

IN-BETWEEN: SELF ØBSESSED//SELF ESTEEM

ØLIVIA FØX

In my body of work, I began to think through a set of problems I've discovered through art-making. The computer is increasingly recognized as the artistic medium it is. The computer is an extension of the self: we are not all the same, and our computers should reflect that difference. My conundrum concerns my reliance on machines (particularly my macbook) to create my work. I cannot escape the mentality that art school perpetuates careerism and standardization, which leads to wealth-based art markets unsustainable to the artist. These practices are a hindrance to creativity and pure expression. I'm not sure what that means within the context of a BFA thesis, but I did write it with my own juvenility in mind. I would like to raise the issue rather than ignore what I fear are dangerous practices. Even if this has always been a problem, I don't feel comfortable conceding to that and my work reflects this struggle. Finally, I wanted to address the female-bodied performance artist, who is enslaved by the dominant art history culture and is tasked to reclaim herself. I feel attached to representing this notion. At the same time, I am stuck in a world where I'm told by the media to hate my body and I feel completely disembodied by the media simultaneously.

Ø

In short, I feel confused about my identity.

I feel in-between.

In my own work, I've turned to what is immediately troubling about making art because I have a manic need to create art and feel conflicted about it. All art, to some degree, is an act of narcissism. I have the privilege to go to college, and paying so much money for a degree in fine art is decadent. However, there are more people than ever doing the exact same thing. A good number of students pursue a BFA because they feel creatively inclined but lack the driving motivation and dedication it takes to be an artist. There is little care to take ownership of a bad career decision, and when the time comes to pay back student loans, the impulse is to create for money rather than purpose. This mimics a lack of discipline within the schools as well; acceptance rates rise as the need for funding/profit does. It seems every week there's another

article about tuition being up a thousand percent or schools losing funding for financial aid or too many students majoring in unsustainable studies. College doesn't seem like the best choice for working class or poor families anymore. Cooper Union becoming a pay-in school feels like the start of a bubble bursting. It feels headstrong and selfish to have majored in art. I know art is important as our representative of expression (and freedom of it where applicable), but I feel trapped in a gilded culture I despise.

These are the prevailing attitudes that build excessive art fairs/elitism that celebrate money rather than merit. I would like to think logically about artistic business models. I'm not sure it's the artist's place to be constantly professional. I don't want to live my career searching for internships and grants and dealers, and sales. I want to focus on ideas I believe in and disperse them through means I trust. I don't mean to bash internships, grants, etc; all I'm doing is affirming my careful consideration of these things. Still, the bigger issue for me is that I don't believe that art fairs are structured in a way that is accessible. I recognize that elitism is a necessary evil in thinking about art, but I take issue with the classism art fairs perpetuate. I don't want my work to be traded and held like stock. Someplace in-between a zinefest and an art fair is the appropriate level of artistic discipline, artistic integrity, and class accessibility.

I'm attracted to printmaking as an in-between art practice. Printmaking can be used to create a valuable art object, but it's also used historically to create a less important version of the real thing (a sketch, a multiple, as apposed to a one-of-a-kind painting). Also significant are its origins in news distribution and knowledge preservation, which manages art within its own spectrum entirely. Printmaking also encompasses so many different types of art-making and is constantly reinventing and adding to itself with new technologies. I consider myself primarily a digital printmaker: an in-between technique within an in-between art mode. I wanted to play with this idea again (and again) because I could. The metaphysical nature of the work in my senior show reflects the debate of what a print represents.

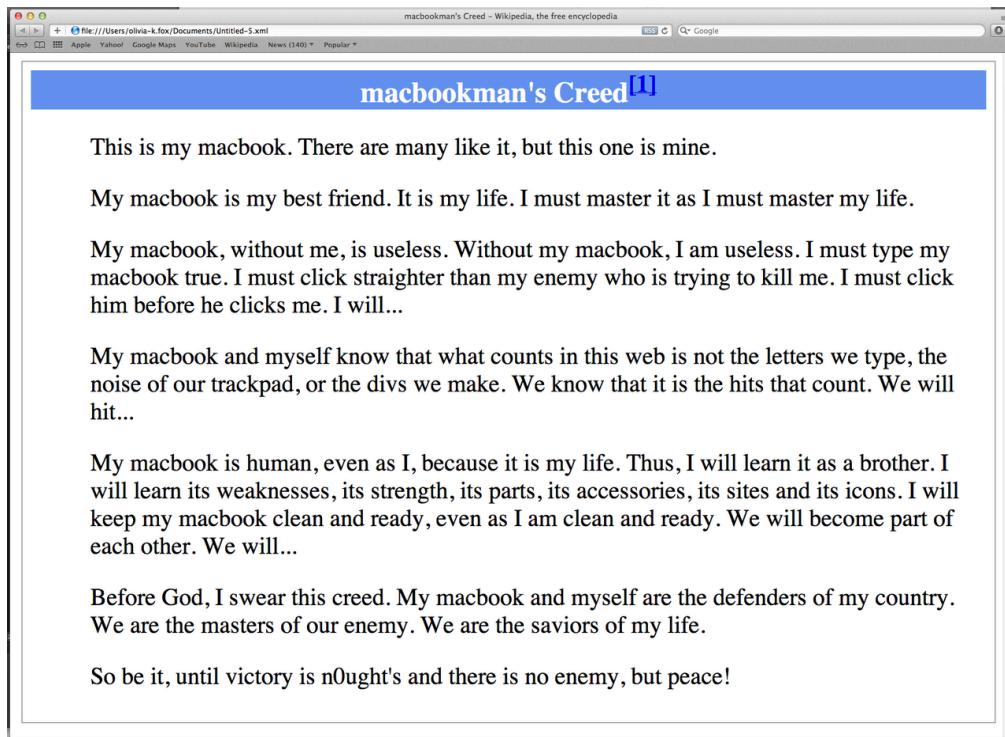


"LAPTOP_FASCIST_PAINTBRUSH_1-3"



"SELF_CØLLAGE_1 & 2 w/Self"

As a person who grew up with both colored pencils and *Kid Pix*, I hardly feel it needs to be said that computers are the new artistic frontier. Keeping a website is important to me as a mode of distributing my work because the Internet is increasingly equalizing. I do, however, feel the smartphone is contentious to the web's equality. Not to discredit the numerous fantastic projects utilizing the smartphone's potentials, but I'm wary of the audience being dominated by a monetized sensibility. Is a smartphone or tablet crucial or excessive? In my experience consumers aren't asking themselves these questions. In my experience a smartphone is an iphone and a tablet is an ipad and that's that. I don't like feeling controlled or being made complacent by decadent society. I find Apple computers to be dangerously ubiquitous, and I can speak to their ubiquity in creative fields.



“macbookman’s Creed”

Certain schools require students to have a macbook pro (equipped with adobe suite); SUNY Purchase will soon join them. Most schools have no requirement for students to learn how their machine works or the history behind their machine. The computer should be properly analyzed as a form of artistic discipline to combat a generation of

entitled/misinformed artists. I know the tube of paint has been considered since its inception, but these questions need to be brought up again. What is the contemporary relationship of the painter and his/her brand of paint? Painters have options of creating their own paints or at least mixing many different brands. Computer users do this to a extent, but I find it's much more complicated than that. There is no technological determinism to paint. Additionally, it takes a team of people to create hardware/software. Computer work is akin to a big production - a play or a film. Yet I feel uneasy about my collaborators being corporations. I wish I had a more one-to-one relationship with my computer.



“THE_VILLAGE (FRONT & BACK)”

I have been trapped in Apple's net. I hate feeling indebted to this company/product. I feel lucky about stupid little things, like having the macbook model before Apple replaced the panel in the back making it much harder for users to replace their battery themselves. Apple wants its users to come to them for any questions they might have. It's more profitable for them if users can't fix their machines themselves. Each new computer model takes away from user modification and Apple's App Store is a censored content environment. If Apple had their way they would have a monopoly on every type of hardware and software. And because of their mass design appeal it wouldn't not only be an economical monopoly: Apple would have a monopoly on innovative and creative people as well.

For years now I've been transfixed by the British television show *The Prisoner* (1967). The show follows an intelligence agent who has decided to resign from his position, but before he can assert his freedom, he is kidnapped and taken prisoner on an undisclosed resort island. His name is taken away, he is assigned a number, and he is made to assimilate into their fabricated community. The often shuffled and confusing powers-that-be are constantly trying to conform him for the explicit purpose of extracting information from him. This is the perfect metaphor for the corporate digital age. We willingly give data to Apple (Google, Facebook, etc) because we're content with the service they provide us. The Prisoner warns that there is danger in this complacency. Though one may feel free in their immediate world, they are being categorized, numbered, bought and sold within a larger environment. A strange white orb incapacitates any residents that act out of place or try to escape the village in which The Prisoner is forced to live. The orb is captivating and hypnotizing, almost as if it were a glowing, white, monolithic Apple logo. When the orb appears, it contrasts beautifully with the romantic architecture of the town behind it, also quite similar to an Apple logo I've been seeing pretty often in Grand Central Terminal.

The following collages are made from an unofficial *Prisoner* game created for the Apple II system by Eduware:

THE PRT RANKER

NOUGHT:

1) I'M STUCK IN A WORLD WHERE I'M TOLD BY MEDIA TO HATE MY BODY AND I FEEL COMPLETELY DISEMBODIED BY MEDIA AT THE SAME TIME.



WHAT IS THIS FASCINATION WITH MACHINES?

NOUGHT:

2) I'VE BEEN RELIANT ON MACHINES (PARTICULARLY MY MACBOOK) TO CREATE MY WORK. I DON'T LIKE FEELING CONTROLLED OR BEING MADE COMPLACENT BY DECADENT SOCIETY.

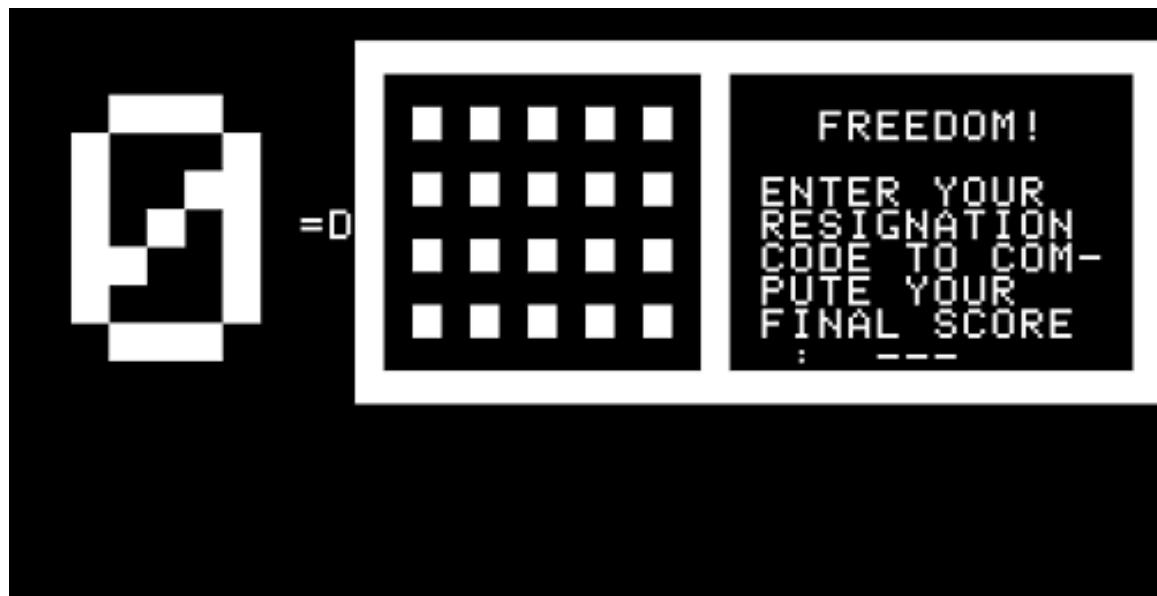
I HATE FEELING INDEBTED TO THIS COMPANY/PRODUCT.

DO PAINTERS FEEL INDEBTED TO WHATEVER TUBE BRAND THEY USE?

I FEEL LIKE PAINTERS HAVE THE OPTION.

IT TAKES A TEAM OF PEOPLE TO CREATE HARDWARE/SOFTWARE.

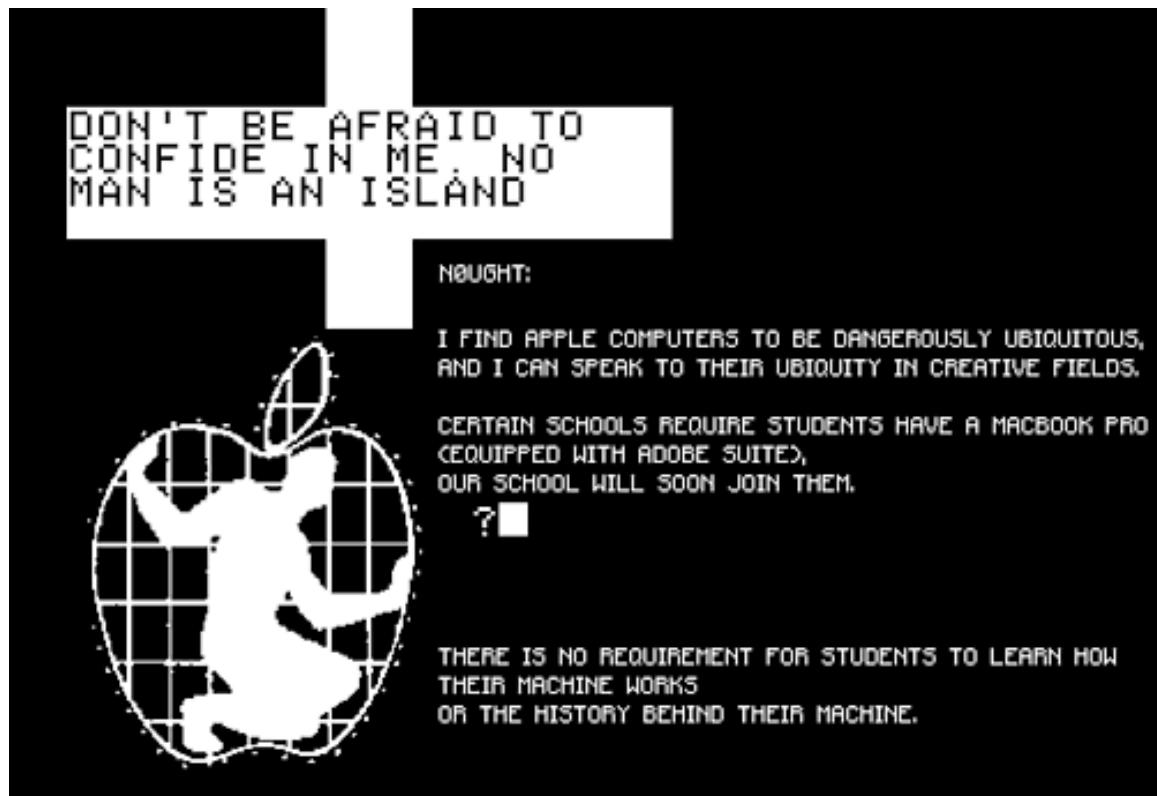
ALMOST LIKE COMPUTER WORK IS A BIG PRODUCTION LIKE A PLAY OR A FILM. BUT I FEEL UNEASY ABOUT MY COLLABORATORS BEING CORPORATIONS.



NOUGHT:

IN MY OWN WORK I'VE TURNED TO WHAT IS IMMEDIATELY TROUBLING ABOUT MAKING ART BECAUSE I HAVE A MANIC NEED TO CREATE ART AND FEEL CONFLICTED ABOUT IT.

ALL ART IS NARCISSISTIC,
AND ALL ART COMING FROM ART SCHOOL IS DECADENT, PRIVILEGED, AND OVERABUNDANT.



OBEDIENCE

FREEDOM

INPUT>n0ught

POINTS ABOUT ART:

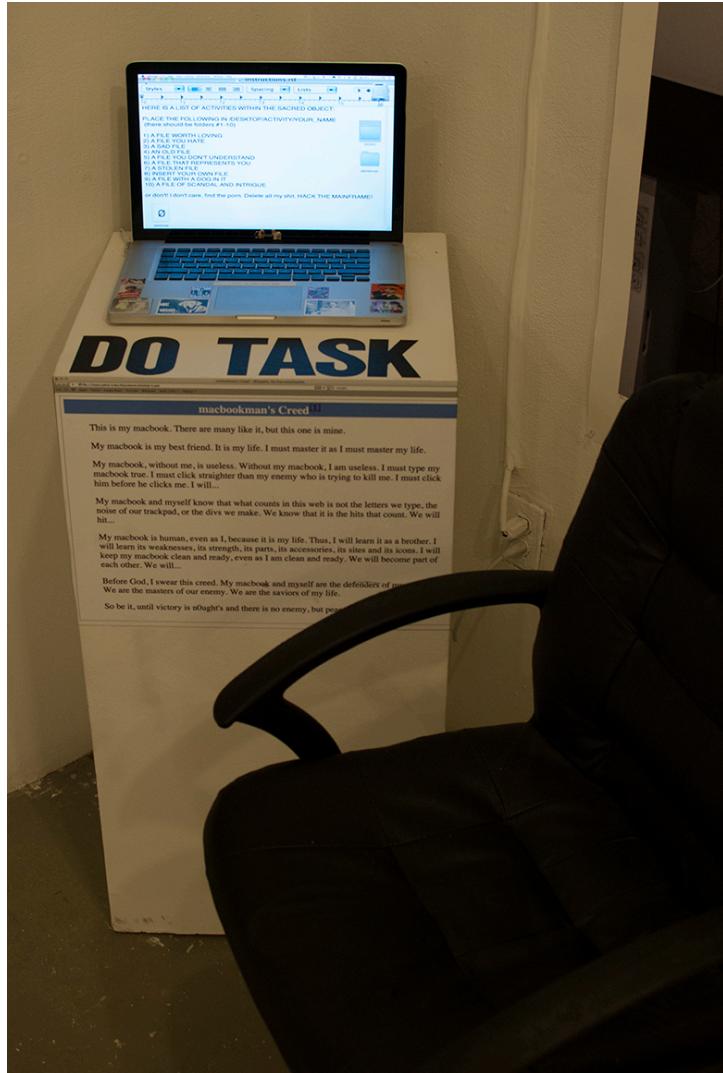
- 1) THE FEMALE-BODIED PERFORMANCE ARTIST IS ENSLAVED BY THE DOMINANT ART HISTORY CULTURE (YES, EVEN POST-GUERRILLA GIRLS), AND IS TASKED TO RECLAIM HERSELF.
- 2) THE COMPUTER IS AN EXTENSION OF THE SELF, WE'RE NOT ALL THE SAME, AND OUR COMPUTERS SHOULDN'T BE.
- 3) ART SCHOOL PERPETUATES CAREERISM AND STANDARDIZATION, BOTH OF WHICH HINDER CREATIVITY AND PURE EXPRESSION.

?SYNTAX ERROR IN 943

■■

I incorporated some of my thoughts under my pseudonym “nØught” which derives from the idea of a zero placeholder, a null set, Ø, all is naught, not, nothing. A slashed zero has become a comfortable way to distinguish my digital self from my physical self; in the same way a slashed zero is intended to distinguish the letter 0 from zero. The Ø is a symbol of a 1 and 0 bisecting themselves. As somebody of often confused and undefined gender identity, I feel strong embodying the values represented by this symbol.

The Ø represents both and neither binary. Owning and affirming this nature in myself has become another layer to my artistic practice. Questions about my personal presentation to society are all included in my investigation of fluidity of ownership and independence.

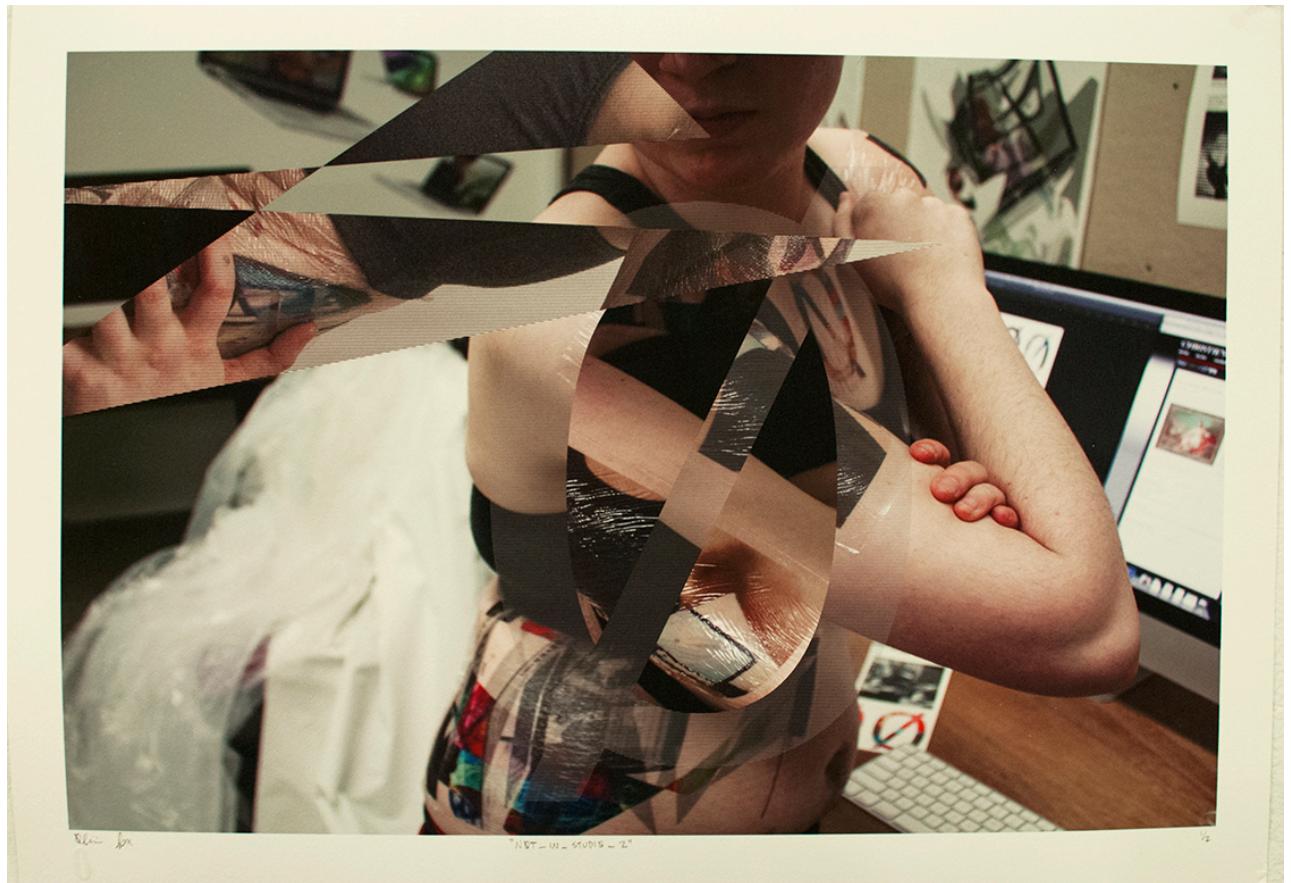


“SELF_CØLLAGE_TASK”

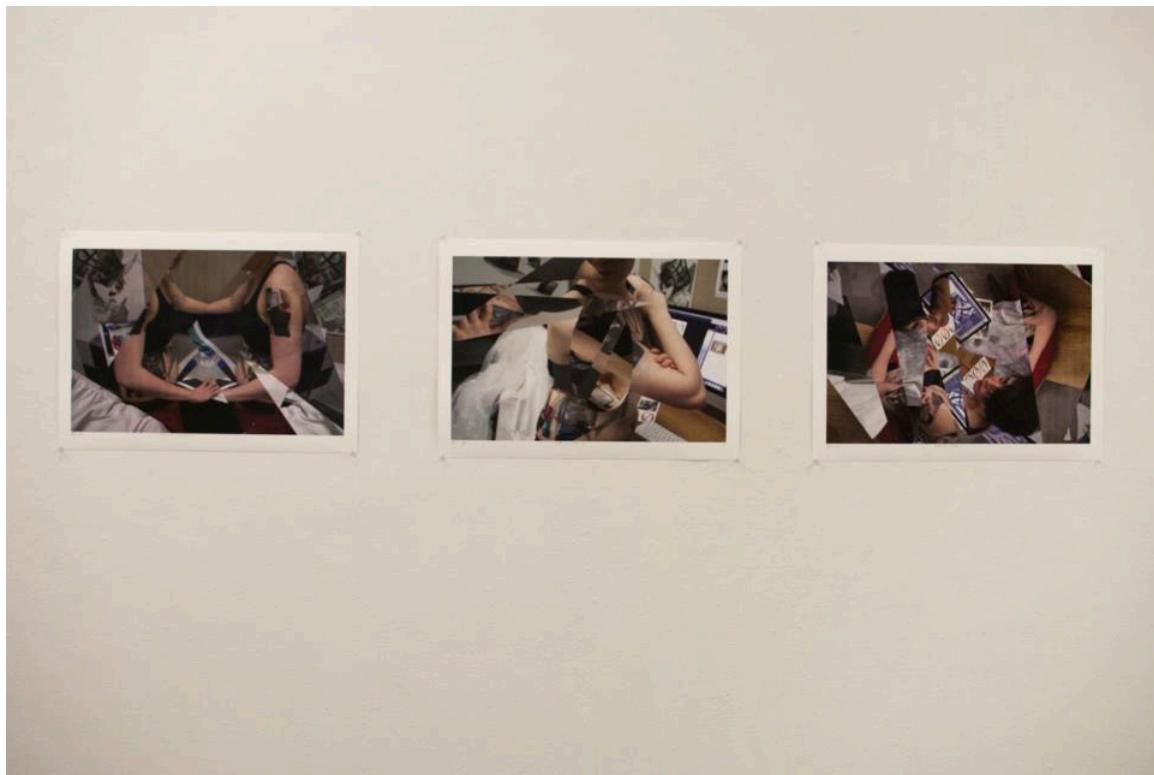
Through my work for Self Øbsessed//Self Esteem I've come to terms with both my narcissism as an artist and my lack of confidence. I also wanted to assert my control over the part of me that is a machine, and the part of the machine that is my artwork. Adhering my work to my body allowed me to be a layer within the work. Furthermore, my computer (and my body) became a part of the show, and viewers were invited to explore, erase, hack (cut-up). I wanted the computer, as my artistic medium, to be an open sketchbook, hopefully calling into question the nature of privacy, contemporary art, and the self.

I can exist in-between:

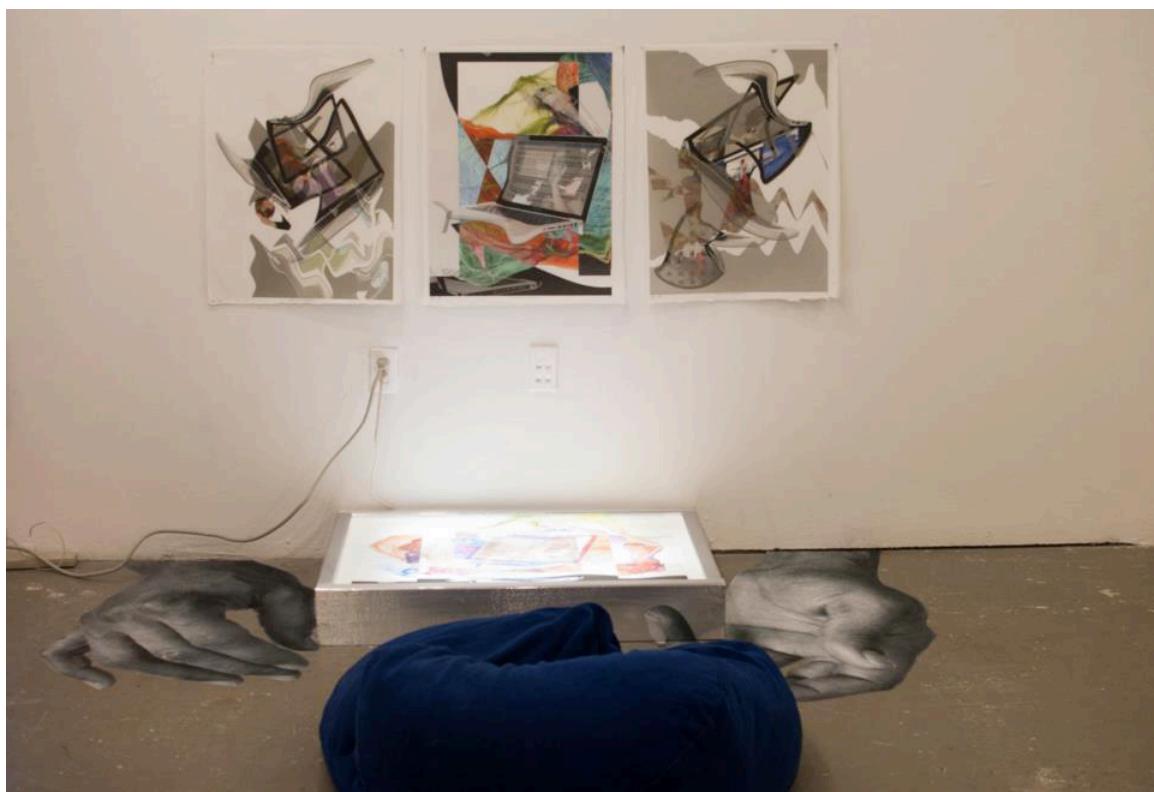
- 1) I do not need to shave to be beautiful, but I can if I want to.
- 2) I do not need to have a macbook to be up-to-date and equipped to practice relevant art, I am not indebted to Apple.
- 3) I do not need to go into an artistic field or career to practice art; I'll do what makes sense for my standard of living.



“NØUGHT_IN_STUDIO_2”



“NØUGHT_IN_STUDIO 1-3”



“LAPTOP_FASCIST_PAINTBRUSH (Installation View)”