyss-(-rencontre-)-16653)

Recognizing that Maximalism sometimes has this effect on people is important in creating a FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) affect through the process of editing and chunking.<sup>30</sup>

- **DeSkilled or “BAD” art**

DeSkilled or “BAD” art is as FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) as it gets because it focuses more on the experience of making rather than the final product. This shift in focus away from the product and toward the process of creation takes the pressure off of the maker to feel like the end result needs to be “Good” and therefore they can focus on the Queer Pleasure (FUN + PLAY) in making. In DeSkilled or “BAD” art, the materials are often—but not always—poor quality, cheap, and easy to find. This aesthetic is most often related to children, but many historical and contemporary artists use it as a strategy to channel that child-like freedom to indulge in FUN + PLAY. I position my DeSkilled art next to artists like Andrew Hussie, Claes Oldenburg, and Taylor Anton White.

In an essay, titled “Sorry, Not Sorry: The Insidious Influence of Hussie and Oldenburg on *MySpace-WIP.jpg*,” I discuss the relationship between Hussie’s *Homestuck*, Oldenburg’s *The Store*, and my *MySpace.jpg* [[x](#)].<sup>31</sup> Hussie was an aesthetic influence, and inspiration for creating a hypertext. *MySpace.jpg* will be discussed in more detail below. And, Oldenburg’s spirit is with me always giving me strength through times of sloppy craft. When I created the gingerbread house on the cover of this thesis, Oldenburg’s energy was with me telling me to persevere and complete the task, focusing on FUN + PLAY rather than an imagined product that I thought would be “Good” in the eyes of a normie.

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<sup>30</sup> Chunking is compressing information through the process of grouping into chunks (Koster 18, 235).

<sup>31</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ry5ed5MhJNWJeXJ2Lbfj\\_Zo8AGMlu6eA/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ry5ed5MhJNWJeXJ2Lbfj_Zo8AGMlu6eA/view)



Fig 4. Taylor Anton White. *2020\_001\_Lol\_Haha*. 2020  
Acrylic, wax crayon, plywood, cardboard, airbrush,  
paper, rubber glove, and rubber coated wire, 62 x 51”.



Fig 5. Taylor A White. *Forest Nintendo*. 2020.  
Acrylic, charcoal, spray paint, airbrush, paper, fabric,  
plastic, sock, losing Pennsylvania lottery tickets, staples,  
sewing, cardboard, canvas, other things, and wood, 62 x 51”.

Taylor Anton White is an artist whose Digital persona and dedication to FUN + PLAY in art that inspires me continually. His paintings and performances are child-like in their Colourful, silly, and nostalgic nature. White posts photos of himself making silly faces while drawing or mowing painted grass in his tighty whities [\[x\]](#).<sup>32</sup> And if that doesn’t convince you that he’s a FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) artist, his artist statement is: “Through the investigation of commonality, cowboy commodification, and spectrum puffing, the human condition campy trope coupon code is interrogated, with specific emphasis on ketchup academic thesis, Tom Cruise, and the Double Internet” [\[x\]](#)<sup>33</sup> (White). This type of language is common online due to

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CD3\\_6SpjaUP/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CD3_6SpjaUP/)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.taylorwhiteart.com/about>

internet meme culture, which is essentially some form of Contemporary Dadaism in its absurdity.

- **Dada**

Dada and its relationship to the absurd, sexy, and domestic is crucial to my research on FUN + PLAY and Queering Art (e.g. Marcel Duchamp, Hannah Hoch, and Sarah Lucas) [[x](#)].<sup>34</sup>

- **POP Art**

"Yes, [POP ART] is about liking things." -Andy Warhol<sup>35</sup>

POP Art jumps off Dada and dives into a pool of manufactured FUN + PLAY. Artists like Andy Warhol and Takashi Murakami highlight how consumerism exploits FUN + PLAY for profit. POP Art is criticized for having an ambivalent stance toward commodification of Art & Pleasure. And, while the aesthetic quality of POP Art can be seen as Child-like with its references to anime and comic books, it isn't child-like in the same way that DeSkilled Art is. While DeSkilled Art looks like it could be made by children, POP Art does not. POP Art looks like it is designed to be consumed by children.<sup>36</sup> It is the candy of art. Moreover, most of the labour is not by the artist, but by machines and other people. I use a critical variation of this POP Art practice in my work when I print or sell art on Society6 [[x](#)]<sup>37</sup>, or arrange recycling on a self [[x](#)]<sup>38</sup> like I used to arrange jam jars [[x](#)]<sup>39</sup> when I worked at Wal-Mart (e.g. Roy Arden).

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<sup>34</sup> <https://youtu.be/u95Csb9bknY>

<sup>35</sup> Mackay, Andy Stewart. The story of POP Art. 2020. [Interview with Gene Swenson, 'What is POP Art?' 1963]

<sup>36</sup> This statement may appear subjective, but it is based on POP Art such as Roy Lichtenstein's paintings that directly link to media such as comics, which are products designed to be consumed by children and teenagers.

<sup>37</sup> <https://society6.com/vincentchorabik>

<sup>38</sup> <https://vincentchorabik.com/top-shelf-consumption>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/BsSEIROjYfJ/>

***Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart) [Feat. Mona (Kevin) Lisa] - 2020***

Queer Pleasure vs Polyamorous Shame [Longing, Love, Lust, Loneliness & Desire]

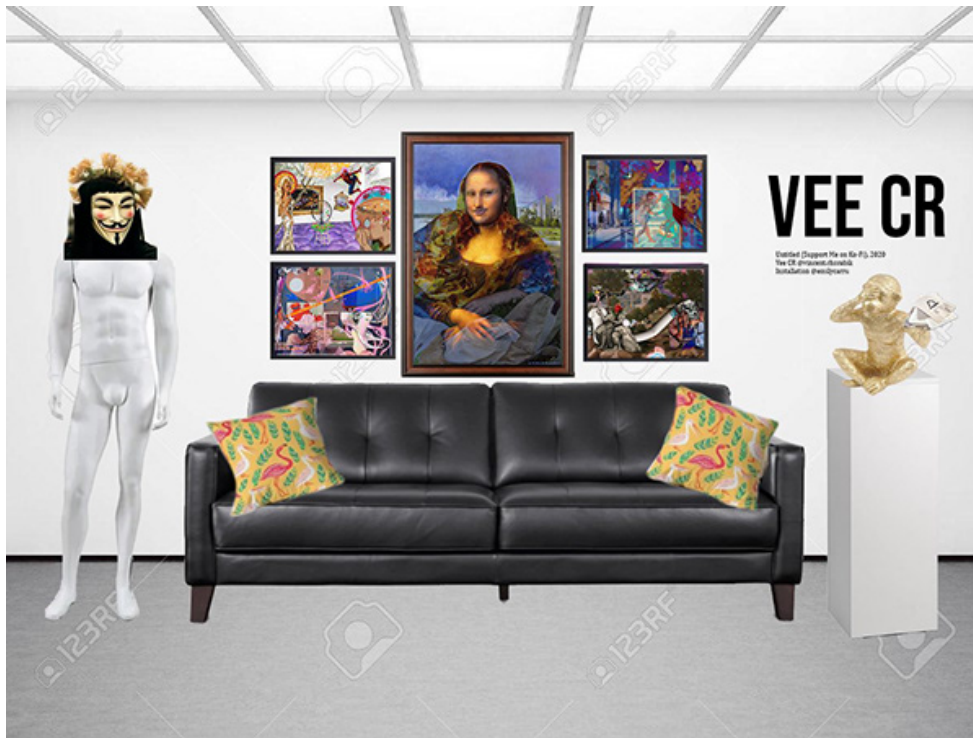


Fig. 6: Vee CR,  
*Holliday Home*,  
2D Mock-up,  
2020.  
Digital Collage,  
1300×974 pixels.



Fig. 7: Vee CR,  
*Holliday Home*,  
3D Mock-up,  
2020.  
Digital Collage,  
1300×974 pixels.

*Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)* is an installation that was featured at the ECUAD Exhibition Commons during *The Pause*, MFA Interim Show, in September 2020. When creating installations, I use the same sort of process of collecting, assembling, deleting and/or removing as I would when making a digital &/or physical collage. In fact, in the planning stages of *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)*, the installation was sketched out as a collage. The original installation plan was a 2D space, displayed flat against the wall (fig. 6). The idea was to emulate a sort of flat IKEA catalogue space and have participants photograph themselves on the couch and share it on Instagram and other social media platforms. This 2D design was intended to create a liminal space between the digital & physical. Moreover, by creating a hashtag and printing my name large on the wall, it was supposed to serve as a sort of POP Art marketing strategy. I was inspired by a few artists who use this flattened couch and artwork installation, including Franz West [x]<sup>40</sup> and Galan Akin [x].<sup>41</sup>

When I submitted this original design to our curator for the MFA Interim Show, Candice Hopkins, she suggested I “take up space” and that I remove the couch. Her notion of taking up space felt in line with my practice of Queering space, so I took that into consideration with my redesign (fig. 7). The couch, however, was integral to the piece because it generated a domestic space of intimacy and hospitality. I thought that maybe Hopkin’s expressed distaste for the couch because it faced away from the artwork, and to address this issue, I changed the orientation of the couch. I redesigned the installation with the concept of a room in mind. In this new 3D configuration, the couch would guide the viewer’s eyes into the work and provide physical comfort. While I maintained interest in revisiting the idea of a flattened liminal space existing

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/west-viennoiserie-t07558>

<sup>41</sup> <https://emilycarr.bc.catalogue.libraries.coop/eg/opac/record/114204757?locg=610>

between physical and digital reality (later addressed in *MySpace.jpg*), I recognized that for *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)* the 3D room worked to my advantage (fig. 8).



Fig. 8: Vee CR, *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)*, 2020. Installation, ECUAD Exhibition Commons.

In its final form, a simple black couch with two Campy, flamingo-adorned pillows faces into a white cube. The floor is made of concrete. Red curtains direct the eye toward a Queer *Mona Lisa*.<sup>42</sup> On the left and right walls hang framed and unframed collages. A white mannequin guards the room. Two plinths made of books hold sculptures. And, a golden monkey offers business cards. The room is a liminal space between a living room and an art gallery. It is both cold and inviting.

*Mona (Kevin) Lisa* is the focal point of the installation. She/They is a creature born of hybridity and desire. The following is a segment taken from my essay “*Mona (Kevin) Lisa* [Method + Description]” [x]<sup>43</sup> :

<sup>42</sup> *Mona Lisa* is an absolute artistic icon to the point of being the official Samsung Galaxy S5 Neo –my phone– emoji for “Art.” This fame makes her the perfect target for Satire. Queer Pleasure in the form of Satire is very FUN(ny).

<sup>43</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IJKDbt17gbnYrHRp7g8ciMoLwlu6bMPi/view>

The figure's clothing and physical expression clash space, time, gender and race. The figure is Queer and non-binary. She/they is wearing a combination of a feminine renaissance blouse and a masculine 90s/00s anime-demon shirt. Leonardo da Vinci's original *Mona Lisa* was produced in c. 1517 and was inspired by the Italian woman Lisa Gherardini. My *Mona (Kevin) Lisa*, on the other hand, features Kevin Holliday<sup>44</sup> who is "mixed race [C]hinese and white...born and raised in Vancouver" (Holliday). Therefore, the new hybridized figure embodies a geographically and temporally dissonant identity. Placing the figure in Vancouver 2020 transports Lisa Gherardini from her natural landscape of lush rolling hills to a human-made urban environment. Additionally, like in Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*<sup>45</sup> (1919) this *Mona Lisa* has a mustache. And while the painting's most iconic feature is her "enigmatic smile," it has now been replaced by Kevin's speaking mouth.<sup>46</sup> (1-2)



Fig. 9: Vee CR, *Holliday Home* [Installation Detail], 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin Holliday is my friend, artist, and the subject of my desires during the time of making this work.

<sup>45</sup> When the individual letters are pronounced out loud in French the title translates to "She has a hot ass," however, if the word is pronounced in English the title reads as "look." This type of pun game is very FUN(ny).

<sup>46</sup> They are saying the word "True," which is one of Kevin's catchphrases, and also creates a pleasant puckery smile.

A reoccurring theme in my practice is the Queering of Art by juxtaposing POP Culture and Entertainment along with the Canon of Art History and English Literature. Thus, the essay continues to describe the process of making *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* and its relationship to seemingly disparate works like a 1990 episode of *The Simpsons*<sup>47</sup> featuring a three-eyed fish, and the 1915 poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot, among other things [x].<sup>48</sup>

The three-eyed fish sparks a discussion around a notably strange feature in *Mona (Kevin) Lisa*, which is their/her three hands. This mutation<sup>49</sup> is FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) because these three hands function as something child-like, cartoony, silly, surreal, and sexy. The hands are reminiscent of the FUN depicted in cartoons like *The Simpsons* or *Twelve Forever*;<sup>50</sup> these hands do not belong to the everyday normie (**Glossary** – normie). Moreover, the three hands are PLAY(sure/ful) because of the sexual possibilities of having three hands! <3 Through FUN + PLAY Queer Pleasure is found in escaping the normie’s reality and celebrating a unique reality.



<sup>47</sup> Two Cars in Every Garage and Three Eyes on Every Fish (The Simpsons: Season 2, Episode 4)

<sup>48</sup> <https://vincentchorabik.com/mona-kevin-lisa>

<sup>49</sup> Mutations, glitches, etc. are seen as opportunities for positive growth and change in my work. They are Queer.

<sup>50</sup> *Twelve Forever* is influential in my thoughts on using FUN + PLAY as a methodology for discussing Queer Pain in a safe space, as well as finding Queer Pleasure in escapism. The show promotes mindful escapism and warns that long term escapism isn’t sustainable or responsible.

Furthermore, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is important to the investigation of *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* and by virtue *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)* because it is a poem that discusses the shame and anxiety that comes from wanting someone seemingly unattainable. In the poem Prufrock is in love with a woman and wants to ask her a question (10). While the question is never revealed to the reader, in the context of the poem it is clear that Prufrock wants to profess his love for her but is afraid of rejection, comparing himself to Michelangelo<sup>51</sup> (14). The feelings Eliot expresses resonated with me during the process of assembling *Holliday Home* because I had Queer feelings for someone, and I didn't know how to address them personally or publicly.

Thus, what is most significant about *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* is that it highlights a figure, Kevin Holliday, whom I had a crush on during the Covid-19 pandemic, who once again sparked my interest in polyamory. It is important to note that I am happily engaged to my partner Bonnie Ratchford and that we had discussed polyamory in the past, but it was something I didn't push because I felt I was "in the wrong" for even suggesting it. While my relationship with Kevin is strictly platonic, developing this crush and displaying it publicly led me down an important road of self-discovery and connections with others.

The installation is titled *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)* for multiple reasons. The idea of a holiday home, a space where one goes to unwind and relax, is the root of my concept of creating an installation that embodies FUN + PLAY. By adding an additional "l" in holiday, it references Kevin's last name becoming a specific homage. One of my peers referred to this work as the bowerbird courtship of building<sup>52</sup> because it feels like a romantic call. While my intention was for anyone to be able to enjoy and interact with the room, there was the hope of a visit from

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<sup>51</sup> In a way, I am also comparing myself to Leonardo da Vinci.

<sup>52</sup> Some male birds construct nests, decorating them with pebbles, flowers, and trash to attract a mate (Cordey).

Kevin. Moreover, the “Glitch of the Heart” aspect of the title is significant as I struggled with the shame of having romantic feelings for someone that isn’t my partner.<sup>53</sup> It felt wrong because the world constantly pushes out this idea that we are designed to be in monogamous pairings and anything different from that isn’t real love.

It wasn’t until I started reading books like *The Ethical Slut* (Easton and Hardy) and connecting with people in online forums like VanPoly that I started to feel less alone and less *weird*. I think this kinship and diffusion of *weirdness* is why for me, it is important to be openly Queer. It helps us connect to one another and feel more secure in our own identities. Polyamory, as explained in *Ethical Slut*, proposes that love is boundless and that through open communication, honesty, and vulnerability, people can engage in healthy and fulfilling relationships. I take these lessons into my collaborative and educational work as I want everyone to feel loved, respected, and heard.

With collaboration in mind, *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)* includes four framed digital collages, which hang on the left and right walls. These collages were made over the Summer of 2020 collaboratively by Kevin Holliday and me [x].<sup>54</sup> During the summer, and even to this day, I struggled with the isolation and loneliness stemming from Covid-19. Making these collages with Kevin was an opportunity to feel connected and creative. The experience of making these collages together by passing Photoshop files back and forth over email was FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful). While each collage functions differently, each expresses Queer Pleasure through the act of collaboration as well as its content. A truly Queer space is made collaboratively because it generates the most diversity.

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<sup>53</sup> The glitch becomes a physical representation of difference and discomfort.

<sup>54</sup> <https://vincentchorabik.com/kev-n-me>



Fig. 11:  
Kevin Holliday  
& Vee CR,  
*Untitled (Enter  
the FaeRealm)*,  
2020. Digital  
Collage,  
16 x 20".



Fig. 12:  
Kevin Holliday  
& Vee CR,  
*Untitled  
(Phann,  
Gladys, &  
Elmo)*, 2020.  
Digital Collage,  
16 x 20".



Fig. 13:  
Kevin Holliday  
& Vee CR,  
*Untitled (Art  
Gallery with  
RuPaul)*, 2020.  
Digital Collage,  
16 x 20"

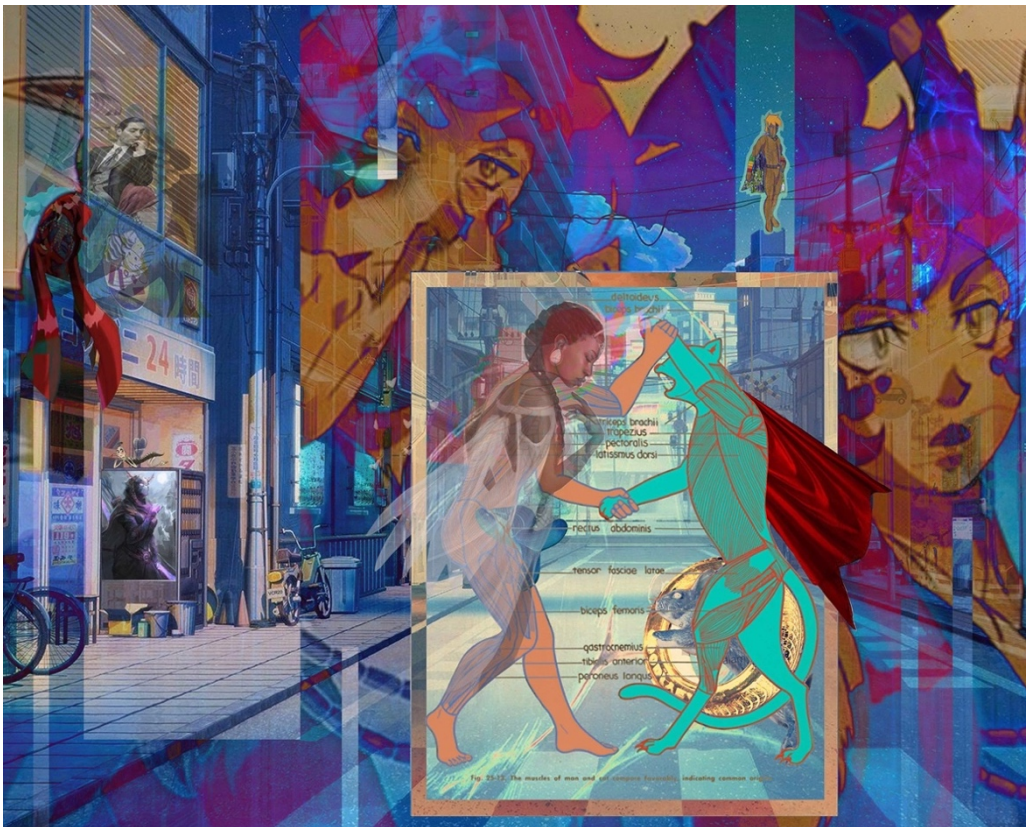


Fig. 14:  
Kevin Holliday  
& Vee CR,  
*Untitled (Cat  
Fight)*, 2020.  
Digital Collage,  
16 x 20"

The content in these collaborative collages (figures 11-14) is a Queer juxtaposition of Art History & POP Culture with characters engaged in FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) activities. Some examples of these juxtapositions include Takashi Murakami's *Cowboy* with Noelle Stevenson's *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (fig. 11), and RuPaul next to Marcel Duchamp's *Wheel and Stool* (fig. 13). The PLAY(sure/ful) experiences the characters are engaged in vary from gazing, touching, breast PLAY, masturbation, fellatio, and fighting (Huizinga: Battle-PLAY). And, they are presented in a FUN(ny) way through bright colours, surreal juxtapositions, subtlety, and decorative elements such as flowers and rain cum.

In a digital space, these collages are abundant, and the viewer can navigate through the space by zooming in and out. However, this interaction is limited when the images are printed. For *Holliday Home*, I chose to print the images at a standard 16 x 20 inches and frame them in simple black frames—like comic book borders. Through this action the images become contained spaces of Queer Pleasure and FUN + PLAY. They are less embodied and lonelier. The pleasures are rendered inaccessible and untouchable, which is symbolic to my experience at the time.

Behind these framed collages, six posters are printed and pinned to the wall with yellow and purple tacks.<sup>55</sup> The two prints that are closest to *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* are the same, but the other four are unique in colour. I call these four “glitches.” During the research process, I was



<sup>55</sup> The tacks are Campy and cute. Their bright bold colours and smooth, curvy surface is evocative of FUN + PLAY.

printing images of recent artworks and exhibitions that I had done. During this process, my printer was running out of ink, and it created interesting lines and changes in colour. When I made these glitches, I was inspired by this printer-running-out-of-ink aesthetic and emulated it by adding digital noise to the imagery and by draining different colours from each glitch in Photoshop before professionally printing the files.

The central imagery for the collage was taken from Kevin Holliday's website [x].<sup>56</sup> According to Kevin, their work is a manipulated image of Britney Spears. However, I appropriated the image because it looked like a flower or vulva, which is very FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful).

The text on these posters reads "A Love Song Plays in the Distance" and the posters are arranged on the wall in a melody. The tune starts off high, then rollercoasters down and up before ending on a low note. While I'm not a musician, I do PLAY video games and was inspired by the simple

melodies Link (the PLAYer)

PLAYs on the ocarina in

*Legend of Zelda: Majora's*

*Mask* (Nintendo 3DS, 2015).<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, at the time of

making this installation, and

for some time afterward, I

watched *Moulin Rouge* (2001)



by Baz Luhrmann on repeat.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, representing love through music was only fitting. For

<sup>56</sup> <http://kevinmholliday.ca/>

<sup>57</sup> *The Legend of Zelda* is a franchise comprised of puzzle based, non-linear exploration games.

<sup>58</sup> Replayability is key to some forms of FUN + PLAY as it creates a space of comfort through the lack of surprises. Susan Sontag, in her *Notes on Camp*, suggests that in Camp there is no character development (9); moreover,

me this melody and the text, which could be interpreted as lyrics, is a bittersweet reflection on a sort of unrequited love.

The final note of the song brings the viewer's eyes down to the ripped white mannequin. The mannequin's name is Joe and he's been a fixture of Bonnie and my home since 2017.<sup>59</sup> In this installation he is featured with a *V for Vendetta* mask and a flower crown from my [Lioness Revealed](#) performance.<sup>60</sup> Joe is an equally hypersexual and asexual object. In the privacy of our home, Joe's junk has been used as a toy for masturbation. In the gallery space, he rests awkwardly; his white skin blends into the white wall. He is a naked wallflower, who wears a mask of a smile and his genitals are censored in a toy way<sup>61</sup> (Ngai 71). If his height, muscles, and nakedness appeared threatening in anyway, they are rendered unthreatening through their awkwardness and censorship. Furthermore, in the context of this space with these accessories, the mannequin is no longer Joe; the mannequin is Vee; the mannequin is me.



Comics and books are stacked, emulating small plinths. On one of these Queer<sup>62</sup> plinths sits an I SPY book with my sculpture, *My Ideas are Garbage* (2018-Present), which is a plastic

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Camp can never be tragedy (10). This space of perpetual innocent bliss is present in Queer Pleasure (FUN + PLAY) but is counteracted with the expression of Queer Pain.

[Note: While there is no room here, in a future essay I will further elaborate on why Moulin Rouge is listed as a Comedy, when in fact it—by Shakespearean standards—is a tragedy, and why that is relevant to my research.]

<sup>59</sup> I bought him from a thrift store saying, "I'll use him in an installation." And voila, I finally did.

<sup>60</sup> [I don't know if you can call a critique a performance, but why not?](#)

<sup>61</sup> As a TRANSperson, I've been asked "What's in your pants?" on more than one occasion, so the idea of blurring what is underneath one's clothes is FUN(ny). The censorship is a satirical "fuck you" to this question.

<sup>62</sup> The plinth is Queer because it is unique from the standard white rectangles or columns (**Glossary** – Queer).

lightbulb filled with domestic debris and detritus, like lint and gum wrappers, as well as an Engagement Ring from my first lover. On top of the other Queer Plinth, my comica,<sup>63</sup> [Phann's \(Mis\)Adventures #8](#), sits with three bottle caps.<sup>64</sup> These sculptural forms are framed in black electrical tape, a wordless “do not touch.”



This room emanates preciousness with its frames and clean white walls. Objects that are produced to be handled, such as books, are displayed in a way that they become untouchable and their original intent, to be read, is stripped away,<sup>65</sup> rendering them useless except as display surfaces. Because these objects are precious to me, I made them inaccessible to the viewer. In the context of *Holliday Home*, it made sense for me to display things with the idea of preciousness and fragility because it represented that idealized stage of infatuation. However, in my research FUN + PLAY are generally linked to interactivity and participation on the part of the audience.

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<sup>63</sup> A Comica is a Comedy-Erotica in the form of a comic book.

<sup>64</sup> Bottle caps are a currency in *Fallout* (Bethesda, 1997-Present).

<sup>65</sup> Stripped away... like Joe's clothes.

As a result, I wanted to create some touch points in the piece, like the couch and the gold monkey.

This gold and glittery monkey sits on the floor by the exit/entrance to the installation. On top of the monkey's head is a stack of business cards, behind the monkey are small prints of the collages on the wall,<sup>66</sup> and on the wall next to the monkey the text reads, "Please Take One <3 (Small Print + Card)." The monkey is FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) because it is handing out business cards during a pandemic, when people are afraid to touch anything, and it is sticking its hand into its mouth—a perfect depiction of what NOT to do during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, this element is a direct touch point between the viewer and me. It is also a consumerist by-product relating to my interest in POP Art. While most of the room is set up to be looked at rather than touched, the monkey asks the viewer to participate by bringing a piece of the exhibition home.



After creating this installation, sitting in it for two hours with a pen and paper, and reflecting on it over the course of several months, I have learned a few things about my identity as a polyamorous person as well as how I want to progress with my research on finding Queer Pleasure through FUN + PLAY. I learned that there are two factors when considering FUN + PLAY in an artwork. The first is the FUN + PLAY experienced by the artist, and the second is the FUN + PLAY experienced by the viewer. In an ideal scenario both factors are engaged. And, because FUN + PLAY is an active state of participation, in order to engage the viewer, the work itself needs to be FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful). The artwork cannot

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<sup>66</sup> Because of Andy Warhol's artwork *Thirty are Better than One*, where he printed 30 *Mona Lisas*, I decided to produce 31 small *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* prints as a joke. With 31 prints instead of 30, I'm one better than Warhol!

simply be a pictorial depiction of FUN + PLAY, such as the collaborative collages, nor an artifact from a FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) happening, such as the mannequin. However, including elements of FUN + PLAY—in their diverse manifestations, working collaboratively—is a successful strategy to engage participants in Queer Pleasure deriving from FUN + PLAY.

Keeping everything that I learned from this project in mind, I started planning for my next piece, *MySpace.jpg*. With this next work, I wanted to delve deeper into self-portraiture and the expression of Queer Pleasure from a personal perspective rather than a distant gaze. Additionally, I wanted to amplify my expression of hospitality and connection to my participant(s) by addressing them more directly.

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## *MySpace.jpg* - 2020

### Queer Pleasure vs Performance Anxiety

[Display & Digital Archive ([Social Media](#) + [Website](#))]



Fig. 21: Vee CR. *MySpace.jpg*. 2020. Digital Collage, 1440×900 pixels.

The next iteration of *PLAY House* is *MySpace.jpg*, which is a digital collage accompanied by a hyperlink poem exhibited online [[x](#)].<sup>67</sup> While one of my struggles with *Holliday Home* (*Glitch of the Heart*) was replicating the digital collage into an IRL<sup>68</sup> setting, because *MySpace.jpg* is digital, its production wasn't bound to the same monetary restrictions.<sup>69</sup> In *MySpace.jpg* I could use any image at my disposal to create the room I wanted. I chose to create

<sup>67</sup> <https://vincentchorabik.com/myspacejpg>

<sup>68</sup> IRL is internet slang for "In Real Life."

<sup>69</sup> IRL stuff is expensive. I designed a wallpaper for *Holliday Home*, which I didn't end up using because the projected production cost was up to three thousand dollars... which seemed a little steep all things considered...

a semi-nostalgic, semi-contemporary room primarily featuring my artworks and belongings.  
Also, the room is designed to look like the same three-walled room I used in *Holliday Home*.

Under the collage a poem guides the viewer through the space. It reads:

Welcome to MySpace.jpg

Here we will Play a little Game:

I Spy with my little eye a Powerful **Lioness!**

She is the Queen of Joyousness.

I also Spy a Pillow

crafted by the hands of Leonardo...

**Duh Vincie!**

I Spy a **Lightbulb** containing seams,  
rings, memories, and runaway dreams.

Now I Spy a **Bathroom for Boys**,  
containing a bucket for blood,  
a request treated like white noise.

I Spy a wall blessed by the **Virgin Mary**,  
And Satyrs oh, so very hairy.

I Spy a **Dragon made of Friendship** and magic;  
one without the other is truly tragic.

I Spy a **Poem** stuck to a fridge,  
its words suspended by an invisible bridge.

And finally, I Spy a **Cereal Box**  
mirroring the Art & Consumerism Paradox.

Thanks for Coming Over and Playing with me,

Let's do it again sometime soon! <3

Xoxo, Vee

While this poem guides the viewer through the collage, it also serves as a guide for discussing *MySpace.jpg* here. The artwork is a self-portrait that explores my identity and relationship with internal and external space. Through contextualization, each element in *MySpace.jpg* builds on top of one another to create a rich and unique dialogue. Moreover, while in *Holliday Home* I found Queer Pleasure by applying FUN + PLAY to my Queer Pain manifesting as Polyamorous Shame, in *MySpace.jpg* I find Queer Pleasure by applying FUN + PLAY to my Queer Pain manifesting as Social Phobia. Therefore, creating a self-portrait without a “self” is significant.



Fig. 22: Vee CR. *Lioness*. 2019. Acrylic Paint on Found Fabric. Approx. 10 x 7.5'.

On the backwall of *MySpace.jpg* hangs *Lioness*, my 2019 acrylic painting on found fabric. It is approximately 10 feet high and 7.5 feet wide. While painting, I thought about Robert Rauschenberg's 1955 *Bed*, and listened to Dorian Electra's 2019 album *Flamboyant* [x].<sup>70</sup>

The painting is impressive in size but made with rudimentary material and skill. The central figure is a symbol of Pride<sup>71</sup> regardless of one's financial status or artistic merit (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – DeSkilled or “BAD” art). I made her large because she is a Goddess, worthy of worship. I made her DeSkilled because I wanted anyone to feel like they could paint her; she is accessible to everyone. Artists like Rauschenberg inspire me to continue making art despite living in poverty. Once, in an interview, he was asked why he painted on his bedding and he laughed saying, “because it's what I had.” Keeping a positive attitude and using what is available is essential in pursuing art despite barriers; this is possible through FUN + PLAY.


The lioness is depicted prancing across a field of diverse flowers<sup>72</sup> and the sky twinkles with rainbow Coloured stars (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – Colourful). A crescent moon looms in the background, a symbol of femininity and change. Two golden-brown cherubs with pink and teal hair hold up a banner reading “LIONESS.” The lioness' spirit is strong and joyful.<sup>73</sup> When I made her, I wanted to create a figure that was proud of their identity and full of self-love. I hope to convey, with these cherubs, the same message as Electra's “Adam and Steve”: “God made me just like Adam and Steve...and Madam and Eve... and he loves me (7, 38, 39). In many ways “God” is a metaphor for society's morals, so by proclaiming that “God made me... and he loves me” one is stating that it is natural and moral to be one's self. This proclamation is at the core of Queer Pleasure.

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxt6g7zt-zs>

<sup>71</sup> Here Pride is used as a pun, as a group of lions is called a pride.

<sup>72</sup> Artist & Associate Dean at ECUAD, Justin Langlois, called these flowers “Warholian,” which wasn't necessarily my intention, but I'm always flattered to be associated with Andy Warhol (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – POP ART).

<sup>73</sup> Her energy is incredibly gay. 

This Goddess is a lioness, but unlike the normie lioness (**Glossary** – normie), this one has a mane. The lioness is constructed from various clothes ranging from my dad’s old socks to Bonnie’s<sup>74</sup> sweater and leggings. In constructing of a being out of clothing, I was thinking about how gender is expressed through fabric we adorn. Moreover, the lion’s mane is a metaphor for the human beard, something I possess despite being Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB).

*Lioness* is one of the pieces that I reflect on most because she gives me strength. She is strong in her identity and views herself in a manner that makes her happy and confident. In the moment depicted, she views herself as strong and feminine. Her mane of socks feels powerful and beautiful against her skin. Sometimes when I am struggling with Queer Pain regarding my visual appearance, I think about her and experience vicarious Queer Pleasure. My gender identity is fluid, and while it’s easier to be consistent for the sake of others,<sup>75</sup> sometimes I see myself as “female” and/or “male” regardless of my gender expression in the form of facial hair and/or clothing. The cherubs for me, come from an internal space, one that is validated by the All-Mighty-Gods of the universe.<sup>76</sup> This piece says, “Your identity is valid. Be you. Be proud. Feel love and joy and be one with the world.”

The next work mentioned in the poem, *Mona (Kevin) Lisa*, also celebrates a figure to the point of Goddesshood. Here, she/they has moved from the precious metallic paper and fancy frame of *Holliday Home* to a Campy pillow printed through Society6 (**Aesthetic Sensibilities** – Campy) [[x](#)].<sup>77</sup> This transformation generates humour: She/They becomes FUN(ny) and PLAY(sure/ful) in a new and unexpected way.

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<sup>74</sup> If you forgot, Bonnie is my partner.

<sup>75</sup> Often when I tell people that I am non-binary, they think it means gender neutral. While I do prefer gender neutral pronouns such as they/them as a baseline, gender neutral language doesn’t always account for my experience of gender which moves along, across, and outside of the gender spectrum.

<sup>76</sup> The All-Mighty-Gods are a rockband formally known as the ERMAHGERDs, but rebranded for obvious reasons.

<sup>77</sup> [https://society6.com/product/mona-lisa-but-queer-satire-fine-contemporary-art3024537\\_pillow](https://society6.com/product/mona-lisa-but-queer-satire-fine-contemporary-art3024537_pillow)



Fig. 23: Vee CR. *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* Pillow. 2020. Throw Pillow printed on [Society6](#), 16 x 16".

Fig. 23, above, is a *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* pillow that I gave Kevin for their birthday; it's photographed in their home. Pillows are often used as intimate objects of comfort and

PLAY(sure). In 2017, Kevin Holliday did a multi-media installation called *R.I.P.* that included self-portrait body pillows holding themselves and watching screens, while lying on a pink inflatable bed, propped up against a wall [x].<sup>78</sup> This hedonistic and sensual energy is often found in personified pillows (Brown 15). In *MySpace.jpg*, the pillow acts as a stand-in friend, during a pandemic where we are socially isolated in our domestic spaces. This friend can be hugged while watching TV, a sort of passive hospitality.

Self-aware, the poem guides the reader from the pillow to the *I SPY* book sitting on top of the fat '00s TV. *I SPY* is a way of seeing as reading. In elementary school, I always PLAYed *I SPY* during silent reading time. (It was either that, or my friend and I hid in the closet and PLAYed make-believe.<sup>79</sup>) The *I SPY* books are composed of large, busy photographs with a ribbon of text along the bottom. The photographs are by Walter Wick and the poetry-riddles<sup>80</sup> are by Jean and Dan Marzollo. Wick creates these complex compositions using found and made materials, then photographs them. His compositions have visual depth and there is often a narrative element. I'm inspired by Wick's Maximalist Aesthetic that induces FUN + PLAY, as well as the Marazollos' method of using text to PLAY a game and guide the reader through the imagery.

Density of information, as provided in games like Wick and the Marzollos' *I SPY*, allows the reader to spend endless time engaged in the FUN + PLAY provided. My intention in creating this same sense of Maximalist FUN + PLAY in *MySpace.jpg* is to give the viewer a place of rest from the external world. It's a room that says, "You have everything you need here. You don't need to leave." This feeling of comfort is a Queer Pleasure, but the necessity for these safe spaces is a Queer Pain because there is no guarantee of a safety outside these collaged walls.

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<sup>78</sup> <https://www.kevinmholliday.ca/sketches>

<sup>79</sup> LMFAO (laughing my fucking ass off) I didn't realize how gay that sounds until now.

<sup>80</sup> For more information on Poetry-PLAY see Johan Huizinga.

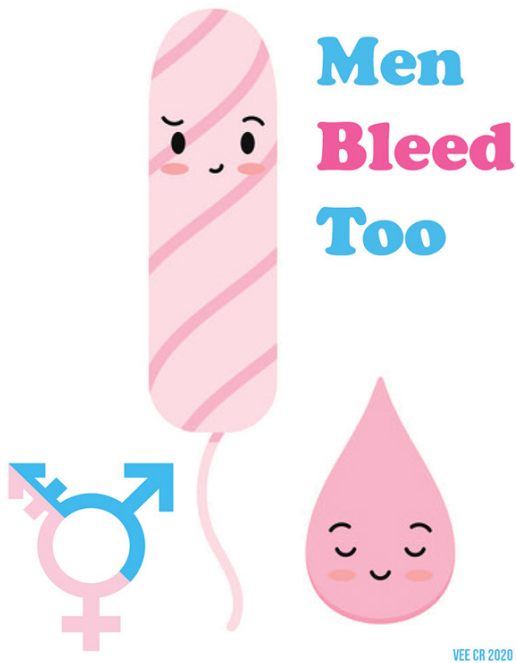


Fig. 24: Vee CR. *Men Bleed Too* poster. 2020.

Fig. 25: Vee CR. Cute Bucket in ECUAD's Men's Room, 2020.

In *MySpace.jpg* there is one visible exit and entrance to the room: a bright red door that is slightly ajar. This door has a juxtaposition of meaning that creates tension. In American tradition, a red door means “a welcoming place to rest” and in Christianity it means a place protected by God (Westerman). However, I increased the saturation and chroma of the red door so that it also took on the meaning of a stop-sign. It is a cautionary red, a sign of potential danger lurking beyond the door.

This is the only space in the collage where the viewer gets a glimpse outside the three-walled room. On the door is a poster that reads “Men Bleed Too” next to a personified tampon and blood droplet; these are accompanied by the pink and blue transgender symbol (fig. 24).

Inside the door is a cute green bucket (fig. 25). The cuteness<sup>81</sup> of these elements is important in creating a FUN + PLAY(ful) space that is child-like, non-threatening and welcoming.

These items are from my Queer Activism work in creating safe spaces for Trans Men and Non-Binary folk. As someone who bleeds monthly, but passes socially as male, it is easier for me to use Men's rooms than it is for me to use Women's rooms. However, when I am on my period it is incredibly difficult to use the Men's rooms when they don't provide Sanitary Disposal Units (SDU). As a Trans Person, I know how dangerous it is to be considered an invader in a space that you just want to use to pee and bleed in peace. Not to mention, the packaging for pads and tampons is often incredibly vibrant and Colourful, so walking over to the wastebasket next to the communal sinks is a dead giveaway. As a result of this lived experience, I've been advocating for SDUs in the Men's rooms at school for over two years in the form of emails and conversations with various people and groups including: the Emily Carr Student's Union, Facilities, the President of ECUAD,<sup>82</sup> and my Professors. When I took Jamie Hilder's Research Class, he directed us to a reading called "Complaint as Diversity Work," (Sara Ahmed), which struck me as significant and rekindled my energy to work on these SDUs again.

I started placing cute buckets and posters in Men's rooms that do not offer Sanitary Disposal Units. Fig. 25 is a photograph of one of my buckets in a men's room at ECUAD, where a sign above the toilet reads "Do Not Flush Feminine Hygiene Products." There are many reasons why this sign here angers me. One is that the signs were put up after I complained about the lack of Sanitary Disposal Units and the response I got was "you're just one person, nobody else has complained." Yet clearly, I'm not the only one bleeding in the Boy's room because *someone* is flushing their products down the toilet, and it isn't me. Moreover, the signs add to the

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<sup>81</sup> Cuteness is related to FUN + PLAY in aesthetics sensibility and functions to pacify a reader &/or viewer in order to express something that might otherwise be too jarring, scary, or uncomfortable (Ngai).

<sup>82</sup> Gillian Siddall.

TRANSPHOBIA in this space as anyone who bleeds that identifies as non-female is now being called feminine for bleeding. In order to point to this problem, while also offering a temporary solution, I installed a cute wastebasket and the “Men Bleed Too” poster in the space. “Men Bleed Too” posters can be found here [\[x\]](#).<sup>83</sup> Ideally, however, it would be nice to have approval to install appropriate Sanitary Disposal Units in all washrooms, not just at ECUAD but everywhere.

Thus, the symbolism regarding the room with the red door is the tension between the Private & Public spaces. It represents how my Private experiences trigger artistic Activism that effect changes in Public Spaces, transforming them into safe and Queer spaces. However, as right now there is still danger and misunderstanding regarding Trans Folks and our identities and intentions, the door remains a cautionary tale for Transphobia.

Next the poem directs the reader’s attention outside the washroom, to the back wall. Hidden behind *Lioness*, one of the collaborative collages that Kevin and I made appears as a transparent texture (fig. 11). Most of the imagery is invisible to the viewer but the reference in the poem as “a wall blessed by the Virgin Mary, / And Satyrs oh, so very hairy” (11-12) colours the room with a FUN(ny) PLAY(sure). The juxtaposition of the Virgin Mary with Satyrs is FUN(ny) because they have very different relationships to sex; one is a virgin and one is driven by sex. Moreover, Mary is a strange mythology as she is pregnant without having sex. While the intention of her being written this way may have been to highlight the importance of chastity in that culture, it actually feels incredibly Queer. For instance, my partner and I want to have children, but as two AFAB people, we have to think outside the cishetero method of conception. In vitro fertilization (IVF), a common practice for people in our position, reminds me of Mary and her ‘Virgin’ pregnancy that doesn’t rely on cishetero sex to procreate.

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<sup>83</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNMOo2ZAULh6go0bA46QRL23-YcXy3tR/view>

Concurrently, the collage celebrates continued collaboration.



Fig. 26: Sarah Green, Kevin Holliday, and Vee CR, *Finger Painting Night*, 2020.

The poem nudges the reader toward the right-hand wall of *MySpace.jpg*, where a diptych hangs above the television.<sup>84</sup> It is an archive of a “happening,” a collaborative finger painting and crayon drawing night with a couple of MFA peers, Sarah Green and Kevin Holliday. This happening was one aspect of process-based research on how collaboration and art-making induce FUN + PLAY. To allow for maximum FUN + PLAY the participants were fed and hydrated. Remember, the wellness of the mind and body are essential to FUN + PLAY and Queer Pleasure.

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<sup>84</sup> This diptych hangs above my own TV at home, a direct link between my digital self-portrait and my IRL space.

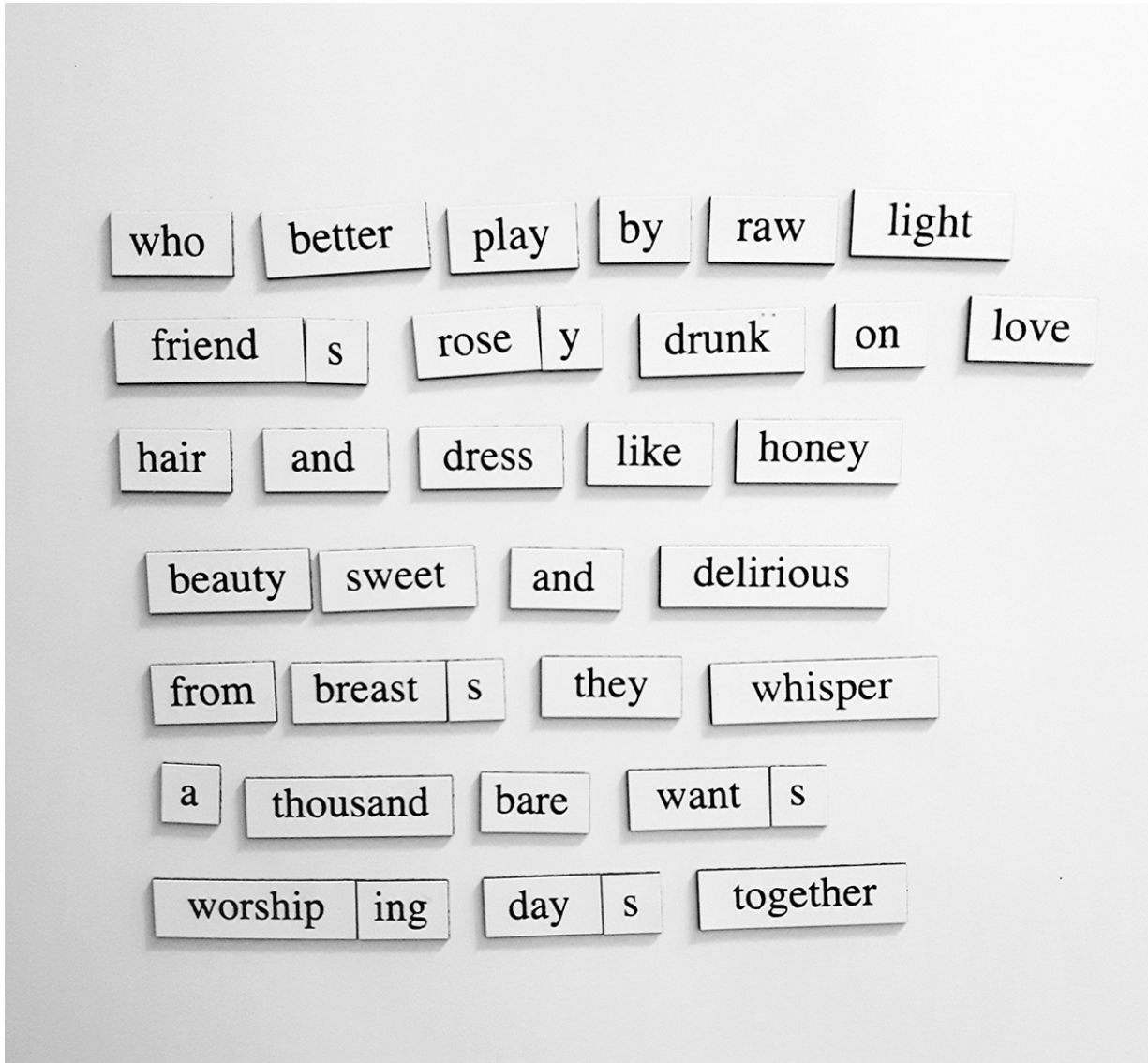


Fig. 27: Vee CR. *Who better play by raw light?*, 2018. Magnet Poem, 4 x 5.5"

Opposite to the diptych is “a Poem stuck to a fridge” (15), which is another element from my own home that is represented in *MySpace.jpg*. The poem above, fig. 27, is a Sapphic love story. The love can be read as romantic or platonic, but either way it is a deep, spiritual space of love. While assembling this magnet poem, I imagined myself as one of these girls, giggling and breathless. I imagined falling over each other laughing, our skin drenched in warm sunlight. In this poem I feel and express Queer Pleasure, embracing another aspect of my Identity & Relationships.

Notably, while this poem is visible in the collage it is illegible due to the image resolution and pixelization. However, it is made accessible to the viewer through the link provided in the poem. Thus, the reader needs to engage in the activity on multiple levels to access all the information. In video game's this type of hidden information is called “secrets.” The intention of secrets is to add more FUN + PLAY by rewarding players for their exploration (Koster, DoubleSpeak Games).



Fig. 28: Vee CR, *Top Shelf, Consumption*, 2018. Recycling on White Shelf, Shelf: 2 x 3', Assemblage: Malleable.

Similarly, the words “cereal box” in the poem link to my 2018 assemblage *Top Shelf, Consumption* [x]<sup>85</sup> [x].<sup>86</sup> This artwork is made up of recycling that was collecting in my kitchen

<sup>85</sup> <https://vincentchorabik.com/top-shelf-consumption>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/B9zVhTPl5bV/>

at the time and a hand-made shelf painted eggshell white. It was a tongue-in-cheek observation on my consumption habits. Thus, I arranged the boxes in a way that mirrored a human-made city, thriving on capitalism. In *MySpace.jpg* it functions as another marker of identity: it represents my artistic and scholarly accomplishments, as it was the piece that I showed at my bachelor's degree art show.

While the collage itself doesn't have a huge connection to *Top Shelf, Consumption*, they do both display an abundance of cereal. Above the fridge there is an array of 3D cereal boxes. These boxes were created with by taking two photographs of my own cereal boxes and merging them together to create more boxes that don't look exactly the same. Behind these, flattened again the wall as if a projection or wallpaper, there is a screenshot of the cereal collection in Jerry Seinfeld's apartment (*Seinfeld*). The fridge itself holds personal meaning: after the *MySpace.jpg* debut performance, I was asked by a participant, "What's in the fridge?" I responded with, "Milk." While this might seem like a silly joke, it references to my childhood, where we had a separate fridge dedicated to milk because my family would consume, on average, 4 liters of milk a day. *Seinfeld*, cereal, and these moments of nostalgia are personal places of comfort and survival; and, flesh out this self-portrait of a room.

Though the poem ends with a cheerful invitation, what isn't addressed is the fact that I am physically missing from the image. Instead, there is a glaringly empty space where the gallery lights, that also double as cameras, are pointing.

However, as the poem guides the reader's eyes away from the empty seat and through the various elements of self-portraiture, the truth is revealed: this room isn't missing a body. Instead, the room is the body. This body is equally comfortable and uncomfortable, an affect activated by the friction between Queer Pleasure & Pain. The Joy & Pride of Queer Pleasure are combating the Anxieties of Agoraphobia and Social Phobia which derive from Queer Pain. As an artist, I

am performing and exposing myself in a vulnerable way to connect with others and create a safe, FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) space for others to join me in Queer Pleasure. This connection between myself and others is core to my work in *PLAY House*, and I continue to pursue it in the final iteration, *PLAY Room*, by targeting the Queer Pain of Chronic Depression and the impact of Covid-19.

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## *PLAY Room* – 2021

Queer Pleasure vs Chronic Depression (+ COVID-19 Quarantine)

[Nostalgia, Rest, Comfort, Fantasy, Escape, & De(/Re)generation]



Fig. 29: Vee CR. *PLAY Room* – Sketch, 2021. Digital Collage, 1350×1080 pixels.

*PLAY Room* is the final iteration of *PLAY House* and was exhibited from March 22-30 2021, at ECUAD as part of the MFA graduate show. *PLAY Room* is an accumulation of all my research into FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) art, with an emphasis on Colourful, Campy, Maximalist, and POP Art sensibilities. It is a self-portrait, similar in ways to *MySpace.jpg*, but different because the form of Queer Pain emergent in the work is Depression instead of Anxiety.

Both Anxiety and Depression may lead someone to barricade themselves inside, but the feeling of Depression is lethargic, thus there is an emphasis on the bedroom as a place of De(/Re)generation. The concept of Degeneration, which is a reversal of growth, and the idea of Regeneration, which is growth through healing, happen simultaneously in this space. So, while the bedroom is a space of rest, when this rest is overextended, it becomes a place of failure.

My experiences with depression correspond accurately with the depiction of Depression in *Big Mouth*.<sup>87</sup> In the show, “Depression Kitty” is a large violet cat that is comforting at first, but then she becomes a weight that keeps you chained to your bed; by then she has become very hard to escape.<sup>88</sup> With the social isolation and quarantine attributed to Covid-19, there has been a global increase in mental health issues including Anxiety & Depression. These issues can affect Queer folks more than non-Queer folks [x],<sup>89</sup> especially Queer youth stuck with unsupportive families [x].<sup>90</sup> While, I am grateful to be in a loving and supportive relationship, I know this isn’t the case for everyone. While making *PLAY Room*, I was thinking about creating a safe space that is equally a self-portrait and a place of refuge and rest for others. Thus, I was very conscious of making the space more livable than a traditional gallery space. Once again, I was thinking about Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and how to supply these needs to myself and to my participants.

After I completed *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)*, my research professor, Randy Cutler, suggested I stay in the room for a couple of hours to experience it for an extended period of time. During my stay, I only allowed myself to interact with the objects in the room. I could use a notebook and pen, but only if I was discussing the room. There were many things I learned

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<sup>87</sup> *Big Mouth* is a 2017 animated sit-com featuring teenagers learning about their changing bodies.

<sup>88</sup> *Untitled (Cat Fight)* (fig. 14) reprinted on bedding (fig. 32-3) becomes a subliminal allusion to Depression Kitty.

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/06/417931/lgbtq-populations-experience-newfound-anxiety-and-depression-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/majority-lgbtq-youth-experiencing-anxiety-depression-amid-covid-poll-finds-n1242111>

through that process that I applied to *PLAY Room*. I learned that the ceiling in that space is too tall, too open, too uncomfortable. The floors are cold. And, I couldn't touch or do anything.

I noticed too that even though I was semi-secluded from passersby, due to the location, I still felt uncomfortably visible. The way that I'm addressing this conspicuousness is by amplifying it, while also giving the audience a chance to transform the space into something hidden. I'm providing the audience with red curtains at the entrance of *PLAY Room*, instead of using them as a decorative element on the backwall, like in *Holliday Home*. Much like how the red door functions in *MySpace.jpg*, the red curtains here serve as an indicator of the boundary. With *PLAY Room*, this boundary is reminiscent of what Johan Huizinga calls "the magic circle" (10), which is the boundary between life & PLAY.<sup>91</sup> Here, the PLAY pun is doubled, as the red curtains function as a gesture toward Shakespeare's quote, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," which is essentially Art = Life, but in slightly different words. Thus, these curtains signal a sense of performativity that is reminiscent of *MySpace.jpg* with the gallery lights, and my personal history of being visibly Queer.



Fig. 30: Vee CR, *PLAY Room* [Installation Detail], 2021.

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<sup>91</sup> Huizinga's notes that PLAY is restricted to time & space stating that "[a]ll play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course" (10). Interestingly, some scholars suggest that it isn't easy to pinpoint the specifics of the magic circle. Is it the arena that the PLAYers compete in, does it include people on the bleachers, and what about those watching from home?

While conceptualizing this work, I was thinking about Vincent van Gogh's 1888 *Bedroom in Arles*, Tracey Emin's 1998 *My Bed*, and Erica Stocking's 2020 *The Artist's Studio is Her Bedroom*. I'm inspired by how each of these artists uses the bedroom as a self-portrait and how the room, and primarily the bed, becomes a stand-in for the body. Van Gogh's spirit is present through his choice of Colourful, stylized imagery. Emin's authenticity of embodied experience is channelled into her objects. And, Stocking addresses the constraints of artists working in their studios, as well as the assumption that one can only make "serious art" in a studio [x].<sup>92</sup>

I'm aligning my work with van Gogh in the way we choose colours as modes of self-expression, Emin in the way that we demonstrate authenticity of Self, and Stocking in our current experience of Covid-19.

However, my work is also very different from each of these artists. While van Gogh made a painting of a room, I will be painting a room. While Emin displayed a lived-in mattress, mine is a blow-up bed—a mockery of a bed, FUN(ny) in its Campy artifice. And, while Stocking designed a clean, minimalist room, mine will be FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) in its Maximalist abundance. Moreover, I imagine bleeding between the influences that either complement or contrast one another, adding to a sense of (dis/)harmony. This (dis/)harmony mirrors the Ambiguous Feelings that emerge when Queer Pain & Pleasure co-exist.

In order to create a lived-in feeling, more similar to Emin than Stocking, I lived in the space for a couple hours a day, post-initial installation. This action functioned as both performance art and research. As a result of these lived experiences and observations of participant engagement, I recognize that *PLAY Room* successfully achieved its goal of being more FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful)—and more hospitable—than *Holliday Home*.

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<sup>92</sup> <https://www.contemporaryartgallery.ca/exhibitions/the-artists-studio-is-her-bedroom/>



Fig. 31: Erica Stocking, *The Artist's Studio is her Bedroom*, 2020. Installation, Contemporary Art Gallery.

Before installing *PLAY Room*, I created a list of objects to bring with me. This is the original list of the *PLAY Room* materials (some elements were altered throughout the process):

1 Mirror, 1 TV, 1 TV Stand (Milk Crate), 1 Blowup Bed, 1 Fancy Pink & Gold Kleenex Box, 2 Custom Society 6 Blankets [\[x\]](https://society6.com/product/fighters-or-lovers-summer-2020_comforter)<sup>93</sup> [\[x\]](https://society6.com/product/lioness4260833_throw-blanket),<sup>94</sup> 1 N64 with Controller and Games, 1 DVD Player with DVDs, 1 Cake Stand filled with, 50+ Bananas (+ Healthy(ish) Snacks), 2-4 large Red Curtains, 1 Large Print of Bonnie & Me in a Fancy Frame, 1 Painting (Childhood Dialogues, 2018), 1 Grey Shag Rug, 3+ small cans of Paint: Lychee PR16G42 [from Canadian Tire], 5+ Colourful Lights, 1 Fake Ceiling made out of various Found Fabrics, 10+ books, sculptures, knickknacks, etc...

<sup>93</sup> [https://society6.com/product/fighters-or-lovers-summer-2020\\_comforter](https://society6.com/product/fighters-or-lovers-summer-2020_comforter)

<sup>94</sup> [https://society6.com/product/lioness4260833\\_throw-blanket](https://society6.com/product/lioness4260833_throw-blanket)

This list wasn't completely rigid and there was freedom to change or TRANSform objects depending on how they interacted with one another in the space. I made sure to bring more objects than necessary for installation day—thus, giving myself the option to PLAY around with more elements and take out what I thought was adding Unnecessary Noise<sup>95</sup> instead of contributing to the FUN of the work.

Some of the elements, like the bed, fabric ceiling, video games PLAYed on the TV, and wall Art are essential to *PLAY Room*, hence their continual presence from the original design in December 2020 [x]<sup>96</sup> to the final product. One of these core elements is the bed. I knew I wanted a bed in this space but the development of the bed, as well as other elements, has been a combination of personal desire and collaborative process.



Fig. 32: Vee CR, *PLAY Room* [Installation Detail], 2021.

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<sup>95</sup> Okay, I lied in a previous footnote about the All-Mighty-Gods; they're not a real band. But, if I had a band, it would be called Unnecessary Noise and it would be some hip new alternative rock band that's Queer AF (As Fuck). I can't PLAY any instruments proficiently so I'll write the lyrics, look pretty, and hit the triangle once in a while.

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJevC2qjFf2/>



In fact, the FUN + PLAY of *PLAY Room* started before the installation as there has been a collaborative element to *PLAY Room* from its conception. When I was making decisions, such as which image to print, I hosted public polls on my IG ([Instagram](#)) and FB ([Facebook](#)) accounts. Whichever image received the most votes, I printed. Here, on the left, is a screenshot from one of these polls. The bottom design received more votes than the top one, therefore it was selected for printing. This voting system adds FUN + PLAY to the artwork before it is produced, and I hope it elicits a feeling of investment for the audience as it is their artwork too.

Another collaborative element is the photograph on the back wall of *PLAY Room*. Multiple people influenced its final outcome including: John Bello (photographer), Bonnie & me (models), and my IG & FB groups (voters). Their contribution to the work is significant in painting a picture of everyone in my life that is important to me and helps me experience Queer Pleasure.

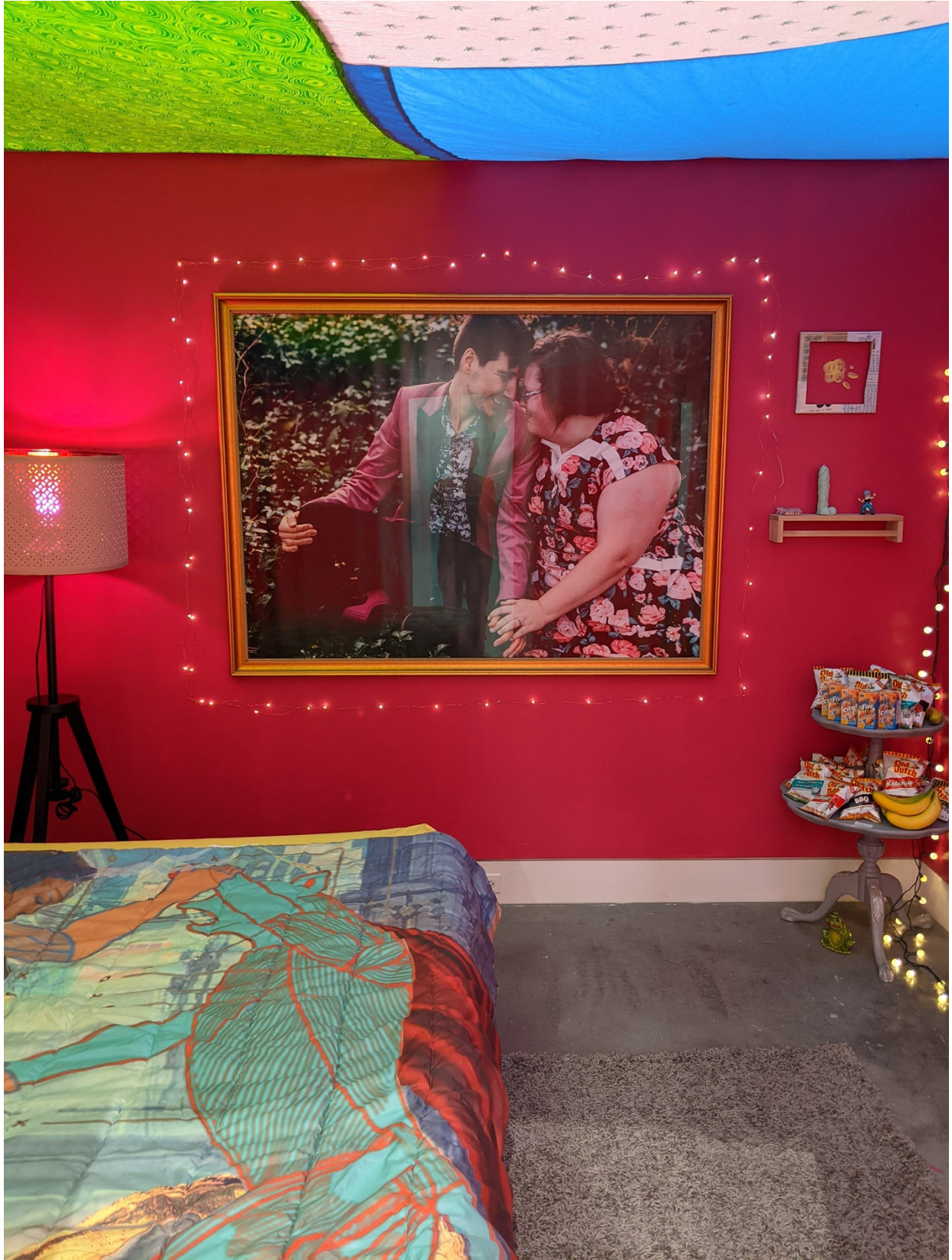


Fig. 34: Vee CR, *PLAY Room* [Installation Detail], 2021.

It is important to acknowledge those who love and support us. They give us strength, happiness, validation, and purpose. Queer Pleasure is loving and cherishing ourselves and others.



Fig. 35: John Bello, *Bonnie & Vee Engagement Photo*, 2020.

This photograph of Bonnie & Me was displayed at 44 x 66 inches in a custom gold frame. This presentation is imbedded with genuine Camp. Susan Sontag argues that naïve, pure Camp is “seriousness that fails” and “has the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve” (7). Printing an engagement photo of this size qualifies as Camp. Moreover, the framing, size, and location of the photograph in *PLAY Room* mirrors and expands upon the depiction of *Mona (Kevin) Lisa* in *Holliday Home*. This relationship between the two images is significant and expands upon my experiences and representations of love. In *Holliday Home*, I was expressing a combination of love for a friend and a longing for something else. And

in *PLAY Room*, I am expressing the love I already have within myself and with my partner. This photograph links me to the Queer Pleasure I feel toward myself and her [x].<sup>97</sup>

Placing it in *PLAY Room* also links my present-self to my past-self. The FUN + PLAY in *PLAY House* is linked to a child-like innocence that is boundless in potential. I think this is important because we are infinite in possibility, yet we are crushed and molded by our environments. This pressure might make a few pearls, but overall it is damaging. This pressure comes from society's creation and exaltation of the normie. Therefore, representation and diversity are key in inducing Queer Pleasure. But, what's the point of making art when nobody is going to see it and that representation and diversity are rendered invisible?

Making art during the pandemic is a painful process, but even in the face of obstacles, one must believe in what they are doing if they are going to experience genuine Queer Pleasure &/or FUN + PLAY. This optimistic sensibility is challenging to uphold, but it is necessary to persevere. In art & life, jokes and laughter are incredibly valuable for survival and connectivity. I particularly enjoy banana jokes because they are innocently FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful).

The addition of an abundance of bananas on a cake stand was an element that didn't come into the plan until January 2021. Later, these bananas were accompanied by a mirror because I thought it would be very FUN(ny) +



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<sup>97</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSfLhCvqVB8>

PLAY(sure/ful) to get people to see themselves eating a banana. Additionally, the mirror is activated as a space for taking Instagram selfies, which creates another element of interactivity as well as creating a liminal space between the internet and physical reality. In some cases, I encouraged participation by placing notes beside objects. A note next to the food reads “Eat Me :-D,” one text to the TV reads “Turn Me On ;-),” and one next to the Nintendo 64 reads “Play With Me ;-P.”<sup>98</sup>

While I couldn’t guarantee that people would eat the food and drinks I provided, let alone photograph themselves doing so,<sup>99</sup> I increased those odds by supplying an abundance of food displayed beautifully for consumption next to a mirror. Moreover, I posted daily updates of PLAY Room throughout the process, and even replenished the food once it ran out [x].<sup>100</sup> The aesthetic



sensibility of the food stand is very POP Art in its consumeristic approach to FUN(ny) +

<sup>98</sup> Yes, I am alluding to Mariko Mori’s 1994 *Play With Me*.

<sup>99</sup> In some countries it is illegal to share images of someone eating a banana, which is incredibly FUN(ny) ... I guess some people are offended by PLAY(sure/ful) food.

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CM4oEAJBMJ/>

PLAY(sure/ful) nostalgia. Not only is it a fine art sculpture, stimulating thought based on aesthetic value, it also serves as a way to feed participants. Because food is one of the most basic needs (Maslow), this act of feeding others is essential in triggering and maintaining FUN + PLAY, creating a safe space that someone can engage in for a sustained period of time.

These chips, bananas, and juice boxes are multipurpose objects that discuss the core concepts of *PLAY House*; moreover, they have a humorous association with Maurizio Cattelan's 2019 *Comedian*, where he duct-taped a banana to the gallery wall at the Art Basel show in Galerie Perrotin [x].<sup>101</sup> Globally, people were outraged by this work and it skyrocketed to success; people were angry that a banana could be called art, that it sold for \$120,000, and that someone ate it [x]!<sup>102</sup> One way that the *Comedian* is FUN(ny) is because it's high stakes. So, much like how I made Andy Warhol's *Thirty Are Better than One* FUN(ny)er by adding one extra *Mona Lisa* to the collection, here I add



bunches and bunches of bananas to make the art more 🍌bananas🍌. While my stakes may not

<sup>101</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/banana-duct-tape-art-basel\\_n\\_5deaab59e4b0913e6f8fd0b8?ri18n=true#:~:text=An%20Artist%20Duct%20Taped%20A%20Banana%20To%20A,made%20massive%20amounts%20of%20money.%20By%20Jenna%20Amatulli](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/banana-duct-tape-art-basel_n_5deaab59e4b0913e6f8fd0b8?ri18n=true#:~:text=An%20Artist%20Duct%20Taped%20A%20Banana%20To%20A,made%20massive%20amounts%20of%20money.%20By%20Jenna%20Amatulli)

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/david-datuna-banana-art-basel-trnd/index.html>

be as high as Cattelan's, making FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) art in a Master of Fine Arts program has enough weight to TRANSform DeSkilled or "BAD" art into something seriously silly.



Fig. 39: Vee CR, *PLAY Room* [Installation Detail], 2021. Fig. 40: Vee CR, *PLAY Room* [Installation Detail], 2021

On the back wall of *PLAY Room*, a Queer painting is displayed (fig. 39). This painting is a small collaged canvas that has been roughly cut with a utility knife. One can look through the painting, revealing an image painted directly onto the Lychee Pink wall with yellow acrylic. This painting was completely spontaneous and made during the installation process, and it probably carries the most humour for me. It isn't FUN(ny) or PLAY(sure/ful) in the same way that eating bananas, or maneuvering through soft porn for a tissue from a fancy box, is but it's FUN(ny) in the same way that Queerness is FUN(ny). It's something that doesn't quite belong among the categories, or boxes, to which it is designated. It's also FUN(ny) because there was risk while making it. Because I was painting directly onto the wall with my finger, I had to be committed to

my action and feel confident in its ultimate success or failure—whatever that really means. This sincere devotion to DeSkilled or “BAD” art allows one to explore with curiosity without a worry of true failure; the creation of any art is a successful and honourable pursuit if it brings one joy.



To summarize my process, while some elements are preconceived during the sketch phase, some elements reveal themselves through the collection and installation processes. When exploring online or IRL (in thrift stores, etc.), I have my senses on high alert for anything that looks, feels, &/or tastes FUN(ny) &/or PLAY(sure/ful). Moreover, after acquiring the objects the next stage is the assemblage. When I put the FUN(ny) &/or PLAY(sure/ful) items together, I see if they illicit Queer Pleasure in me through their combination and display. Therefore, while I am confident that the items I have collected, and continue to collect, are FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful),

it isn't until the moment of assemblage that I can holistically experience the aesthetic and conceptual effect, and make edits through an intuitive process until the work is complete.

This pairing of spontaneity, love, and labour in *PLAY Room* is echoed in the adjoining installation, *Drawing Room*. Moreover, collaborative self-portraiture is present in *Drawing Room* as everyone involved is contributing their personal PLAY(sure)s to the work.



Fig. 42: Vee CR, *Drawing Room* [Day 01]. Installation, 2021.



Fig. 43: Vee CR, *Drawing Room* [Day 09]. Installation, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOZ-ENq5-ac>

As *Drawing Room* was a last-minute installation accompanying *PLAY Room*, I won't discuss it in detail here. However, I will acknowledge that it was an effective strategy to engage participants in collaborative art making. The prompt written on the wall in large letters reads, "Draw What Makes You Happy :-)." This text was drawn in a DeSkilled manner in order to comfort participants. They didn't have to worry about competing against my artistic abilities and therefore they could focus on the thing they were drawing, not how they were drawing it. One of the benefits of working with "BAD" art is that it activates a sense of "I could do that!" in the participant, which is more beneficial to engagement than a doomed sense of "I can't do that."

To create a sense of domestic comfort and child-like FUN \_ PLAY, I placed my personal coffee table here along with craft paper, crayons, markers, and tape. The table is worn with years of use, but I painted a fresh coat of white on its surface to cover up the coffee stains that may be too reminiscent of genuine domesticity. During Covid-19 times, I think people gravitate towards things that look clean. Therefore, I created a sterile white surface with access to hand-sanitizer and fresh drawing supplies for the safety and comfort of my participants.

It was lovely to visit the space daily and see the development of *Drawing Room*. There was also so much diversity in responses and methods of making! which was incredibly exciting for me because I think that's what Queerness is all about—celebrating diversity. Everyone involved made *PLAY Room* and *Drawing Room* safe, FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) spaces.

:)

:)

## Conclusion

*PLAY House* is an exploration of Queer Pleasure & Pain manifesting in liminal space(s). This space is a self-portrait caught between the Public art world & the Privacy of domestic life. In *Holliday Home (Glitch of the Heart)*, I explore the Queer Pleasure of loving a friend and the Queer Pain of feeling shame for my Polyamorous desires. In *MySpace.jpg*, I express the Queer Pleasure of Celebrating Non-Binary Identity and the Queer Pain of Trans-Erasures & Societal Pressures to Conform. In *PLAY Room*, I take everything I've learned from *Holliday Home* and *MySpace.jpg* and generate a FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) space that combats Queer Shame, Anxiety, and most notably Depression. This space is a refuge from the cold and oppressive demands of our cisheteronormative society built upon the concept of a standardized normie.

*PLAY Room* is a space where everyone is encouraged to relax, unwind, and be themselves. However, by virtue of being an art installation of a domestic space dressed as a theatre set, participants may carry an acute knowledge of being displaced and observed. Thus, just as much as this space is a refuge, it is also a critical space of acknowledging boundaries and barriers that keep us from being our truest selves and connecting honestly with others. With this awareness of Queer Pain & Pleasure, we can begin to TRANSform spaces into FUN(ny) + PLAY(sure/ful) ones that are truly inclusive.

Moreover, *PLAY Room* is paradoxical as it claims to be a safe space but cannot guarantee safety. The safety must be generated from everyone involved. As the artist, I aim to create a space that facilitates well-being by giving both freedom and guidelines to participants. The guidelines encourage participants to respect one another and follow Covid-19 safety precautions such as washing hands and maintaining distance.

This paradoxical nature is mirrored in my intentions: while I hope everyone participates in a respectful manner, I acknowledge that I cannot control everyone's actions—nor do I wish to.

At the same time, by publicly expressing Queer Pleasure in my installations, I hope to create a beacon for Queer folks to feel visible and loved. This desire for a world that is loving and caring toward one another is at the core of my research practice. While it might be arrogant to say that I hope my artwork changes the world, it is my hope that I can facilitate change in some people.

In *PLAY Room*, and *PLAY House* as a whole, I encourage people to value Queer Pleasure & FUN + PLAY in Art, Writing, Education, and Life. Through my research it is clear that Queer Pain is the result of systemic oppression and *othering*. This Pain can be conquered—even if only temporarily—with Queer Pleasure, which can be found in FUN + PLAY. Thus, their importance cannot be dismissed as essential to creativity, literature, education, and existence.

During the two-year MFA program at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, I have developed a fuller knowledge of: self-portraiture, ethical collaboration, the culture of PLAY, FUN derived from humour & game design, and the aesthetics that generate FUN + PLAY (i.e., Colourful, Campy, Maximalist, DeSkilled or “BAD”, Dada, POP Art). I’m excited by the future applications of these methods & materials into Art, Writing, Pedagogy, and everyday Life in my own practice as well as anyone who is influenced by my work. Moreover, through my own experiences as well as responses from faculty, mentors, peers, loved ones, and strangers, it is clear that the juxtaposition of Queer Pain & Pleasure in a single artwork activates a sense of (dis)comfort that is intellectually and emotionally stimulating. I will continue to develop this strategy as I believe it is the most accurate representation of Queer existence.

While being Queer has its struggles, and everyone is uniquely Queer, there is nothing more beautiful than celebrating what makes you—you. Creating spaces that are visibly Queer where everyone’s voice is heard is essential in creating an inclusive world.

Moving forward, I will continue to work TRANSdisciplinarily, making: drawings, paintings, collages, assemblages, sculptures, installations, texts, performances, etc. I will also

continue studying the relationship between Art & Life, with a particular interest in Gender, Sexuality, and (dis)Ability. I aim to pursue a hybridized PhD in Art & Gender Studies to further my research on historical and contemporary Queer Pleasures & Pains and how they aesthetically manifest. I will also continue teaching Art & Writing in academia as I believe I can facilitate change from within the institution, connecting with likeminded people interested in inclusive and innovative design.

At the ECUAD Writing Centre, I facilitate a weekly Creative Writing group called “Wordsmiths.” Here I am given freedom, flexibility, and support to lead workshops and teach/tutor in ways that are genuine to me and those who join. In this space I perform as a host to a liminal (Public & Private) space that exists simultaneously in my bedroom and everyone else’s domestic spaces via BlueJeans. While I PLAY the role of the leader, I encourage collaboration at every step. Everyone involved is equally the teacher and the student. This decentralized pedagogy gives room to all voices. Through this openness I have witnessed abundant love, respect, and compersion in this group. It is beautiful to see people coming from many diverse backgrounds and life experiences to talk about Art, Writing & Life together. Moving forward, I will continue to express my authentic self and collaborate with others to create a better future for everyone through love, respect, representation, empathy, and compassion.

The *PLAY House* philosophy is designed to make everyone’s lives better, whether they are Queer or not, because the magic circle is collectively constructed, without hierarchy or a standardized normie. Instead it acknowledges systemically derived, ingrained habits that we, as individuals and society, continue to fall into; and suggests methods of TRANSforming them through FUN + PLAY into an open conversation. This dialogue is a refusal to conform to preconceptions of who we are and instead gives us room to say, “This is who I am. And, this how I like to be treated.” I want you to know that YOU are worthy of this Queer Pleasure.

**The End**



## Cheat Codes

= = equals.

@ = pronounced “at” connects a person or site to an online post [/location].

# = pronounced “hashtag” shares or connects ideas; used ironically to reveal hidden thoughts.

+ = things are reliant on, or wholly empathize with, one another.

& = things are related but there is tension between them.

and = the connection is there, but this idea retreats from the spotlight, blurring, out of focus.

/ = both concepts live simultaneously + independently, and sometimes one concept is two concepts.

vs = versus is a battle between two concepts; alternately VS is a BIG Battle between concepts.

FULL CAPS = this is a core concept; the trunk of the tree.

Some Caps = this is a branch from the core concept tree.

no caps = this is the leaf that makes up the elements of the tree.

() = extra information.

[ ] = extra extra information and/or edits.



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