

ELEVATING THE QUEER BODY

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Abstract

Elevating the Queer Body is an art based exploration in removing objectification in the visual consumption of my own queer body. Throughout this thesis, I explain the experience of queer objectification, and how to overcome it through abstraction in a painting practice. This research comprises spiritual ideologies, as well as the history of abstraction, to inspire me in creating an ethically consumed representation of my figure. This is achieved through an abstract depiction and veiling of my figure. Presented compositions are overlaid with Islamic inspired devotion and ornamentation as a form of elevating the body itself.

Acknowledgements

For this paper could not have been written in a vacuum, I acknowledge and send gratitude to those who have done the work that precedes me and currently guides me. I would also like to thank those whose support allows me to do the work that I do.

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Biography

Growing up in a conservative Christian southeast American community as a closeted queer man has been a piece of reflection within the work I am now making in my twenties. I came out as gay in 2016 at the age of 19 at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), a very sociopolitically progressive space towards homosexuality and gender. These two polarized communities led me to think about what I can glean from these two radically different spaces. What good can we take from a queer space and bring to a conservative religious space, and vice-versa? What parts of both communities should we be scraping away and what should we be keeping?

Historically, many religions have rejected the queer community, and because of this, many queer individuals reject religion. However, with my background, it is impossible to fully reject my Christian community, family, friends, and morals that have influenced me. The impact of religion is undeniably a part of me that I cannot keep rejecting. I do not think I should. My time in New England made me think critically about religion. I rejected it and spent some time away. However, leaving Rhode Island and moving back to the more traditionally-minded Carolinas has me questioning the other side. Is there space for moderation? As I slowly rejoin the religious communities that once rejected me, I do not see things as black and white. I do not see religion as wrong, or the cultural behavioral norms of queer people as completely right. This is not self-hatred, but a step towards empathetically questioning my queer

identity that will forever be a part of me. I work to find balance between my queer identity and my religious more familial community. My goal is to find my own placement within the established binary I have seen in these two spaces through my field of art.

Being removed from the queer bubble in RISD opened my eyes to the flaws of the community that allowed me to come out. As a contrarian, no community is safe from my scrutiny. Coming out has not been all the gay unicorns and prismatic rainbows that I thought I was entitled to. I was quickly struck by objectification adjacent to idolatry. I assumed the queer space to be a safe one, but soon realized rejection can come from within the queer community itself. In its truest form this appears within judgments of the queer male body by the male gaze. Bodies are often reduced to “pieces of meat”. Instead of a body being a living spirit, it is an object designated for sex and judgement. This male gaze has led to the queer struggle of loneliness. Michael Hobbes tells us in his Huffington Post article *The Epidemic of Gay Loneliness*, “For years I’ve noticed the divergence between my straight friends and my gay friends. While one half of my social circle has disappeared into relationships, kids and suburbs, the other has struggled through isolation and anxiety, hard drugs and risky sex.” (Hobbes, 2017). I specifically argue that this gay male problem relates to the male gaze: to be judged, used, and then discarded. The queer body has lost its sense of value, both externally and internally. This leads to self hatred and an inability to achieve intimacy through a need to protect one's own body.

Objectification from the male gaze specifically runs rampant on the queer dating app Grindr. Various examples of being called a “bitch” for not giving others “what they want” (my body) come up weekly. Stalkers, harassment, and unsolicited “dick pics” are an assumed quality of life to be accepted. I equate these examples of the male gaze to the practice of idolatry, with both terms being interchangeable in context to my research. Idolatry being to worship a body equated to a physical material item, as opposed to a body equated to an immaterial spiritual entity.

In contrast, Christianity teaches that “So God created man in his own image” (ESV, Genesis 1:27). “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” (ESV, 1 Corinthians 3:17). Surely there is something to take from this. In my work, I weaponize religious ideas that were at war within me for so long, and use those messages to help portray queer bodies as sacred. I specifically use various religious ideologies around the human body to conceptually inspire me to elevate the queer body in my art.

From this Christian background, I was first struck by the visual aesthetic of anti-idolatry when I began to be introduced to the creative works of the fellow monotheistic Islamic culture. During my time visiting and studying in Istanbul, Turkey (2018), I saw this first hand. The historically significant figurative representations in the Christian *Chora Church* (fig. 1) exist four miles away from the abstract Islamic sacred aesthetic of the *Blue Mosque* (fig. 2). From the *Blue Mosque* I learned how to use abstract languages as a form of elevation when

representing something sacred. I learned to blend this visual vocabulary with the Christian values of our bodies being a “temple”, or sacred.

Introduction

Referencing abstraction and Islamic ornamentation, I use these references in my paintings to encourage the viewer to see the human body as sacred. This involves finding a balance between abstract minimalist references of the queer body with additions of ornamentation inspired by Islamic art: created through an abstracted minimalist silhouette depicting my body, dazzling colors, and painterly ornamentation. By focusing on these formal qualities over objectifiable representations of my body, I have learned to see beauty in the ambiguous. This goal of seeing and accepting beauty in ambiguity has been inspired by spirituality. Religion's faith in something that is beyond understanding amazes me. For some people, their faith may motivate them to undergo extreme lifestyle changes for something that is arguably impossible to prove by human logic. In Islamic art, it is seen by some as sacrilege to visually depict religious figures due to concerns that it might lead to idolatry: the act of worshiping a material object over something sacred.

This problem was first introduced in art historical discourse with the rapid conquest of Muslim armies of other religious societies. Explained by Luca Mozzati in his book *Islamic Art*, “When early Islamic civilizations conquered Byzantium, Mesopotamia, and Iran, these Muslim cultures were at odds with their

cultural background, most notably the deployment of narrative and anthropomorphic imagery, especially for religious structures and objects.” (Mozzati, 22). While this debate over figuration or non-figuration is disputed, “The chief peculiarity of Muslim artistic expression is the invention and deployment, especially in the field of architecture, of a highly characteristic artistic language of a geometric and floral type verging on the abstract.” (Mozzati, 22).

After sitting in many childhood church services with a stereotypically attractive western white buff Jesus (fig. 3), I agree with those early Muslim cultures. At times, visual depictions of the body can cheapen a spiritual entity to the realm of logic over emotion. This is demonstrated by the translation of the crucifix to a gold pendant on sale for \$370.30 at the jewelry store Zales (fig. 4). Islamic artists use pure abstraction and decoration to represent the aura of the power of God. Instead, Islamic artists force the viewer to be dazzled by ambiguity. A viewer's response to a space such as an Islamic mosque is emotional, not logical. “Given the particular nature of Islam, its meaning can only be theological.” (Mozzati, 22).

There is a feeling of a sacred presence when sitting in the middle of a meticulously ornamented Mosque due to this language of geometry, pattern, and abstraction. This is shown in the Iranian mosque of the Shah, *Masjid-e Shah* (fig. 5). I am interested in the potential of this abstract visual language used to decorate the *Mosque of the Shah*, to emotionally represent a concept or the body. The visual language of complete non-representation brings me liberation when I use it to represent my body. This allows me to keep my body within the space of the sacred as opposed to something definable.

I reject the queer body being shown as the stereotypically pornographically idealized man with an excessively body builder and/or skinny ingénue physique. This oversaturation of idealized bodies is a feeding ground for objectification. Instead, I depict the queer body as an aesthetically beautiful experience. I encourage viewers to see things through a new lens. By creating bodies that cannot be objectified by the male gaze, I hope for gay men to not look at the figure as “a piece of meat”, and instead view it as sacred as an Islamic mosque. By having non-queer people view the queer body through a pleasurable viewing experience, I hope to open up space for queer acceptance. The goal for all audiences is empathy.

Influences

My research is primarily personal auto-ethnographic. Due to this qualitative and personal form of research, I often reference other artists' work, art history, and doctrines from different realms of spirituality. This grounds my personal experience within a more shared communal zeitgeist. While the feeling of sacred aesthetics is not quantifiable, I hope to express shared perceptions from various sources. In this thesis, I specifically pull from each of various perspectives as context for my work.

Growing up in a Christian high school I learned a lot about the Bible, but that information was skewed to the right politically. In my teenage years, I traveled to both Qatar and Istanbul, which was the first time I had ever been in

awe viewing art in person. This was also the first time in my life that I understood what it meant for something to be sacred. In my early twenties I steeped myself in the history of queer painting. This is where I was simultaneously empowered, and also overexposed, to the stereotypical muscular cisgendered man partaking in what is seen as sexually taboo, anal intercourse. In his 2021 text *Queer Formalism: The Return*, William J. Simmons describes contemporary art by cis gay men as “A troubling return to (queer) figuration by cis gay male artists who, in a fascist neoclassical way, depict conventionally handsome, lithe boys scrolling on postcoital Instagram” (Simmons, 14). I am opposed to this tendency described by Simmons in work like Jeremy Jaspers’ *Julien* (fig. 6). Instead, I focus on abstraction of my body in my thesis exhibition work.

My work is always in dialogue with the form and color languages of Islamic abstraction. This abstraction can be easily digested for a person removed by Islamic culture by an understanding of formalist abstraction. Formalist abstraction is defined by critic Clement Greenberg as “an examination of an artist's ability to visually balance the elemental forms on the canvas”. It was also a “judgment of that painting's purity of medium and style” (Formalism). Suddenly the way a painting is made, and what it is made of, began to exist as its own valid concept outside of illustrative narrative. This created space for both artists and viewers to sit in the ambiguity of emotional stimuli outside of logical meaning. In my work, this has been learned and validated further through the history of Western abstraction within painting that Greenberg tries to describe. I specifically focus on

painting and its history in my work, as a closer cultural departure from Islamic architecture.

The roots of Western abstraction can be traced back to spiritual origins, particularly the movement of Theosophy. The Theosophical Society was founded in late 1875, in New York City, by Russian noblewoman Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (Sender). The general beliefs of theosophy came from a synthesis of many religions and the way that they intersected with modern scientific discovery. It is a reasonable conclusion that Islam was one of these synthesized religions. However, “By 1893, following the death of Blavatsky, [Annie] Besant became the president of the Theosophical Society and endeavored to make its principles a practical force for shaping future societies.” (Melt). This quest for spiritual and emotional understanding was taking shape through Western art, centuries removed from a culturally Islamic foundation. Annie Besant made abstracted studies, but this authority as a leading abstract painter was later transferred and actualized by artist Hilma af Klint.

The first acknowledged abstractionist was the female artist Hilma Af Klint. She created her first purely abstract painting in 1906 (five years before artist Wassily Kandinsky, who is commonly described as the father of Western abstraction). Her first abstract paintings were a series titled *Primordial Chaos* (fig. 7). These paintings were created rich with symbolism as a method of conveying lessons from Theosophy. She recorded spiritual ideas of balance (yin and yang), and other more emotional and spiritual ideas (Hilma). Af Klint went on to create a series of paintings for the Theosophical Society. Produced between 1906 and

1915, the paintings were generated in part through af Klint's spiritualist practice as a medium and reflect an effort to articulate mystical views of reality. While these paintings never existed in their intended space, they have recently been exhibited and elevated by the Guggenheim museum in New York. This 2019 Guggenheim exhibition marks the point in the contemporary art world where Af Klint has become acknowledged historically and brought to my attention. Stylistically, they are strikingly diverse, incorporating both biomorphic and geometric forms, expansive and intimate scales, and maximalist and reductionist approaches to composition and color." (Hilma). Through this work, western civilization began to understand that our mental and spiritual bodies were just as valid as our physical ones. The beauty of this work sparked the growing fire which brought emotional ambiguity into the western painting zeitgeist from the early twentieth century to today.

From this spark, Wassily Kandinsky added kindling to the fire through his abstract "compositions" (fig. 8). Inspired by these abstract depictions of spirituality, Kandinsky narrowed painting's ability down to the ability to capture emotions. In his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, he describes form and color as representational of emotional concepts such as "joy" and "vigor" (Kandinsky, 17-19). I am interested in this time period, as color and form began to be identified as a space for the emotional and spiritual within abstraction.

Contemporary queer painter Amy Sillman, expands on the works of Kandinsky by folding it into the queer body. In Sillman's work, the focus is still on form and color. However, these two formal elements begin to exist in relationship to the

queer body and experience. Color can reference the metaphysical sensations of “cuddling with your [queer] partner on a Sunday morning” (Simmons). This is referenced in her 2016 painting *Bed* (fig. 9). Her paintings reference the form of the queer body and the potential of color to expand on the emotional vocabulary of Kandinsky. The work begins to incorporate materiality, metaphor, and personal relationships into abstract painting. Her colors continue the conversations of Kandinsky, where “naples yellow is tepid, chromium oxide green is overbearing, flake white has a dry indifference, and pthalo blue seems insubstantial but is domineering” (Sillman). When she uses color and form, it gives vocabulary to her queer identity and queer body.

Another contemporary abstractionist, Sarah Faux brings this most recently towards her work. These works are a close inspiration in my work, furthering the visual language of Amy Sillman. In her painting *Beach Body* (fig. 10), her formalist visual vocabulary of materiality, color, and composition are the focus when viewing. The painting is purely formal, but allows room for the viewer to make their own connections and associations. Faux is one of the first artists to talk about the male gaze with me. I remember her showing a work explaining the body represented. The experience of sitting with her painting, looking for the body for a few minutes has stuck with me. Minimalist, but decisive red brushstrokes indicate genitals, the physicality of the body, and sensuality. While these brushstrokes operate as abstract, there are clues for the viewer to construct figuration. This painting does not persuade, it implies. She represents

the body through form and color in a way that is representative of a body, but, by using abstraction it avoids sexualization or objectification.

From this established lineage of artists, my work begins. I focus on abstraction founded in both color and form. I work like Sarah Faux to represent the queer body in a nuanced way. I focus on suggestion and subversion. Implication being to suggest, as opposed to telling the viewer in an overt way. The subject of my paintings exists on the canvas, but is not easily given away. This teasing of subject matter creates safety around the portrayal of my body. This is allowed through my use of abstraction.

Challenging the profane, and elevating the sacred I aim to be subversive. In my experiences with queerness, I have been labeled as perverted due to a romantic and sexual attraction to men. Typically religious, these communities have taught me that I am an abomination for this simple reality within my existence. Quoting the Bible, "Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin." (ESV, Leviticus 18:22). Being thought of this way, I believed and accepted the idea of being an abomination. This led to me taking ownership of perversion as a form of self validation at an earlier point in my life. Now, I claim that I am not corrupt, I am sacred and created in God's image. My body is a temple.

From the lineage of Islamic abstraction to Sarah Faux, I abstract the queer body in a way that draws on its sacred qualities. I celebrate the queer body. Using suggestion and ornamentation the body becomes elevated to a sacred figure instead of a place of idolatry.

Work

By the time of me writing this, as I end my explorations within my master's program, I have counted 83 two dimensional works that have been made during my time at Winthrop. Throughout these two years I have learned the importance of privacy when displaying these works. While I will discuss the process and lessons learned creating the works through this master's program, I will be talking about the first set of 79 paintings in a purely abstract way instead of giving specifics or even showing these works. This is both to avoid tangents, as well as the very objectification I am rejecting. I have expressed in this paper so far that the essence of the work created within this master's program has revolved around representations of the queer body as well as how to compliment that with Islamic inspired ornamentation. From these 83 works I have decided that only the final ten that are shown in my thesis exhibition are successful in conveying the message that I believe in and feel safe conveying. The others I view as idols.

The early works are overly graphic in ways that are counterproductive in the way they subject my body to the male gaze. Typically through graphic compositions, these paintings operate as idols instead of representations of my body as a spiritual temple. For example, this lesson has been learned through the exhibiting of my work on the social media app Instagram. I have experienced objectification through the exhibition of this early work just through its curation on Instagram. Throughout these two years I have talked to various men who have

viewed my Instagram and seen these early works. I have experienced on multiple times these viewers using the display of these images as an entryway to remove my body from my spirit. These early works were counterproductively turned into an invitation to the purely physical aspects of my body. The paintings were simmered down to a simple pick up line at best, and a personal bodily judgment at worst.

From the culmination of these works I described in this paper, the final ten paintings are what I consider as the outcome of the series. I will discuss these paintings chronologically and how one led to the next. These works welcome a more sensuous discussion around my body because of the protective pairing of veiled ornamentation, as well as extensively abstract compositions. With that out of the way, and the trust I have in the reader reaching this point in this thesis, the subtle aspects of my final works will be revealed.

The first painting of significance within my master's program is titled *Torso #1* (fig. 11). *Torso #1* is significant in the sense that it was the first piece of mine to isolate the themes of Islamic maximalist ornamentation and synthesized it with Greenberg era abstract minimalist composition. This piece is a representation of my nude torso that is a repeated motif throughout these significant paintings. A composition that implies sexuality, in a way less apparent than the representation of body parts such as genitals. Through the use of the silhouette composition, the figure slowly reveals itself to the viewer. Through ornamentation, the figure is elevated.

To ornament the figure, various painting techniques are employed: such as texture, glazing, dripping, as well as a subtle analogous color scheme. Materiality of acrylic is pushed in order to elaborate on the sensuality of the torso, all encouraging the feeling of touch. A subtle gradient over the torso from warm to cool, expresses the idea of being warmed by an implied body. This second body is represented by a heavily textured dioxine yellow (fig. 12). This textured surface displays the desire to be touched, but is protected by its placement in a preserved gallery space. Lastly, the use of drips exacerbates sexuality through the implications of bodily fluids. The summation of these formal elements encourages a self portrait that is sensuous. However, *Torso #1* implies this sensuality through slow abstract languages, as opposed to a fast pictorially graphic reveal. This slow reveal repels mindless objectification.

Inspired by the red centric analogous color scheme of *Torso #1*, the next painting in the series is titled *Torso #2* (fig. 13). This piece furthers the formula from *Torso #1* with an inverted glowing yellow silhouette accentuated by a pink tinted red calligraphic motif scattered over top. This painting now incorporates a more sacred art-making experience through the implementation of the idea of devotion, an idea hinted at within the areas surrounding the drips of *Torso #1*. devotion is present in the calligraphic red patterning, but it is even more prevalent in the more nuanced scribbling of ballpoint pen around the perimeter of the figure (fig. 14). From far away when viewing this painting however, this devotion is hidden. When the viewer begins to spend more time with this painting up close, the act of devotion is revealed. Referencing the effects of an Islamic mosque

being inspiring due to sheer amount of effort. The sheer effort and time given to the minute ballpoint pen encourages appreciation.

As devotion is explored in my work, a conversation is begun on touch and sensitivity. In *Torso #2*, the process of scribbling the ballpoint pen was an intimate experience. The raw canvas was lying on the ground with me lying on top of it. My face was inches away with a slender stylus rubbing every inch of the canvas, with consideration in every stroke. This intimate treatment of the canvas felt sensuous and sacred to me like the Islamic mosque fused with an experience of queer sexuality. This inspired me to open up into intimacy and vulnerability in the later piece *Torso #3* (fig. 15).

Unlike the rest of the works in the series, *Torso #3* is a practice of physical vulnerability. Starting on the ground, a thick protective layer of a very specifically muted red acrylic implying blood. While creating this surface, I began to realize the materiality of acrylic paint. Acrylic paint uses a urethane binder that is both flexible and hard like a protective armor. To counteract this armor, the painting was literally ripped apart through the use of intensive sanding and dremeling. Unstretched and torn apart to the point of literally ripping gaping holes into the canvas. While this piece had trauma enacted onto it, the remains are glorified. Each whole is sensitively patched with scraps of fluorescent pink canvas. This pink activated the holes (trauma) in a way that glows (fig. 16). All of these processes became a step towards vulnerability.

In the next piece, *Torso #4* I continued this pursuit through the most sensitive mediums I could consider (fig. 17). It is the only work on paper, which is

a fragile surface in comparison to the typically used medium weight raw canvas. I paired this painting with a delicate surface with the delicate medium of watercolor. Unlike my typical acrylics, watercolor is sensitive in its instability. Due to the nature of its gum arabic binder, It has the potential to be reactivated or disrupted. It must be handled in a cautious manner compared to the acrylics. To compliment this, I pursued the medium of colored pencil as the final layer. The sensitivity of the previous ballpoint pen was exacerbated by the use of colored pencil. Prismacolor brand colored pencils in particular use a softer wax, requiring a lighter touch. This intimacy was pursued through lightly grazing the surface of the textured watercolor paper, with the pigment just being picked up by its peaks (fig. 18). Like *Torso #1*, *Torso #4* was created on the ground with me lying on top of it.

This exploration of sexuality is again paired with Islamic inspirations through the motif of veiling pursued through the use of the colored pencil, and a lace like flower motif. While this layer is light, it disguises the watercolor, as well as preserving it through a wax top coat. Through the use of color relativity between these two layers, the painting becomes darker than the rest of my works. Typically described as “the boring painting”, *Torso #4* is a practice in reservation within sensitivity. This requires the viewer to get close and view closely to unravel its layers and achieve titillation. This is the only way to truly notice the complexities of the painting.

The last works chosen for this thesis are the smaller paintings *Torso #5-8* (fig. 19). Pushing intimacy in my paintings, I chose to explore working on a

smaller scale. In these paintings, the watercolor and colored pencil motif of *Torso #4* is elaborated on. Combining these material elements with a small scale elevated the idea of devotion due to the intimacy of a painting being smaller than the viewer, as opposed to the larger works in this series. These paintings don't push any new ideas into the series, besides an understanding of scale. These paintings are simple. However, I am interested in the descriptions used around them. They are simple, yet visually pleasurable. This has led to comparisons of the small paintings to small diamonds.

Elevating the Queer Body

As a show consisting of just paintings, *Elevating the Queer Body* is not excessive in its curation. These paintings were hung in a manner of the typical history of painting shows in gallery spaces. The show is paintings on a white wall accompanied by nothing but labels.

The spacing between the paintings is the only strong consideration that needed to be made. My goal was for each painting to have the space it needs to be enjoyed alone, while creating an exciting space free of hierarchies. This is accomplished through the fact that each painting has the same space between it and the painting beside it.

The architecture of the gallery added complexities to the show. Built as two wide walls for art, the space is interrupted by two support columns in the middle of the room. I decided to utilize these columns as dividers (fig. 20). The

space in between the columns operate as viewing rooms for the large paintings. The large works lend the viewer to both enjoy from far away and close up (fig. 21).

I was also interested in the wall space adjacent to the columns. The floor space is more limited in these areas, forcing the viewer closer to the wall. I decided for this space to be where the small works are hung. Running with the descriptors of these paintings being “diamonds”, I installed the small watercolors in vitrines (fig. 22). The effect of the vitrine protecting the small works elevates the idea of value. This references museum display techniques of items of value such as diamonds or jewelry.

Conclusion

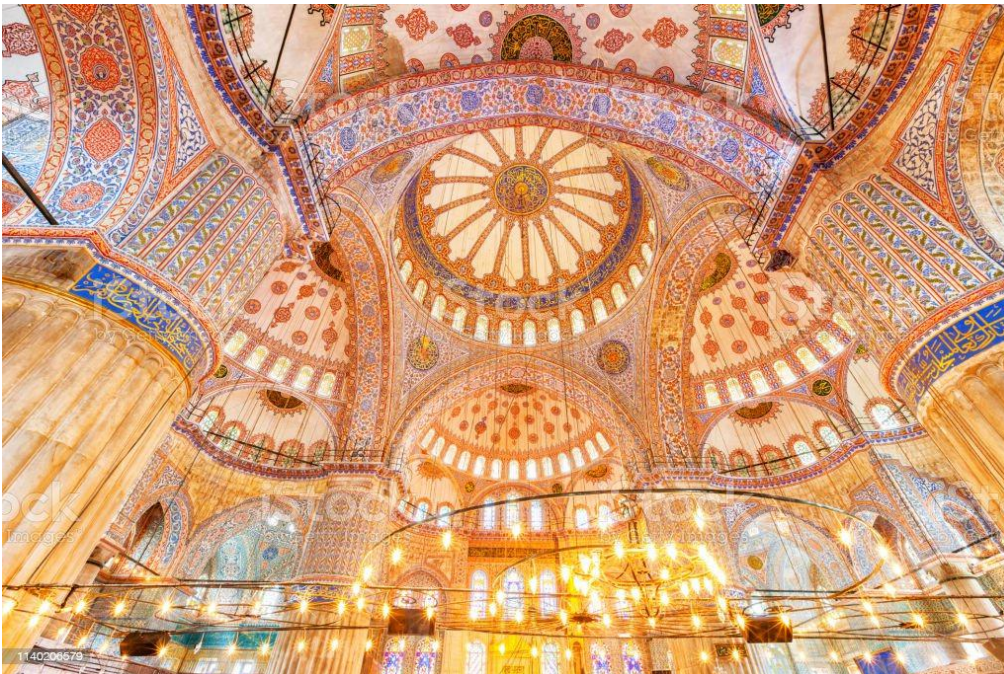
As a painter who operates through the art world with a queer lens, I acknowledge an issue of objectification towards my body and others within the queer community. In this research, and through this body of work, I create representations of myself that are free from objectification.

Through Western concepts of abstraction within the realm of painting, and Islamic concepts of ornamentation, I have created a series of works to accomplish this goal.

Figures




(Fig. 1) Chora Church, Istanbul, Turkey, 413-414



(Fig. 2) *Blue Mosque*, Istanbul, Turkey, 1617



(Fig. 3) Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi, *Crucifix Pudua*, Bronze, 71" x 65", 1443



♥

✉

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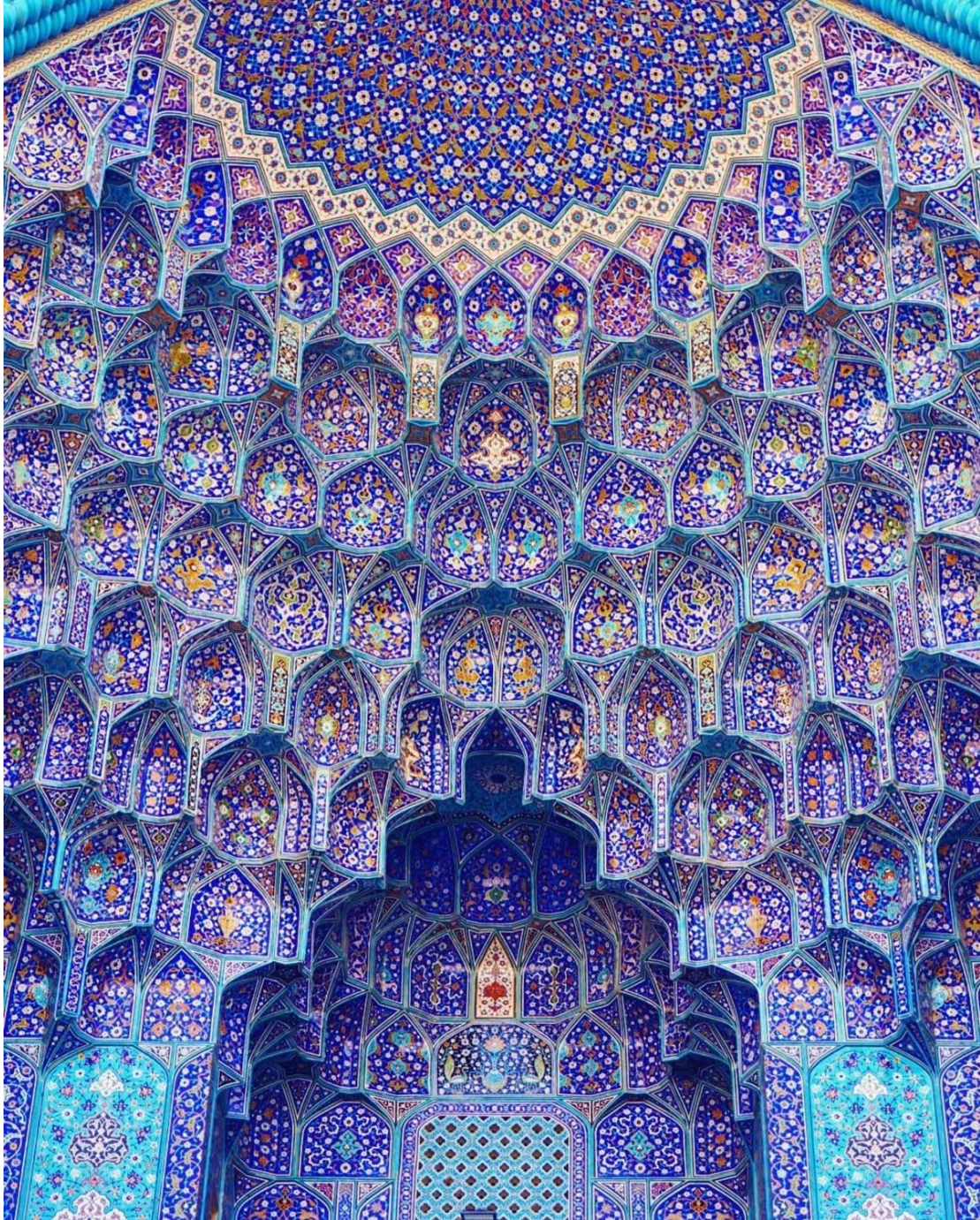
Service Needed	Typical Cost ²	With This Plan
Clasp Repair	\$44-\$85+	INCLUDED
Refinish and Polish	\$44+	INCLUDED
Prong/Stone Tightening	\$36-\$54+	INCLUDED

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(Fig. 4) Zales, Men's Textured Crucifix Necklace Charm in 10k Two-Tone Gold, 2022



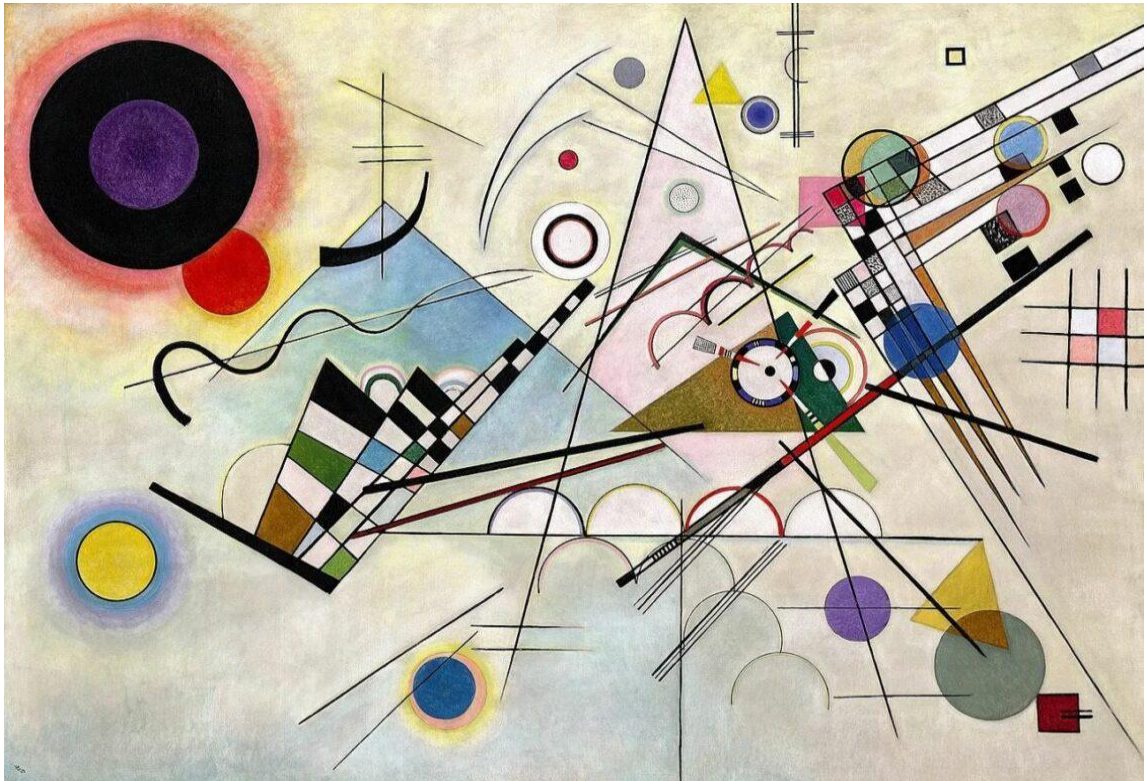
(Fig. 5) *Masjid-e Shah (Mosque of the Shah)* vaulting with muqarnas, 1612-1638, Safavid Isfahan, Iran



(Fig. 6) Jeremy Jaspers, *Julien*, Acrylic on Canvas, 24" x 20", 2022



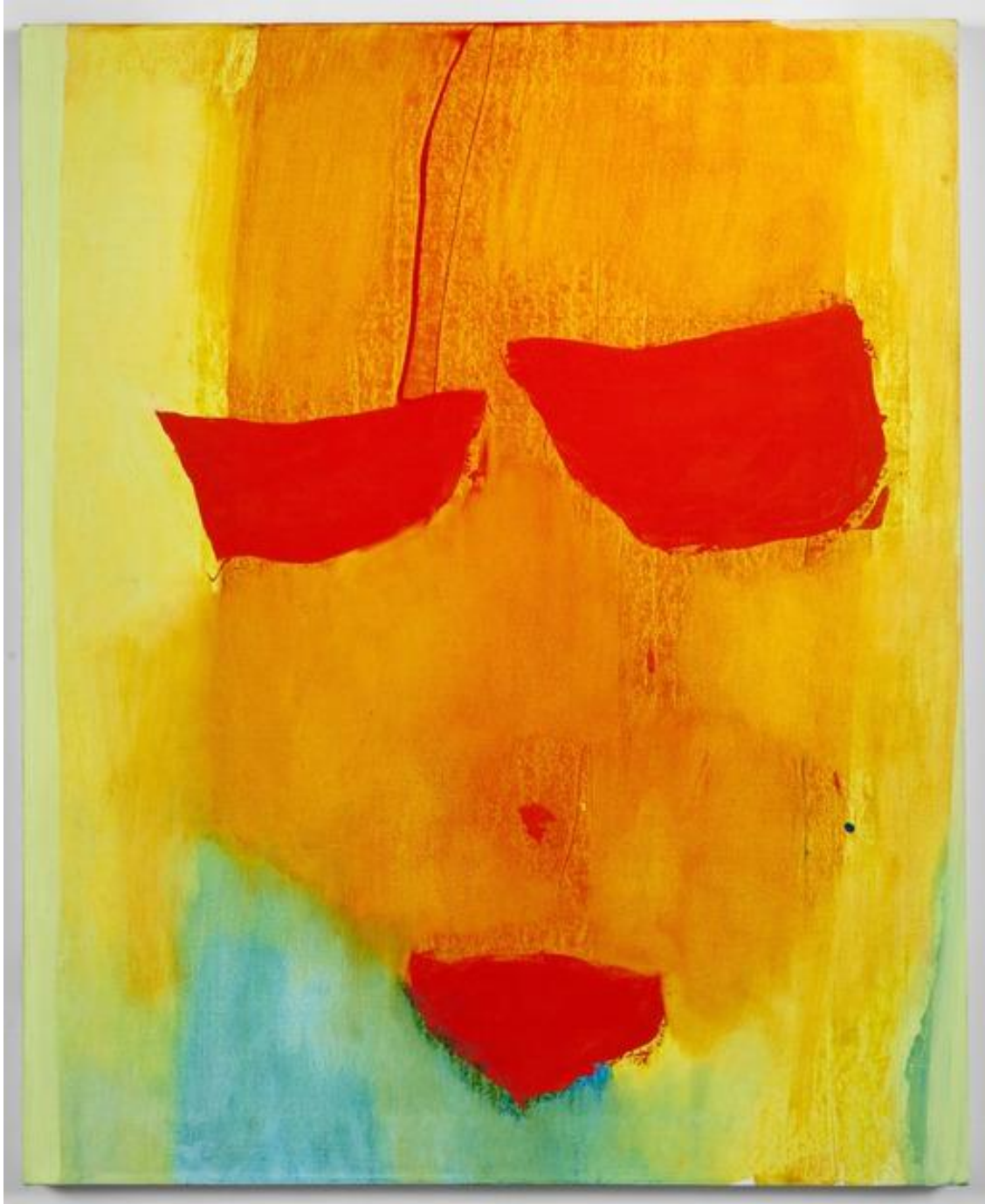
(Fig. 7) Hilma Af Klint, *Primordial Chaos*, Oil on Canvas, 20 9/10 x 14 3/5 in, 1907



(Fig. 8) Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition #8*, Oil on Canvas, 55 1/4 x 79 inches, 1923



(Fig. 9) Amy Sillman, *Bed*, Oil on Canvas, 90" x 83", 2006



(Fig. 10) Sarah Faux, *Beach Bodies*, Oil on Canvas, 32" x 28", 2012,



(Fig. 11) Grant Mahan, *Torso #1*, Acrylic on Canvas, 54" x 90", 2022



(Fig. 12) *Torso #1*, Detail



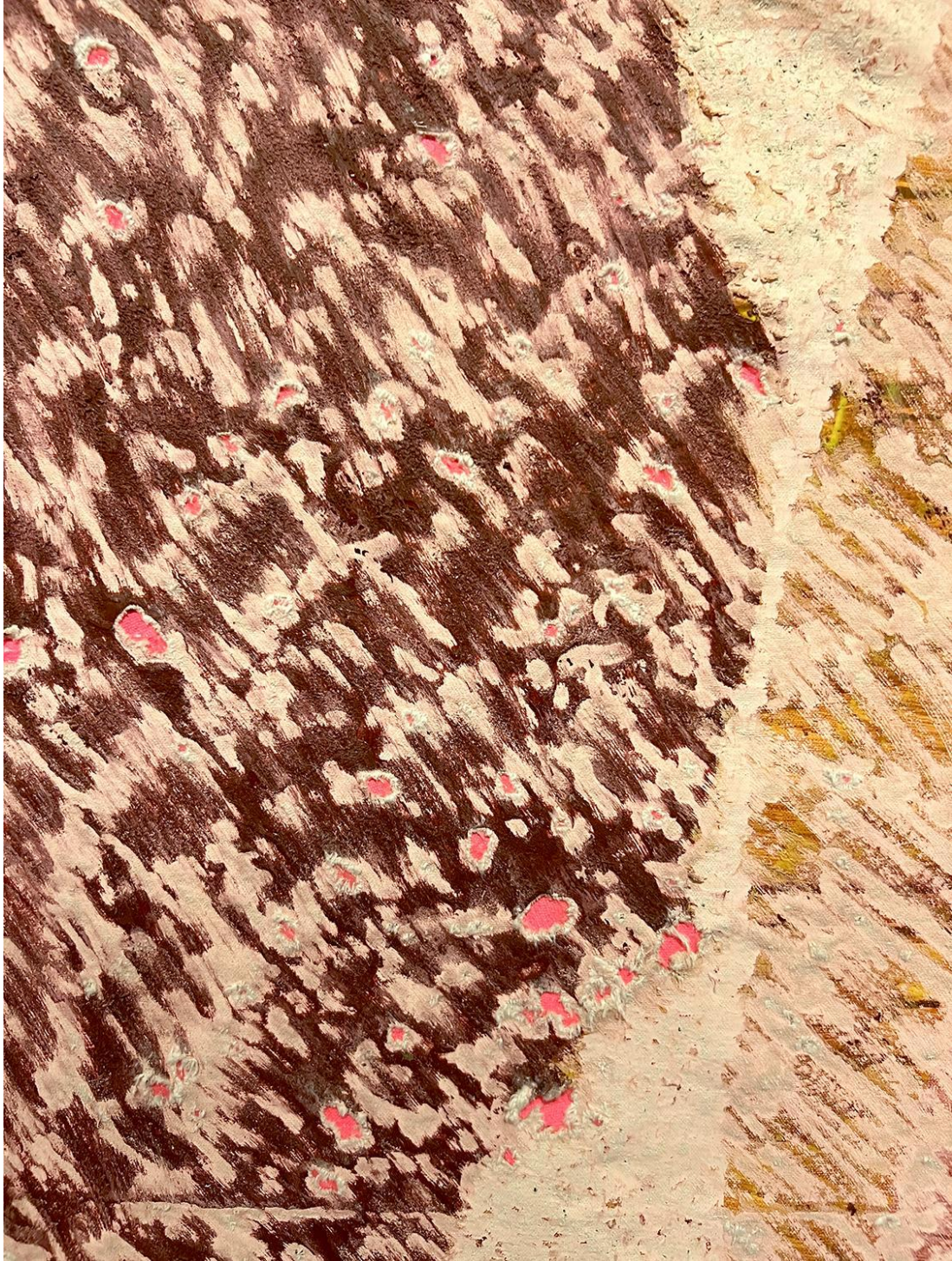
(Fig. 13) Grant Mahan, *Torso #2*, Acrylic and Ballpoint Pen on Canvas, 50" x 69", 2022



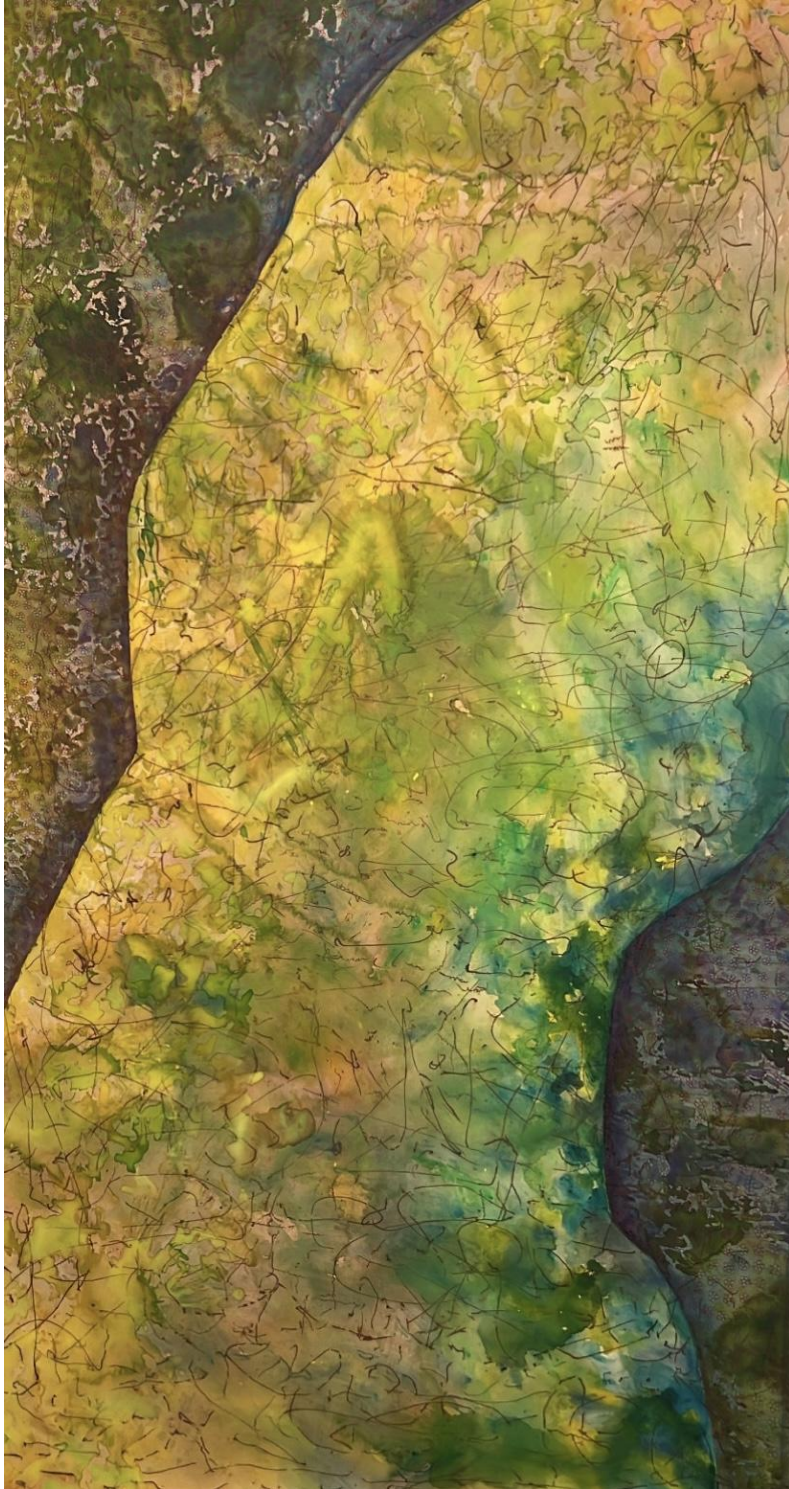
(Fig. 14) *Torso #2*, Detail



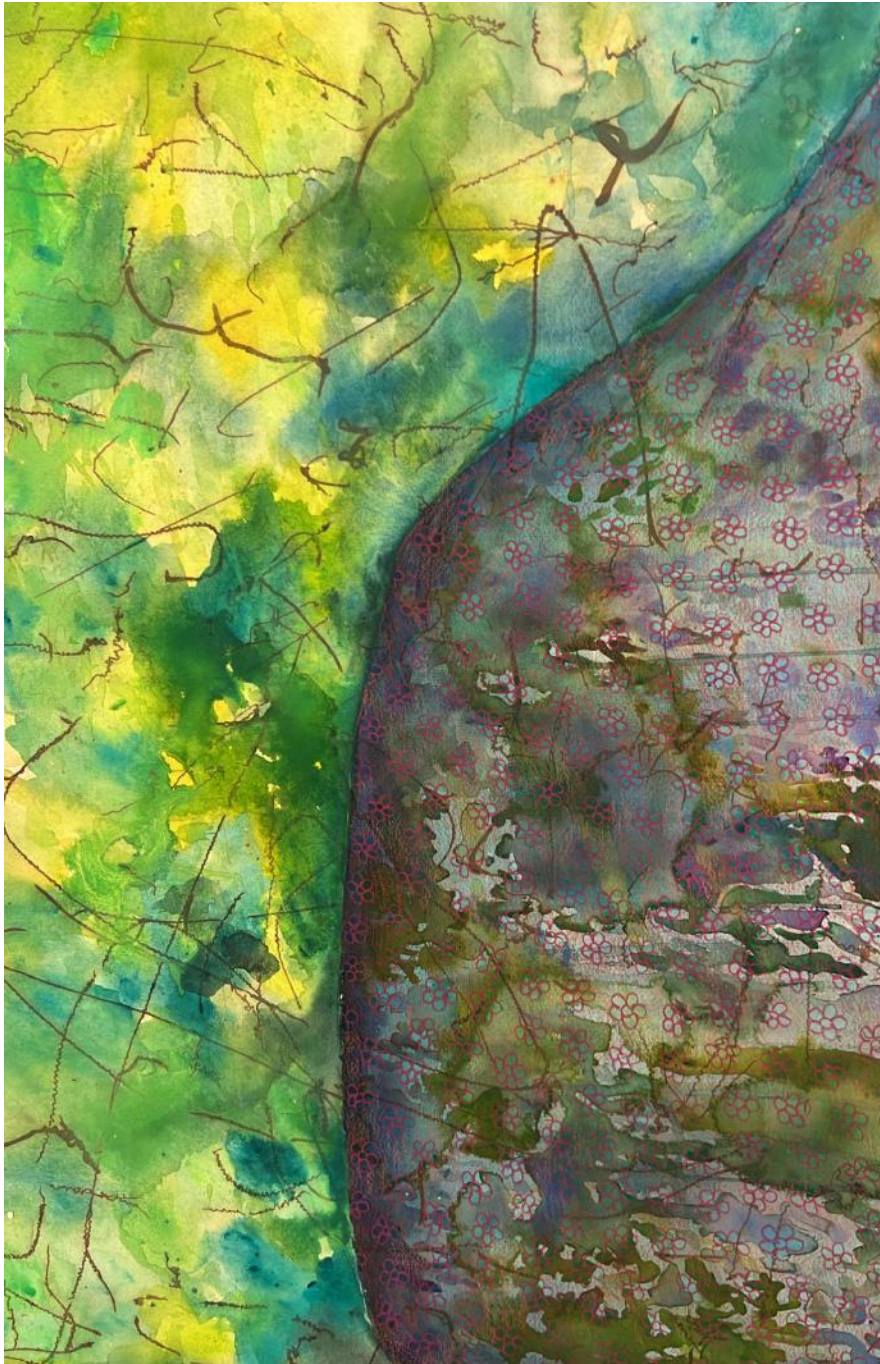
(Fig. 15) Grant Mahan, *Torso #3*, Acrylic on Unstretched Canvas, 59" x 92.5", 2022



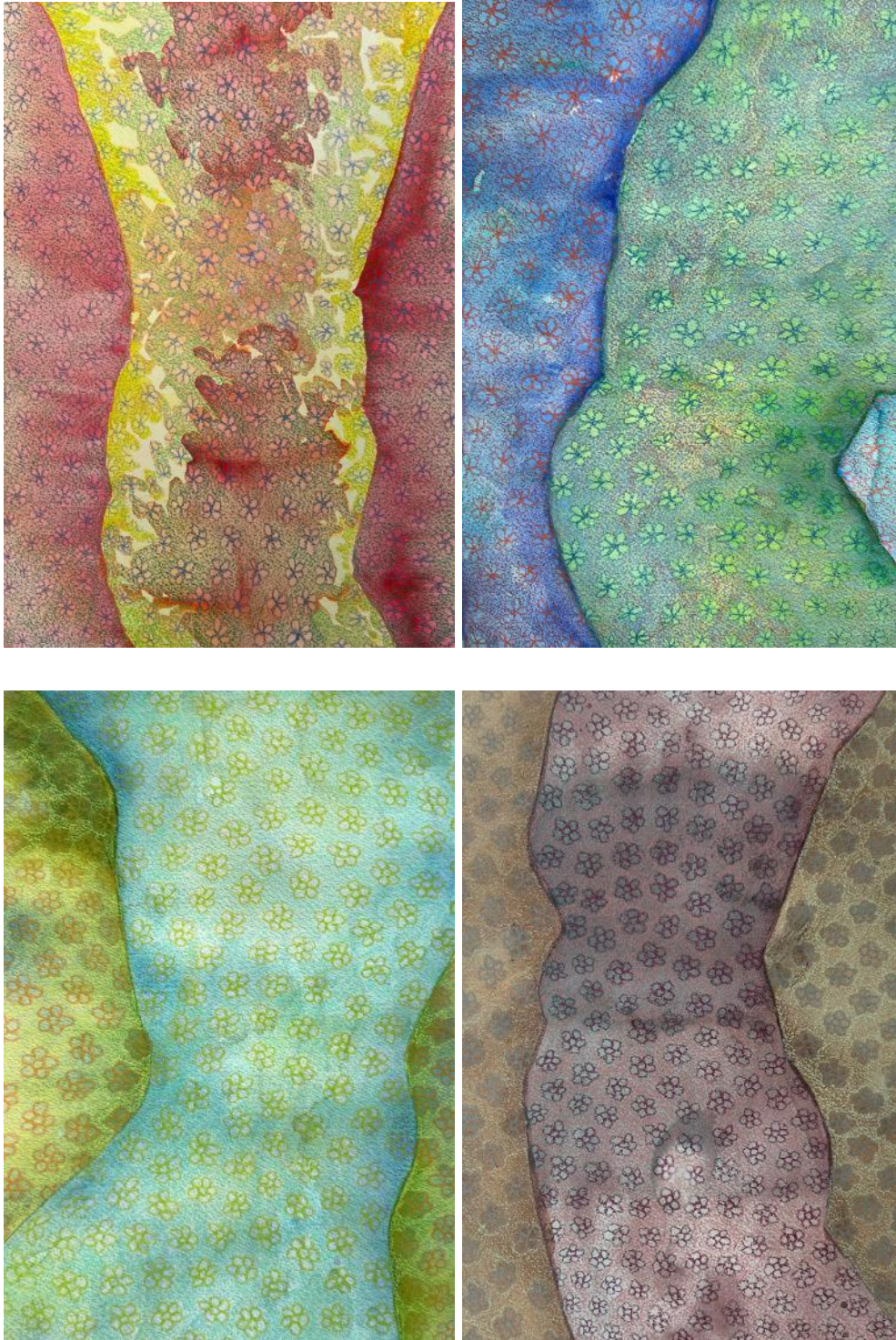
(Fig. 16) *Torso #3*, Detail



(Fig. 17) Grant Mahan, *Torso #4*, Henna, Watercolor, and Colored Pencil on Paper, 52" x 95.5", 2022



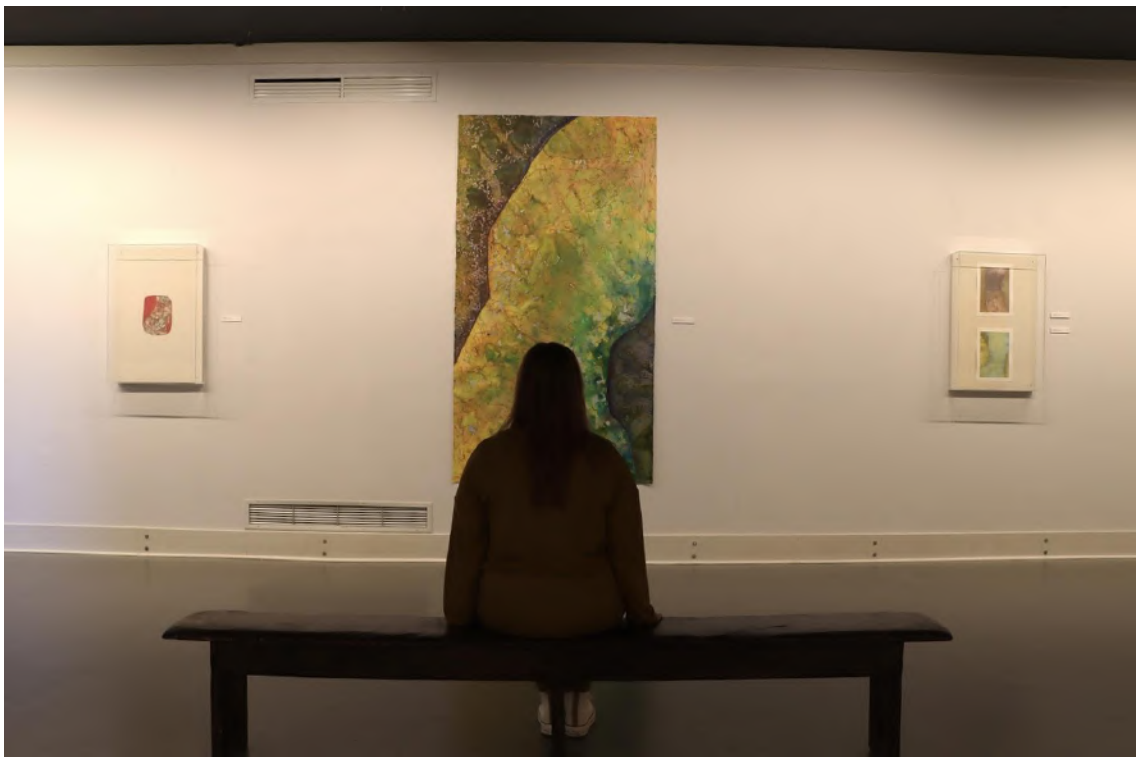
(Fig. 18) *Torso #4*, Detail



(Fig. 19) Grant Mahan, *Torso #5, 6, 7, and 8*, Watercolor and Colored pencil on Paper, 11" x 17" each, 2022



(Fig. 20) *Elevating the Queer Body*, Lewandowski Gallery, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 2022



(Fig. 21) *Elevating the Queer Body*, Lewandowski Gallery, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 2022



(Fig. 22) *Elevating the Queer Body* detail, Lewandowski Gallery, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 2022

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