

ARTIST RESEARCH

Artists who I have researched while developing my work, featuring themes on sexuality, gender and relationships between people as well as their work style being more loose, 'messy' and abstract.

WYNNIE MYNERVA

"My work transits and widens the limits of the flesh, the body and desire. I don't paint mere fictions but bodily possibilities. My paintings are a vibrant extension of my body, an erotic and synthetic field of plastic exploration. My pieces are both pictorial and performative. The pigment on fabric and plastic operates on the same level as the incisions I choose to make on my body: both are technologies aimed at disrupting the normative truth of sex and gender..."

Winnie Mynerva is a painter based between Barcelona and Berlin. Their work aims to disrupt normative sex and gender along with the structures of racial, sexual and class violence that perpetuates misogyny. Mynerva's work connects to my own through its depictions of gender and sexuality, with their large paintings usually featuring the nude body in art which is separated from its misogynistic history.

"My paintings are in turn a threshold where parts of the body proliferate beyond names and labels, intermingling sexes, organs and prostheses"

<https://wynniemynerva.com/statement/>



BERNISE BING

Bernise Bing was a queer, Chinese-American artist working in the 1960s San Francisco Bay Area art scene. My interest in her work developed from her exploration of identity and experiences, something that is fundamental to my work. Her key focus was on her experiences of balancing being a Chinese woman with assimilation into American culture, which presents itself through the bridging of expressionist style, Bay Area figuration and traditional Chinese calligraphy in her work. I found inspiration through not only her exploration of identity, but also her style of large 'messy' paintings.

'For me, all nature is pure, and purely abstracted, the spiritual union links both the seen and the unseen forms of nature. Freedom, for example, is seeing trees as pure energy, light, and mass made up of linear particles.

I would like to think of myself as a disciple of the art of Chinese calligraphy; however, my practice and knowledge are those of a novice. Yet the outcome of my personal statement-how I view the world, using only knowledge and experiences from the past, present, and future-remains on its own terms.' *Extract from Bernise Bing's artist statement*

<https://queerculturalcenter.org/artists-statement/>



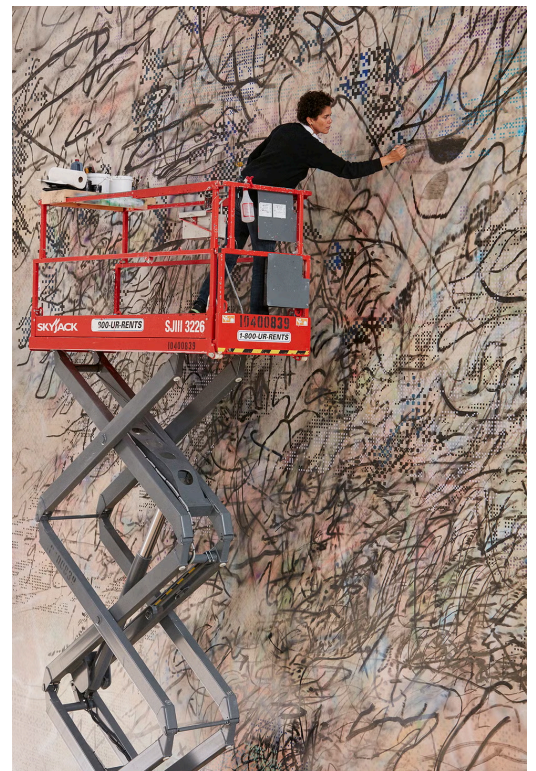
JULIE MEHRETU

Julie Mehretu was born in Ethiopia and currently works in New York City. Her work focuses on her depiction of the contemporary experience as well as confronting confliction. Her art is often at an extremely large scale and very abstract, sometimes using aerial work platforms due to their massive size.

“I’m attracted to images, different types of images, and usually that’s because of what’s going on in the world. And because I used to work with this information more directly, I think I’ve become much more well-versed in the language of architecture. So all of that comes into the work in different ways, but I don’t really spell out exactly that this is, for example, an image from Baghdad. This painting is not a description. I want the work to be felt as much as read.”

I found inspiration in Julie Mehretu’s work through her messy style of painting. I strived this term to be looser with my work, and let it flow more freely without being worried about perfection, and Mehretu became a big inspiration in this style of creative process. Her work comes from a large amount of contemporary experiences, from politics to literature and music, and her paintings are often large and abstract. My work is equally formed from contemporary experiences, although often more autobiographical. The scale of her paintings are another inspiration for me, as larger paintings are important to my work and what I am trying to convey, and it is always important to see how other artists use scale. Her statement that she “want[s] the work to be felt as much as read” resonates with me as my work will hopefully move into more abstract territory.

<https://www.whitecube.com/artists/julie-mehretu>



MY READING LIST

- THE STORY OF ART WITHOUT MEN - KATY HESSEL
- POOR ARTISTS - ZARINA MUHAMMAD, GABRIELLE SE LA PUENTE (AKA THE WHITE PUBE)
- FEMINISM IS FOR EVERYBODY - BELL HOOKS
- 100 ARTIST MANIFESTOS: FROM THE FUTURISTS TO THE STUCKISTS
- SEVEN DAYS IN THE ART WORLD - SARAH THORNTON

SHORT BOOK REVIEWS

THE STORY OF ART WITHOUT MEN - KATY HESSEL

The Story Of Art Without Men by Katy Hessel tells the story of women's art history. This book in particular is important to me, as it isn't constrained to just western women. I have used this book to expand my understanding of female artists, as it is an incredibly important topic for me. My work is by a woman and it concerns women, and so ensuring I am educated in the history of the women before me is exceptionally important to my artistic process.

POOR ARTISTS - 'THE WHITE PUBE'

Poor Artists by Zarina Muhammad and Gabrielle de la Puente (aka The White Pube) is about why we still make art in a system that does not support or respect artists. This book spends some time focusing on the financial experience of artists, which is incredibly important to me as a working class artist. Making art is a choice that can come much easier to someone with a lot of money to fall back on. Choosing between success and artistic integrity is very difficult in a capitalist world, and reading about the experiences of other artists has been very beneficial to me in understanding my desire to persevere in creation despite it all.

FEMINISM IS FOR EVERYONE - BELL HOOKS

Feminism Is For Everyone by Bell Hooks, is an important introductory text to feminist understanding. As my work is concerned with women's experiences, especially the lesbian

experience, feminism is fundamental to everything I do artistically. The book does have limitations however, as Bell Hooks is writing from an American experience, and while many feminist experiences are universal, her writing on class especially does not reflect the experiences of class and conversations around feminist class deconstruction in the United Kingdom. Despite this, the book is still good in presenting introductory ideas of the type of feminist thinking that so often informs my work.

100 ARTIST MANIFESTOS - ALEX DANCHEV

100 Artist Manifestos selected by Alex Danchev is a compilation of important artist manifestos. This book was important for my research in manifestos for my worldbuilding module, as we had to create a performance piece based on a hypothetical manifesto by an artist of our choosing. It gave me a better understanding of the artists mentioned in the book, some of which I knew about beforehand and others less so (Kandinsky, Mayakovsky, Rodchenko, Le Corbusier, Picabia, Dalí, Oldenburg, Vertov, Baselitz, Kitaj, Murakami, Gilbert and George...) I did however struggle to emotionally connect to some of the artists as their beliefs and experiences are separate from my own, especially considering some of the artists mentioned were not very good people in their personal lives.

SEVEN DAYS IN THE ART WORLD - SARAH THORNTON

Seven Days in The Art World by Sarah Thornton gives an important insight into the living reality for artists. This was important for me as I often feel the art world beyond university is very mystified and difficult to imagine myself positioned in. This book demystified it for me and allowed me to see the art world as something tangible and accessible. I did not finish this book by the time I finished this term, however beginning it still helped with my research and practice.

BUTCH/FEMME CULTURE

My key theme throughout my work is representing Butch and Femme identity. This interest stems from my personal experience as a lesbian and with coming to terms with my femmeness as well as wanting to represent butch and gender non conforming bodies. I believe that this is a theme I will explore more in my final year at university since I struggle to find much representation on the topic and I would love to share my viewpoints and experiences.

Butch and Femme subculture is a key part of lesbian history and experience. They are identities that encompass a wide range of things, from physical presentation to political positions within the community. Traditionally, the Femme is a feminine presenting person and the Butch is a masculine presenting one. As a Femme myself, femmeness in particular is important to me. The most important part of being a femme lesbian is using their femininity to protect and support butches, who cannot hide their identity as easily, as masculinity in women is easily detectable. Beyond this, to me being femme is about subverting traditional ideas about femininity and gendered expectations of womanhood. My art would, for example, always include body hair and body types beyond the expectations for the female body. Representing the butch body is especially important to me, and my artistic expression of such is a large part of what being a femme means to me.

One of the most well known and influential books around this culture is *Stone Butch Blues* by Leslie Feinberg, which details the butch experience. This has been significant for me in understanding this experience, as I am not a butch. I have also read *Valencia* by Michelle Tea, which is an autobiographical novel written by a femme lesbian, which describes the experience of being in the lesbian scene in 1990s San Francisco. This in particular inspired my work, as it highlights the struggles surrounding the queer community such as sex work and drug and alcohol use, but most importantly to me it reflects a distinctively lesbian joy in community, relationships, and friendships. My work often depicts the happy side of lesbian experience, and so this book detailing both good and bad sides of it is good for keeping my work grounded in real experience.



AN OAK TREE

‘Q. To begin with, could you describe the work?

A. Yes of course. What I have done is change a glass of water into a full-grown oak tree without altering the accidents of the glass of water.

Q. The accidents?

A. Yes the colour, feel, weight, size...

Q. Do you mean that the glass of water is a symbol of the oak tree?

A. No. It's not a symbol. I've changed the physical substance of the glass of water into that of an oak tree.

Q. It looks like a glass of water...

A. Of course it does. I didn't change its appearance. But it's not a glass of water. It's an oak tree.

Q. Can you prove what you claim to have done?

A. Well, yes and no. I claim to have maintained the physical form of the glass of water and, as you can see, I have. However, as one normally looks for evidence of physical change in terms of altered form, no such proof exists.

Q. Haven't you simply called this glass of water an oak tree?

A. Absolutely not. It is not a glass of water any more. I have changed its actual substance. It would no longer be accurate to call it a glass of water. One could call it anything one wished but that would not alter the fact that it is an oak tree.

Q. Isn't this just a case of the emperor's new clothes?

A. no the emperors new clothes people claimed to see something which wasn't there because they felt they should. I would be very surprised if anyone told me they saw an oak tree.

Q. was it difficult to effect the change?

A. No effort at all. But it took me years of work before I realised I could do it.

Q. When precisely did the glass of water become an oak tree.

A. When I put the water in the glass.

Q. Does this happen every time you fill a glass of water.

A. No, of course not. Only when I intend to change it into an oak tree.

Q. Then intention causes the change?

A. I would say it precipitated the change.

Q. You don't know how you do it?

A. It contradicts what I feel I know about cause and effect.

Q. It seems to me you're claiming to have worked a miracle. Isn't that the case?

A. I'm flattered that you think so.

Q. But aren't you the only person who can do something like this?

A. How could I know?

Q. Could you teach others to do it?

A. No. It's not something one can teach.

Q. Do you consider that changing the glass of water into an oak tree constitutes an artwork.?

A. Yes

Q. What precisely is the artwork? The glass of water?

A. There is no glass of water any more.

Q. The process of change?

A. There is no process involved in the change.

Q. The oak tree?

A. The oak tree.

Q. But the oak tree only exists in the mind.

A. No. The actual oak tree is physically present but in the form of the glass of water. As the glass of water was a particular glass of water, the oak tree, the oak tree is also particular. To conceive the category 'oak tree' or to picture a particular oak tree is not to understand and experience what appears to be a glass of water as an oak tree. Just as it is imperceivable, it is also inconceivable.

Q. Did the particular oak tree exist somewhere else before it took the form of the glass of water?

A. No. This particular oak tree did not exist previously. I should also point out that it does not and will not ever have any other form but that of a glass of water.

Q. How long will it continue to be an oak tree?

A. Until I change it.'

'An Oak Tree' was installed in two units consisting of an installation of a glass of water on a glass shelf and some feet off the ground as well as a text mounted on the wall (As pasted above). It is a conceptual piece which is in an interview format. My first thought when reading this text was on the concepts of art itself. Arguing that art is not strictly about what you see or think but what the artist wants you to see or think. When does the artist, the creator, gain authority and how much authority might that be? Could an artist create anything and call that thing something else, they are the creator of it of course.

'An Oak Tree is important because it wonders at what point a "creator" gains authority. To elicit faith in one's work, must an artist be divine, like God, the O.G. artist? If not, then why is it so hard to believe this glass of water constitutes art when a trained professional tells you so?' <https://dailynexus.com/2017-05-24/an-oak-tree/>

However, when researching Michael Craig-Martin further I looked at his Irish roots. Despite growing up in the United States, Michael Craig-Martin had a strict Catholic upbringing which adds another perspective to 'An Oak Tree'. The 'body and blood of Christ', often represented by bread/wafers and wine are fundamentally transformed into Christ's body just by saying so in religious contexts. An Oak Tree can follow the same principles, by calling a glass of water an oak tree it then becomes the oak tree.

'If you're going by traditional doctrine, the wafers and wine are still, well, wafers and wine, but their essence — what they are fundamentally (and philosophically) — is transformed. They may still have the features of wafers and wine (the "accidents" as An Oak Tree's text calls them), but that matters not; some wizardry has transformed them into holy objects.'

'If God can say the wafers and wine are body and blood, then shouldn't artists, as creators and gods of their own work, have the authority to imbue said works with whatever meaning they choose? Shouldn't critics and visitors, like Catholics lining up for communion, have faith that a cup of water does indeed have some deeper meaning? Shouldn't they believe that it's art?' dailynexus.com

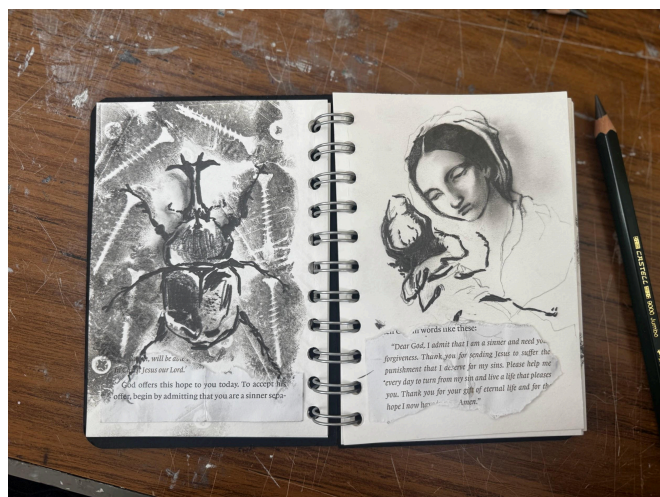
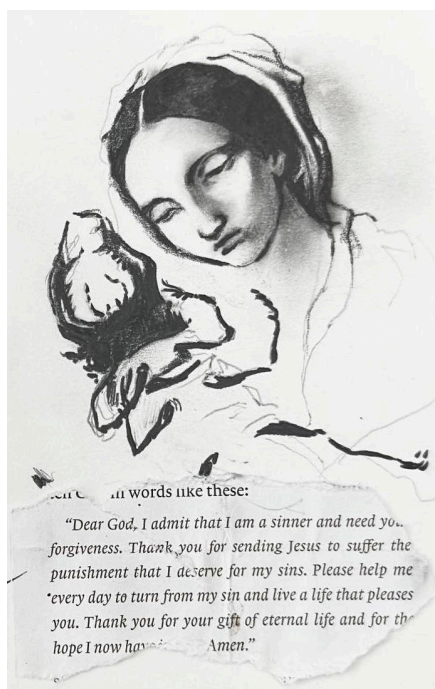
LIFE DRAWING

This term I tasked myself with using the life room more often as it is extremely beneficial to my practice. On Wednesdays after my life drawing classes I would take extra time in the afternoons to practice my painting and drawing skills. We began using paints more often in life drawing which at first, I found quite nervewracking, despite being familiar with painting. I found painting in short bursts of time to be difficult, but soon felt as though it helped with my looseness and need to perfect things.





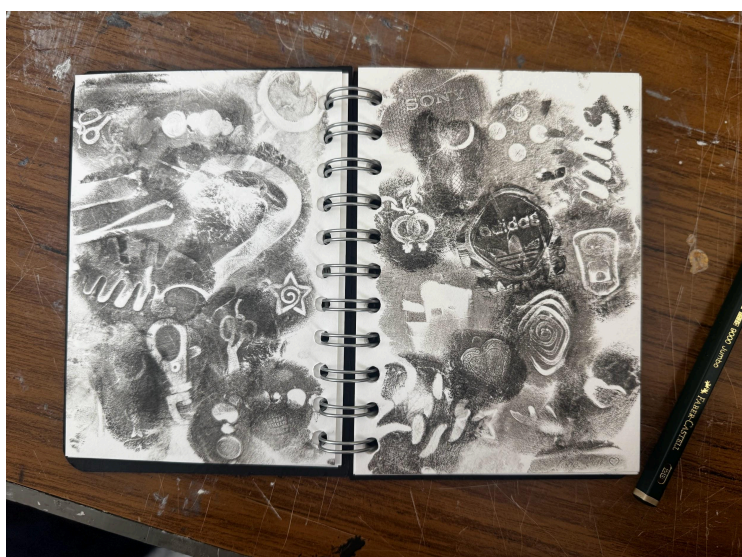
PERSONAL EXPLORATION



Exploring themes of religion, lesbianism, feeling 'othered', grossness, not fitting into patriarchal standards etc. The Madonna holding a baby beetle 'Jesus' along with a prayer about being forgiven from sins.



Beetle sand blasted glass to explore this theme as well as some exploration with monoprints, printed from objects on my person that I feel express queerness.



The beginnings of my painting: this painting has already gone through several alterations, I have changed the composition and poses quite a bit as well as the distance between the figures, my aim has also changed. I am unhappy with the clothing being on the left figure so as I go into term two I will continue to work on this painting and will likely exhibit it for my end of year exhibition.



OTHER RESEARCH - GALLERIES

I also travelled to look at some galleries including local ones such as the Glynn Vivian which have pieces from one of my favourite artists Gwen John as well as some galleries in London such as the Tate Britain and The National Portrait Gallery. I saw some art from some artists' work which I had done some research on last year which was a wonderful opportunity.



Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Delaine Le Bas*

Zoë Buckman - *Cush Jumbo* ('why don't you just tell me how you want to be, baby & i'll live like water around you')





Chantal Joffe - Self-Portrait with Esme



Lady Ottoline Morrell, 1875-1926
By Augustus John

Morrell was closely associated with the Bloomsbury Group and was a key figure in the London literary and artistic circles. She hosted many gatherings at her home, 45 Bedford Square, which became a place where artists and writers could meet and discuss their work.

When this portrait was first exhibited in 1913, it was critical success. The painting is a brilliant example of the artist's ability to capture the essence of his subjects, while the Morrells' connection to the Bloomsbury Group is evident in the painting's style and subject matter.

The painting is a portrait of a woman, and it is a portrait of a woman. The painting is a portrait of a woman, and it is a portrait of a woman. The painting is a portrait of a woman, and it is a portrait of a woman.

Oil on canvas, 1913
Dimensions: 100 cm x 80 cm
Location: The National Gallery, London

Gwen John, 1876-1939
Self-portrait

The Welsh-born artist Gwen John is known for her delicate and intimate portraits of women, often in a contemplative or introspective pose. This self-portrait is a classic example of her style, with its soft lighting and subtle expression.

She painted this self-portrait a couple of years before moving to Paris, where she spent most of her artistic career. When there are no other people, she often turned to a companion young woman.

John was an advocate of women's independence and education, and her own reputation was often overshadowed by her brother, the painter Augustus John. This portrait is a testament to her artistic talent and her role in the Bloomsbury Group.

Oil on canvas, about 1910
Dimensions: 100 cm x 80 cm
Location: The National Gallery, London

Gwen John - Gwen John