Study finds Blood Cultures can screen for Dynastical Mutations in Popular Culture

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Professor Prince and Professor Rich

Artist Statement

Study finds Blood Cultures can screen for Dynastical Mutations in Popular Culture examines the intersectionality of power dynamics both historically and through societal taste and preference in consumable culture with exclusivity and the heritability of cultural traits and cultural power. The dynamic of the Romanov bloodline and hemophilia acts as conceptual overlay between exclusivity driving malmutation through a narrowed gene pool. This narrowed gene pool is extended to personify the traits selected from previous generations that are necessary for the continued exclusivity of Eurocentric popular culture. Participation within popular culture is dependent on the cultural traits, power, capital, and values that have been individually inherited and passed down through familial lines. The sampling of popular culture and the juxtaposition of the fallen Romanovs are materialized through the wheatpastes that are absorbed into public conscience much like the traits themselves. These images are integrated with the documented performance of donating blood to an undetermined donor. Through the act of donating blood, a feat that would have potentially killed the Tsarevich, Brush removes a layer of her own physical Eurocentric traits and predetermined exclusive access. This body of work operates as a case study finding that from an evolutionary perspective, an exclusive species is a stagnant species. If species and culture is dominant traits and a ruling class, then societal traits are dependent on previous generations. Survival is contingent on evolution.

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On a cold Sunday morning with a slightly warmer cup of coffee the newspaper was stretched out before me. I was following the Bundy protests in Oregon. Of all the social protests that happened in the year 2015, this was the most refreshing and appreciated. Amongst the specifically racial inequality that was made evident in the news, the strife that had griped the nation that year was obvious to rising tensions. Reading the paper became an empathetic exercise and the repetitions were becoming exhausting. It was to my delight that the Bundy occupation started because of all the social movements and conversations taking place, this was one I could read for entertainment.

A group of white, male farmers felt like they were not being heard. Among the protests in Baltimore, Ferguson and across the country, with the confederate flag debate on Southern Pride, the backlash that followed the Supreme Court ruling legalizing gay marriage, and the effect terrorism had on the entire population of Muslims, the occupation seemed trite. The day before, I had read a NPR article where Tribal Chairperson Charlotte Rodrique expressed her views on the occupation. She undermined the legacy that the Bundys and other farmers were citing recognizing that is was built on initially oppressing the Paiute Tribe. (Kennedy) Here were white men, frustrated with a government and a society that was built around them because they didn't feel they could fully exercise their rights that were originally founded on an oppression of another people. While diving in and taking things lightly I came across these comments from Professor John Freemuth at Boise State,

> "These are tough issues to resolve because they are about people's values…They have a concern that they are being left behind, that their values and their concerns are really irrelevant to the urban folks around the country." John Freemuth, a Professor at Boise State. (Wolf)

Although the legacy that these men hailed from was questionable and their actions radical, it was Mr. Freemuth's comment that made me realize this was a very serious group that felt sincerely threatened. These values that were at the front of their occupation were built on familial ties and tradition that could not be logically countered, and were as inbred as their DNA. These ideologies were passed down like a hereditary trait. These men were not only carriers, but were fully expressing the cultural traits that had been passing through previous generations and became present in the current politically charged environment.

How we interpret society, how we participate in society, and what place society allots for us in indicative of what place our previous generations have been granted. Our cultural traits can become synonymously inherited with our eyes, our nose or our hair color. It is the intersectionality of our physical traits and our inherited cultural traits that define our experience. Exploring this intersectionality further, there are reoccurring commonalities between specific heritage and what is perceived as valued within society. Eurocentrism has shaped what is valued in culture. European descent implicates an inheritable dynamic between visual social power and the invisible filtered version of the world that is catered and marketed towards European people. Going beyond European descent as a signifier of the white race, European descent also indicates sets of values based in Christianity, and the enforcement of gender roles specific to European culture. Looking at European descent as a culture ruling class, I refer to back occupation that took place in Oregon and Freemuth's comments.

The issues are difficult to resolve because they were based in values; values entrenched in a familial legacy of ranching, of working from the land, of ringing masculinity that dictates problems can sure as hell be solved with guns, because they always have been, and anyone who is questioning these affirmations are questioning their heritage. There has always been more

passed down than physical traits and what is inherited has larger implications than individual groups; these traits cumulatively shape generations and fuel popular culture. By acknowledging that popular culture is Eurocentric, the relationship between inheritable physical traits and inheritable culture traits merge to form a place in the social hierarchy. By tying physical characteristics to culture capital, European descent indicates heirs of a popular culture ruling class.

Human history is flooded with family lines and inheritance dictating who has held power. Justified exclusivity is necessary for few to maintain elite status in society and traditionally, the justification for exclusivity has been made through birthright. Although restricting power to familial relations is a short term way of guaranteeing the ruling class remains restricted, over time the bloodline deteriorates from lack of genetic diversity. At the intersection of power and genetic failings is the Romanov Family. The Romanovs marked the end of autocracy in Russia and were the last of a long, previously unchallenged tradition of the Tsar.

The title Tsar became interchangeable with Emperor of Russia, however Tsar connoted that the man who held the title was appointed and place there by God. Autocratic rule in Russia was maintained for nearly five hundred years before Nicholas II ascended to the throne. In the process of his father, Alexander III, dying, Nicholas II became engaged and eventually married Alix of Hesse-Dermstadt, a German princess and granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Renamed Empress Alexandra, Alix of Hesse-Dermstadt was an unknown carrier of the hemophilia that was being expressed throughout the various bloodlines in European monarchies. (Massie pg. 3-238) In order to best indicate heirs, the Romanovs subscribed to primogeniture. Hemophilia is a recessive, sex linked X-chromosome disorder, meaning that it is more likely to occur in males

than females. By demanding that the oldest male heir was to inherit the throne and by unknowingly introducing hemophilia into the bloodline, the Romanovs damned themselves.

After four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia, Alexei the Tsarevich was born. Within a year of his life, Alexei started showing signs of being hemophilic, and the relief that came with finally having a male heir turned to panic. Hemophilia is a hereditary disease that affects the body's ability to successfully clot and stop blood flow from an injury. Without successful clotting, injuries that are minor accidents become life threatening and debilitating. The entire bloodline and the future of autocratic rule rested on a child's extremely fragile health, and his health was the result of genetic exclusivity stemming from Queen Victoria.(Massie, 139-223) Generations of dynasty and exclusivity to funnel power channeled into a malformed X-chromosome that rendered the heir helpless. It was not one boy's inability to heal, but years and years of cultivating the trait that would inhibit his ability to do.

The emergence of hemophilia in the Romanov bloodline was seemingly abrupt, but the mutation took several generations to form and surface. The evolution of genetic mutation is not unlike the mutation of cultural ideologies passed through familial lines. The occupation in Oregon was fueled by generations of anti-government sentiment and incensed masculinity stemming from romanticization of the West and the shrinking contemporary need for the West to thrive. American culture evolved away from a desire to idolize the cowboy and the open range, as the country's economic reality continued to shrink familial farming and ranching's contribution to GDP. Freemuth stressed that discrepancies in values accelerated the conflict. The rancher's feared their values were being left behind, and although their actions weren't justified, their fears certainly are. The majority of the country does not share their values which makes their values less relevant and isolating when engaging in a national conversation like the one that

was opened up by the occupation. There may have been signs that there would be a form of protest from these ranchers, their fathers could have been carriers for the unrest these men now had, however it's the interaction between the environment and the cultural characteristics the formed this outcome.

The Bundy occupation is an extreme example of a culture clash with the larger society, but the culture of the masses has also selected traits that promote exclusivity based primarily in Eurocentrism. The isolating values shared by the few in Oregon were an island in the ocean. Exclusivity in popular culture dictates the waves. Eurocentric popular culture has defined societal norms based on Christian morality, has articulated beauty standards centered on the white woman, specifies what it means to be "traditional," and presents and promotes "traditional" gender roles and sexual expression.

Christianity has a prominence in Western popular culture, especially in the United States, regardless of how many people are actively practicing the faith. It's regularly cited that America's foundation is built on Christianity and constant conflict erupts when the government looks to separate itself from specifically Christian laws. This tension between foundational religion and separation of church and state has revealed itself in the recent Supreme Court ruling legalizing gay marriage.

> "White Christians have dominated the United States for centuries, often at a terrible cost to other ethnic and religious groups, so it might seem strange to hear them complaining about persecution. But their fear goes beyond the wedding industry, and it runs deeper than a wish to preserve tradition. They worry that rejection of the new cultural norms will cost them jobs, businesses, college accreditation, even tax-exempt status for their

> churches. At the Liberty Institute, a nonprofit organization that fights for religious liberty in court, president Kelly Shackelford said calls for assistance nearly quadrupled after the Supreme Court decision. In a September poll by the Christian magazine WORLD, a group of about 100 evangelical leaders and insiders said religious freedom would be the leading factor in their choice of presidential candidate." (Lake)

Seeded within the realm of legislation that actively looks to discriminate groups outside of the Christian norm is HB-2 in Texas that vastly decreases abortion clinics. Puritanical beliefs on sexuality can be seen strung along from Europe to colonial America to these contemporary issues. Without the invention of reliable birth control and the presence of physical hardships in earlier times, it was advantageous to stress the importance of the family unit and Christianity was an excellent means to do that. Survival was backed with morality. Survival of our species is no longer dependent on the traditional family unit, personal resources are not gathered through physical labor and sex is no longer indicative of children. Keeping Christianity as an imperative in popular culture is becoming less and less advantageous for the society as a whole.

Albeit the formality of Christianity is fading in the culture as a whole, familial ties are still very prevalent. Being raised Christian is culture capital, or was a generation ago, and seeing the larger popular culture move away from strictly Christian values is threatening. That threat leaks into popular culture and social media- cue the Starbucks cup scandal this last holiday season. Sparked by Joshua Feuerstein, a social media pastor, the Starbucks red cup scandal was backlash from the removal of Christmas imagery on the Starbucks holiday cup. Although the colors still remained red and green and the imagery was never specifically religious from the introduction of the cup, some Christians claimed offense. When CNN interviewed Feuerstein and asked what bothered him about the change in the cup, Feuerstein stated. "Well, I think it's much

more than just a cup, I think it's the overall narrative and I think the cup is very symbolic and parabolic in that it parallels a society that is essentially trying to remove Christmas from Christmas." Feuerstein echoes the fear of a majority becoming a minority. His popularity after making this statement proves that he is not alone in his thinking and yet Christianity is the only religion in the United States that has demanded that a national chain cater specifically to a religious holiday. HB-2 and the inability to drink out of purely red cup in the month of December are implications that this hereditary cultural gene of Christianity is mutating. The red Starbucks cup wasn't the sentiments of a fringe group; it was a trending topic on Twitter. It's the acknowledgement that a value that was passed on, that guaranteed some authority or belonging and is as seemingly engrained as eye color and hair color, is no longer purposeful or has no consequence beyond personal experience.

The understanding of the sexes, the roles male and female play, and their purpose in society and place in popular culture are also Eurocentric. Mainstream beauty has just recently started to be defined beyond White, and women have just recently held cultural capital for things other than personal aesthetics and potential for motherhood. Rigid masculinity and the value of being stoic is also fading from popular culture. Although society is transitioning to a more fluid understanding of what gender and sexuality are and how they can be expressed, performing gender is still integral in being granted acceptance into society. Using gender roles as a restraint dictates the operations of society based on who has power to operate within different aspects of the economy and what aspects of culture are acceptable for consumption for each group. Gendered commodification rampantly dissects what is needed to perform gender through products and commercialization. By providing products that generate acceptance based in gender identity, i.e. make up, men's and women's hygiene products, gendered toys for children, threats

to explore gender beyond capitalistic definitions and against previously conceived Christian values ruptures personal identity and value placed on gender, rendering actions against performing gender in popular culture isolating.

Familial cultural mutation based in gender and sexuality is more nuanced than the protest that has stemmed from the perceived threat to Christianity. Understanding of gender is as much of a spectrum as gender itself, and gender is more related to inherent identity than a practiced religion. Although people can be raised within a faith, they are born with a certain orientation and identity. Believing orientation and gender are unchangeable factors that are paramount to defining identity has become the popular ideology of the millennial generation. (Pew Research) The ideology of defining gender and orientation as unchangeable facets of identity is spreading through and is supported by popular culture. There is however a strain between the new growing popular beliefs and the beliefs of previous generations; especially from those who are deeply seeded in Christianity.

In the legislation that is currently being debated in North Carolina, the discussion is centered on which group is more worthy of legal protection, Christians or people who identify other than cisgender. Precedentially in the United States, it has been Christians who have been granted the most protection. Arguments for the passing of the legislation state that the law would be protecting people's right to fully practice Christianity, which defines relations outside of marital and cisgender as a sin. Fully banning the discriminatory practices that would affect people of different orientation or gender would infringe on the right Christians are argued to have to denounce it as sin. Specifically affected are industries surrounding marriage and adoption, arguing that forcing people to provide services are forcing them to perpetuate a perceived sin.

The current legislation piths LBGTQ+ and Christian rights against each other and raises the question, which group is more important and which group is most deserving of protection? The argument for the protection of Christians is based on the inalienable right of religious freedoms, and the right to practice that religion. However this law is contingent on the idea that in order to fully practice Christianity, disfranchising another group and justifying discrimination against them is a part of the faith. HB-2 is the moment of truth for both communities. It proves that the LGBTQ+ community cannot rely on Federal protection and shows the true power of state's rights. It also shows how little status the LGBTQ+ community has, especially in Southern states, where Georgia was considering similar legislation. That there is consideration even taking place is reminiscent of the older generation and its own view of exclusivity versus acceptance and the hierarchy it would like to continue. In the article, "U.S. becoming less Religious," Pew Research found that millenials were the generation least likely to be practicing a religion and across the board, and all major religions in the United States were becoming more accepting of homosexuality. (Pew Research) As the population ages, there is a shift to be less observant of any faith, and observance has a lower correlation with homophobia than it has in the past. This legislation is not a reflection of the general population, but of Christians in the South feeling like they are losing ground and their values.

Eurocentric popular culture solidifies the norms that continue to be perpetuated. There are many people in the United States who see race as an issue that has been resolved. Thinking that considerations of race were over after the civil rights movement is responsible for the current strained conversations that are taking place today. "We are not a racist society" and yet institutional racism continues to persist. Defining racism as a form of hate eliminates the broader scope and impact as racism. If that is the only definition, then that argument is mostly correct.

Yes, there are still hate groups that operate in America with dated ideas of race, but generally people denote them as outliers. However, if racism is expanded to be understood as a preference for Eurocentric, or white, and not necessarily a hate for people of color, then the ramifications of a Eurocentric culture can be better understood. Larger ramifications of this preference are mass incarceration and The War on Drugs as the new Jim Crow that specifically targets people of color. (Alexander) Preferential treatment defines the writing, practice, and execution of blind justice throughout this country.

In order to illustrate specific cultural traits dictating a Eurocentric culture I've selected two clips from iconic Americana and one clip that becomes self-aware of internal wrong. The first clip selected features John Wayne from the film *The Searchers.* John Wayne was selected because he became the icon of the cowboy long after cowboys really existed. The cowboy is an American icon and the American West has been romanticized to symbolically imbibe freedom, toughness, unrelenting grit, and the physical and figurative open frontier. The cinematic fascination with the cowboy post World War II rings of American pride by pulling at the specifically American experiences, toughness and the fierce masculinity that the cowboy personifies.

In the clip *The Searchers,* John Wayne and his posse are bracing for an attack from the Natives of the area. The clip begins with the Natives chanting an incomprehensible and drastically stereotypical chant. Although there are some men with Native American heritage featured as the majority of the group, the chief is a white man in red face. The scene then transitions to the white men about getting ready to fight. Immediately one of the men appropriates the already stereotypically driven chant and repeats it in a mocking tone. Another man who has already been shot is given a bible by the Reverend, telling him that it will make

him feel good. John Wayne, who is speaking from earlier cinematic experience, labels the Native cries as a death song. As the moment of the shootout approaches, the man who originally appropriated the chant says, “That which we are about to receive, we thank thee o Lord.” The shootout commences, and when it becomes realized that John Wayne and his posse have won, the Reverend says Hallelujah, whilst John Wayne continues shooting. Angered with the shootout, John Wayne yells at the men, “You don’t want to be with me for what I’m going to do.”

An ‘Us versus Them’ mentality dominates the clip as a major theme. It justifies the conflict and the makes the victory of the shootout worthy through the exploitation of stereotypes and markers of popular culture. The Native Americans are dehumanized initially by allotting them the role of the savage aggressor. Limiting their speaking to stereotypical chants, dress, and action illustrates that they are cast to fill the role of the “violent Indians” and are not meant to be portrayed as anything else. Furthermore, not hiring a Native American actor to play the chief, the only distinctive individual in the group shatters any Native American individualism that could have been portrayed. The white characters response to the chanting helps to solidify the “Us.” By mocking the Native Americans with appropriated chant, it takes away any gravity that their culture and their actions could have had. By labeling the chanting as a death song, the only piece of the clip that is close to being culturally relevant becomes synonymous with stereotypical savagery. (*The Searchers)*

References to Christianity also help to justify the shootout and the resulting victory. The Reverend giving the wounded man a bible, the man saying grace before the attack, and the Reverend proclaiming hallelujah at the end of the shootout portrays the group as moral and god fearing versus the violent others. The association between Christianity and morality is a founding

belief in Eurocentrism and has long been a part of Western culture. The Native Americans are already dehumanized and portrayed as violent, but with the addition of Christianity to the white men's fight, it's a battle between the immoral and moral. Christianity also creates a further justification for seemingly violent and aggressive actions if it is determined that people perpetrating harsh acts are doing so because it is god's will. The American West and the cowboy were driven by Manifest Destiny. The United States relationship with imperialism further demonstrates the idea that conquering is justified if it is spreading democracy and the example of a Christian founded nation.

The shootout scene from *The Searchers* highlights the racial tensions, stereotypical depictions of Native Americans, and the effect of Christian morality that were widely accepted in popular culture. Criticism of the selection of the clip could be based on its release in 1959. Because of the dated nature of the clip, the assertions made about a Eurocentric popular culture are no longer relevant in today's society. This clip was selected to illustrate the cultural gene pool of that has been passed down, and these cultural genes are still being carried, even if there are not outward signs, they are still a part of popular culture's heritage. This assertion is evident because John Wayne remains to be a cultural icon.

The second clip selected is from *The Seven Year Itch* starring Marilyn Monroe. This clip was chosen because of who Marilyn Monroe was in popular culture as a person, what her character represents, and the dialogue she shares in the scene. Marilyn Monroe evolved to be significant in popular culture by changing her name from Norma Jeane Mortenson, dying her hair, and undergoing plastic surgery. The blurring of celebrity and person meant the continuation of the public perception that shaped her into an iconic sex symbol. The idea of a woman being

nothing more than an object in a man's world confirms gender roles perpetuated by Eurocentrism.

In the film, Monroe's character is simply, The Girl, an unnamed beautiful woman who is the subject of the main character Richard Sherman's fantasy. The role's title, The Girl, is demeaning in both its lack of individuality and its referencing of Monroe as a girl instead of a grown woman. By not giving the character a name, individuality is stripped from the role and Monroe becomes a basic stand in for any other beautiful woman. By being titled, The Girl, Monroe is reduced to a simpler existence. Throughout *The Seven Year Itch* Monroe exudes sexuality while still maintaining a certain level of unspoiled purity that didn't exist outside of cinema in 1955. Through the casting of The Girl, Monroe further illustrated the maxim of femininity at the time, but was perpetually type casted as the soft dumb blonde fantasy of men and movie goers alike. (*The Seven Year Itch*)

As confined as Marilyn Monroe was in her gender role, her counterpart had more leverage. Richard Sherman, played by Tom Ewell, was validated by Marilyn Monroe because of his sensitive nature and his shy disposition. Marilyn Monroe goes beyond accepting him despite overwhelming masculinity and places his softer nature above his more macho counterparts. His ability to somewhat transcend his allotted gender role also rings of male privilege. Richard Sherman has much less constraints to abide by society aesthetically, thus his personality is enough to win Monroe over. Although Monroe's dialogue somewhat challenges preexisting notions of masculinity, she would not be afforded the same situation. Taking account of the many physical and personal changes she underwent to be in this role, she could not rely solely on personality; no woman could.

Marilyn Monroe's larger role in society as an American icon and an infamous sex symbol is also indicative of Eurocentric tendencies as her popularity is dependent on her being the epitome of Western beauty. She is white with platinum blonde hair, soft pink blush, and red lips. As sexed up as she is in certain roles, her classically iconic white dress, which incidentally comes from *The Seven Year Itch,* blowing up around her is appealing without being too provocative. The whiteness that surrounds her imbues a sense of purity and innocence that would not be associated with a woman of color. Marilyn Monroe, although sexy, is not remembered as trashy and is a treasured cultural icon. This privilege is based in a preference for her specific features and the lasting nature of her as an icon shows that what she represented is still valued today.

The final clip selected is from *Apocalypse Now*, an American film based on Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness.* Both the film and the novel deconstruct the corruption of man, when he is tempted with power and control over others. The clip begins with the description of Colonel Kurtz as a good man with outstanding qualities. He is not portrayed initially as mad, but as someone possibly corrupted by his experience with the Special Forces and his work in the field. The temptation of power and the ability to exercise more control warps Colonel Kurtz view of military leadership into deity status. General Corman describes the muddled nature of war and states, "Out there with those Natives, it must be a temptation to play God." (*Apocolypse Now)*



B**rush,** ***The Seven Year Itch,*** **Wheatpaste on Reuter, 2016**

Personifying God in man is a complicated assertion. It ties power and might to an Icarrian myth of man flying too high whilst committing heresy. Viewed as immoral and inhuman, man as God, especially a blood thirsty one, becomes twisted with personal dilemmas through the manipulation of others fates. Dictating and ruling with hate can become attractive if it means an establishment of power in what seems like a godforsaken place. Society has perpetually been a system of hierarchies, and Eurocentric popular culture has ruled as a dynasty. Although proclaiming dynastic rule as a group is less blasphemous than proclaiming God, justifying that power comes from God is eerily similar, specifically in relation to imperialism and manifest destiny. Popular culture influenced by Christianity enforces gender roles and has put white cisgender people ahead of people of color and the LBGTQ+ community. Closely held beliefs driven by popular culture have the power isolate groups. The recognition of a rogue Colonel is

the same as the recognition of a rogue cultural trait, in order to control it, we have to check ourselves and terminate with extreme prejudice.

The pieces of film chosen have been already circulated through popular culture; the sampling of these clips exemplifies the traits that have been cultivating through time. In the European bloodlines, hemophilia could be traced back to Queen Victoria as a common ancestor, Although the references in film are dated, we participate in a legacy from that time. The other aesthetic aspect of this project will be wheatpastes of Romanov portraits, wheatpasted stills from the clips, and wheatpaste animations of hands. The Romanov portraits are enlarged historical photographs. Because it is a conceptual gap between dynastic popular culture and the fall of the Russian Empire making the Romanovs any bit ambiguous seemed unwise for communication. Selection of photographs to wheatpaste were based on two conditions: how the figures fit the space, and the framed images became markers of power and significance. The three Romanov portraits I chose to frame where the entire royal family in a seated, official portrait, Alexei and Nicholas II because of the emphasis on primogeniture in the Russian bloodline, and a portrait of Alexei, the sole Tsarevich. By adding frames to the portraits of John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe, and Martin Sheen, I’m indicating another ruling class.



Brush, *Alexei and Nicholas II*, 2016, Wheatpaste on Carr

In order to make an aesthetic connection to the Romanov portraits, the stills from the film clips are still based largely on portraiture. The choice to cutout the background, so that only the frame and subject remained was intended to reference fine art and gallery space into a rougher context. Some of the figures are meant to remain unframed to be viewed as more approachable. The level of intimacy in the photographs is indicative of the choice to frame them or leave them in a more organic cutout form. The wheatpasted stills are the link of the adapted film to the street art installation. By encompassing the portraiture of the Romanovs while operating within their own culturally created environment, the wheatpastes of Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, and Martin Sheen visually connect to the rest of the installations. By using the same aesthetic, historical dynastical rule is tied to cultural dynastic rule and the relationship between power and trait is forged.

Animating the hands through wheatpaste was indicative of the evolution and appearance of bloodlines through physical veins. At the end of the animation the hand becomes self-aware and removes its own veins. This is a further complication of the metaphor. It's important to acknowledge the cultural traits that have been passed down from generation to generation. There is a multitude of ramifications surrounding Eurocentric popular culture, and some are shameful. However it is also not an option to remove what we choose not to see. These cultural traits are how we have gotten where we are and ignoring them, is ignoring our own existence. Ignoring the Eurocentric bloodline is also ignoring all the groups that have been affected by the marginalization. Similarly we are dependent on the cultural bloodline to give value to our existence, and traits that are harmful that we simply ignore instead of treat, remain harmfully within the cultural conversation. For example, looking at the Confederate Flag as a symbol of Southern Pride instead of as the flag that was a symbol of the Confederacy that fought to retain rights to slavery ignores the culpability of perpetuating systemic legacies from Jim Crow. The lack of acknowledgement of a harmful trait is synonymous with avoiding screening for certain diseases and avoiding preventative care; unhealthy and debilitating. The aesthetic of the animated hands is based on the animations of Stacy Steers. Her work is soft with limited color and the grace of her animations is what I tried to



Brush, *Vein Animation*, 2016, Digital Still



Steers, *Night Hunter*, 2011, 35 MM, Stereo Sound, 15:30, Source: cclarkgallery.com.

emulate. Her use of soft line and Victorian illustration are reminiscent of the Eurocentric aesthetic that I'm working with throughout my project.

The purpose of wheatpasting on Allegheny's campus is to physically mimic legacies of traits and unseen traditions surrounded what is commonly thought and seen. The wheatpastes are not meant to be immediately obvious and are meant to slowly become an accepted part of the campus environment. Like other markers of inherited cultural traits, what has been so deeply coded into an environment becomes ambiguous in meaning. Silently accepting these traits and indicators results in an uncritical submission to a questionable heritage and implicates missing a larger narrative. Although the images will be around campus, I believe they will mostly go unnoticed and understanding the larger narrative of the series will be difficult until the gallery opening.

Wheatpasting allows for more control over a public space than utilizing only traditional gallery space, but street art has additional connotations that need to be addressed for this project. Street art is illegal and accessible to every person. Artists and protesters alike have used street art to amplify ideas, causes, and careers that would otherwise be shut out of conversations. I'm engaging in street art on a college campus where I most likely have unofficial permission and I've already been guaranteed access to a gallery space. If I have the means to create art in a more

traditional sense and I've benefitted from the system that has granted me this access, how can I defend my occupation of space in a conversation that is much more desperate for others?

In the essay, "Black Hair/Style Politics," Kobena Mercer is critical of the relationship between popular Eurocentric culture had with Black culture in the United States. Mercer dissects Black culture through the various waves in movements through time in style, hair, and music. She discusses the attempt to assimilate into a popular culture that is never fully accepting, styles and culture that are specifically Black and speak to Black pride, and finally Black culture that becomes appropriated into mainstream culture.

> "Once commercialized in the market-place the Afro lost its specific signification as a "black" cultural-political statement. Cut off from its original political contexts, it became just another fashion: with an Afro wig anyone could wear the style." (Ferguson Pg. 255)

When something has been cultivated to hold cultural weight for a group of people that have had little space to occupy, appropriating it is unethical. Street art originated to spread political messages and social movements to the masses. A criticism of this project is that I'm appropriating street art as an art making practice, especially when my rebellion isn't against any real authority. I do believe that this criticism is valid and warranted. If I got caught while wheatpasting, I probably wouldn't be taken as a threat because I'm a blonde white girl. Where I'm putting up my work is a liberal arts college. It's where my peers and I run around trying to make a difference while hoping to be accepted into an M.B.A. program. Revolution cannot be spelled J. Crew. So why should I wheatpaste on a college campus besides my previous conceptual justification? Because I believe that street art is the most accessible art form, and

through its accessibility, I too have a right. An excerpt from *Untitled. II, The Beautiful Renaissance*-

> "You can try this at home! It's relatively safe. It's easy. You don't have to worry about pleasing a client or target audience. You get to experience the empowerment of being a cultural producer and the thrill of being an outlaw. You have moments and experiences that you would never otherwise have had. It grants you direct access to audience without forcing you to package yourself or prostrate yourself before the emperors of art and entertainment to beg for your fifteen minutes. It's fun. It's exciting. Do it! Do it tonight!" (Shove, pg. 32*)*

Although I am doing this project in order to graduate, which means I have a distinct target audience, I get to create in a way that before seemed impossible. By simply wheatpasting in the middle of the night, I'm defying the notion that women shouldn't be alone in the dark because there are bad men out there. I'm the one who's walking around with a hammer and a razor blade. I own that I am a blonde white girl, from a Catholic family, at a liberal arts campus, who's the women's tennis captain and who is employed through residence life, who creates a watered down version of street art. But the point of street art is to liberate the viewer as well as the artist, and although I have respect and gratitude for the positions I hold, I also feel liberated through my choice of execution for this project.

The culmination of wheatpastes and the film will be presented in the gallery alongside a performance piece that will take place on opening night. This performance piece is the insertion of myself into the dialogue that I've worked to create. The Eurocentric cultural traits have not only been passed to me, but I am the product of them and flourish because of them. Although it's

disadvantageous to have to conform to beauty standards, it's fortunate to fall within the most traditional of definitions. This piece is about how I interact with the marginalizing cultural traits that define me. I wanted to have an autobiographical element, which tapped into the dynamic of power, culture, and hereditary traits, while also being influenced by JR, a Parisian street artist that created art that added physical benefit. JR created giant vinyl portraits of residents and installed them on their deconstructing roofs, the portraits added identity to the space as well protecting the residents from inclement weather. Inspired by JR and wanting to personally embody the metaphor I had created, I decided to give blood.

The Romanovs were consumed by hemophilia so by simply giving blood I am completing a feat that would have otherwise damned the Russian Empire. By giving away blood, I'm giving away what I've physically inherited from my bloodline. What stagnates a trait and gives it an opportunity to become malicious is exclusivity. A desire for exclusivity was the source for hemophilia and remains the source Eurocentric culture that decries diversity, whether that be through race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. By giving blood I'm tapping into my own bloodline, separating my inherited physical and cultural traits and I am examining the exclusivity that created me into something accessible and lifesaving for someone else. I will not know who will be injected with my blood, and it can go to any person who is a match regardless of identity. The anonymity of who will receive my blood takes down what remains of predetermined exclusivity. Although the majority of my person remains exclusive, for a moment in time, physical barriers are broken down. Giving blood is however is not accessible to everyone, as gay men are not allowed to donate. This rule is a legacy from the AIDS crisis, and by giving blood myself, I acknowledge the discriminatory nature of the rule that is still in practice.

Conceptually this project examines the intersectionality of Eurocentric popular culture, of ruling classes both historical and cultural, the lineage that comes from both, and the physical embodiment of these ideologies within me. It is within the execution of this piece that I have pushed myself further as an artist and a human, and it is this project that epitomizes my undergraduate degree.

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