

Fierce Solitude

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Abstract

The idea of solitude is usually known as nonsocial. However, it does not contradict social engagement but deepens it. Currently in progress for the Student Scholars Program, my creative project explores a reconceptualization of solitude connecting to themes of family, memory, childhood, home, and the self. By researching various historical and contemporary interpretations as foundational tools informing my work, I came back to the familial space of the house. Sewing and knitting nightgowns and slippers and then hanging them on a clothesline tell the story of my household's significant female figures- grandmother, mother, and daughter. I draw upon new experiences with solitude in this space with a knitted blanket where patches of sewn muslin signify the places I've lived and the beaded words narrate feelings of home. Connecting to my black multicultural identity, I deepen my self awareness and connection to the outside world by claiming my space in solitude.



Project Statement

Fierce Solitude will embolden artistic identity and claim solitude by a Black/Hispanic/Latina female artist. This research is important to the field of visual arts, as it creates and encourages deeper conversations about solitude that encompass contemporary spirituality, philosophy, identity, and empowerment. Redefining solitude provides new instantiations that go beyond the classical western definition and appropriation of the concept. I decolonize the concept of solitude and show the fierce positive force it can be.



Project Goals

The goal of this project is:

- To define my role as a multicultural female artist and claim my space as an artist who thrives in and makes work about solitude.
- Present a range of possibilities of what solitude can be in research and artmaking.
- Apply personal experiences to define the essence of the relationship of solitude and creativity to art-making.
- Use reflective practice to develop and produce artwork.
- Understand how solitude is an act of being connected in space, environment, with self, and others.

INTRODUCTION

- My research and analysis relied on various historical and contemporary sources and interpretations of what solitude is.
- I observed how philosophers have generated various definitions, beginning with Aristotle's description of solitude as, "fit only for beasts or gods". Today, the idea of solitude where the intellect meditates alone is a cliché of western culture.
- I was impressed to find some contemporary interpretations that began to separate from the traditional meaning.
- Clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, Danielle Knafo relates solitude to relatedness stating that instead of understanding solitude as contradicting to social engagement, it can deepen it.
- I mainly referenced the works of two writers Iyanla Vanzant and Dorthe Nors as a metaphysical/ conceptual backbone to the artmaking process. I resonated with Dorthe Nors, a Danish writer, who articulates solitude as the ability to be with yourself and to be open to the life that you carry.
- Iyanla Vanzant, creator of her television series, *Iyanla, Fix My Life*, guides others with her personal experiences and provides healing and awareness to families spiritually troubled. Vanzant is the main inspiration for the reconceptualization of solitude.
- Through my findings and my own personal experiences, I identified several key concepts to begin developing ideas for each piece. Key concepts included: sense of place, home, family, childhood, imagination, memory, and self.

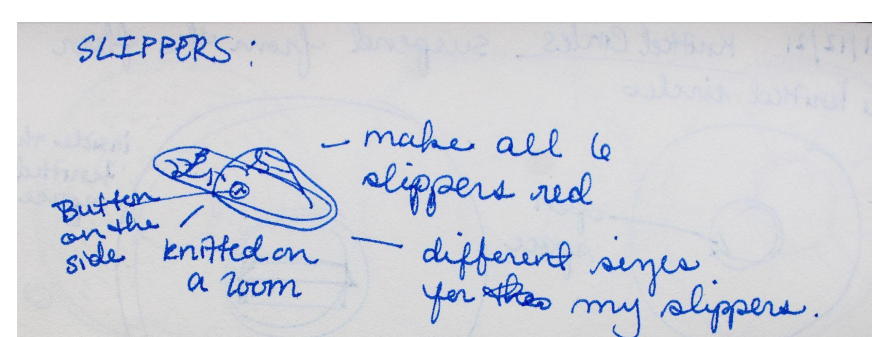
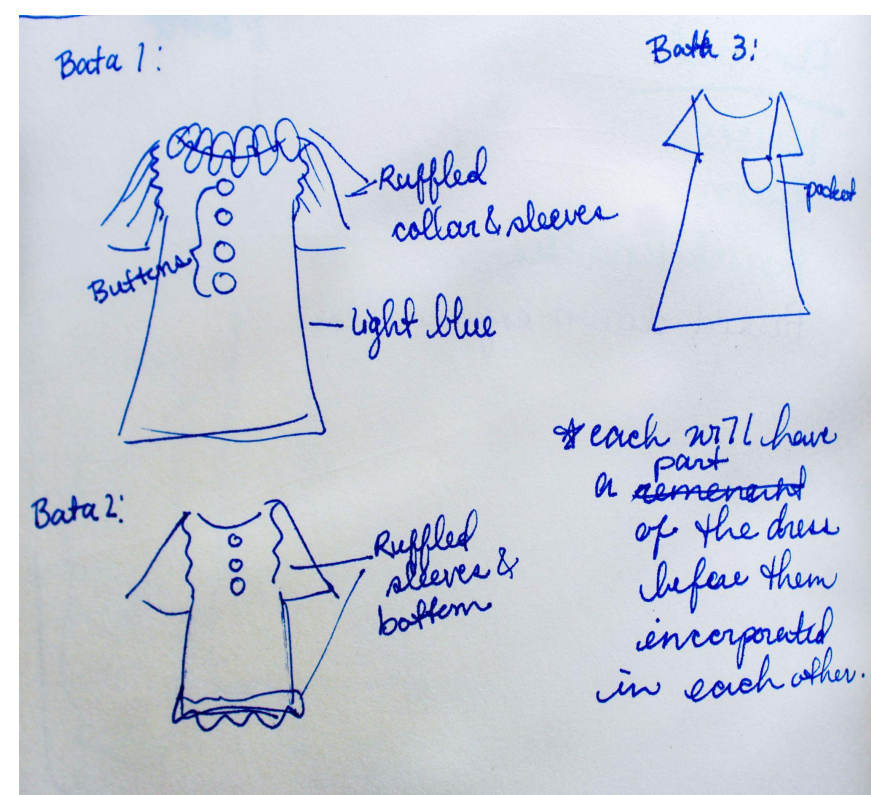
CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

- For the development of each project, I allowed myself room for exploring different materials and techniques that felt appropriate to the key concepts..
- A visual diary was kept to develop ideas and create concept sketches for each project, compile a reference list of concepts, notes, images, and sources.
- I met with my mentor every two to three weeks to discuss the progress of each project.
- With each completed project, I submitted a short verbal presentation to my mentor connecting to my key concepts.

PRODUCTION

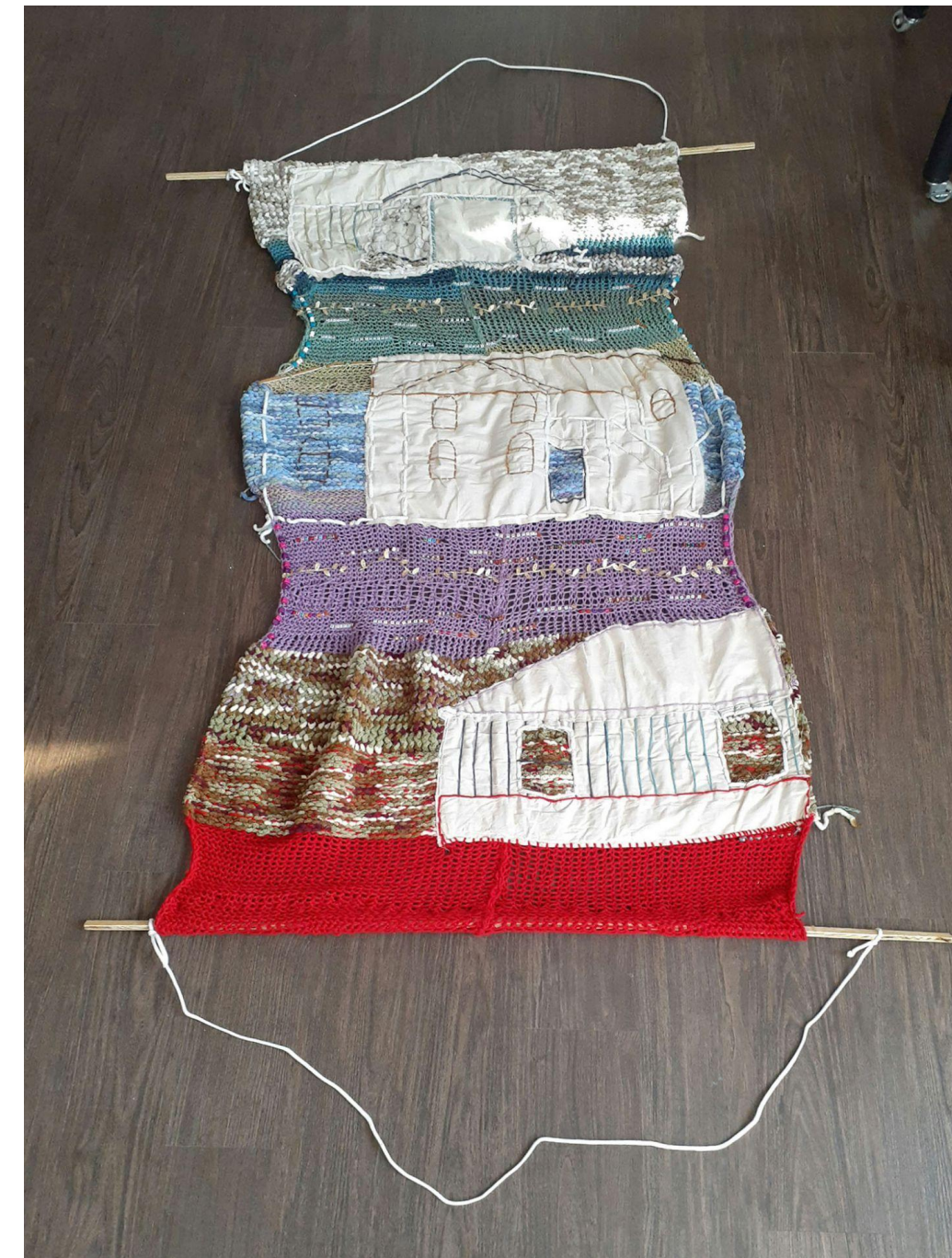
Batas and Slippers

- La Bata is a Spanish term for dress/nightgown. I was reminded of my late grandmother who would use this term when I was little.
- Through a conversation with my mother, I understood the significant roles the women in my family played and how those roles were passed onto me. "*You are my mirror, just like I was for my mom.*" This quote by my mother inspired the creation for this installation. The batas became a narrative and representation of who I am within my familial community.
- I purchased three corresponding colors of fabric; each would represent a female figure; grandmother, mother, and daughter.
- I referenced a nightgown I already owned to determine the sizes of each gown doubling the sizes that best matched my mother and grandmother.
- For the gowns, I gave each of them their own unique features while carrying some of these features into the next gown. This is to indicate that each woman carries the same trait as the other.
- For the slippers, I used a circular knitting loom for a faster process and red yarn. The red yarn reminded me of the hibiscus flowers my grandmother used to grow around the house as well as the feelings of warmth and comfort within the home.



House Hammock:

- My mother would tell me the story of how she learned how to knit, sew, and crochet at a program for young mothers. The baby blankets she made me, which I still keep, was the inspiration for the House Hammock.
- I thought about how the idea of home and family largely shaped my personal identity. I found solitude within my tightly knit familial community.
- For this piece, I worked with narrating the feelings of home by depicting three of the Florida homes I lived in as a child sewn into a knitted blanket.
- I chose several skeins of multicolored yarn to create an abstract background that reminds me of my time in Florida. The blanket was also knitted on a circular knitting loom.
- For the homes, I sketched and cut out portions of each house and hand stitched them to the blanket with yarn that corresponded with each of the homes. I then cut out shapes to allow the background to show through.
- Letter beads were sewn through the empty spaces of the blanket. Words included *belonging, space, community, etc* as they narrated feelings of home.
- The final product will be displayed as a hammock in the Fine Arts Building during the BFA Exhibition in May.



The Work



"Mirrors of Each Other"
Medium: Fiber/Textile installation
hung on clothesline

"House Hammock"
Medium: Fiber/Textile
installation hung on clothesline



Conclusion

- Though this research is still ongoing, I have realized how my home and family life is heavily intertwined with the concept of solitude. I see that it's not just one idea but in fact, it connects to many concepts, especially selfhood.
- The idea that experiences and connections of the outside world are possible to achieve in solitude and for myself, this was my inner, familial community.
- Personally, solitude is a reflection of who I am, where I have been, and how I got here. These questions will guide me in my future work.
- Solitude can extend and reflect an alternative form of identity art: knowing who you are and embracing all that you find there outside of the political and social issues that many contemporary artists focus on.
- Solitude can link to personal identity within the concepts of sense of place, home, family, childhood, imagination, memory, and self.
- Solitude is the ability to be with yourself and open to the life you carry and aware of how one shows up in life and in the world.

Works Cited

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