

Parts

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UNO Gallery

2429 St. Claude Ave.

New Orleans, LA 70117

Artist Statement

In “Parts,” I explore the construction of my identity in childhood in multimedia works and sculptural installation. The title of the show is a direct reference to the “parts” of dissociative identity disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder. Often diagnosed in adulthood, this disorder is a coping mechanism a person can develop to survive trauma, which becomes trapped in memories in the brain. This entrapment results in C-PTSD or complex post-traumatic stress disorder. The parts, also called “alters,” protect the individual from accessing the trauma. The parts slice off the trauma as though another person experienced the events.

I have had a mental health regimen of some sort since I was nine years old, and I am aware of the genealogical threads of mental health issues in the generations of my family before me. My own C-PTSD is exacerbated by my genetic predisposition for major depressive disorder (MDD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). I became aware of my own DID in the last year and a half through EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) and talk therapy combined with psychiatric treatment. Learning about and from my parts so far, one of whom is a child - a common part to have - has helped me find the materials to make this work and its meaning to me.

Fibers and knots, stitches and floss literally create closure for various parts of fabric works in the show. The hand spun yarn I made from my hair and Buddy Cat's fur bring together the abject qualities associated with differing contexts of the body. By combining this spun fiber with yarn from my therapist in samplers and clothing fitted to my form, I juxtapose discomfort with comfort and the abject to beauty, in the Kristevan sense.

Sewing, embroidering, and knitting processes parallel the way the lines of my neural pathways become untangled and rerouted in EMDR. These domestic and decorative methods are steeped in personal and general notions of feminine identity. Fabric moves, knots, stills, waves, tangles, smooths, and soothes throughout the show, much like the process of healing itself. “Yarns,” or stories, and other idioms and word play are embedded in much of the media.

I use artifacts from both of my grandmothers and domestic techniques I learned from the women in my family to materialize the intangible lines of my disorders and addictions. Like GAD and MDD, AUD (alcohol use dependence or disorder) has genetic markers; I am in recovery from all these labels. Reflecting on family histories has shown me that I am breaking unhealthy-for-me cycles in my own life. The pulped and reprocessed documents, journals, 12-step paperwork, skin, hair, and fur I use to make new things in new contexts in this show reference these breaks. I slough away old beliefs and perceptions that informed my self-perceptions to support the creation of my reknit and renewed,

recovering identity. *Glass Slippers*, revised in this installation since its exhibition this past summer, marks a literal path through my recovery to my core, childhood self, around which much of my healing is being done.

The paintings combine layers of poems and texts with graphite self-portraits from childhood photographs. In some paintings, layers of glazes create chromatic black; in others, it is flat darkness, and both suck in and reflect all light at the same time. Painting has always been an index of my physical presence, a record of my movements. The subject matter has often involved grounding, most recently through depicting images from my own meditative practices. These paintings are *memento mori*, commemorations of the parts of me and how they have emerged as well as the marker of my presence in the now.

I move paintings toward installation to immerse the viewer in the environment I want to create. This installation, *Core Self*, is a simulacrum of my processes and past. The white room evokes the aesthetic of the white cube, as well as padded cells, ghosts, sacraments, and innocence, invaded by sound, light, and the witness of the viewer.

Healing is inherently uncomfortable. Tackling uncomfortable personal subjects related to my mental health in my work has long been a way for me to both perform research and ground myself in various stages of healing. By meeting and learning about my parts, I am integrating them into myself, my cohesive identity. In this show, I explore moments in the path to their creation and create mementoes of the process of their discovery. Some moments have been “eurekas” and “bingos,” and some have slowly revealed themselves to me.

It feels extremely purposeful to debut this work in this gallery, a space I directed for seven years and then voluntarily left seven years ago for the preservation of my mental health. The work in this exhibition is layered, interlinked, and interlocked with the space itself. However, I can separate its various parts into new groupings, “rearrange them a little” — to quote one of my parts — in new contexts. And, with the ritual of this installation and show, I have transformed it into a place of healing.

I am grateful for this opportunity and space to communicate about the shadow work and research I have done. I want to communicate and dialogue with the viewer in this work. I hope to lead and move towards an environment of communication and healing by modeling and occupying this space, albeit temporarily. There is belonging in communicating, especially because it can encourage others to communicate and heal, and that is something I want most of all.