

# Understanding the Self Through Movement



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# Acknowledgements

*“Stay here, in this difficult place. Stay here actively. Breathe through the discomfort and pay attention to what it’s telling you.”*

*- Unknown*

*Thank you to all of my Artist Mentors; Desy Schoeneweis, Gina Gibson, Eshrat Erfanian, Viet Le, and Susan Pui San Lok for encouraging me to experiment, fail, and learn. Thank you to my Faculty Advisors, Mario Ontiveros, Michael Minelli, Humberto Ramirez, and Luis Jacob for challenging me to ask the uncomfortable questions.*

*An and even bigger thank you to my friend, my confidant, my training partner, and my husband Nik for putting up with a whole lot of uncomfortable during the journey.*

# Entering Through the Body

*My entry into the graduate program in visual arts at Vermont College of Fine Arts (VCFA) did not start the way one would expect. My body decided for me and my entry started with a bodily awakening. My story began with a physical journey to Minnesota in the spring of 2016. I was attending and participating in black belt training. For every female martial artist in attendance, there were ten male counterparts, a normal disparity for the discipline. These black belts were more like family, close friends, and confidants. My Master Instructor never treated me or any of his female blacks differently than the male black belts. His theory was that as soon as you earn a black belt, you were all expected to train and act like a black belt. The term black belt was supposed to be neutral.*

*During the training, all the women were paired together and all of the men were paired together. Again, a normal happenstance in the discipline. The female black belt I was assigned to work with during the training, was adequate, but wouldn't help me advance or push my skills. So to challenge myself, I walked over to Mr. Andrew, a personal friend, and a male black belt, and requested additional training. We worked briefly and intensely on the new technique and after being thrown to the ground, (part of the technique), the Grandmaster in charge shouted: "Master Naomi, get back to your corner," and pointed to where the rest of the female black belts were standing.*

*My body went rigid, my face felt flushed, and my hands curled into fists. My body instantly went on the defense. This Grandmaster was like a grandfather, a mentor, an elder, and he had just called me out for working with a male black belt. In that moment I felt betrayed, humiliated, and discriminated against because of my gender. I thought the term black belt was neutral, but apparently, it was not.*

*Here I was a black belt who was known and praised for intense training, hard work, and elite technique, who also happened to be the higher rank, and yes a female. Yet, I was the one who was being told no, and not just no but was being publicly chastised for being a woman working with a male black belt. This was the first time I had ever been treated this way by my martial arts family, and I hated it.*

*For better or worse, the martial arts discipline is a lot like the military, and when a superior gives you a command, you don't disobey, and you sure as hell better be respectful. So I swallowed the words on the tip of my tongue and said quietly, "yes, Sir," and walked back to the corner... my corner. My body and my mind were viscerally distressed. The rest of the training I felt shocked, furious, and by the end of the day, I was physically and mentally exhausted. My body demanded a change, even before I was able to cognitively acknowledge it.*

*I applied to the graduate program of visual arts at VCFA in the winter of 2016 under the guise of being a newly formed feminist; out loud and proud. My application images were full of small stereotypical encaustic collage works that depicted images of silhouetted women, nuclear housewives, fashion model's from the 60s and 70s, and utilized dress patterns, old text pages, and lace stencils as backgrounds (Figure 1). Looking back, I can now see how naive, surface, and idealistic these pieces were. In no way did they represent my life, my passions, or even my identity, they were merely a by-product of an underdeveloped understanding of feminism.*

*During my first semester at VCFA, I received a critique from Faith Wilding. I was so excited to be working and engaging with Faith, as she was one of the pioneering feminist artists of the 60s and 70s, and I was ready as a new feminist to learn from her. Hung proudly on the wall was a set of 8"x 8" encaustic collages from my newest series Adventures in Wellness (Figure 2). These works utilized an old children's physical education workbook from the late 1970s to juxtapose a nostalgic visual with contemporary colors and textures.*

*Adventures in Wellness* was my newest series created after being accepted into VCFA.

*As Wilding and the student group clustered around my work, I was ready for the feedback and the anticipated triumph that was sure to come with a positive reading of my new work. However, I was greeted with silence, a silence that seemed to intensify and last forever. Wilding eventually declared “well... they’re pretty, well put together compositionally, but I don’t see you....where are you in the work”? I was devastated, horrified, and completely stunned. I had no idea how to answer that question.*

*I ended up receiving three more critiques which echoed the same sentiments. My confidence was crushed and I felt frantic to find an answer. Raw from the inferior critiques I choose to experiment and take down all of my work and create an impromptu installation. The installation included an old school desk found on campus, my small collaged price tag that said Stay hung on the wall above the desk with odds and ends from my personal backpack stuffed and placed on top or inside of the desk (Figure 3).*

*The items included a VCFA memorabilia mug, season three of the Golden Girls, a current sketchbook, and several academic texts. I was attempting to create meaning out of the proximity of objects and construct a new meaning for my existing artwork. Unfortunately, it didn’t work. I was still being asked, “where are you in the work?” “what are you passionate about?” and “why is this work important?”*

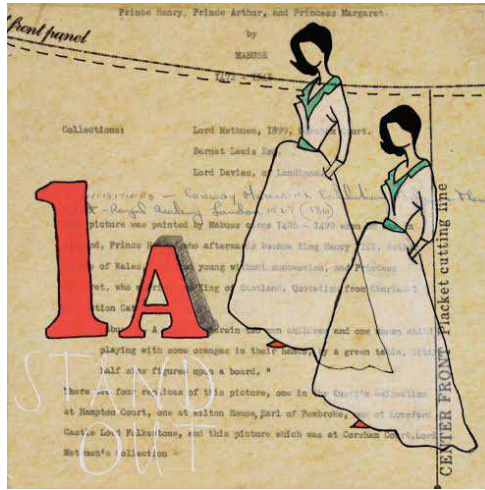


Figure 1



Figure 2



*It was about halfway through the first residency when I meet another artist, Gerald. Gerald had participated in a few of my critiques and I found myself completely confused, intrigued, and fascinated by his artwork and how he approached making. I was especially excited and bewildered by his ability to challenge and disagree with the faculty, and how he used spontaneity and chaos as both destructive and creative forces. I now understand that Gerald's approach and interactions with the faculty revealed a type of relationship between two professional artists that illustrated their mutual respect for different perspectives and strategies for art making. Something that would take me a full year to realize, and implement myself.*

*After a particularly hard critique for me, Gerald and his enigma of a personality asked me, "well do you really see yourself in the work you brought?" It surprised me a bit, but I was able to answer with a definite "no." "Well if you don't see yourself in this work that you brought, what work do you see yourself in?" Gerald inquired.*

*This was the breakthrough moment I needed. Gerald was able to simultaneously comfort me and challenge me with questions. Someone who could get me to think and be vulnerable about the answers. That night I went to bed more confident than I had felt all residency. I knew what I wanted to study and create. I wanted to explore my role as a martial artist, an art form that I had studied for over thirteen years. Martial arts was a rich art form that intersected with many theories, artistic processes, psychologists, and pedagogical approaches. Something that I didn't understand yet.*



Figure 3

# Training the Mind

*I had two main goals coming into VCFA. One, to further my teaching credentials to open up more opportunities in higher education. And two, to build a practice as a contemporary artist. As I reflect on my time with VCFA, I realize my goals changed almost immediately within the first semester. Exploring and developing an understanding of the martial arts in relation and in conversation with performance art or installation practices became my new goal. My first-semester investigations and explorations resonated with these shifting goals. My visual culture project title was “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Art: Martial Arts as a Performative Practice,” while my studio project was “Unattainable Perfection: The Constant Path of the Martial Artist.” I knew from the onset that I wanted to encounter a variety of research styles from first-hand accounts, case studies, academic texts, podcasts, and lived experiences. I felt as if the martial arts wasn’t seen as a traditional artistic discipline, and I wanted to prove that it was. My Faculty Advisor, Mario Ontiveros, was instrumental in encouraging me to engage with multiple texts. Text was a term used for multiple ways of critically engaging with information, different perspectives, theory, and research. Ontiveros would often say “Naomi, a text can be anything.” I took this methodology to heart, and it has become one of the cornerstones of my artistic practice even today.*

*A Life Without Limits by Chrissie Wellington, her autobiography, was the first text I investigated. An accidental triathlete as described by Wellington herself, the autobiography equated athletics or sport with personal salvation through the development of a collective everyday practice or experience. In Wellington’s case, the collective everyday experience was her training time with her coach and teammates. An experience that developed intense relationships, trust, and relied upon an intentional commitment from everyone.*

*This concept of a collective everyday experience really impacted me and my work. My martial arts gym and the relationships I built there were my collective everyday experience.*

*And like Wellington, in the beginning, I was separating my experiences as an artist from my personal life, my career, and from my role in the martial arts gym. By living my life in separate worlds I could not see the impact and connections that naturally occurred between these positionalities. The first phase, which Wellington points out in her autobiography, was to see and make the connections between my various selves, my roles, and my jobs. What I once saw as a singular, isolated, and discrete personality became interwoven and interconnected through the martial arts. It became a way of life.*

*Listening to the podcast Design Matters by Debbie Millman where she interviewed Sam Winston, an interdisciplinary artist who analyzed typography as a universal visual language, helped provide the methodology for how I would enter into the research of the martial arts. During the interview Winston said we needed “the physicality or performance to understand hard concepts” and through “the physicality of the work, by using your body you become absorbed into the work, and begin to understand the hard concepts.” Physicality became essential to my artistic process both as a form of production, observation, but also as a form of performance.*

*Within the martial arts discipline, students start by learning the physical movements and their bodies are their entry point. With iPhone in hand, I began to record the movements, images, and sounds of the gym. I wanted to use the space as an experimental playground. Nothing was off limits and I wanted to question everything. I was gathering and creating an archive of the gym, the practitioners, the movements, the sounds, and the community (Figure 4, Figure 5). I didn't know what I would do with this collection yet, but it felt important to collect, important to document.*

*In my sketchbook, I wrote, “I am ecstatic to explore my identity through the martial arts and as a martial artist,” and as much as I connected with Wellington’s tale, I still felt as if there were worlds between being a triathlete and a martial artist. Precisely, the way in which gender was constructed, portrayed, and lived out within these different sports. I had never heard of a female triathlon being called too masculine, but I had definitely heard of fighters like Ronda Rousey portrayed and demonized as brutal and masculine.*

*The field of martial arts contains violence and I felt like that violence impacted the way I and others understood and interpreted martial arts. The book *Global Perspectives on Women in Combat Sports: Women Warriors Around the World*, functioned as a bible for me. The book contained various essays, articles, and case studies by several internationally known authors, researchers, and martial arts practitioners. The essays explored various thematic and contextualized topics on gender performance, gender-transgressive behaviors, and media perspectives, on women athletes around the world who engaged in both hard and soft combat sports.*

*The essay *I’m Not the Type of Person Who Does Yoga. Women, ‘Hard’ Martial Arts, and the Quest for Exciting Significance* by Mark Mierzwinski and Catherine Phipps helped place my work within a larger historical and theoretical trajectory and lineage. Sports psychology, and in particular, the study of female engagement in, and with, mimetic violence and martial athleticism became key elements that influenced my studio work. Mimetic violence, a simulation that puts the physical, emotional, and mental strength of the athlete to the test in a socially acceptable arena and context, was a large component of being a martial artist. On the other hand, I also wanted to cultivate an understanding of the spiritual connectedness inherent within the martial arts.*

*My artist mentor Desy Schoeneweis was instrumental in helping me see the larger picture.*



Jukdo Strike  
3/3/17 00:01:19

Figure 4



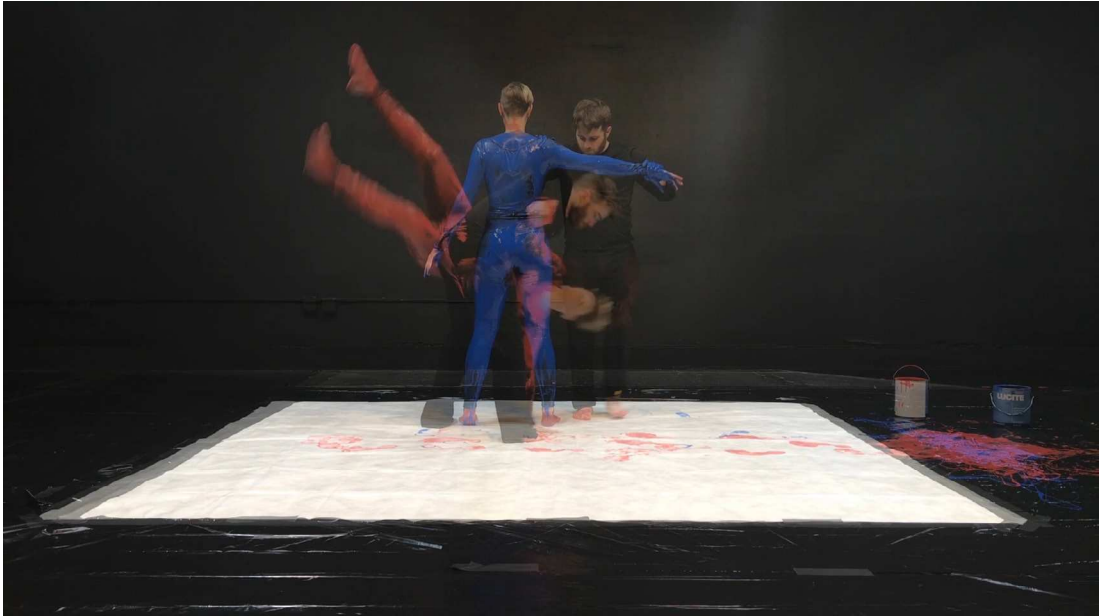
Figure 5

*Schoeneweis encouraged me to continue asking questions, documenting, and exploring, even if I didn't know how the work would manifest. She would ask me what about the meanings ascribed to the movements, the actions, the objects, and the rituals within the gym space. Schoeneweis reminded me that my art form, martial arts, was movement based and required constant attention, practice, and engagement.*

*Maybe I would be better served to think of those keywords or actions as a performance of my creative process. As a consequence, I began to understand that I needed movement, physicality, and action to feel connected to my work. Performance art spoke to me, the present tense action, the site specificity, and the durational components all created a situation that had to be experienced in the now.*

*The performance was a simulator, a way to physically, mentally, and emotionally work through questions that I did not yet know how to ask. Questions that felt important, questions that needed an immediate physical and emotional response.*

*Armed with this knowledge and the months of documentation of gym life, my first performance video, Eum & Yang was made (Image 6). Eum and Yang are Korean terms translating to the balance of opposites. These terms embody the philosophical foundation of the Korean martial arts systems of Taekwondo, Hapkido, and Kumdo & Kumbup, which I practice and teach. I wanted to physically embody both the philosophy but also the mimetic violence involved in the practice of the techniques. The performance uses paint as a visual articulation for the philosophical system; controlled falling (blue), and randomized falling (red). The visual impact of the painted body is mapped onto the canvas by the actions and displays the inaccuracies and impossibility of balance or perfection. Eum & Yang calls into question the goal of perfection ingrained within the martial arts body and philosophy of achieving this perfection within the cultural body.*



*Figure 6*



# Reflections of Spirit

*As a martial artist, I gravitate towards hard, dynamic movements. Michael Minelli, my second Faculty Advisor encouraged me to visually research performance artists and the different ways movement played a part in telling a story. It was important for me to focus on women. From my previous research, I knew that women were treated differently by society when engaging in physical activities, especially ones that pushed the boundaries of physical behaviors and emotional responses. I focused on Yoko Ono's work Cut Piece. Ono simultaneously introduced chance operations and content of everyday life into art; ritualizing the simplest actions, drawing attention to the most ordinary things and removed sensory perceptions through a Zen Buddhist and mindfulness approach to art making. In Cut Piece, Ono assigned herself passive roles that capitalized on and emphasized her mental, and emotional power over her physical power. This strategy was in direct opposition to how I viewed movement. These performances inspired in me a new willingness to look at movement more critically. Motivated by Ono's work Cut Piece, I was determined to create a performance that utilized a specific everyday martial arts move to critique a larger social issue. I began by asking myself how would I make or replicate Cut Piece in a way that used my strengths? What social issue was I interested in making a statement about?*

*During a drive home from work, I was listening to music and singing along. Somewhere in the back of my mind I was unconsciously mulling over these questions about creating a live performance, social issues, and passive versus direct movement. It hit me like a ton of bricks, or in this case boards. For my performance, I wanted to critique sexism, sexist language, and use board breaking to reference a physical breaking point, but also an emotional one.*

*Throughout the last few months, I had been surrounded by the conversations of the Trump administration, voters rights, immigration, and women's rights both inside the martial arts and outside. Creating a piece that bridged both the martial arts but also spoke to a larger society felt right.*

*Developing a performance required me to understand that there is always a reciprocal relationship between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer. This relationship was paramount to how the performance would be read and interpreted. Breaking Point (Figure 7), was presented during the winter residency of 2018. For the performance I reached out to female artists, curators, writers, and women in leadership positions; and requested sexist phrases or comments they had ever encountered or heard in their life. These phrases were then written by my hand onto the boards. Enhancing the existing connection to the phrases I wanted to use the physicality of the everyday act of writing to embody those words. I wanted the phrases to represent real actions from people I knew and admired. These were not arbitrary people or incidents.*

*The second component of the performance involved selecting two students, Kevin and Tom, as board holders. I wanted the holders to be untrained and have to rely on my expertise in order to perform the task, but I also wanted to have the holders be male. The visual relationship between a female physically engaging and fighting sexism and the male board holders acting as objects, barriers, and challenges became important in creating a visual tension within the performance. The holders would take turns and present me a board, which I would then read out loud and promptly proceed to yell while breaking the board with my hand. The verbalization of the phrases and the yell during the break created a sound barrier that mimicked the physical barrier of the boards and men.*

*By performing the politics with my body and demonstrating that there is a physical and emotional breaking point, my work was in conversation with artist Heather Cassils, Antonia Wright, and Yoko Ono. Breaking Point quickly became one of my most successful pieces, and I was excited to continue this trajectory into movement, identity, and the body. Little did I know that my third semester would bring drastic changes, uncomfortable conversation, and powerful insights.*



Figure 7

# Building Community

*Moving into my third semester, my Artist Mentors were Eshrat Erfanian and Viet Le, a powerhouse team. We had decided to split the semester between both of my Artist Mentors, as each one of them brought something different to the studio. Erfanian brought a technical and critical understanding to my studio, while Le challenged me to understand my feelings and then critically ground them. My Faculty Advisor was Humberto Ramirez and I was really excited to work with both Erfanian, Le and Ramirez, but also extremely intimidated. Everyone at VCFA said, “Le will make you think and feel”, “Ramirez will brutally challenge you intellectually”, and “Erfanian will always demand the best”. I wanted to be challenged, I wanted my work to continue to improve and be impactful. I was also interested in working with an Artist Mentor that wasn’t directly connected to my community. Living in South Dakota the successful artist is a painter, a printmaker, a sculpture, and the standard themes are beauty, landscapes, and the never-ending buffalo. This wasn’t me, and I wanted an Artist Mentor who didn’t fall into this way of thinking, and I got two.*

*Working with Erfanian at the beginning of the semester, my studio work focused on the technical. I wanted to venture into video and I needed to understand the role of the image and image making. To this end, I learned how to create video sketches. Quick, raw, and highly unedited videos that worked through a question, a movement, or an idea. Influenced by Hito Stereyl and her article *In Defense of the Poor Image*, my video sketches explored the relationship between image-making, image producing, and image sharing and the imparted value of the re-valued image.*

*The first video sketch I worked on was titled *Throw Like A Girl* (Figure 8), it was a disaster. The video took pop culture images from the internet and combined them into a 1-minute long video.*

*The video attempted to call attention to the gendered media representation of women and the norms of femininity for the social female body. It was not successful, in part, because I became caught up in the image collection, and forgot that the images needed to tell the story.*

*I went back to the drawing board and gathered more information, more research, including; *The History of Sexuality* by Michel Foucault, and *Orientalism* by Edward Said. As successful as I felt going into my third semester, I wanted to find a way for my personal artwork to connect back to my martial arts community, and more largely the Rapid City and surrounding Black Hills region. *The History of Sexuality* presents Foucault's inquiry into the popular repressive hypothesis of sexuality and adopts the antithetical belief that the social construct of sexuality is fluid and contingent on the interaction between historical ideologies, discourses, and power structure relationships. Foucault makes a distinction between a discussion and a discourse; the latter determining who has spoken, how they spoke, in what context, and in reaction to what, observing a complex body of content where language, knowledge, and power are closely linked. This research connected back to my earlier research into sports psychology and gender performance, but it applied the principle to a larger demographic and explored the fluidity of the cultural body. I began to acknowledge that individual concerns are always linked to the larger social element. If the individual concerns are always linked to the larger social element, where do my personal concerns link?*

*Enter Viet Le, my second Artist Mentor of the semester. Remember how I told you Le would demand you feel and then challenge you to ground your feelings in critical theory, well he did that and more. Le invited me to attend the Global Asian Exchange (GAX) conference in London because he felt that it would help me unpack my feelings of tension between my white western heritage and my adopted fascination and intersection with my eastern martial arts practice.*



*Figure 8*



*He introduced me to terms like diaspora, orientalism, and critical whiteness theory. Most notably Le introduced me to two books that helped me focus and narrow down my desire to connect my work to my communities: Black Belt and exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self by Fusco and Wallis.*

*Black Belt as an exhibition catalog introduced me to artists who were making work that intersected with martial arts but did not identify as martial artists themselves. Artists such as Patty Chang and Rico Gatson used the martial arts as a springboard for larger social and cultural connections and focused on pop culture references to influence their work. Chang explored through her video Death of Game, the stereotypes within the martial arts media representation, specifically Bruce Lee's role as a symbol for fetishization, perpetuation, and proliferation of combat between non-whites in a predominately white industry. Gatson, on the other hand, employed the martial arts philosophies of yin and yang to critique the battle history of rap and hip-hop culture with his piece The Art of Battle. Both of these works inspired and encouraged me to think about how the martial arts as a culture, an influencer, and as a public popular culture could influence or be in conversation with other cultures or histories. If martial arts could influence hip-hop, then how did the martial arts influence a midwestern town like Rapid City?*

*Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self became one of the most influential texts I encountered on my graduate journey. The book charts the social construct of race, a theoretically coherent system of human classification and white privilege which demanded a clearly defined binary system, and how photography, as a result, was the means by which race was produced as a visualizable fact in the United States.*



*From its origins, photography had been indistinguishably linked with racial typography, fetishization, commodification, and exploitation. The art of photography was deployed in “the pursuit of scientific truths about race, and it played a crucial role in the construction of racialized viewing as a positive, pleasurable, and desirable experience”. For the first time, both my research and my studio practices were pointing me to understand and in engage my complicated historical identity. A history that on one hand was individualized, personal, but on the other hand was social, systematic, and political. A history that intersected with other cultures, ideologies, and ways of living.*

*As a white woman living in South Dakota, my personal history (the way I identified) seemed less important than my inherited history of white privilege within a larger discourse on indigenous rights. My participation in the GAX conference reinforced these feelings. White privilege was everywhere, a force that needed to be fought against, and here I was a white woman clad in white privilege. I didn't know how to combat this force, let alone begin to discuss how my participation in the martial arts overlapped. Le encouraged me to read the chapter *Prairie Pinups: Reconsidering Historic Portraits of American Indian Women*, as a way to understand new strategies of engaging and critiquing historical records and narratives. Three quotes from the book stood out to me.*

*These quotes represented a history and not just any history, but in a way, my history, and I hated this history. I was deeply troubled and excited by this discovery. I was excited because I felt like I had found a way of visually looking at my history and understanding the motivations and influences behind it, but troubled because every time I engaged with history, it seemed, white people were to blame, and by extension, I was to blame. Amidst a tumultuous relationship with my personal history and the larger social history of the Dakotas, Le encouraged me to talk about these feelings, embrace both histories as flawed, and create work that enveloped the complexity.*

*“As the popularity of staged images grew, tribal diversity was reduced to a formula of singular visual icons...to the public, Indians, appeared interchangeable.”*

*“Disguised as the pursuit of knowledge, ethnographic photography - images of the non-Western subject - permitted scientific scrutiny of women’s bodies.*

*“In the objective records of human diversity, photographed bodies of dark-skinned women were mapped, charted, measured, diagrammed, and reproduced under the rationale of science.”*

*Thus I created two pieces, Pride and Punishment (Figure 9) and My Dakota Body (Figure 10).*

*Pride and Punishment was a 3:06-minute performance video where I stood naked in front of a 6ft x 9ft American flag and proceeded to strike myself repeatedly with a jukdo; a bamboo practice sword. The video title references Michel Foucault's book Discipline and Punishment which analyzes the history of the modern penal system and seeks to analyze punishment in its social context and to examine how changing power relations affected punishment. In addition, it references Jane Austen's book Pride and Prejudice where the personal qualities of the characters create tension within their relationships. Since the video shows only one body, one person, these character qualities manifest themselves in the single characters, calling attention to the internal and independent disciplinary system within each person. This disciplinary system is enhanced by the constant striking of the jukdo against the bare skin, leaving red marks to show its passage and purpose.*

*With the American flag creating a wall to wall covering, the presence of the American identity, and the American pride overshadow the identity of the figure. Is the figure female, male, American? These questions are rendered as inconsequential compared to the overbearing presence of the physical act of punishment. What this video explores is the intersection of personal histories (female, martial artist) and inherited cultural histories (white privilege, American) and the tension that exists between navigating that relationship.*

*It explores the complex emotional and physical relationship we have with identity and culture, using physical flagellation to reference the mental punishment we put ourselves through while polarizing and creating a dualistic understanding of diversity and identity or privilege. Furthermore, the figure is choosing over and over again to torture themselves. Why?*



*Figure 9*

*Pride and Punishment helped me to understand my feelings towards the inherited social history of South Dakota, but also to understand that my personal identity could be and should be more than just the social history. Where this piece fell short was in its ability to help demonstrate how you took responsibility for the social history but also made space for a new personal identity within the narratives. My second video My Dakota Body (Figure 10) uses the method of masking, costuming, and manipulating the body to call attention to the tensions between navigating personal histories and inherited social and cultural histories of a space and geography. Specifically, the costumed figure draws parallels between the American “white-washing” historical practices and the now socially acceptable and sometimes fetishized martial arts tradition.*

*Clad with gold glitter boxing wraps, three overstuffed hanboks, (Korean traditional dresses), five-layered martial arts doboks (uniforms) and a full white-washed body, My Dakota Body was the first project to harness the power of layering, costuming, and a manipulated performance to draw parallels. The overstuffed and layered costumes took inspiration from Haute culture fashion designers Viktor & Rolf during their presentation of the Russian Doll (Figure 11). I loved the visual metaphor of the clothing or in this case the heritage consuming the figure. In many ways, I felt as if both the Korean culture, and the American white culture were swallowing me whole. Where did I exist within these narratives?*

*Coming back to VCFA I was enthusiastic about sharing my two video works; Pride & Punishment, and My Dakota Body. I felt as if my questions about identity, race, and ethnicity were finally coalescing into an articulate concept. Pride & Punishment was a visual representation of the emotional struggle that I was working through while My Dakota Body symbolized my romanticized and distorted interactions and understandings of my American identity and my adopted South Korean cultural art form.*

*Both of my works received mixed reviews, and in particular, Pride & Punishment at times was read as sexual in nature; focusing on female self-flagellation, male fetishization, fantasy, and the androgyny of the displayed body. Although Pride & Punishment wasn't always read and interpreted as the physical act symbolizing the hidden emotional turmoil, I found myself being able to articulate why. I subsequently began to see myself as an artist with the ability to take criticism and filter it.*

*My second video, My Daily Practice wasn't as successful, but in many ways a more powerful tool. The video was extremely experimental and grappled with the crossover between how I saw and felt about being American, and what I perceived as problematic ties to South Korea within the martial arts. During the making of this video, Viet Le my artist mentor challenged me to get in touch with my feelings and to think about the way the visual could represent complex feelings of resentment, confusion, consumption, and fear. In many ways I wanted the video to explore and navigate a third space. I was more than just white, more than a martial artist, more than just female. I wanted a way to acknowledge the combined histories and yet find a third space to explore and engage with both my personal identity but also my social identity. To this end, I was asked why my work always featured me front and center. Was it just the Naomi show, or were there other people, stories, and cultures that I could collaborate with? This question drove me into my last semester.*



Figure 10

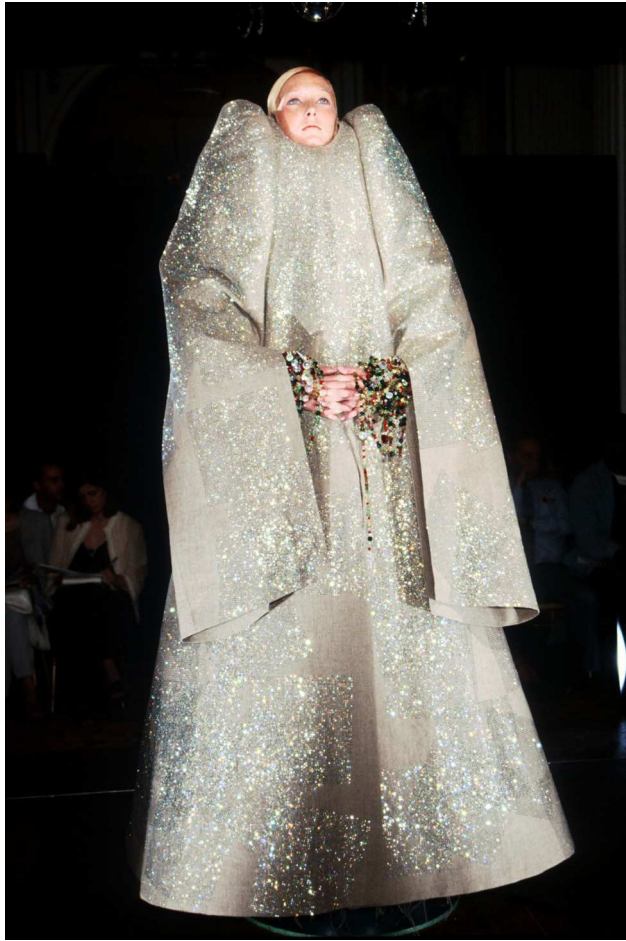


Figure 11



# Full Circle

*My last semester is underway and I finally feel like I am making the work I was meant to make. My final exhibition will feature a work titled Our Daily Practice, moving away from the Naomi show and into collaboration. This interdisciplinary piece strives to answer the question; how do I and my identity co-exist with others in my community? How does movement help us connect? The work, supported and influenced by my amazing Artist Mentor, Susan Pui San Lok, will utilize everyday movement to create empathetic connections with others. Showcasing the process of situating the personal body within the larger cultural community within the Black Hills. As I sit here in my office working on this very process paper, I am overcome with the realization that my time is almost over. In a few short months, I will graduate and my time with VCFA will be over. I am not sure how I feel about this yet. Currently in the background of my mind playing insistently is the advice from the previous graduating class.*

*“Don’t stress, you have been writing your process paper since the beginning”. “Starting over is a natural part of the process”. “Don’t start any new television series, you won’t have time for it. You have a studio practice and a process paper to perform”. To be completely honest, I wasn’t sure if I could write a process paper. I have never felt like much of a writer, and the papers I did write were so academic that I could easily hide with the facts. But a process paper is so much more than facts. It’s a reflection of myself and my journey, and its intimidating as hell. I found it so intimidating that I put it off for half a semester. Two weeks before my draft deadline, I couldn’t procrastinate any longer, it had to be written. To my surprise, in the first hour, I was able to write twenty pages. The graduating students were right, I had been writing and living my process from the beginning.*

*The paper was really a tool to help me reflect and build off of the experience. The graduating students were right, I had been writing and living my process from the beginning. The paper was really a tool to help me reflect and build off of the experience.*

*I can honestly say, that thus far it has been worth it. When I started the program my goal was really to prove to others that my artistic process was a valid one. A great side effect of the VCFA experience is that I have accomplished that goal but more importantly, I have convinced myself that my questions, my experiences, and my practice is a valid and important one. Something that looking back I realized I hadn't done.*

*I have trained my body, trained my mind, developed an understanding of myself through my movement and the movement of my community. I have been able to build a practice that is a way of life, not just a part of it. I am forever grateful to all of the amazing people that I have met along my journey; faculty, staff, artist mentors, and especially the students.*



## Artist Statement

*Living at the foot of the Black Hills in South Dakota I view myself as a multi-disciplinary artist who uses landscapes, performance art, digital technology, and martial arts practices to situate a practice, identity, and personal culture within a specific geographical region. Specifically, I am exploring outside the martial arts training space, my identity and culture as a white female martial artist practicing and teaching Korean-based martial arts. My art practice involves movement, performative elements, media processes such as sound collection, video, projection, and are embedded within her martial arts philosophy of understanding and establishing learning strategies for the body, mind, and spirit.*

*My artistic process utilizes an emphasizes a conceptual and research-based approach which brings together my martial arts community building practice and the public and social practices, inherited histories, and the physical and emotional states of the contemporary cultural body and identity. I explore the body as a site for action, conflict, power, identity, and resistance.*

# Education Philosophy

*Students want to learn and explore.*

*Students are naturally curious and want to explore and learn about the world. As an educator, it is my job to encourage their natural curiosity by creating engaging, socially diverse, intersectional, and relevant learning experiences and opportunities that help them expand and push their boundaries. As we create repeated learning success we reinforce lifelong learning within our students.*

*We learn by doing.*

*Our first learning experiences in this world are explored through movement, repetition and physical touch. We learn best by doing and through play. I believe that an active teacher encourages active learning. Utilizing all five senses, different learning styles, and encouraging students to approach the learning process as equals creates an active and supportive learning environment. My education methodology is student-centered, strongly based on communication, research, and performance projects through which students articulate their goals and build their individual practice.*

*Focusing on the learning process from start to finish provides a well rounded and active learner. I believe students should know and explore different ways to complete the following skills:*

*How to study and how to take notes*  
*How to retain and engage with information*  
*How to research both traditional and non-traditional sources*  
*How to ask questions and critically think about ideas, processes, projects,*  
*and positionalities*  
*How to articulate and express your thoughts and ideas*  
*Time management*

*Have a plan. Critique the plan. Change the Plan.*

*The best way to engage a student is to have a plan that is focused, inclusive and explores different learning styles and situations. This plan must have activities that enhance and builds upon the student's existing knowledge base and encourages growth and exploration. But be ready to critique your plan, to change it if need be, and be ready to listen to your student's as equal and collaborative learners in the classroom. Embrace student-centered and student-directed learning that embraces exploration, discovery, experiential learning, and the production of academically rigorous products.*

*Feedback and communication are key.*

*Critiques and feedback are important tools that help focus, realign and adjust the learning environment and instruction so that they can target students' learning needs. In order for improvement to take place, feedback must be given in a timely manner to allow the students to digest, interpret and adjust.*

*All students need the tools in their toolboxes.*

*Students should have skills and strategies to be able to work effectively at all levels and in all situations. Students should be aware of their own learning preferences, and work to strengthen these areas. We want to empower our students to critically think and use a variety of tools within their exploration.*

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