

Roxy Jamin
That's How the Shadows Pile Up

I aim to examine the shadows between things and what we, as humans, fill them in with in order to understand the definition or essence of “being”. These ambiguous gaps are attempted to be filled by both quantitative and qualitative aspects: our anatomy, including our physical presence and the mass, volume, and magnetic pull on the universe, as well as developed metaphysical ideas of identity, religion, personal spirituality, a universal symbolic index, and concept development through language and narrative. This constant balance of both science and metaphysics in understanding human composition begs specific and nagging questions:

How does one retain an identity, a personal narrative, a sense of definite self within the knowledge of being the sum of scientific law and parts? And where does the science end and the metaphysical begin?

One way of exploring these questions is through both historical and current investigations into reverie and dream states, concept development through language and emblems, biology, natural philosophy (the predecessor to modern science which viewed philosophy and science as one and the same), and religion. All of these mediums have been used consistently to understand– and I hope to pull from all of them evenly and allow them to exist simultaneously, liminally, and in great conversation.

The dichotomy between matter and metaphysics is investigated through video/performance work, sculpture, and drawing, all encompassed in an installation which works to document my existence, scale, and identity through empathetic and intimate methods paired with scientific demonstrations. Resembling both a scientific display and a religious altar in form, this piece compiles the many mediums I use to understand my place and scale. Garments sewn from outlines of my own body, and a sheet standing at my own height and maximum width–decorated with diagrammatic measurements specific to my anatomy and movement– hang framing the central display. Within the central installation, diagrams of shadows are presented in both a cosmic scale (a model of an eclipse) and a terrestrial scale (shadows cast from a light source on objects). A video plays centrally and restarts on a loop every 17 minutes, depicting a specific state of reverie in which the mind and body are oddly separated and viewed cyclically through universal themes of mass, dream, and ritual.

In these cumulative works, I hope to gradually gain insight into the space in-between which I inhabit– through methods both ancient and modern, lucid and somnambulatory, material and metaphysical. A likely and beautiful conclusion: One may never really be able to quantify the human experience, and that shadow in our being is just too great to ever put a name on.

Transcription of sporadic writing used within the thesis piece itself:

There was a great heaving upwards, a massive and subterranean quake, and every inch of skin on the body had seemed to move one centimeter to the right– or the left– but whichever way it was, it certainly didn't look as it had looked before.

The great quake continued, and this time it moved obliquely. And only the sky is open, because everything is full of sap.

Beneath the space that one takes up, the contents had jumbled their order around a bit. But still there was patient waiting, always patient waiting, for the subsurface shift to show itself–to make itself known as more than a phantom feeling! Instead, a liminal shadow shrouded the feeling from any true visual perception, which is considered more reliable than that odd, mammal intuition.

It's pinning a fruit fly to the wall: a small thing which easily slips through fingers, bad to get on, so bad that you can recognize it.

The debt of gravitational energy may never be paid off
Especially for perpetual motion machines
And those who wish to maintain a sense of balance.

With unbent light, that's how the shadows pile up. Not the same everywhere.