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Spring 2020

Artist Statement

My inquisitions are grounded and firm.
My voice is now stronger than ever.
My fire is burning hotter than it ever has.
The depths of my ocean are shallowing.

Personal and artistic growth informed by historical and contemporary views in human curiosity through the lens of female perspectives and the utilization of printed matter such as artist books. Research-based and experimentally-driven, with explorations that link Women's Studies, Art + Ecology and Printmaking attitudes.

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Thesis: Written Oral

Firstly, thank you for allowing me to share my journey with you. I want to thank all of the people who have made it possible for me to come this far but instead, I share my thanks with you for the sake of this written project. My hope is that this gratitude will someday be received. Let's not dip our toes to test the waters this time. We're diving straight into the depths. Growing up in a conservative household can be difficult when you're a free-spirited, curious child. The constant questioning and exploration of my environment was deemed 'over-stimulating', 'hyperactive', and 'high-strung' for many people involved in my upbringing. As I grew into teenagehood, I subdued my questions, I silenced my interests, and I conformed to the formal public education system. This is not to say that my inquisitive personality was erased, rather it was muted by aspects of my lived experience. Childhood, societal influences, such as gender norms and capitalist-consumerist society: these are all dominating pressures that aimed to soften my inquisition, dampen my fire and hush my voice.

When I started my thesis proposal last semester, curiosity was my main focus. My overall goal was to recontextualize curiosity in a contemporary sense. How do we equate value to curiosity now as a society and how has that changed over time? What I found was somehow both surprising and expected. Through the investigation of historical archives, periodicals, art and design aspects, and contemporary modes of thought, I was able to trace a change in curiosity as it relates to female perspectives. What I saw throughout this extensive research were the connections between 1500's Europe, patriarchal control, and religious domination. Because of these long-lasting and dominating aspects, females were ascribed to curiosity, and in a negative light. Meddlesome, nosey, or just plain hysterical, curiosity was seen as a medieval sin in the eyes of the Christian Patriarchy.

Curiosity, as the motivation for knowledge, was correlated with femininity. Femininity was ascribed to curiosity in an attempt to subdue the pursuit of knowledge that was outside the church's commands. Information seeking was 'ungodly' and in most cases, being curious meant that you were meddlesome, filled with drama, and in search of trouble. Furthering the alienation of women in the field of natural inquiry, the anthropological symbolization of curiosity was strengthened by the Italian iconographer Cesare Ripa when he published the illustrated version of *Iconologia*¹, a book of important symbols, in 1603. Ripa's illustration, *Curiosita*², depicts a giant, crazed-looking woman with large wings and flung open arms: as if to embrace the world. Illustrations such as this established a strong parallel between inquisition and femininity.

Refreshingly, previous beliefs surrounding curiosity that are outlined above fueled new perspectives in future literature, art and design attitudes, and societal patterns. Today, we think of curiosity as a diligence to knowledge; a motivation that guides all of us into the unknown. Recently, experts have informed us that curiosity is in fact a *drive*, not an *instinct*. Whether innate or learned, they

¹ Ripa, Cesare. "Iconologia di Cesare Ripa", Cristoforo Tomasini, Venice, 1645. Digitized 2009. – via Google Books. Accessed Sept. 17, 2019.

² *ibid.*

can't agree but we do know that all humans possess curiosity. What's important about this distinction is that it points out that curiosity lives in this strange purgatory between good and bad. Curiosity can lead to the discovery of a cure, or it can "kill the cat". What we do know is that behavior born from curiosity can be deprogrammed. If your dog is sniffing that dark corner in your basement, only to get its nose snapped by a rat trap, it learns not to do that again. Curiosity as a motivation thrusts us into the unknown and narrow realms, whether good or bad. These examples, paired with modern philosophies regarding knowledge, freed curiosity from its religious shackles and contributed to the transformation and standardization of curiosity as an invaluable human motivation that would aid in future advancements.

By actively searching for the origins of where curiosity derives - in ourselves and in others - we learn more about where we need to direct our careers, our relationships, even our lives. Ultimately, by exploring the world through our senses, we're composing connections in our brain through the psychological catalyst we define as curiosity. Some people are more curious than others, much like some have more musical talent than others. This is true for many human characteristics. So, my initial thesis question started as *what would it look like to visualize and interpret the mental avenues that have guided and informed my own curiosity?* One thing I knew for certain at the time of posing this question: all human beings possess curiosity.

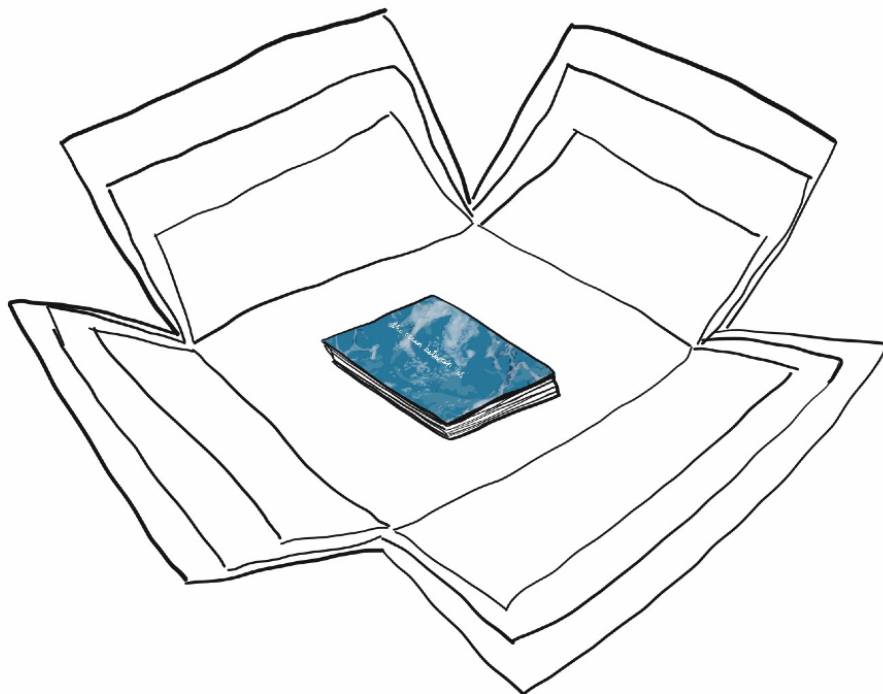
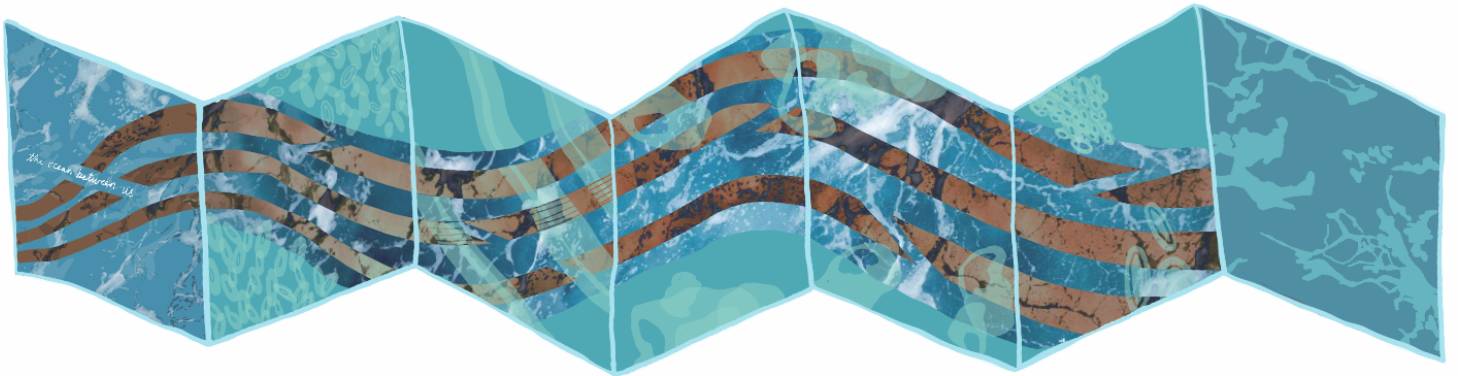
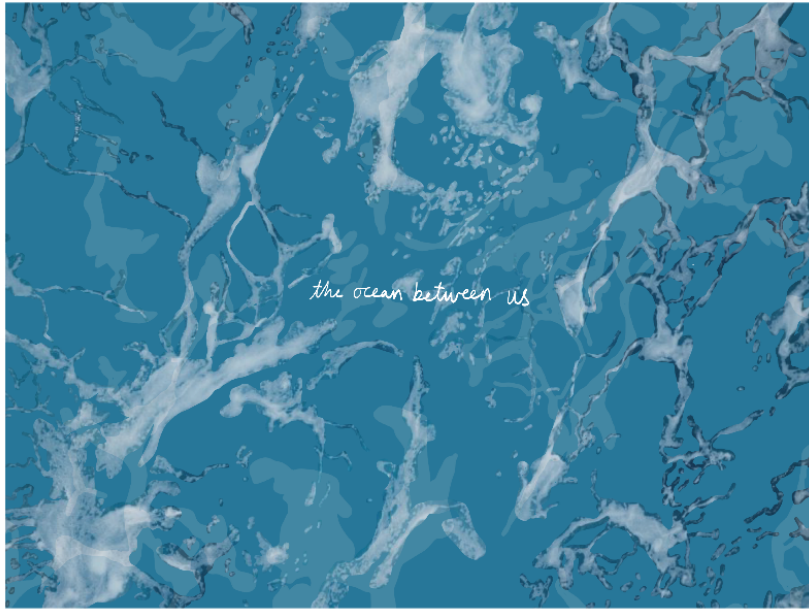
What becomes pivotal in this project is how this initial question became the project itself. As I began experimenting in the studio during and after my thesis proposal, I noticed none of my work pertained to *me* at all. In hopes of not only showing the skills that I've learned as a young artist at PNCA, but also celebrating my growth as a human being, I refocused my project goal. I might have actually been worried if this personal project hadn't changed at all. That realization came just before an early semester meeting with my mentor and PNCA instructor, Rory Sparks. I might have asked rhetorically: *why is my personal project not personal?* To that I can answer now: I amassed an ocean of distance between myself and my artwork. The work was an afterthought and the process was my work. The distance has always been there but was only then starting to shrink. And then coronavirus happened.

Unfortunately, our school was forced to close for the remainder of the semester and all of us felt the massive effects of this historic change in our personal lives, our careers, and our mental and physical health. Since the start of this worldwide quarantine I have sought healing for myself and for those affected by this pandemic. It can be difficult to move forward with an ambitious project when your resources are so limited. I didn't really know how to move forward. But what I did know was that as an artist, I possess the skills to interpret through my artwork and express through the intersection of personal and universal change. My project changed. My life changed. I changed.

Ironically, this project went from a self-directed process to a self-isolated challenge. Throughout this unique experience, I have identified key successes and failures. I am an active participant in this project. The intersectionality of individual exploration, personal narrative, and cultural representation creates a unique synthesis of information gathering and art-making. What's important about my role is that it assumes maker and viewer. I am not a passive component in this process. As I said, I am actively serving my artwork as the artwork serves me. As I navigated these colossal changes of how I would approach my thesis project without the support of PNCA's studios, I found that instead of abandoning my project I would salvage what I planned and create a digital illustration of what it would have manifested without the blockage of pandemic. What you see is the result of adaptation and envisioning. We are constantly presented with walls and boundaries that aim to halt us in our creative practice and what is important is how we react and overcome those obstacles. These digital works are the result of that process. As a printmaker, I have been introduced to many different approaches to producing artwork but digital mediums have not been my strongest skill. Through the forceful quarantine and lack of studio access, I was able to strengthen my digital rendering skills and allow myself to visualize the work that I

had planned all along. My goal is that in viewing these digital works the viewer may translate this message and the struggle that ultimately created this project and will continue to be the catalyst from which I carry it on into the future.

Now, I look back at my thesis proposal with a bit of hope and a sprinkle of grief. In retrospect, I am better able to understand the ocean of distance that I created between myself and my true self in order to deter the personal aspects of my project. When shaping my proposal, I was primarily focused on knowing *why* we are curious as humans and proving how that curiosity is constrained through sociopolitical, geological, and cultural constructs. I impeded my project by allowing my own fear to dictate my focus. My project wasn't about all of humanity's curious tendencies: it was about my own curious tendencies and how they inform or retract my creative practice. Streams of doubt, fear, and anxiety still trickle within my personal ecosystem but I am always continuing this self-exploration. Through the development of this project, I have learned a truly invaluable lesson about myself: Evolving, adapting and overcoming comes with critical thinking and art-making, especially as an artist.





She loves. She
hates. She weeps.

The Ocean Between Us is a project about starting from a base camp idea, searching boundlessly for answers and unexpectedly uncovering a treasure trove of personal growth through the discovery of psychological barriers that are eventually overcome.

An accordion book represents the most precious discovery as it's buried underneath physical and conceptual layers of enclosures. The ocean carries with it the magnetic energy from the earth's plates.

Magnetic strips clasp each pocket shut only to be opened with the force of a human hand. As each layer is disrupted, the accordion book begins to show itself.

This initially perceived ocean begins to lower its tide. Only to fall into a slow trickle. The ocean never leaves, its tides ebb and flow.

