

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the Graduate Project Exhibition or Film Project prepared

By: Camille Charbonneau

Entitled: Unmoored

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts (Studio Arts – Painting & Drawing Dept.)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Names of the final examining committee:

Delphine Hennelly	MFA Studio Arts Advisor
Patrick Traer	Faculty Examiner
Kelly Jazvac	Faculty Examiner
Mojeanne Behzadi	External Examiner

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Dean of Faculty

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CAMILLE CHARBONNEAU
-
UNMOORED































The key to my departure from the Mormon church resides within my queerness. Queerness carries an internal knowledge of itself, one that directly contradicts the Mormon belief that sexual orientation is a matter of choice. That recognition exposes a flaw in a supposedly divine doctrine, like a glitch reminding us of the fallibility of the machine and the presence of its hardware, “revealing its edges and seams,” as Legacy Russell writes¹. This moment of clarity breaks the illusion of religious truthfulness, much like clipping out of bounds in a game and seeing the constructed nature of the world. The boundaries of the system develop a crack, consequently offering the possibility of a new path. Failure, if reframed as a productive avenue², allows for this crevice to lead somewhere beyond the church’s rigid description of success.

This truth initiates an unmooring, allowing a slow drift away from the influence of the church while carrying fragmented symbols as artifacts from the relationship. These memories are like ruins from an unsuccessful religious indoctrination³, haunting the mind like fractured vessels incapable of fulfilling their original sacred rituals. These hollow props are emptied of their sacredness, existing between mourning and preservation as they lose their connection with their source and gain in personal sanctity. Symbols become obsolete as they are held through time, they fall out of use, and find new meaning like the floppy disk, losing its anchor in the physical world after its adoption in digital interfaces. With this work, I look at the distance and clarity that unmooring brings and the relationship it allows me to develop with a sacredness nurtured out of bounds from the church’s power.

The act of holding changes the thing held. Words from a folded note start fading, its paper softens, a grain of sand becomes a pearl from the layers of an oyster’s nacre. Signs of wear, patina, buildup, and crusting are physical symptoms of a relationship of proximity. Holding directly affects surfaces, softens limits, un-defines, and shows increasing traces of the carrier. Like Eric Cameron’s *Thick Paintings*,⁴ layers upon layers of acrylic paint are meticulously applied to everyday objects in an almost protective manner. While not exactly being held, these objects are tended to, embraced, enveloped. We know this white mass still has an alarm clock at its core, but the care given to the object makes it unrecognisable. The painting becomes something representing the artist more than what it covers. Sound also changes depending on the space which holds it. Alvin Lucier’s *I Am Sitting in a Room*⁵ showcases this phenomenon. Lucier’s work starts from a recording of the artist narrating a text which is then played in a space where it is re-recorded. The size and geometry of the room emphasizes the resonant frequencies in the recording, which

¹ Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (London, UK: Verso, 2020).

² Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

³ Maxime Coulombe, *Désir Du Noir: Sur Le Gothique* (Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 2024).

⁴ Eric Cameron, “Alarm Clock (3295) ,” Acrylic on alarm clock (Montréal, Canada, 1979), MAC.

⁵ Alvin Lucier, “I Am Sitting in a Room,” Sound Art (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University, 1969).

after many iterations, confuses its whole. The dimensions of the space influences the sound to take its shape. If objects take on traces of the thing which holds them and if sound is deformed from the space within which it is played, maybe memories act similarly within the mind which contains them.

By repeatedly engaging with my memories, I allow them to progress with me. I insert myself within these symbols each time they are recalled in my practice. I use realism as a way to honor their origin, yet still leave traces of myself through the imperfect process of translation. Installations allow me to actualize my relationship with them by creating new settings which slowly detach them from their original meaning. The baptismal font is fragmented, incapable of holding water, reduced to its appearance like a monolith belonging to an unknown civilization⁶. The veil becomes a welcoming cocoon rather than an exclusionary limit, reminiscent of pillow forts, relinquishing some of its authority as it sags to the floor. Bees start acting like flies, gathering at the orifices of the ox as if they were collecting the salt from its tears or initiating the process of decomposition. They become part of the tiles, transcending their narrative role to one of material construction and embellishment.

The further away I travel from the church, the further these symbols are from their religious point of reference. Burial's music⁷ has been described as walking home after a rave as the sound from the event still reverberates in you. The phenomenon of reverb is interesting to compare with memory for the similarities they share. Both reveal the changes that distance, absence, time, and interiority bring to perception and recollection. An excess of reverb can accumulate the notes of a harmonious composition to the point of dissonance, eventually smothering the melody. Music becomes noise from reverb's confusion. The sound of origin is still present, but its order has been lost, everything is heard at once. The obfuscation of distance leaves the possibility for an alternative reading, one similar to the original signal, but new.

The distance from unmooring puts me in a new position, one that might reveal angles which were impossible to see from previous points of view. The othering of queerness allows for a look from the outside, to experience an orientation to things that are parallel to ones of a more privileged majority for which the objects were designed⁸. This distance can be seen as a horizontal one which grants a framing of the whole picture, its back, and its side, or a vertical one detaching us from objective ways of knowing like the linear perspective. Steyerl⁹ writes about the groundlessness of a vertical shift which deconstructs from its disorientation. The relationship that sculpture and installation have with the body allows an exploration of orientation,

⁶ Antonio Dominguez Leiva, *Monolithes: Retour d'une Mythologie de l'âge Spatial* (Paris: PUF, 2022).

⁷ Burial, *Untrue*, CD (UK: Hyperdub, 2007).

⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁹ Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective," e-flux, April 2011, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective>.

point of view, perspective, distance, and limits. The body can be put in relation with objects in other ways than frontal, reflecting queer points of view.

In this work, I consider what becomes possible once unmoored from formative systems of power. I observe how my relationship to religion slowly transforms from this slow drift. Queerness initiates this unmooring, and what follows is a process of carrying, allowing symbols to erode, shift, and gather traces of my own handling. Like sound reshaped by the room that contains it, these inherited forms change through repeated contact, becoming both echoes of their origin and records of my presence. The distortion that distance creates is not a loss but an opening: a reverberation that blurs and makes space for alternative readings. Through sculpture and installation, I explore this expanded field of view made possible by stepping outside the frame of religion. In that groundlessness, a different kind of sacredness emerges, one that is self-made, mutable, and patient.

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