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SELENE

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SELENE

by

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Abstract

My MFA Thesis Exhibition, Selene (Greek goddess of the moon), is an autobiographical journey through self-discovery, recognizing the power of my past seductive and destructive behavior surrounding sexuality. This current body of work serves as a metaphor for “moth to a flame” analogy and “if you are not careful the flame can burn you”.

My journey through personal healing from past traumatic events has taught me that my vulnerability is what breeds my strength. Ways that people navigate life being vulnerable and how they heal from wounds stemming from abuse, addictions, broken hearts, and loss varies among people. I have healed through years of verbal and art therapy. Reading myths and folklore, studying Jungian psychology has fueled my imagination and given me wisdom that I have needed to grow as a woman. My figurative sculptures are created for healing and exposing serious topics surrounding the human psyche, human sexuality, the abject and the beautiful.

Selene consist of life-size figures that are stylized by the tradition of Greco-Roman figuration, combined with surrealist undertones. The stylized approach supports my views on the allure of our culture towards the history of idealized beauty. It is my intention to challenge my viewer’s perception of the power of attraction and repulsion through the male dominated gaze and notions of the female gaze. I want my viewer to question their role in power structures such as “moth to a flame”. 
# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................................. ii

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Chapter 1 ........................................................................................................................................... 3

Section 1- The Abject and The Beautiful
Section 2- Semiotics and Symbolism

Chapter 2- Dreams/Mythology/Archetypes/Healing ................................................................. 10

Chapter 3- The Creation, Installation and Exhibition of Selene and the Male/The
Masculine........................................................................................................................................... 15

Chapter 4- The Female and the Male Gaze ................................................................................. 25

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 28

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................... 29
**Introduction**

Power in sexual attraction, gender, and mystical realms (religion and mythology), is a force that holds great weight as it directs us, influences, recedes within us, and can be dominating or submissive. I am intrigued by power that holds and transforms us as humans.

Over decades of self-discovery and healing I have looked at the dynamics of personal power relations within seductive and destructive behavior, manifested through my sexuality and my intellect. This exhibition reflects that journey of discovery. Through the creation of ceramic figurative sculptures this exhibition is celebrating beauty, the abject and mystical realms. I am not only presenting the body as an object of representation but as an experiencing subject of being human.

In this thesis, chapter one examines two key thematic points that inform the theoretical content of this exhibition. They are the beautiful and the abject, and the semiotic and the symbolic. In chapter two I examine three thematic points that explore psychoanalytic and mystical realms: dreams, archetypes and mythology. These ideas have served a major role in the creation of this autobiographical exhibition, and they have been used for countless centuries to seek truth and self-understanding, and how one situates oneself within society and culture.

Chapter three discusses my installation, materials and process, and the four primary elements of this exhibition: female figure, male figure, cocoons and moths, and how these elements are upholding the theoretical content that is embedded within this installation titled *Selene*. 
Chapter four discusses the nuanced and challenging debate surrounding the male gaze and the female gaze. In this exhibition, I have attempted to subvert the male gaze and give power to the female gaze, through the incorporation of the abject and the beautiful.

In conclusion, I contemplate the seductive and destructive power structures within sexuality and gender. I will discuss mystical realms, such as dreams, as being a way to connect the conscious and unconscious mind.
Chapter One

Section 1

The beautiful and the abject

“When we are too easily pleased, we are in danger of failing to appreciate beauty. That is why great art does not merely satisfy. It also arouses. To truly appreciate beauty the imagination must not outreach reality, but reach out to ever-expanding ranges of it, and delve into ever deeper levels of what is near and familiar”\(^1\)

-Van Meter Ames

*Selene* is an exhibition of an autobiographical journey of my awareness about the concepts of the abject and the beautiful. The semiotic and symbolic must coexist within myself for me to feel a sense of wholeness and harmony. Society has preferred to look at something beautiful. Beauty, as a concept, was originally inspired by nature and by women. In 1921 English art critic Clive Bell wrote about aesthetic beauty in his critical essay titled *Art*. He describes that what we may find as “beautiful” comes in the form of a young woman. Bell states:

“I have noticed a consistency in those whom the most beautiful thing in the world is a beautiful woman, and the next most beautiful thing a beautiful picture of one. The confusion between aesthetic and sensual beauty is not their case so great as one might supposed. Perhaps there is none; for perhaps they have never had an aesthetic emotion confuse with their other emotions. The art that they call “beautiful” is generally closely related to women. A beautiful picture is a photograph of a pretty girl; beautiful music, the music evokes emotion similar to those provoked by young ladies in musical farces; and beautiful poetry, the poetry that recalls the same emotions felt, twenty years earlier, for the rector’s daughter. Clearly the word “beauty” is used to note the objects or quite distinguishable emotion.”\(^2\)

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Not much has changed since Bell’s writing in regards to what one might find to be beautiful. Mass media plays a huge role in what a person finds to be beautiful, especially in regards to the body. Most imagery of men and women and their lifestyles, are portrayed as flawless. Because of this, many people have high expectations of themselves, their surroundings and tangible objects like fashion or housewares.

The theme of this exhibition, “A Moth to a Flame,” surrounds the power of attraction to another person sexually and, attempts to expose the seductive and destructive power of aesthetic beauty— not only of a woman but also of a man. Beauty has power when it attracts.

The contemporary literary theorist, philosopher and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva introduced the concept and wrote about the abject in 1982 in her book titled *Powers of Horror*. She described it as a “physical or violent reaction of the body, one that may be improper or unclean.” The corpse, mucus, lumps and tumors, and body fluids such as mucus, vomit, semen and pus are all examples of the abject. Cultural abjections include sexual taboos, prisons, freak shows, and anything that confronts social order and disturbs conventional identity and beauty.

When successfully utilized as an artistic motif, the viewer’s subconscious prejudices toward what is vile, disgusting or taboo are overridden by an imposed curiosity to more deeply examine the piece, rather than the conditioned response for disengagement. The urge to pull away in disgust, when viewing an abject artwork, is counteracted by the impulse to see what “should not” be seen.

Visual art provides a safe zone by acting as a window for the viewer to experience the abject in art that may evoke an emotional response, such as fear or anxiety. For instance, a painting is a passive object that hangs from the wall in a museum or gallery space and can be a prompt for the observer to participate in.

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4 Kirk, 14
The roots of the abject are embedded in the Surrealist movement of the early 20th century. The father of surrealism, André Breton explains this as a moment when objects or ideas that do not ordinarily belong with one another coexist within the same context: "the resolution of those two seemingly contradictory states, dream and reality, in a kind of absolute reality, seriality, so to speak." Such a moment, however, is one of conflict rather than harmony and meant to make the viewer think in a different way. Max Ernst’s painting titled: The Virgin Spanking the Christ Child Before Three Witnesses: André Breton, Paul Eluard, and the Painter (1926), is an example of how depicting the Virgin Mary and Christ in this manner, combining the sacred and the profane, throws the viewer off with potential anger or disgust, hence the abject. (Fig. 1)

*Breakfast in Fur*, by Meret Oppenheim, created in 1936, is a sculpture that has been celebrated as a model of the surrealists’ ambition to create a disturbing object. This piece creates unpredictability within associations. She transformed a familiar object into one that becomes exotic and alien. (Fig. 2)

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In the 1960’s, through the feminist movement, and the 1970’s body-centered art, artists began to express and openly expose their opinions towards patriarchal order and question topics surrounding politics, gender and religion. Depictions of perversion, voyeurism, sexuality, activism against patriarchal order, and questions regarding religion and ritual ceremonies began to be depicted in art on a controversial level. Artists broke boundaries and rules using non-traditional materials and despicable imagery to make political statements about the current state of society and culture.


"Abject art" is a term suggested by the theoretician Julia Kristeva to designate art based on the image of the human body, but specifically the body fragmented and decayed or represented by one of its socially less presentable functions (scatological images, for example, abound in the show). In depicting what most people would rather not see, the theory goes, art breaks through societal taboos, especially those surrounding sexuality.

The first section of this show titled ”The Maternal Body”, included works like Marcel Duchamp's "Priere de Toucher" (1947), a book cover bearing a foam-rubber female breast; Louise Bourgeois’ bizarre, sphinxlike "Nature Study" (fig. 3); a Cindy Sherman photograph of an anatomically ambiguous manikin, and selections from Mary Kelly’s "Post-Partum Document," with infant fecal stains on diaper material, to name a few. Together, they create a distinctive texture, with currents of irony, ill will and sexual tension moving from piece to piece.

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9 Ibid
All of those works of art may be quite different from one another, but when you break down the abject, they all are clear examples of this. Be it through the bulbous shapes protruding from Louis Bourgeois’, “Nature Study”, which is headless, or the uncanny manikin by Cindy Sherman. Certainly, these artworks promote something horrific lies behind femininity.

Works of this nature, excite and inspire me as an artist. I push the boundaries of taboo topics, such as sexuality, death, matriarchal and patriarchal order. Using a balance of beauty, through Greco-Roman style of sculpting the human figures, and the grotesque nature of the Moths and the Cocoons, Selene serves to represent the combination of the beautiful and the abject, and what may lie behind closed doors, within dreams, and within one’s own psyche.

Section 2
The semiotic and the symbolic

Semiotic and symbolic representation are employed in Selene simultaneously. According to Julia Kristeva semiotics consist of non-linguistic signs. Internal forces such as, intuition, body rhythms, and sound all serve to provide information. The symbolic is described as physical signs and language. They serve as a way for my audience to relate to Selene, both in terms of the masculine and the feminine within themselves. These theoretical systems are understood as
drives, which are energies or forces that move between the body and representation.\textsuperscript{10} Kristeva suggest that all representation, be it artistic or linguistic, is composed of two elements, the semiotic and the symbolic.

Kristeva suggest that semiotics is closely related to the feminine, is experienced through rhythm (dance or poetry), tones (music or verbal language), color, and movement (speech or film), in representation. She states the semiotic aspect of representation is linked with the maternal body and the infant’s first recollection to this connection. This idea is upheld through Freudian psychoanalytic theory; which is the notion that an individual subject requires the repression of the primary (the maternal body) experience, to be able to move into social realms.

Semiotic elements are intuitive, non-representational, which have meaning for the human psyche. They motivate representation as it challenges the stability of signifying structures. The semiotic drives the representational process.\textsuperscript{11}

In Jacopo Bellini’s painting, \textit{Madonna and Child}, the symbolic is recognized through the depiction of the Christ child. This painting blends both the symbolic and the semiotic. Kristeva’s analysis of this painting suggest that the luminous colors give a glow or highlights the maternal space, and that Bellini seeks to be reunited with the maternal body through his paintings. He often displays the mother as both an object of desire and an object of fear as seen in Fig. 4. The woman is

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Jacopo Bellini (1400-1470) Madonna and Child Adored by Lionello d’Este Oil on wood c1450 60 x 40 cm (23.62” x 15¾”) Musee du Louvre (Paris, France)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{10} Chris Murray, Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century, (Routledge, NY), 167-168
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid
portrayed much larger than the man kneeling or bowing to her right. She is glorified yet at the same time feared.

The symbolic, the masculine force created by law and structure, stabilizes representation to ensure stability within the psyche. Per Kristeva, the symbolic is when a child begins to form language and self-identity beyond the mother, but throughout time we continue to relate to both the maternal and the paternal forces within ourselves. The tension between the semiotic and the symbolic is what creates representation. Kristeva believes that we keep a close tie to both in our life by existing in the semiotic and the symbolic.
Chapter 2

Dreams/Mythology/Archetypes

Over the past decade, I have been sculpting archetypes, though I had been unaware of the cultural significance, lending credence to the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious. I have developed a high level of personal awareness and healing through the study of dream analysis, mythology and archetypes. Dreams, mythology, and archetypes are inter-woven in the visceral, mystic, and religious realms. These types of stories and symbols often teach me important life lessons which I share with my audience as a form of connecting, relating and healing. In the paragraphs to follow, I will attempt to explain the Jungian theories of dreams, mythology and archetypes, which is the driving, inspirational force for the creation of my art.

“The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul.”
-C.G. Jung

When I am speaking of dreams I am only recalling images and other content that comes during sleep which I am finding to be a vital part of my life. Dreams are a source of inspiration for my artistic practice. I don’t sculpt my dreams, but, visually, Selene is surreal and takes on a dreamlike quality, as if I have manifested a dream.

For millennia, people have been informed by their dreams, this idea is upheld by biblical sources. For example, there are dreams of pharaoh in the Old Testament (Genesis 41): warning of upcoming famine. In the New testament (Matthew 1) an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him that his fiancé, Mary has been impregnated by the Holy Spirit. Even earlier than the

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12 Mary Ann Mattoon, Jung and the Human Psyche, (Routledge, NY 2005), 115
Egyptians and Babylonians, the Jewish interpreters, owe to their rudimentary knowledge of dreams.\(^{13}\)

My dreams have fought with my consciousness to change behaviors and direct my future. Through dream analysis, I am seeing a common thread of guidance and hope for a bright future. I am warned of upcoming events, I fight with my inner demons, and I am told when I am acting like a child. These types of dreams give me a sense of wholeness and that I am cared for by a higher source or power. As an artist, I feel it is my duty to share my journey of personal growth as my way of bringing to light important issues such as Power.

Mythology has been used to bring order to the human experience and to answer questions about life. Myths often portray archetypical characters in them. Psychologist, Carl Jung, was interested in the way that symbols and myths permeated our conscious and unconscious lives. His notion of the “collective and unconscious” is a set of idea and memories that transcends cultural boundaries.

Shared concepts, which Jung described as *archetypes*, permeate the collective unconscious and emerge as themes and characters in our dreams and surface in our culture— in myths, books, films and paintings, for example.

Jung felt that disunity among thoughts in the personal subconscious and the conscious could create internal conflicts which could lead to particular, personality traits or anxieties. Such inner conflicts could be resolved, claimed Jung, by allowing repressed ideas to emerge into the conscious and accommodating (rather than

\(^{13}\) Ibid, 117

Fig 5
Sarah Justice, *A Pick for the Gather*, 2016. Ceramic, oil pastels. 36”hx10”wx11”d
destroying) them, thus creating a state of inner harmony, through a process known as *individuation*.\(^{14}\)

Jung believed that by acquiring the qualities of an archetype from the collective unconscious, we repress those attributes of our true self which do not conform to the archetype. To achieve individuation and realize our true self, he claimed that, rather than repressing these traits, we must ‘integrate’ them by allowing them to surface from the shadow and to coexist with those in the *ego*, or true self. Analytical psychologists may encourage this integration, or individuation, through therapy.\(^{15}\)

Jung believed that there are symbols and themes, which serve as archetypes, that live in our dreams that are meant to be brought to our conscious level to help us find wholeness and inner harmony. Archetypes are model images of a person or role, such as The Mother, The Father, The Old Wise Man, The Wise Woman, The Trickster and The Shadow. Each of these archetypes has served as a source of healing and understanding of myself.

Most of my figurative sculptures have come to be archetypical, depicting mythological/folkloric characters. In the past, I have sculpted Medusa, Persephone, La Loba, and Andromeda, and now, for my exhibition *Selene*. Most of them are archetypal of a strong female/mother type or goddesses. “A Pick for the Gather” (Fig.5), has both the wise woman archetype (the owl reference) and the quality of the trickster archetype (her body language). There is a wise, protective and cynical/trickster quality in this sculpture. This combination resonates with me personally as I

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\(^{15}\) *Ibid*
am a wise woman, my internal mother and quite the rebellious type. From the Greek mythological character, Athena, the owl is representing wisdom and the protector. La Loba was inspired by the Native American folklore character from the story, *Skeleton Woman*. This story comes from the book, “The Woman Who Runs with the Wolves”, by Jungian Analyst and psychotherapist, Clarissa Pinkola Estes’. (Fig.6) La Loba is known as the bone collector. This woman symbolizes the wild woman archetype, the natural woman, using the owl reference noted by the owl skull, placed on her forehead. Her hair is sculpted like a “skeletal” mohawk that transitions down her back into a shape of vertebrae. The dark clay body eludes to an indigenous woman but, the face was sculpted to be ambiguous, in hopes to represent all women. The bright colored underglazes washed over the brown clay body symbolizes a ceremony, such as La Loba sings over the bones in the story. These elements serve to bring to life, in visual form, the wise woman archetype.

Contemporary ceramic figurative sculptor, Adrian Arleo has used archetypical imagery in her work for decades. Her main conceptual concern is not with the rendering and construction of the body, but to convey or suggest an array of nonphysical, internal, ephemeral, spiritual, emotional or psychological experiences. Like me, she uses some of Jung’s theories surrounding the human psyche, within the content of the figures that she sculpts. As seen within the ceramic sculpture, *Anima and Animus*. (Fig.7) According to Jung, animus is the male archetypal component within the female psyche and the anima is the female archetypal component to the male psyche, which lie in the collective unconscious. These usually resonate behind the shadow archetype,
which often is shy to present its vulnerability.\textsuperscript{16} She uses the figure to get at the human being and human nature, not at the body as an end to itself.\textsuperscript{17} She incorporates animals on and within her figures, creating metamorphose of the human and nature.

Archetypical images often take on mythological form. Carl Jung noticed that archetypes are general to all humankind, but the images are shaped by specific history and culture. For example, individuals and cultures may have different images that they employ in a work of art such as the good mother, the hostile brother, but the motif is the same, whatever the image. Representation varies but the inherited tendency of the human mind is to form representations of mythological motifs. \textsuperscript{18}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Mary Ann Mattoon, Jung and the Human Psyche, (Routledge, NY 2005), 49-50.
\textsuperscript{17} Lark Books, The Figure in Clay, Contemporary Sculpting Techniques by Master Artists, (Lark Books, New York, NY), 22.
\textsuperscript{18} Mary Ann Mattoon, Jung and the Human Psyche, (Routledge, NY 2005), 38.
\end{flushright}
Chapter 3

The Creation, Installation and Exhibition of Selene

My autobiographical thesis exhibition, Selene, was inspired by and references Julia Kristeva’s theory of the Abject, semiotics and symbolism; the idealized beauty of Greco-Roman sculpture; and last but not least, Carl Jung’s theories surrounding the complexes of archetypes, dreams and mythology. (fig.8) I created a surreal, dream-like, state in this installation as my attempt to incorporate these theories. I will first discuss my material choices and process for the creation of the figures. I will then delve into the content of each figure and what they represent, while anchoring them to other historical or contemporary artists and artworks that align with these theories.

Selene is an installation consisting of four main figures: Selene, The Male/The Masculine, Cocoons and Moths. (Fig.7) Clay is the main material used for the sculptural process of each figure. The versatility and flexibility of the material is a perfect match for the type of sculpting that I do. I build my figures hollow, which allows me to push, pull and flex muscle tone from the inside out. Clay is malleable, yet has memory, which is intriguing to me, as the initial footprint of the sculpting process often reveals itself after the firing process. This keeps
my perfectionist tendencies at bay and allows for a more impressionist mark, bringing an essence of human life to the female and male figure.

I use clay to create the human form, but I am not limited to traditional ceramic surfaces as a final finish such as glaze. For this exhibition, I used underglaze, paint, encaustic, and fiber to complete the final surface of my figures. I have over twenty years of experience as a painter and am comfortable with the material which makes sense to me to use on many of ceramic sculptures as a final surface treatment.

In the exhibition, Selene, the female and male figure, and the moths were sculpted out of a deep rich brown clay body from Washington State. This clay body is dark brown- almost black- when it is fired to cone temperature. Because of the process of cutting up the life size sculptures to fire them and then reassembling them, I spray painted the figures with layers of textured black, raw umber and burnt umber paint to resemble the natural clay body. I am aware that Selene and The Male/The Masculine may take on the representation of an African American due to the color of the figures. My intent was to create these figures as ambiguous and show the natural tone of the clay body, which is the earthy brown, like stone or even bronze. Other contemporary ceramic artist such as Arthur Gonzalez, Tom Bartell, even historic Indigenous wood fired vessels and figurines often are sculpted out of terracotta or dark brown clay bodies. For me, the use of this dark brown clay body is purely it is an aesthetic, material choice.

Edith Garcia in her book titled, Ceramics and the Human Figure, describes the figure and the body as such:

The figure and the body have both been exploited by ceramic makers from ancient times to the present, often with contrasting intent. Sometimes they have been used to capture a sense of the sacred; sometimes debase religious feelings. Through representational and expressive sculpture, figurative ceramics has celebrated beauty and
the abject. In its current day not only presenting the body as an object, but to also engage the body as an experiencing subject. In the glorious diversity of figurative ceramics, what defines this genre is its ability to present, represent, or engage us with our own experience of being human.\(^\text{19}\)

*Selene* and *The Male/The Masculine* were sculpted life size, as I envision the viewer being able to relate on a human level as they interact with the sculptures. The viewer can look the sculpture in the “eye” so to speak. The figures become confrontational as they have life like qualities. Depending on the position of the viewer within the room, he/she can be startled as the figures may be within your periphery, fooling him/her to believe someone is, really, there. I found that I personally experienced this during the installation process. I enjoy this type of experience as it can seem uncanny. I feel my work is on the realism scale but not to the point of hyper-realism, because I have not rendered human skin or the whites of the eyes of either of the sculptures. My aesthetic style leaves room for empathy from the viewer, as there is enough distance between what is real and what is not.

The figures in this installation follow the tradition of Greco-Roman figuration, much like historically renowned sculptors such as Rodin, Bernini, Camille Claudel, and others, both in terms of a certain idealized style of representation of the human form, and of mythological themes. I am drawn to the use of the idealized body in our culture, but at the same time I have subverted this beauty with combining it with the abject. The use of beauty and the abject at the same time creates figures that are more honest to our current cultural times.

According to Kristeva, the abject is closely tied to the mother architype which I have
depict in my sculpture of “Selene” and the “Cocoons”.

Kristeva ultimately maintains the idea that something horrific lies behind femininity. She says that
woman cannot laugh at the destruction of the phallocentric order, as this would turn her either into
a terrorist or a depressive because she does not have the inherent difference that allows the male
avant-garde poet to reduce language to nonsense without threatening his subjectivity. Of course,
this is a slight generalization, but it has given rise to critiques of Kristeva’s politics. On the other
hand, many (female) artists have found inspiration in Kristeva’s writings and her reworking of self
and other terms of the semiotic and its connectedness to the affective body. 20

A perfect example of something horrific that lies behind femininity is
Kiki Smiths sculpture titled Virgin Mary. (Fig. 9) This sculpture is of
a cast female body, where Smith has exposed what lies underneath
the skin. The flesh of wet muscles, lacking skin to cover the closed
eyes. The woman’s arms are slightly outstretched with her palms
facing upward; her pose is one of vulnerability. This sculpture makes
people uneasy and frightened of their own morality, because it looks
to be depicting death. Virgin Mary, Smith says, “gets robbed of her
voice, sexuality and agency to be a vehicle of the god made flesh.”21

Kiki Smith’s artwork explores the mystical realms from a feminist view point. She grew
up Catholic which inspired her to question patriarchal power and the structures that lie behind
religion. Smith says, “…In working with the body, I feel I’m actually making physical
manifestations of psychic and spiritual dilemmas…” She suspects that Catholicism and art have
gone well together because “both believe in the physical manifestation of the spiritual world, that
it’s through the physical world that you have spiritual life, that you have to be here physically in

21 Diane Fremont, Inspiriting Body/Embodying Spirit, accessed April 25, 2017,
a body… And it’s about transcendence and transmigration, something moving always from one
state to another.”22

I grew up in a Christian household (Father Catholic, Mother and Step-father Methodist)
attending church most Sundays, but my parents allowed me, to believe the older that I got,
whatever I so choose when it comes to spirituality. For this I am grateful, as I have explored
many denominations and have settled to believe, simply, that there is a spirit realm, a mystic
realm that lies in our waking and dream life. They serve as a guidance towards my internal
wholeness and harmony. I attempt, much like Kiki Smith, to uncover spiritual and mystical
realms to seek inner harmony and understanding of power structures such as religion, sexuality
and gender.

Selene is a voluptuous female figure. She stands with her legs slightly apart firmly on the
rock. Her left arm resting on her lower stomach holding her womb softly. As her right arm
reaching up above her head, with a sense of longing; her gaze is looking up towards her hand
aware that there is something that she needs. Pock marks cover her skin on her chest, face and
upper back, representing the eating away of her flesh, much like a silk moth would eat wool
fabric. This texture is symbolizing the eating away at her soul and spirit as well as subverting
idealized beauty, like perfectly smooth skin. Her hair is blowing up towards the right side as if a
gust of wind has just hit her, symbolizing a shift or change in her awareness. Wind is
symbolizing the father archetype (the protector, the knowledge). This gesture is the moment
when the realization of her (my) behavior has been seductive and destructive. The arm and hair

22 Ibid, Diane Fremont, 8.
gestures and horrific swarming of moths was my conscious, waking life. Abjection and the semeiotic and symbolic and working together in the sculpture titled Selene. (Fig.10)

For this exhibition, I teamed up with another student to do projection mapping on my female figure. Individual moths were mapped out allowing light and movement to only illuminate on the selected moth. There are about eight moths that illuminate and move with receding colors of reds, yellow and white. The moth becomes the light. It not only is drawn to light, it “is” the light. The moths take on the persona of the human, which is drawn to light/power and at the same time is the light and power. The rhythm of the fluttering, illuminated moths and the reference to the wind upholds the semeiotic element in this sculpture.

Selene became the title for the female figure and for the thesis exhibition. Selene is the Greek goddess of the moon. (Fig.11) After this figure was sculpted, I began my search of mythology and folktales surrounding the moth to the flame analogy. Selene came up in my search. Excitement built as I learned that she is considered a heathen and the goddess of birth. Selene had many lovers. She fell in love with a mortal man, and because of her fear of his death, she put a spell on him so he would eternally sleep and never leave her. She bore about 56 of his children.

Ironically the texture of Selene’s skin, the pock marks, look like the surface of the moon. Moths naturally are drawn to the moon light, as they are the night
butterfly. If the moon light is not shining brightly, moths will fly towards artificial light. I find this analogy to be interesting and one that speaks to following truth instead of false truth. Knowing what is the truth or following one’s intuition when making decisions in life can be challenging and tricky. The moon represents the mother archetype, the truth and intuition. It creates the tides and cycles in the natural world.

The moths were individually sculpted to resemble silk moths. They are dusty grey with white flocking creating a silky shimmering effect. This swarm is representing all the moths that have surrounded me in my life-time. The moths are the common thread that links the female figure, the male figure, and the cocoons. They could be any gender and have no prejudice as they are drawn to light, be it artificial light or moon light.

The moths take on the persona of the human, which is drawn to light and power at the same time is the light and power. Human are driven by a force or power within themselves. This power can over take us, recedes in us, direct us and follow us. Sometimes a person’s power is not even recognizable within themselves regardless of this it affects them in positive and negative ways. Selene and The Male/The Masculine are both considered a moth, in terms of the power of sexual attraction and the power within their gender. The swarm of moths in this exhibition would be any one of us in our society or in the world.

The counterpart for my female figure, is the male figure, titled The Male/The Masculine. (Fig.12) I created the male figure life-size, as he stands 6 feet tall. He is leaning up against a column in the gallery. His body type is strong and stout. His gesture is relaxed, yet at the same
time, is posture is kind of showing off, as he sucks his stomach in and bows up his chest. His body is facing Selene but is head is turned away from her. He has a slight smile or smirk on his face. What is he doing and thinking? Who or what is he looking at? For this sculpture, I did not want to give an answer to those questions.

I intended for the male figure to represent a moth. He is hanging around and waiting for Selenes’ attention. But the interesting twist is he has turned his head and looking at something else. Has he been part of Selenes’ life all ready and has now started to move on to seek another woman? With his posturing is he trying to attract a mate? Is his charisma shining? The Male/The Masculine, is being swarmed and circled by moths but the moths are not eating away at his flesh. There are a few pock marks on his skin, but not nearly to the extent of Selene.

The Father archetype and The Shadow archetype is represented here through this male figure. On a conscious level, he is a moth and on a subconscious level he is “my” internal father, “my” protector. Jung viewed the Shadow archetype as not only necessary for wholeness and individuation but, also capable as “yielding treasure.” For example, the shadow quality of anger can turn into assertiveness, and vulnerability can contribute to sensitivity to the needs of others. The Shadow archetype is one that man often keeps hidden or is unaware of. This is a part of ourselves that we are ashamed of. For example, a person may come across as mentally strong and composed under pressure, but behind the scenes has bouts of crying spells. This is a side of a person that they may feel compelled to hide from the rest of the world as they would come across as being weak.

Fourteen fragile, moth cocoons were made for this installation. (Fig.13) The cocoons were created by taking, lace, cheesecloth, crocheted bonnets and dipped them in slip, which is a liquid clay. I formed these shapes by creating an internal armature that eventually burned out in the firing process. The beauty of this process is that the fabric burns away leaving a perfect imprint of the folds and texture of the material. Once the cocoons are bisqued, which is the first stage of firing, I painted on layers of underglaze using brown, yellow, orange and red tones. The cocoons then are placed back into the kiln to be fired again at a hotter temperature. When they came out of the kiln from their final firing, I applied layers of beeswax, white flocking and fiber to the surface of each individual cocoon. They look like soft knitted sacks.

The actual size of moth cocoons is small. Their shapes and surfaces are quite grotesque/abject in nature; they almost look alien. I researched countless types of cocoons to create the shapes of these objects. I chose to create them larger than life, to present them as a transition between the natural world to the human world. They look like many things, such as, animal flesh, male anatomy (testicals), cow stomachs, organs and wombs.

The cocoons represent the mother archetype, as the shape is referencing a womb, a cave. These are the final resting place for Selene. This is where she is lead after she has been through her trials and tribulations to seek solitude and hire enlightenment. Which is a process that I have gone through multiple times in my life-time thus far and will continue to go as my journey of personal awareness continues to develop.
To create this installation, I had to consider the audience as a participatory agent much like the moth. The placement of the figures, including the cocoons, is shaped like a circle, representing the continual life cycle when seeking higher enlightenment. The audience is first encountered by *The Male/The Masculine*. They are met with a nude male, strong in build, handsome, turning his head as if he knows that you are walking from behind him. I wanted my audience to engage with him, to take the time to look at him fully, to find him attractive. The moths do not allow you to get too close as they are swarming around the periphery of him, giving him a sense of authority or power; very statuesque. Once you pass the male nude you are met head on with *Selene*, faced with potential horror. The audience then stands between the *The Male/The Masculine* and *Selene* feeling the potential of sexual tension. They are both nude and facing one another and *Selene’s* arm is raised towards him. I want my audience to feel that the tension is troubling as the male has shifted his gaze, while *Selene* is being grotesquely swarmed by crawling moths all over her upper body. My hope is that there is empathy placed upon this interaction between the figures. Once you pass *Selene* the audience is led into the hanging cocoons. They are hung in a way that the audience can walk in and around them. When the viewer stands far into the cocoons they can view back out at the male and female. They notice a connection and can view the cycle from *Selene* to *The Male/The Masculine* then to the *Cocoons*. The audience completes the circle when the spaced was filled with a swarm of people. It was an amazing experience to watch a group of twenty-five people or more viewing this work at the same time. Selene and the Male became just part of the group. The audience became the moth, circling in and around the figures while filling the voided space. The experience was unique, overwhelming and fulfilling.
Chapter 4

The Female and The Male Gaze

As a female figurative artist, I am often looking at other artists and how they present the figure in their work. I have noticed that the nude female body is mainly depicted in works of art. Not much has changed for hundreds of years, as the nude female body has been established as an absolute and accepted object of male desire. Marble sculpture, *Reclining Bacchante* (1819), by Jean-Jacques Pradier is an example of how woman have been portrayed in erotic fashion for the pleasure of the male gaze. (Fig. 14)

In John Berger’s book titled, *Ways of Seeing*, he states:

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman’s self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From the earliest childhood, she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually.²⁴

Because of the long history of patriarchal order woman have been raised to be fully aware of her presence and how she appears to other, ultimately to a man. If she is appreciated by a man than she can appreciate herself. I struggle with this awareness as it has followed me throughout my lifetime. I believe it all begins with how the father “sees” his daughter. I don’t discount the laws

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of attraction and wanting to be desired by a man, but it is important that men "see” women as more than just an object of desire, such as a strong, smart and independent.

For woman, there is a great challenge trying to objectify the male body in the same fashion as the female body, through artwork. I presume that it is nearly impossible as the male never losses his power over the woman. This challenge circles around power dynamics between genders that has long been developed over time. I question whether in my lifetime this can ever change. Female artists who bring a sexual statement within her work is often considered sexually available to men or are questioned, whether-or-not she is perpetuating the male gaze. Feminist artists such as Hannah Wilke, Joan Semmel and I have faced this challenge.

It is hard to find contemporary artists representing the male nude that doesn’t meet these types of challenges. Contemporary ceramic figurative sculptor Christina West has often presented the male completely alone. For example, Strip sculpted in 2014, presents the man struggling to remove his tee-shirt, as it is the last piece of clothing to be removed. (Fig.14) Per West, this allows, without threat, the male gaze to lessen, which in turns allows the view to gaze upon the male body. He has no power over the audience when his eyes are covered.

I depict the male/female gaze differently than West. The female and male gaze is present in Selene, by subverting the traditional norms of the male gaze and giving the accessibility of the female gaze onto the male figure. As a female artist, I am aware of the traditional roots of the male dominating gaze and frustrated that the female gaze is so hard to defend or even define. The
female sculpture, Selene’s gaze is blinded by moths. She is not capable of seeing anyone looking at her because of being swarmed by these moths. The swarming of these moths takes away from her idealized beauty which in-turn subverts the male gaze. I am also aware that some people may dispute this, because the woman is nude and in front of an audience to gaze at. I have taken her gaze, her ability to see people looking at her, to compound the idea of fear, chaos, and the need for change. If we can use the female gaze like the traditional understanding of the male gaze, I would say it is achieved in *the Male/the Masculine*, as his gaze is not blinded. He is completely aware of the fact that he is being looked at by the audience. The power of the moths took Selene’s gaze away which is sad, because otherwise she would be looking at him. The *male/the masculine* is posed in an idealized contrapposto fashion, bowing out his chest, giving a slight smile. He is enjoying being looked at as he is trying to attract a mate. Selene on the other hand is overthrown by this idea of the male gaze, which has now blinded her vision. *The male/the masculine* is no longer interested in her as she has become unappealing and he is using his power of attraction to seek the next source of light.
Selene is an exhibition that is filled with complexes of the mind, the psyche as well as depicting power dynamics between genders. Mystical realms, such as dreams and mythology, are intermingled with horror and beauty. My belief and study of Jungian psychology has been a way for me to connect these realms, and to see that they work together in forming a healthy psyche within myself. This journey, this exhibition, is autobiographical, as I am sharing my way of existing in the world, while I have been seeking for decades, how to healing from traumatic life experiences and events. I seek to combine my conscious and unconscious mind for a since of inner harmony. It is my wish that my audience contemplates and comes away with an awareness of their power of attraction, sexually, socially and how they use their gender for their benefit. I ask my audience: How do you fit into the analogy “A Moth into the Flame”? 
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