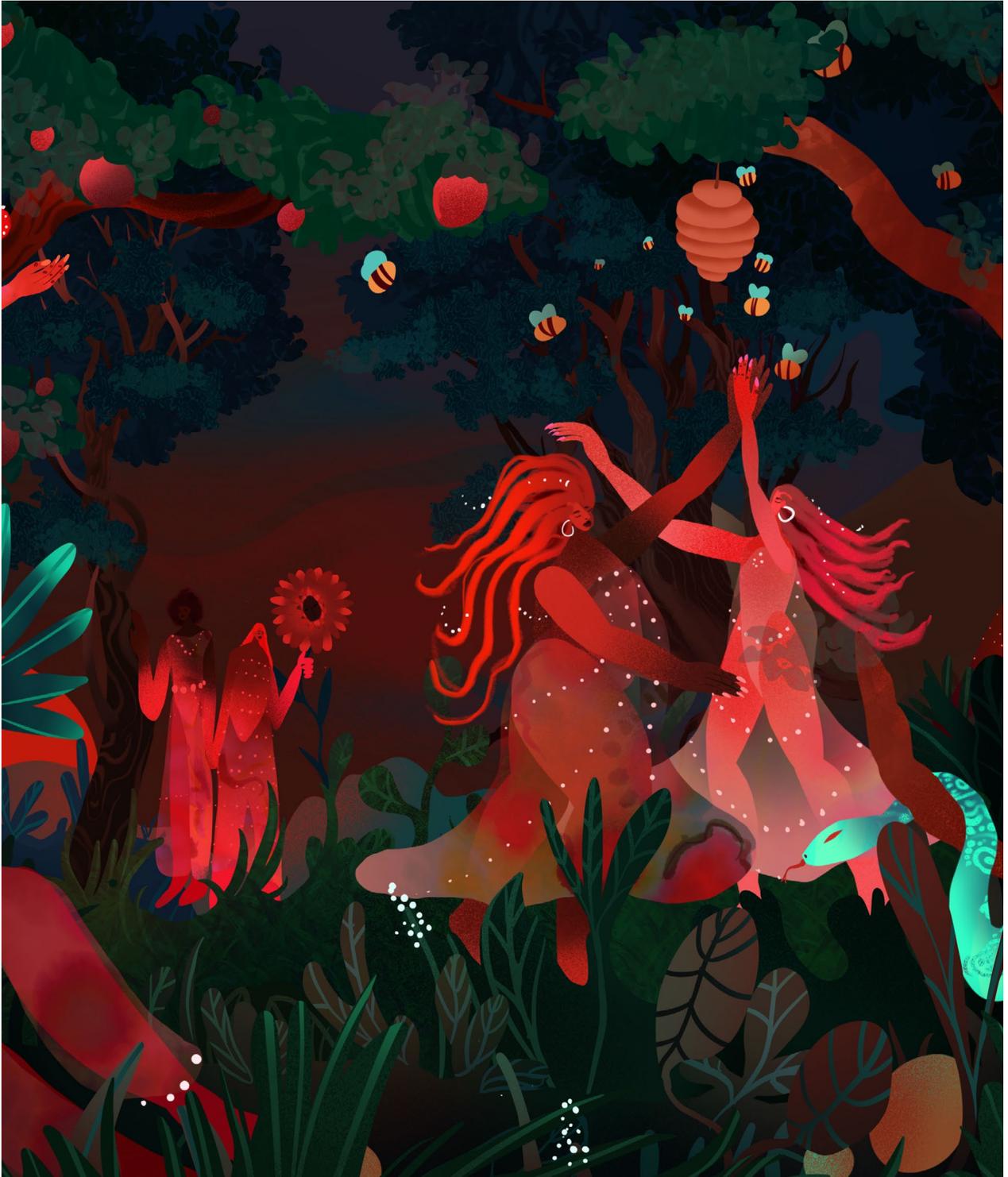


AMIR KHADAR

We Outside



Black Studies Senior Thesis Catalogue

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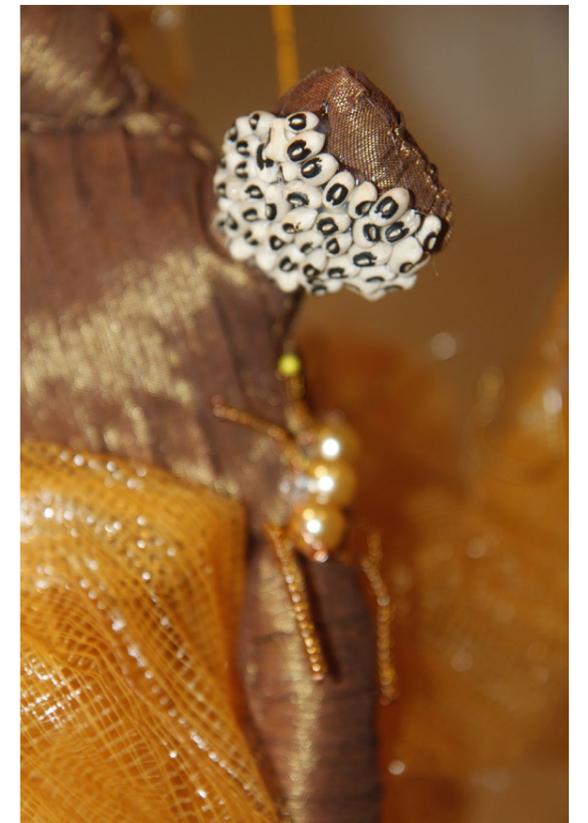
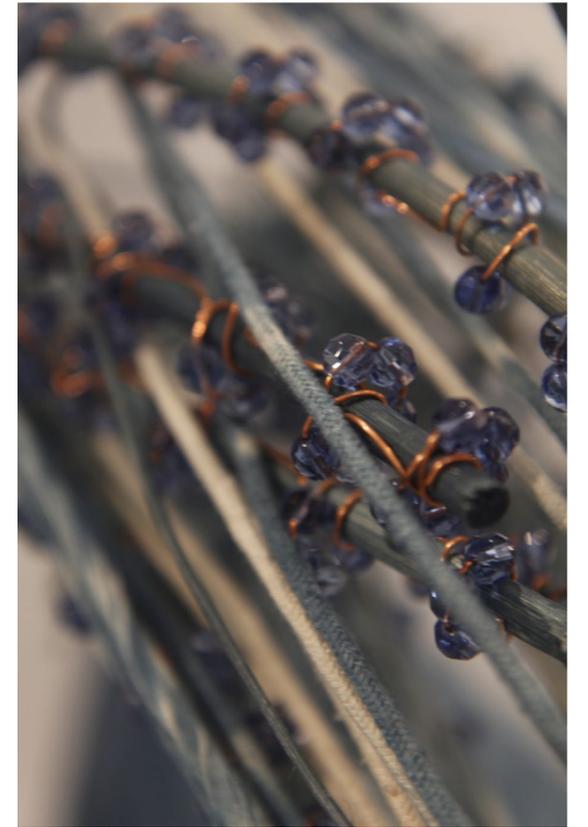
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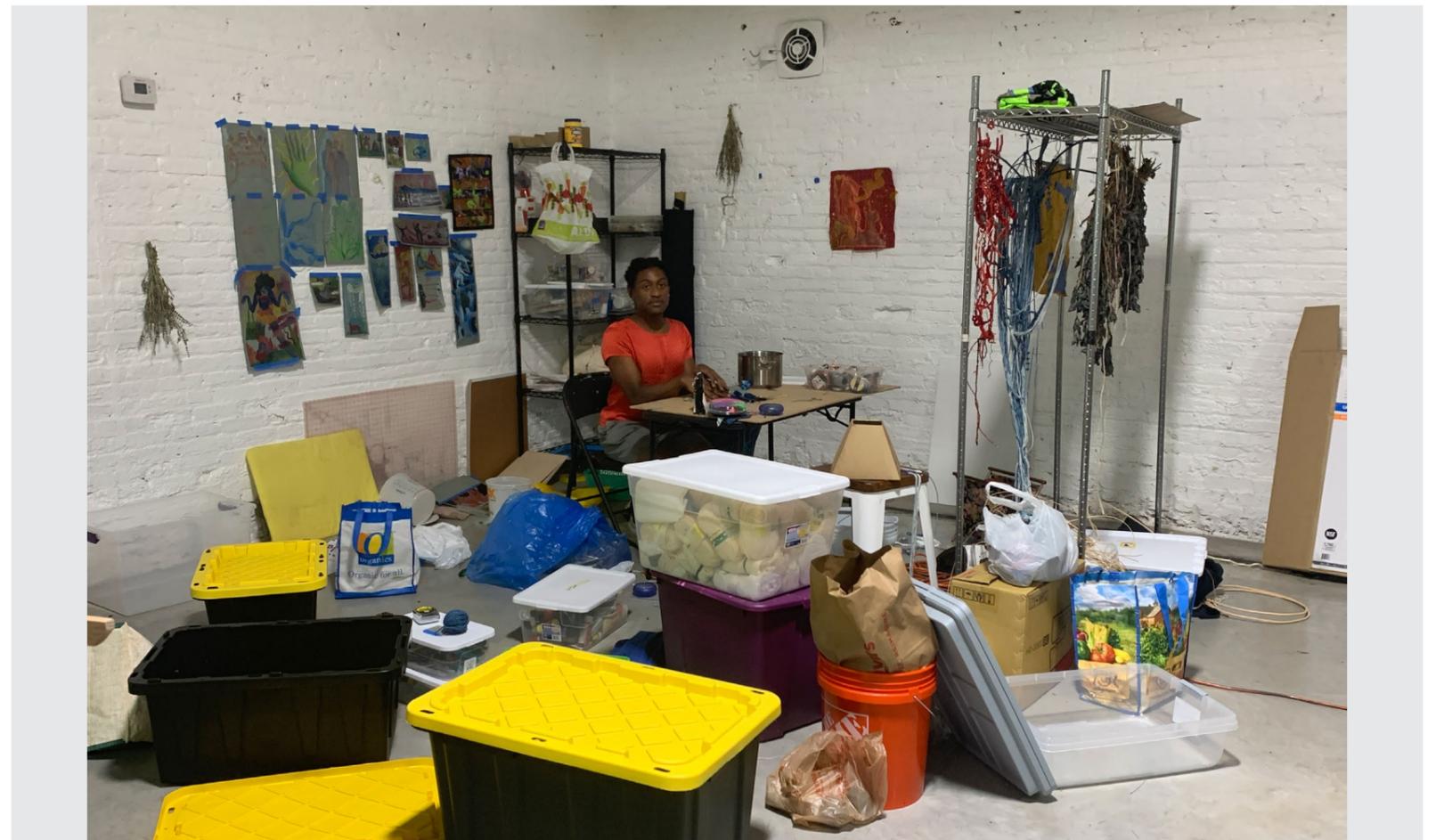
INTRODUCTION

I began this journey in Summer 2021 with a grant from the Mellon Foundation to explore an interest in the humanities. My advisor was Professor Nina Johnson. I lived in Baltimore, and worked out of Blue Light Junction, a natural dye annex farm owned by Kenya Miles. I had a studio space, and spent my time there building upon concepts and skills I established at Art school. This was the first time I was creating an artistic practice almost independently. I was also working on commission projects and design work as I was going through this process.

I have always felt a strong urge to explore Blackness disconnected from Black people's bodies, and address relationships between Blackness and the environment, but I felt I didn't have the intellectual foundation to address these concepts. I learned to lead with embodied knowledge, and the art started to come to me naturally. The process was deeply experimental, I was exploring many different techniques, materials, and ways of thinking to find what would tell the best story.

Through the process I asked myself questions like; Why are we afraid of the woods? Why is discoloration ugly? Where does white (color, not skin) come from? Are trees Black? Are weeds Black? Do we disrespect the earth because it looks like a Black woman?

This document is my way of capturing all these thoughts and making them accessible for my future selves, because many steps of this process were building upon and building new precedents for art practice. For personal/professional purposes I have properly documented and edited each of the pieces in the exhibition so I have materials for future applications. I include some pieces of my process, and list out any points for further exploration



MOODBOARD

Created with adobe illustrator. This was made to bridge conceptual thoughts and aesthetic interests. Initially there was a strong desire to pursue installation, but that form of making was not possible with the time and resources allotted.

Aesthetic Things I'm enjoying



Materials/Qualities

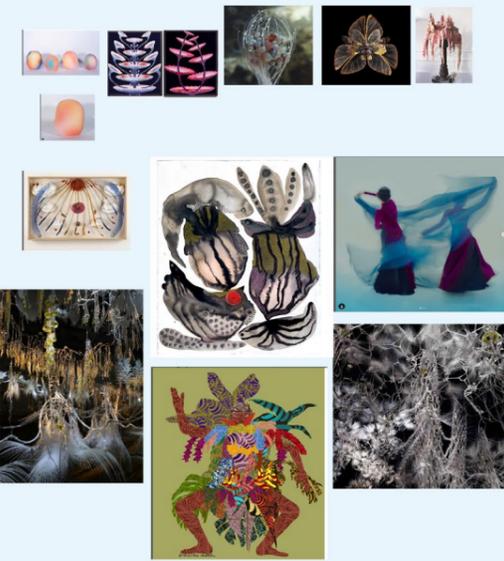
Qualities:
 Transparency
 Reflection
 Refraction
 Light Sources
 Textile structure
 Skin?
 Digital influence

Tensions:
 Light/Heavy
 Digital/Analog
 Old/New
 Moral Good/Bad

Processes I'm interested in:
 * 3-d Modeling
 * 2-d Cutting into 3d sculpture
 * Ceramics
 * Tapestries made away from me
 * soft sculpture
 * Tuttle building
 * Painting on surfaces but not on canvas
 * Some digital collage, specifically where my photos would be central
 * Photography maybe
 * Exporting the creation of objects

Spheres of Influence:
 * My video game girl Avatar
 * Avatarhood and ancestry as interchangeable things
 * Transhumanism, disjoint from nature
 * Transhumanism, disjoiing from humanity
 * Re-coding associations with colonial stereotypes ex. nudity as our stupidity, our fear of primitivity, our fear to look like we are the primitive and close to nature
 * Black eco-feminisms
 * Black Trans-humanist
 * Cyborgisms, but not necessarily with technology that is cyborgy
 * Creation of things in digital spaces
 * Art Neavue
 * Krio and other mixisms

Other Artists Works



Artist List:
 *Wangechi Mutu - Textures, conceptual approach, framing, nature and spirit as grounding
 *Ebony G Patterson - Technique, spatial sense, fiber gurl, color, materialisms, maximalism, use of technology, surface design
 *Mary Sibande - Scale, size, use of form,
 * Alda Muluneh - Just excelent narrative and color work, the simplicity of everything is just fantastic.

*Iris Van Herpen - Use of techn, nature as inspiration, craft, surface design
 * IB Kamara - Just stunning in the curation department.
 * Lisa Yuskavege - I like her storytelling and color pal-ette usage.

Animals/nature



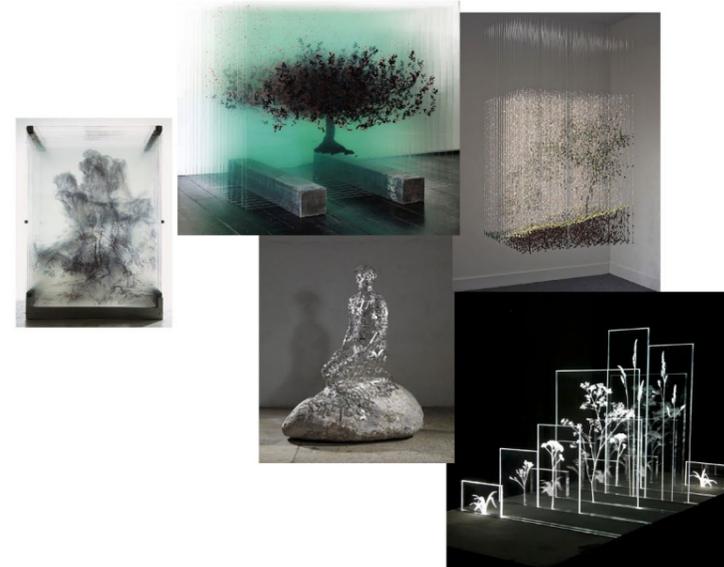
Composition/Forms

Floral/botanical arrangements and drawings are hitting real strong.
 Transparency created by layering panels is doing a lot
 Light incorporation
 Draped elements

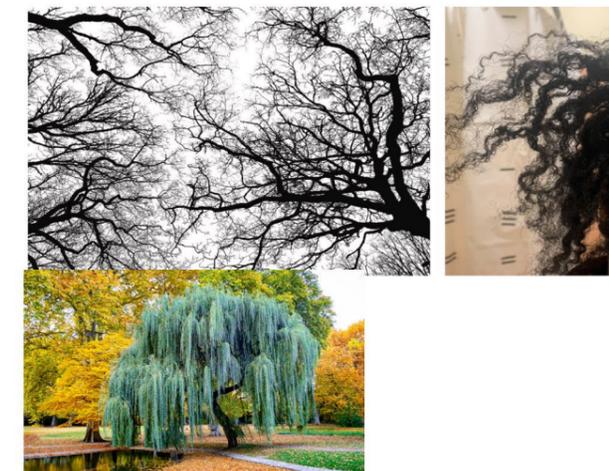
Wire edged ribbon type shapes. Can use the couching tools on a sewing machine for this. Would maybe have to do this on a stretcher? Get on my Iris Van Herpen.

Could try cutting transparent film that I have colored, and then using a heating gun to warp it

I could stiffen some transparent fabric in a drape, and then cut it into my nautre shapes



Nature as a concept also occupies blackness.
 Hatred of both

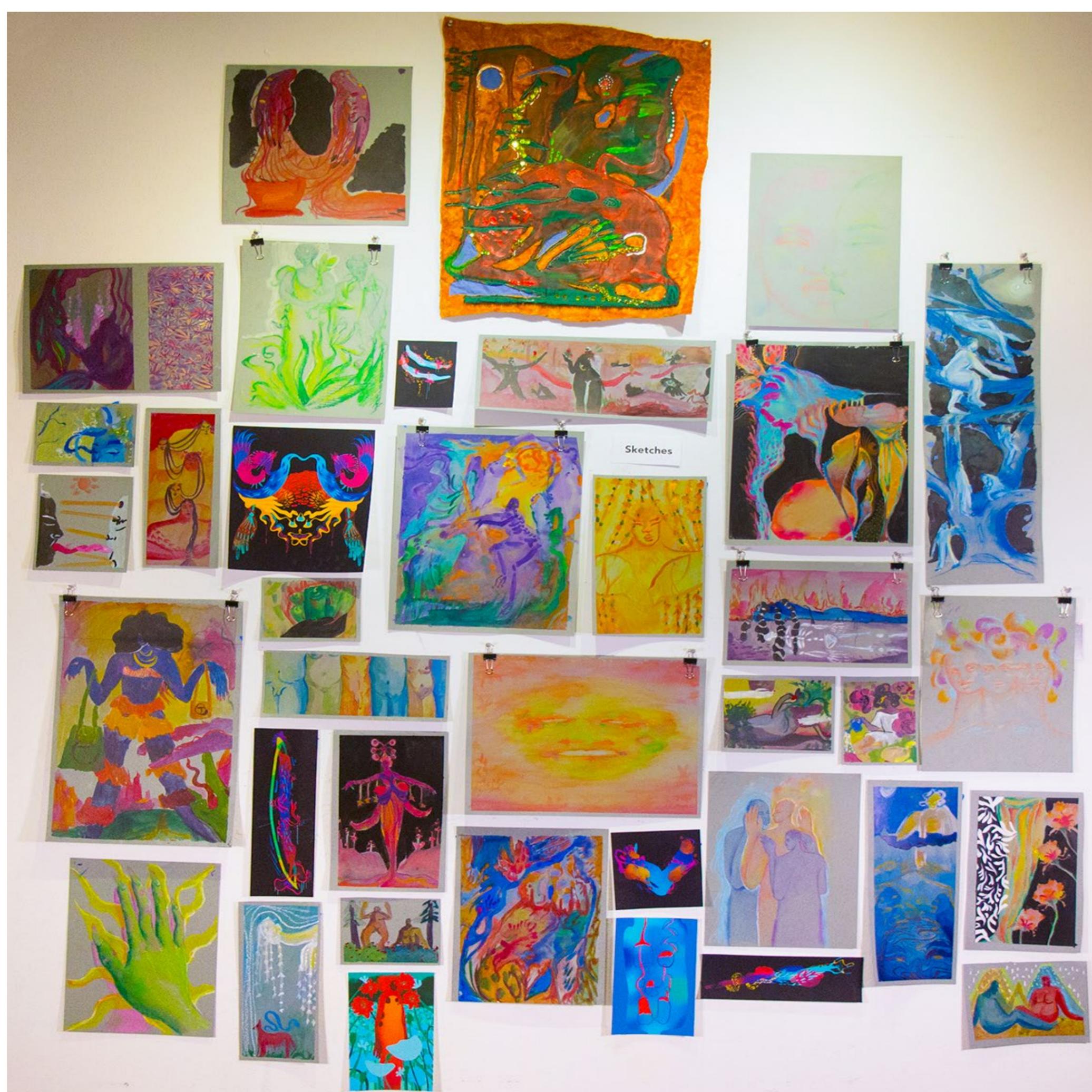


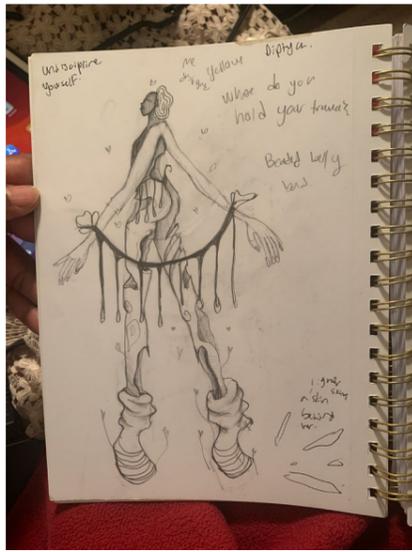
SKETCHES

Sketching is a vital part of the creative process. Drawing comes to me with more ease than writing, so it is my primary documentary process. These represent the most relevant drawings from summer 2021 and spring 2022. After engaging with research artifacts I would draw to digest the information and capture any salient ideas. These sketches document explorations of smaller and bigger ideas that led directly to the creation of the artworks in the series.

There is A LOT of content in this section. Nothing is meant to be engaged with individually, It's here mostly for archival purposes. I edited the work down to about 1/4th of my drawings, but I easily filled 2 sketchbooks and some change. They are organized mostly chronologically so there is some type of story, but again it's not the most important that each one is seen individually.

A note for the future- I want to start exploring options outside of rectangles.





Sketch of a person slipping out of their skin.



Sketch of a Black person.



I started by just cutting up paper, and seeing how many rectangular dimensions I could come up with.



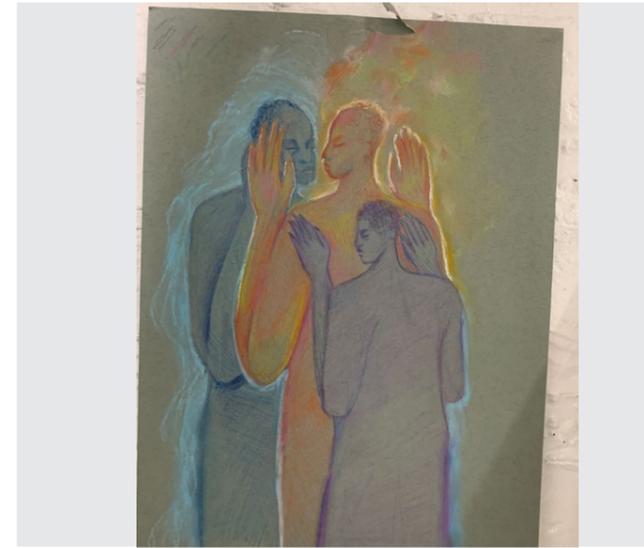
A colored pencil sketch. Some type of gorgon.



Preliminary Color Study.



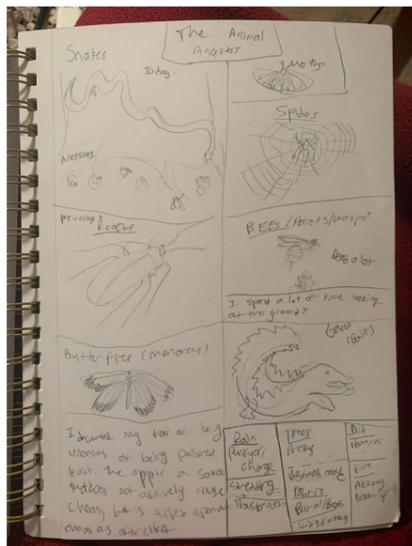
Other color study.



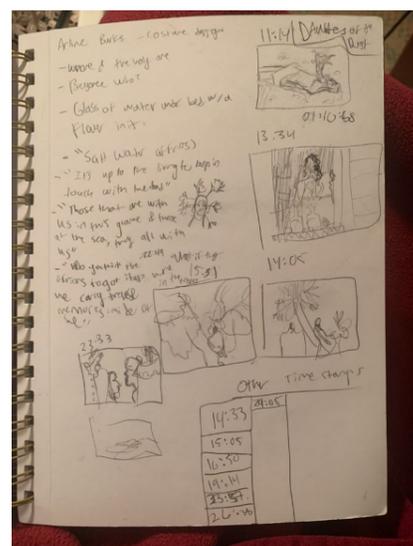
Another colored pencil sketch about shadow/light self.



Inspired by the dried marigold garlands in Blue light junction.



4 Documenting my animal associations.



Timestamps and sketches from Daughters of the Dust.



These people are burning money and dancing in a field of chaos.



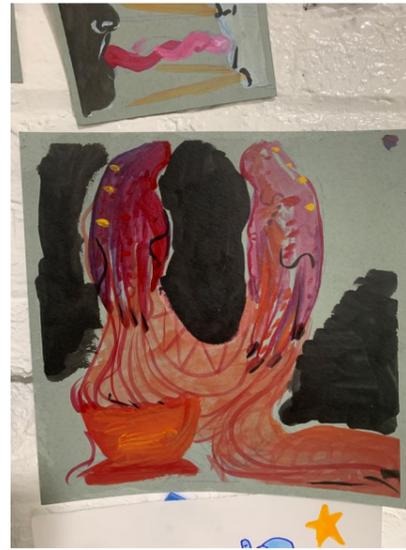
The feeling of having a Telfar and running through a city.



Assorted drawings



A person crying on the ground, while the earth is on fire behind them



Conceptualization of my poor hands.



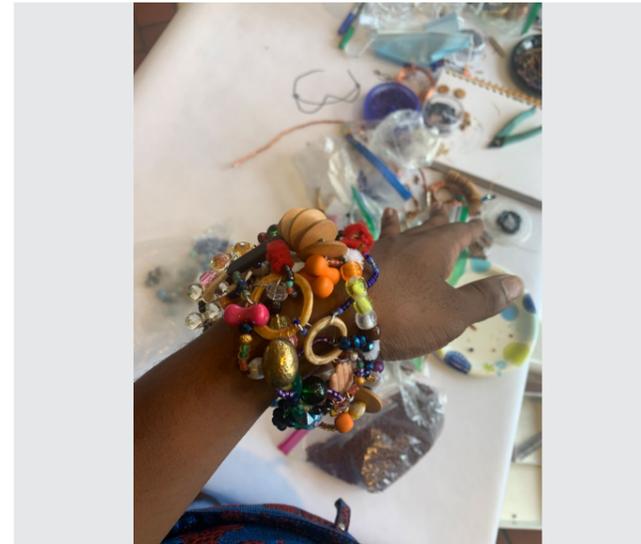
A sketch of what my poor hands could grow into.



Some girls in foilage.



The first quilt/painting study. This is an actual quilt.



My first exploration of the improvisational bead-ing technique.



My studio being packed up at Blue Light Junction.



5 Another quilt/painting study.



Another quilt/painting study.



Another shot of Blue light junction.



The first wall of sketches in it's entirety.



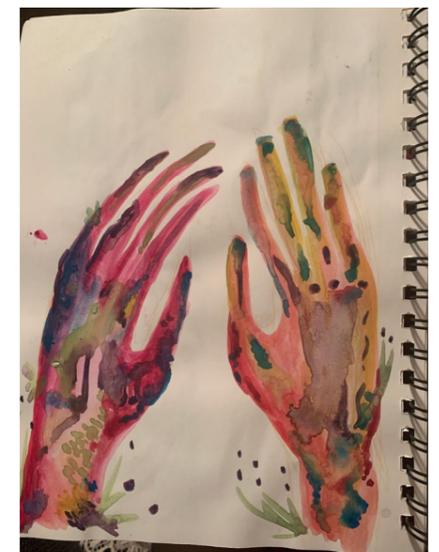
Early sketch of person integrated ecosystem.



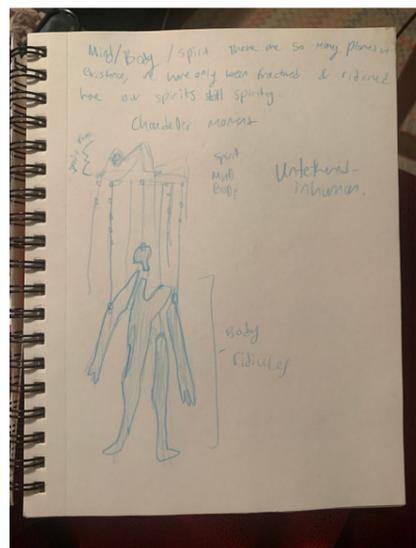
Early sketch of person integrated ecosystem.



how I experience flowers. I think of them as ghetto flowers.



Early sketch of person integrated ecosystem.



Sketch of a mobile depicting physical and spiritual bodies.



More ghetto flowers.



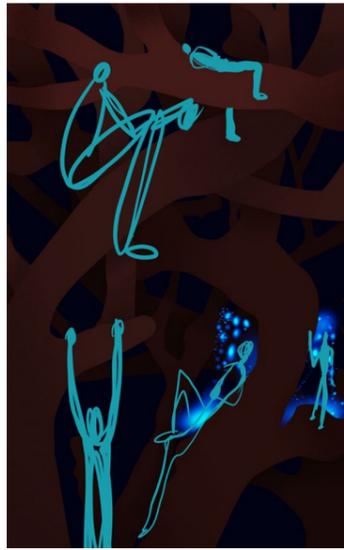
6 Painting of weeds that felt black to me. There are some subjects that aren't racialized for whatever



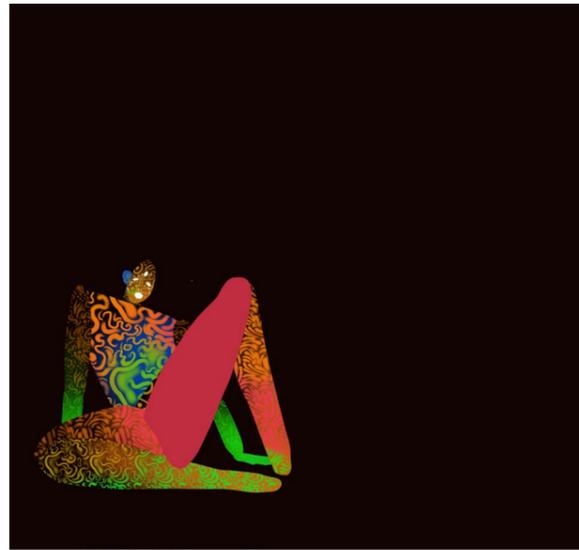
reason and it feels like flowers specifically fill this category? I struggled to make them feel like



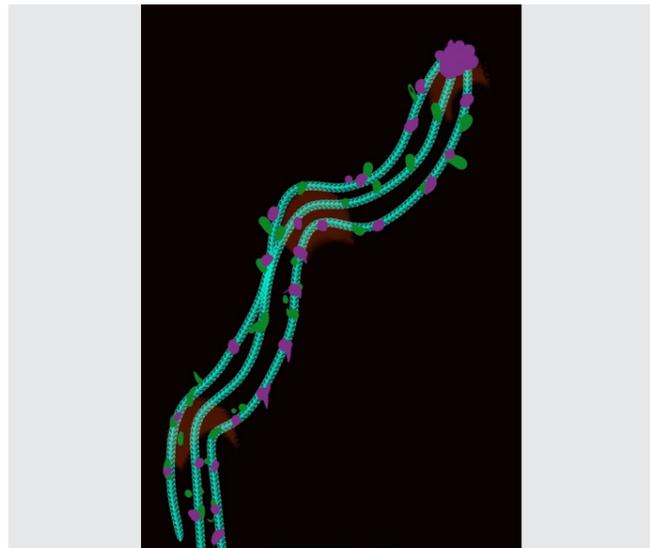
A circle of ancestors watching a corpse burn.



People in a tree



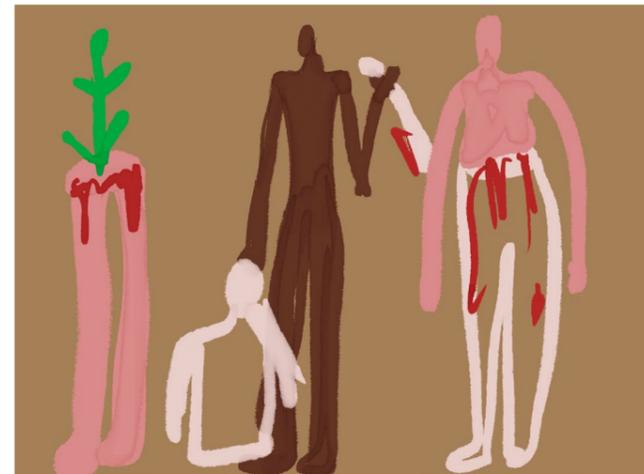
A figure made of hand-drawn repeat patterns.



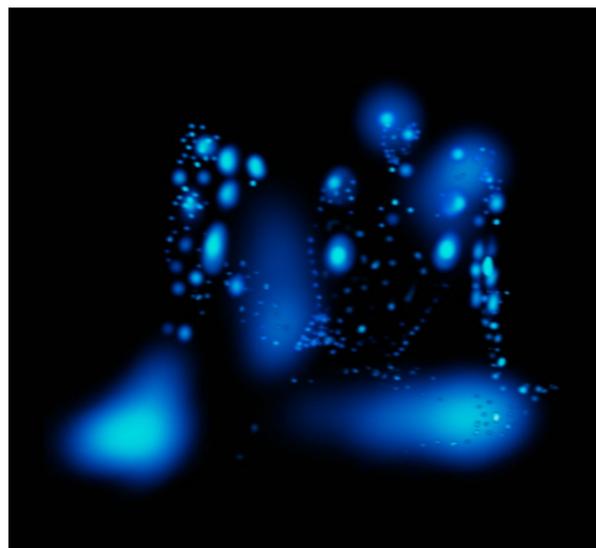
A long willow/braid that would cascade from the ceiling.



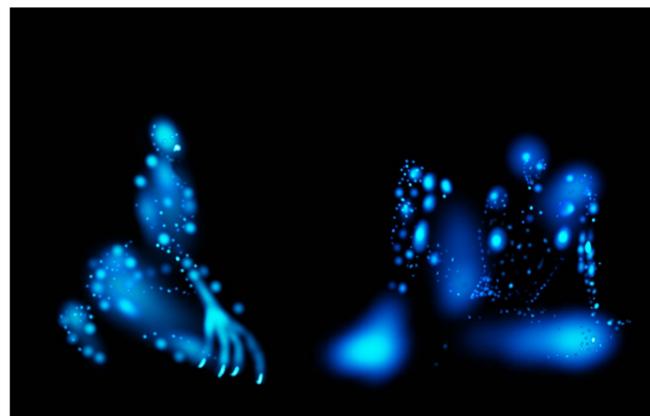
More people in trees.



Someone playing god.



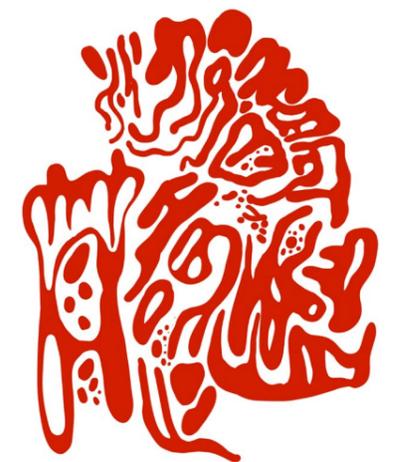
7 A star body.



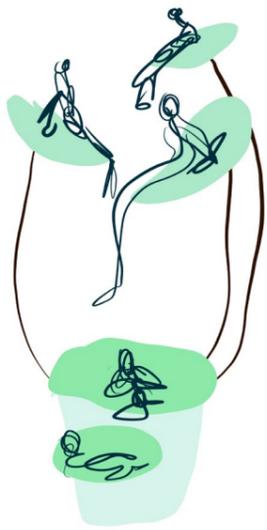
Another star body.



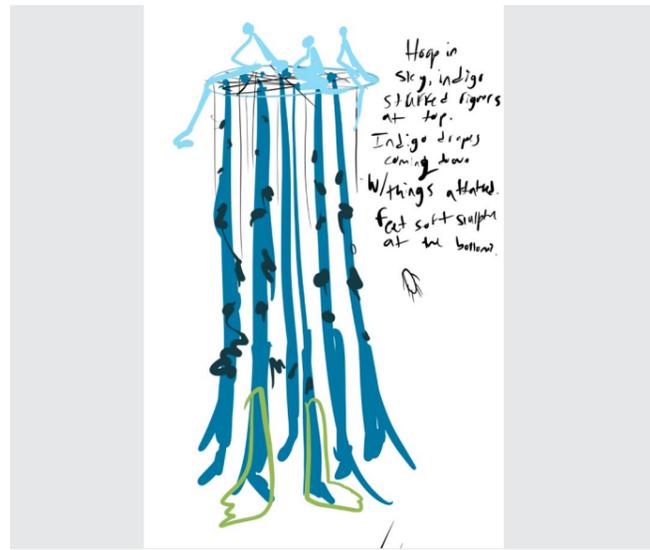
A color study.



An observation of a spilled liquid.



Beginning of ROACHES



Beginning of roaches/potential indigo installation way.



Ribs



Femur



Final sketch for ROACHES



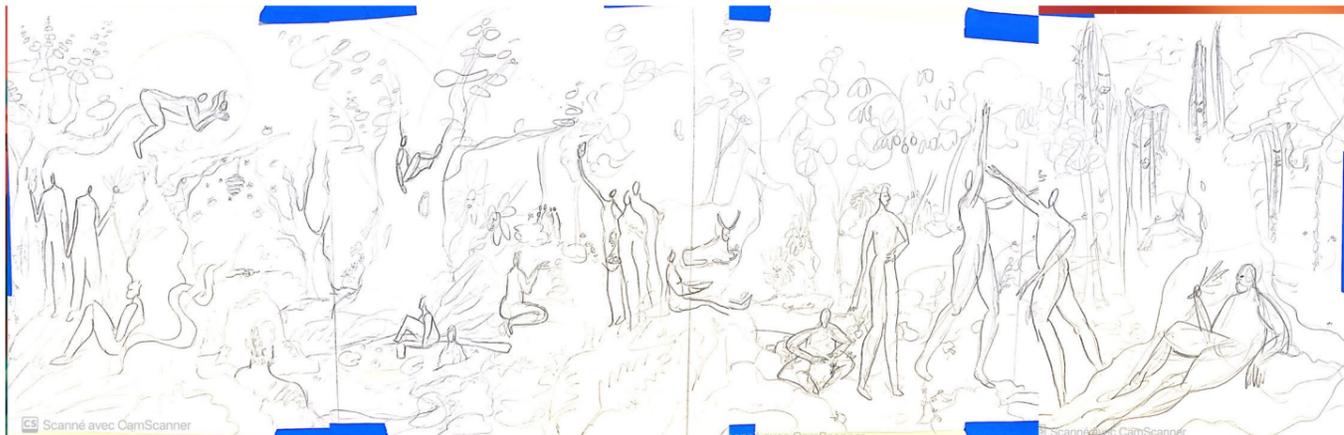
Sketch for Why You Hate Your Mother



Hip Bone



This is a few of the bone peices assembled



8 Come to my garden sketch (scanned).



Skull



Post-mortem fantasy figures frolicing somewhere



INDIGO ALTAR

Materials: Wood, reed, natural fabrics,

Techniques: Synthetic and natural indigo dye processes, basket weaving, Adire (wax resist/batik), quilting, laser cutting.

Explanation: This is a compilation of several hand dyed items. Indigo was a commodity during the trans-atlantic slave trade, but has deep roots in West African ancestral aesthetics. Extensive research on indigo dye chemistry and cultivation were a precursor to these works.

Components of this installation:

- A 'summer quilt' made as a riff off the commemorative cloth tradition to honor the ancestors who brought this tradition from West-Africa to the Americas.
- A piece of hand waxed adire fabric.
- A mobile made from dyed reed, beads.

Further exploration: This was my attempt to rationalize many of the objects I have made over the years using indigo. This is a small curation of what was physically available to me at the time, but I would like to make this a complete altar at some point where there is a level of interaction. Maybe a live dyeing session?

ROCK, RIVER, TREE, ASHY KNEES

Materials: Quilted fabrics, acrylic paint, sequins, beads.

Techniques: A multi layered appliqué tapestry, created by subtractive and additive applique, painting, machine sewing, and prayers.

Explanation: Ashy knees because when you kneel by a river your knees get ashy. A visual collage of human forms, natural systems, and microorganisms. All of the references were layered on top of each other to symbolize one-ness with surroundings.

References: On the Pulse of Morning, Maya Angelou.

Further exploration: I think this might be it for this one? There was discussion of showing an obtrusive human to further the narrative, adding a negative to form a positive essentially, but we will see what happens.





ROACHES!

Materials: Found fabrics, beads, wire, feathers, black eyed peas

Techniques: A soft sculpture/jewelry object. Made with a sewn figure, beaded roaches, manipulated fabric, and other embellishments.

Explanation: American cockroaches were brought to the Americas during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. I was meditating on the historical and contemporary proximity of roaches to Black life, as well as the racialization of roaches and their conceptual proximity to Blackness. I also have a personal & spiritual connection to them.

References: 'Lil B*tch' by Bby Mutha

Further exploration: This was initially conceptualized as a human sized (or larger) installation, where there would be automated movement and light work to further represent the themes.

MAMA TAKES HER THINGS BACK

Materials: Threads, beads, sequins, dye

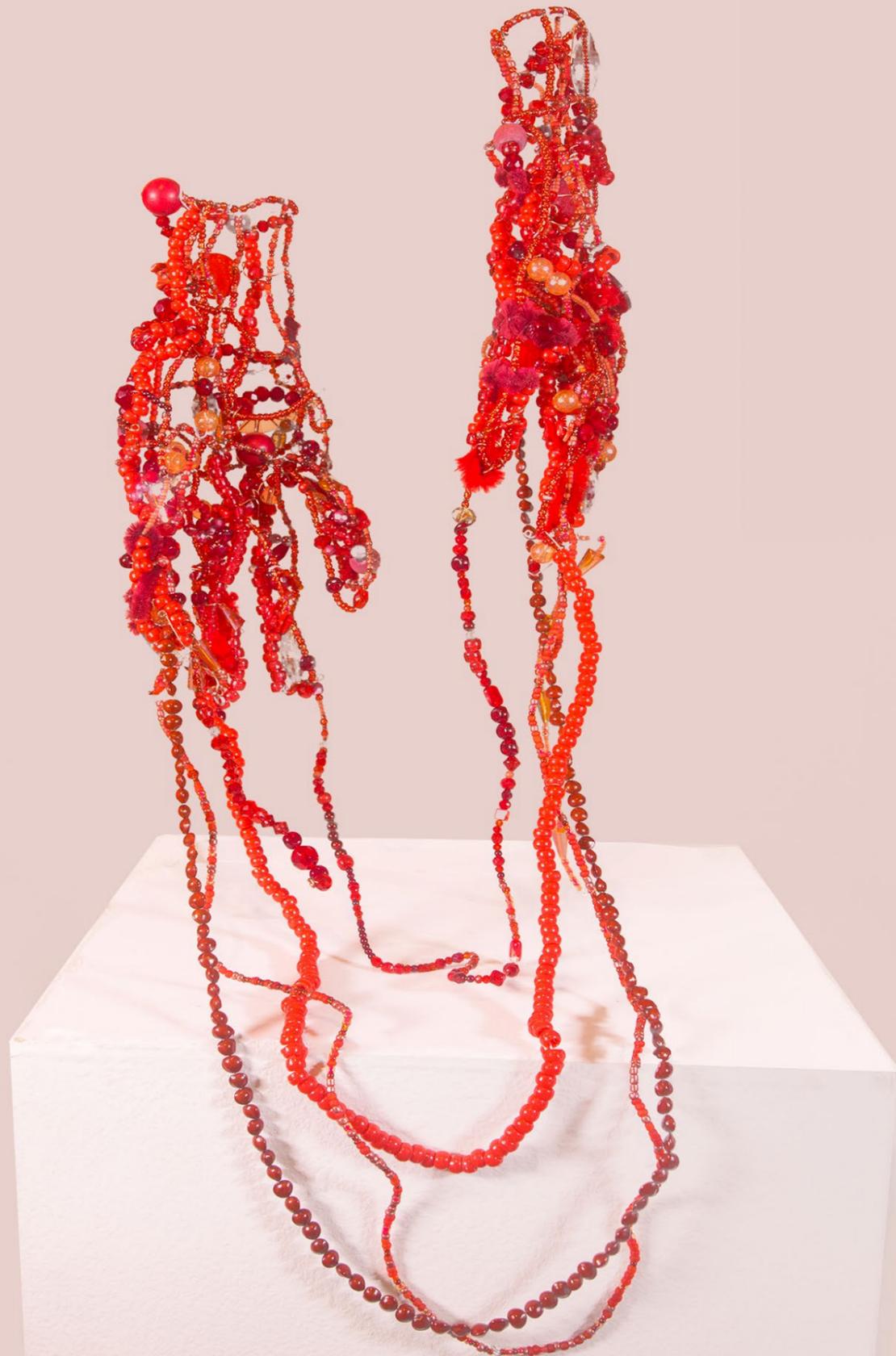
Techniques: A tapestry hand woven on an automated heddle loom (TC2). After weaving the tapestry was dyed and embellished.

Explanation: This was created by synthesizing depictions of women with stars for hair in apocalypse stories. Starting with revelations, then into Yoruba myths (mawu) and other indigenous storytelling. They are reclaiming.

References: Apocalypse tapestries in Angers, France, Yoruba creation stories, and Revelations in The Bible.

Further exploration: I want to weave more! It was one of my favorite artistic practices. It isn't accessible to me currently because the looms to work on are not cheap, but it feels like a very smooth merge of digital art and analog skills. I don't feel complete when I do work rooted wholly in either set of skills, so even though I didn't make this piece specifically for this exhibition, it reminds me I have things to pursue. I would love to create a series of illustrations and handle them in this fashion, to depict an eco black feminism informed apocalypse series.





MY POOR HANDS

Materials: Beads (acrylic, wire, glass, stone, seed) , wire, pipe cleaners.

Techniques: Wire wrapping, beading.

Explanation: As a jeweler-in-training I have been to many bead shows, and the economics of a bead show challenge our paper-based value system. Beads in themselves are a currency, so buying beads is like currency exchange. This observation created a new response to the question "what are you worth" (and other questions that ask us to monetize humanity) because there was a time when people were traded for beads.

Further exploration: This was initially conceptualized as a full sized anthropomorphic sculpture with some type of automation. It would show someone releasing the beads in their body, symbolizing a release of the associations between currency and humanity.

COME TO MY GARDEN

Materials: Digital illustration

Techniques: Procreate and photoshop painting

Explanation: This was made to illustrate some of the conceptual ideas in a more legible way. Many of the artworks were abstract, and I wanted to return to some of my sketches that had more literal figurative work. Christianity/post-enlightenment thinking demonizes our connection to the environment, and situates sin in our physical body, so I depicted people enjoying being in their bodies and being integrated with the environment.

References: Come to my garden by Minnie Riperton

Further exploration: I see this becoming a mural or some type of digital space.



BEAUTY SHOP INSTALLATION

Materials: Rope, beads, acrylic, fabric, dye, wire

Techniques: Laser Cutting, head wrapping, macrame/knotting, beading, peyote stitch

Explanation: Aesthetics are important! I think the beauty shop is the origin of many black femme aesthetics. It is one of the only places that uniquely caters to Black femme desires. It's definitely still a capitalist marketplace and in no way a safe haven, but it still holds liberatory possibilities. This is a small installation composed of 3 pieces.

- **47 inch synthetic twist, no lace, no closure**
A headdress inspired by Yoruba beadwork and booty length box braids. Made using macrame and knotting techniques, beauty store beads, and laser cut pieces.
- **I know that ain't my tablecloth she got on**
A head wrap fashioned from several pieces of hand dyed synthetic fabric. Includes a hand beaded eye covering. Informed by the epistemology of head wrapping.
- **Where you get those?**
Several earrings made using various analog and digital techniques - peyote stitch, laser cutting, wire wrapping, and painting. Inspired by the earring racks at beauty stores.

Further exploration: I have had the idea to expand this into a full scale installation for a while. I envision it becoming a magical realist beauty shop that encourages people to understand the innovative spirit behind diasporic Black aesthetics. Inspired by Lisa Lou's 'Kitchen', where she hand beaded a kitchen to illustrate the unseen labor of domestic work.





WHY YOU HATE YOUR MOTHER??

Materials: Quilted fabrics, acrylic paint, sequins, beads.

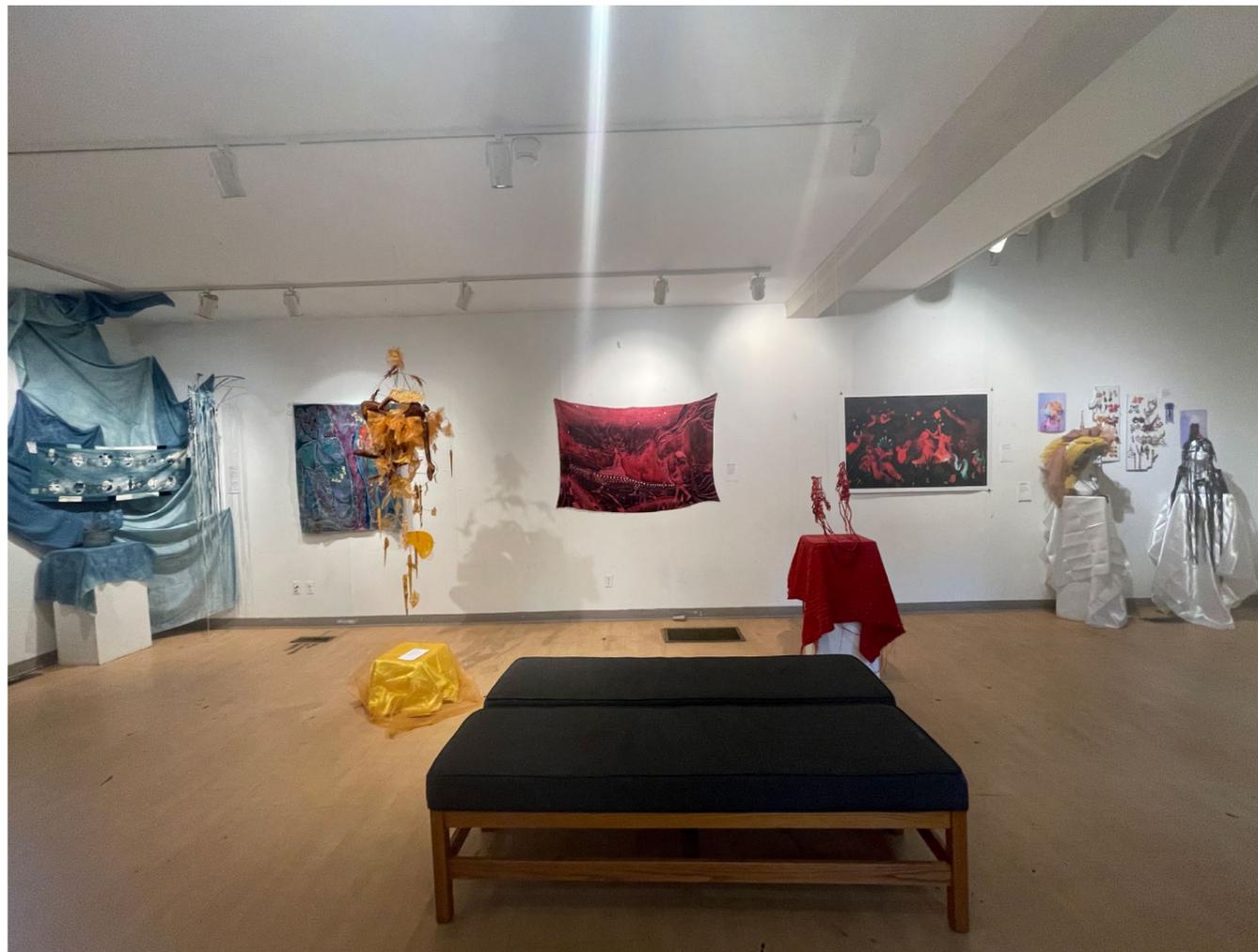
Techniques: Appliqué tapestry.

Explanation: This is about how the earth resembles Black people in aesthetic. A brown/mud skin, and winding trees for hair. My thesis for this is that disrespect and destruction of our environment is caused by the same mechanism that creates terrorism against Black people with feminine expressions.

Further exploration: I need to resolve the bottom of this. I feel like the quilts I made feel like stills of an animation? The concept isn't reading in the way I want it to.

EXHIBITION

The following is documentation of the exhibition that took place on 4/29 and 4/30. A lot of documentation is in video format, so I need to work on transforming it.



WE'RE OUTSIDE :

Amir Khadar's Black Studies Thesis Exhibition

Come to see the exhibition of Amir Khadar's capstone project, We're Outside - a series of mixed-media artworks informed by diasporic ecologies. There will be space to share reflections, interact with the artwork, and enjoy refreshments! Prints will be available.

@ Kitao Gallery

Opening:
Friday 4/29
7-9 pm

Visiting Hours:
Saturday 4/30
1-5 pm



EXHIBITION TEXT:

Dehumanization of Black people creates human as a category we can aspire assimilation to. Associations are made between our bodies and the 'worst' things nature has to offer - disease, dust, dirt, mud. It's reflexive to dissociate from these 'dirty' grotesque things to become human, but it drives a wedge between us and our environments. But what is actually wrong with mud? Is dirt actually dirty?

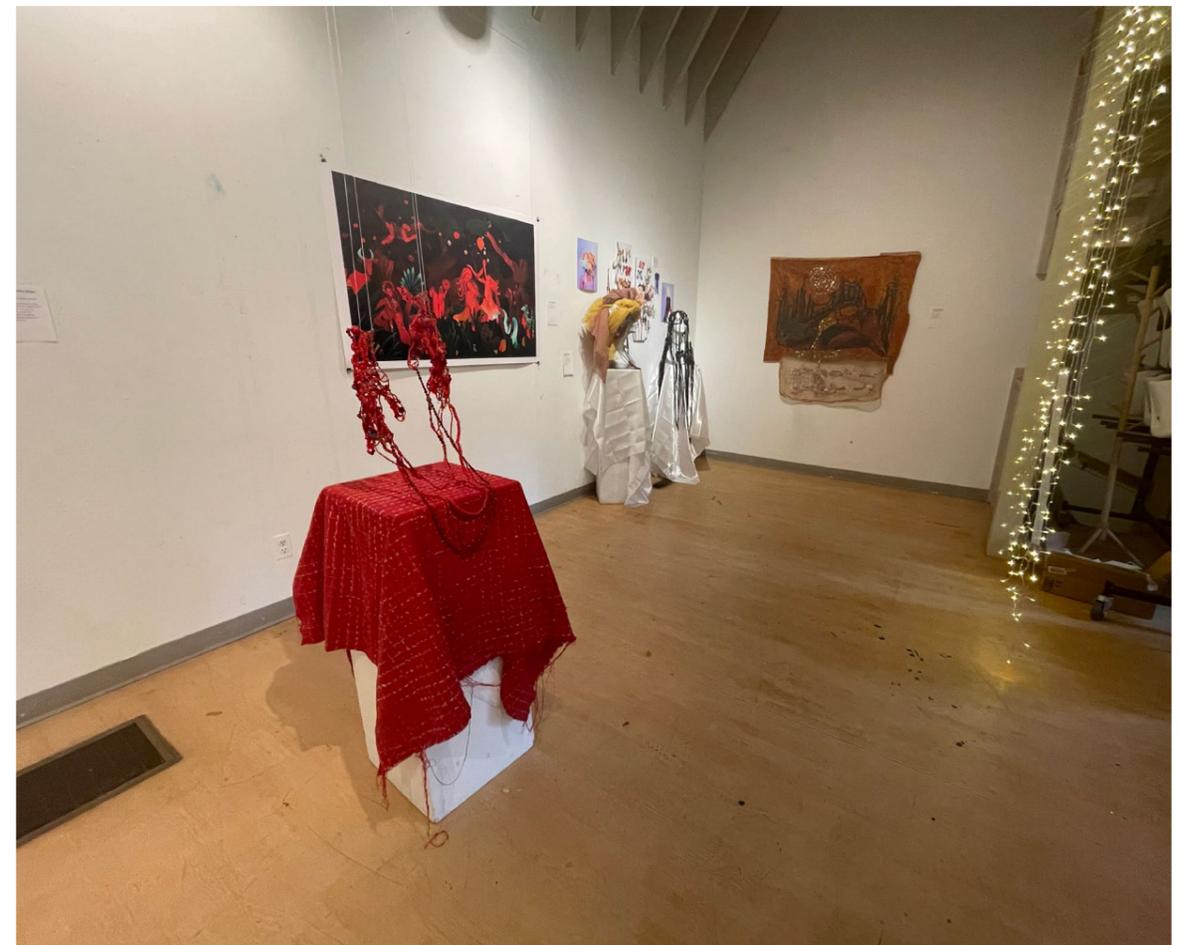
This exhibition explores liberatory possibilities created by Black people's contextual proximity to the earth. What happens when we step outside the confines of the human category and live in our skin, our hair, our nails and use these things as a bridge between us and our environment? What happens when we disconnect from human associations and invest in other ways of being. Can trees be black? These artworks strive to provide speculation around these ideas.

This body of work was made throughout summer 2021, and spring 2022, there were several stages of research, experimentation, and ideation to create all the final artworks. In these artworks attention was paid to aesthetic and intentionally creating beauty. It's important that we form our own aesthetics and body politics because they are necessary to a functioning culture and pleasurable life. To this extent, the majority of materials used were second hand or found, because trash is a subjective category.

In making these objects there was also intentional dedication to fiber techniques - knotting, patching, sewing, natural and synthetic dyeing, beading, etc... because the hand motions that create braids, weavings, quilts, and garments are echoes of ancestral techniques. When we partake in these ways of making, we make space for ancestral knowledge to materialize, and who knows better than them?

Next to many of the artworks are small books. If you feel compelled, please write something! Could be a poem, a reflection, an alternative artist statement, a critique, something it reminds you of. It's a blank piece of paper, make it yours!

Special thank you to The Black Studies Department, my thesis advisor James Padillioni, my summer grant advisor Nina Johnson and everyone else who gave me all the critiques and guidance that made this such a fruitful experience - Abbie Rugg, Angie Etienne, Anna Fruman, Kenya Miles, Savannah Imani, Sarah Heerey, Valeska Populoh, and Vy Vu.



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