

Practitioner's Statement

Lutte

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Throughout history, the human figure has been used to reflect social issues. The raw and pure representations of the human form in the arts in general have allowed artists to express profound meanings relating to the depiction of the human form. Therefore, I was able to convey my inner turmoil relating to self-acceptance, self-identity, and the current social pressures relating to masculinity, in my own work.

On top of drawing influence from historic representations of the human figure, I was inspired by the figurative photography by Christoffer Relander; his depiction of emotions through a figures' positioning. Man Ray was a significant inspiration, specifically his 'Violin' photograph, as he used nude figures and monochromatic tones to successfully convey a narrative. I demonstrated my skills in digital photography and photo-manipulation through my body of work. The resulting imagery is a vehicle that conveys my inner-most feelings and frustrations.

I began photographing a nude figure in various positions, lighting conditions, and environments. I chose to manipulate the figure in tense positions as the muscles/bones accentuated the contours of the body. Additionally, lighting was spotlighted against the figure, highlighting the curves of the muscles, to convey a powerful sense of masculinity. This process was repeated in a variety of positions against a monochromatic backdrop; this created negative space around the figure, establishing a focal point that intensified the mood of masculinity.

The works of Mana Morimoto, professional photographer and seamstress, influenced me to use thread to accentuate the line-work, tones, and contrast within my first piece, *Lutte* (French for *struggle*). I chose to use red wool throughout my piece as a representative of violence, love, and anger – all of which highlight the intense emotions surrounding sexuality, and the struggle with self-identify/acceptance. I created an image of a masculine figure crouching in a foetal position, expressing emotions of self-disgust and denial. I used layering techniques and hue/saturation adjustments in the photo-manipulation software, Photoshop, to position skin-colour squares around the figure, representing unwanted pieces of himself. Red wool was used to connect the shattered sections of the figure, expressing denial, yet supporting connectivity to society in general. The diagonal lines of the thread that connected to the shadowy pieces created depth by pushing the figure into the background. Positioned below this main image, I attached three separate images of the figure with different patterns of wool – the repetition of red wool emphasized the emotions of the colour. In the first image, I sewed a cross over the back of the figure. The cross, which is iconic of religion, represents the crucifixion of LGBT+ members of society by extremist theists. I created the second image by positioning the figure in a bowing position. I then matted orange and red wool and laid it underneath the figure to create imagery of the figure praying to a raging fire, submitting to his burning desires. Additionally, I used white bed sheets underneath the figure to create a smooth but uneven texture that complimented the smooth textures of the skin. I created a final image of the figure turning away whilst tensing, imitating the act of turning away in shame.

I sewed red wool around the figure to outline the strength of the subject, to create contrast against the background, and to compliment the skin-tones of the figure. The red wool, which traces around the whole figure, is seen as an empty mask that shows an ashamed human. In creating these images of sexuality, self-identity, and acceptance, I was able to synthesize my own perspective of inequality in society, and the injustice that is excepting within it.