Abby Phillips

FOREWORD

A garden is regarded from a distance as tranquil, and from overhead as rigidly geometric.[1] But herein exist diminutive yet violent exchanges of energy, constant decomposition, and regeneration, all visible at a multitude of focal lengths and magnifications. I photograph central aspects of the garden as pictograms—a visitor, flora, nectar, and insects alike. Through reiteration they are dissociated from their contemporary and primordial contexts. I then recombine these subjects and meaning based on semiotic associations they have come to bear through advertisement and commercial displacement. For example, to comment on the objectification of the female form through fragmentation, I anthropomorphize abiotic aspects of the garden, such that the signifiers of humanness appear to dispel from the visitor's flesh, seeping onto the veins of an adjacent leaf.

Fatality so often coincides with the appearance of opulence. And in the natural world, death and life often appear in the same frame. I was inspired to offer insight on the possible consequences that a female-identifying individual may face curating her aesthetic and visual livelihood on a platform which capitalizes off of a negative feedback loop, and her possible reasons for subjecting herself to this.[2;3] These images pictorially represent the modern digital girl's frantic wavering, in search for perfection within metonymic objects symbolizing beauty and herself.

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1 I was inspired by modern interpretations of the garden in a French Manner. Lagerfeld's recreation of the Garden at Marienbad and Issei Sagawa's repurposing of the Bois de Boulogne in Paris are particularly representative of this standard.

2 Please refer to the 2017 study by Pixie G. Turner and Carmen E. Lefevre on the high correlation between orthorexia nervosa and Instagram activity.

3 Admist recent controversy, Instagram's Privacy and Safety created a collaborative page with National Eating Disorder Association titled, About Eating Disorders. Facebook's AI reccommends posts and accounts based on the user's behavior, not necessarily just their published actions. As a result, modes of short term gratification are present community-wide. An eating disorder is commonly presented in tandem with post-production editing, and both are rarely disclosed to followers. The user posting feels gratification for the compliments recieved. The unaware observer, meanwhile, analyzes the digitally enhanced image as a means of proliferating the eating disorder. The greatest flaw in this cycle is that the observer is comparing an image of an angle to something three-dimensioal.

IMAGES 1-27

1. *Portrait of Megan in IV* (Summer, 2017)
   The most startling encounter I had with Megan was when she showed me a collage featuring two selfies; one with makeup and re-touching, and the other without. There were so many acne scars from stress. She told me, "this is my life as a catfish". Using her real life self as a base, Megan had created an avatar that only existed digitally. She was this 1080 pixel wide emulation as well as a human being. It was this pixelated, compressed delusion that entrapped her into an eternal cycle of self deprecation. On one hand, thousands of people sought her digital self as beautiful on Instagram. The other is real, physical, unseen, flesh with imperfections that she could not blur out. When I asked her how it felt to exist as two different identities, her response indicated that she found the paradox to be quite depressing.

2. *Charley's Heart-shaped wound at Mission Rose Garden* (Spring, 2018)

3. *Hair vase in studio and detail* (Fall, 2018)

4. *Vanessa cardui on desk with; spoon, mug, resin egg, ear chain, and floral ear ornaments* (Winter, 2020)
   Jewlery designed by Yuu Kumazawa for her brand's, NYXU, Spring 2020 collection. Our collaboration was inspird by the reproductive function of nectar in relation to flora and her mate, the insect.

5. *Vanessa carduus resting on Lauren's foot* (*Winter,* 2020)

6. *Vanessa virginiensis' forewing scales, near costal margin.* (*Spring,* 2020)

7. *Guided Putrefaction* (*Summer,* 2019)
   Scanned herbarium entry of a partially decomposed, bisected Rosa.

8. *Still life of rosebud with Penicillium* (*Autumn,* 2018)

9. *Tableaux vivant of Mia with honey and Apis mellifera* (*Winter,* 2020)

10. *Vanessa cardui with Podosphaera aphanis, rosa, Lasthenia californica, erigeron karvinskianus in glass bowl (2019)*

11. *Process of filming bisected rosa and petals in glass bowl* (Spring, 2019)

12. *Drosophilidae found dancing in honey* (Spring, 2020)

13. *Christina shooting her girlfriend, Dorothy, using a microscopic camera connected to my laptop.* (*Winter,* 2018)

14. *Erigeron karvinskianus in honey 1* (*Winter,* 2020)

15. *Formicidae inside of and eating honey* (Spring, 2018)

16. *Erigeron karvinskianus in honey 2* (Winter, 2020)

17. Dew drop *on mirror* (Fall, 2019)

18. Tabebuia rosa resting on meiji chocolate wrapper (Spring, 2018)

19. Rosa californica developed hip and flower pressed between wax paper (2020)

20. a. *Musca domestica resting on Arian at Coronado Butterfly Garden* (Fall, 2019)
    Who detects threat as an obsctruction of a visual pattern between the negatives space between its ommatidia.

    b. Musca domestica and wing on peachy chiffon and strawberry (*Spring,* 2020)

21. Phyllanthus tenellus (*Spring,* 2020)

22. inside of Periplaneta americana (*Spring,* 2020)

23. Eurphorbia hypericifolia's sap (*Spring,* 2020)

24. Eyelash and dew (*Spring,* 2020)

25. Inside of Periplaneta americana 2 (*Spring,* 2020)

26. *Eyelash, flesh, honey and Apis mellifera* (*Winter,* 2019)

27. *Lasthenia californica* (*Spring,* 2019)

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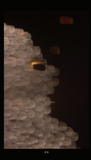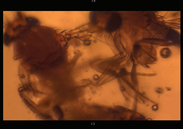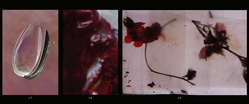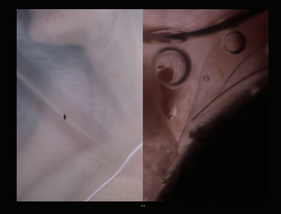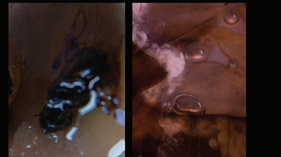
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