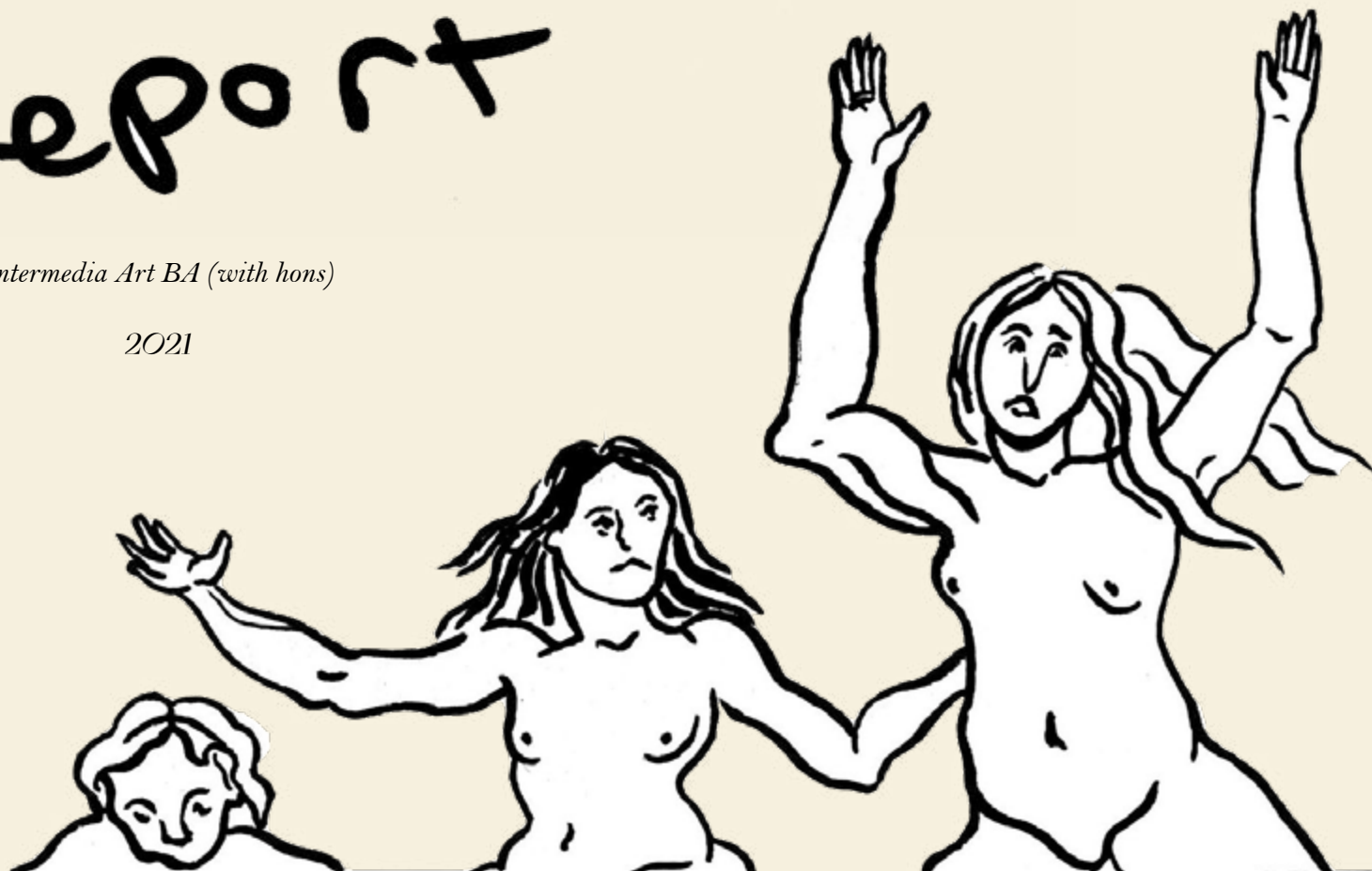


Maria Cecilie Wrang-Rasmussen

Research Report

Intermedia Art BA (with hon)

2021



Artists statement

I work with storytelling, drawing, animation, and coding. I am currently examining themes of memories, queer identity, and time through non-linear narratives and compositions.

Considering the idea of simultaneity and Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome, has led me to look ahead at digital technologies and to the past into historical sources. The rhizome looks at information as a grid of connected points, like mushroom roots or an ant colony, connected and responding to each other. I see rhizomatic patterns in different places, from webpages to fresco wall paintings and Choose Your Own Adventure novels.

The pattern shows up in my drawings, with entangled bodies in ink and charcoal, touching, colliding, pushing against each other, and in the browser, where narratives unfold and loop together. In my moving image work, soft movements and multiple events unfold simultaneously to express the fluidity of identity and intimacy. These animations branch out: in some paths they exist purely as film, some as physical objects in art installations, and finally some are integrated in my browser-based art, where the moving images, static drawings, and stories are combined.

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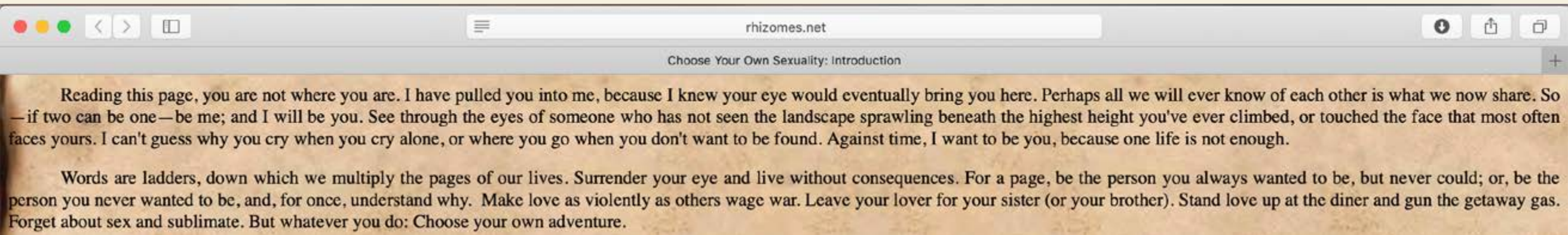
Please feel free to get in contact for any questions or enquiries.

The following section contains an edited version of my artistic research report, which expands on my research topics, influences, and work process.

If you would like to read the full high-quality document please feel free to contact me.



Fresco study, charcoal on paper, 210 x 297 mm



"Reading this page, you are not where you are. I have pulled you into me, because I knew your eye would eventually bring you here... Against time, I want to be you, because one life is not enough."

This is how Brooke M. Campbell starts the introduction for the 2004 entry in the online journal Rhizomes: cultural studies in emerging knowledge.

When researching my dissertation on the topic of Time and Memory in artist's moving image, I was introduced to the time philosophy of Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. In an introduction to Deleuze's written by James Williams, I read Deleuze's concept of time:

"There is no general line of time and no space-time continuum. Instead, singular processes make their own times within limits set by some wider formal principles" (Williams, 2011 p.5).

This is describing simultaneity, and he expands on the concept through illustrating a scene of a cemetery:

Every day, in a corner of a Victorian cemetery, a few feet away from the grave marking the death of a loved one, an ageing figure copes with grief and loss by feeding pigeons and squirrels at the foot of a decaying statue. None of these actors and things exists in the same time, the same present. The events around each singular thing, the events whose synthesis creates the thing, determine a present (Williams, 2011 p.5).

This story stuck with me, how using a short, simple story can make sense of such a big concept.

Rhizomatic mushroom root structure



Throughout my work this year I have been creating browser-based artwork exploring the structure and presentation of non-linear storytelling.

The stories I want to tell are complicated, they jump in time, change between narrators, morph between bodies.

My browser-based artworks are open and accessible to everyone through the website-URL. Provoking the barrier between the author and the viewer, reactive programming lets the browser artwork form itself around the viewers mouse-movement and clicks. There is no one way to view them, no definite start or end, just moments.

I started creating hand drawn animations, and the traces left from the previous frames created beautiful captures of movement. These animations branched out, in some paths they existed purely as film, some as physical objects installed as art, and finally they made it into my browser-based art, where the moving images were combined with static drawings and stories.



perhaps mythical labyrinth. I imagined it untouched and perfect on the secret summit of some mountain; I imagined it drowned under rice paddies or beneath the sea; I imagined it infinite, made not only of eight-sided pavilions and of twisting paths but also of rivers, provinces and kingdoms. . . . I thought of a maze of mazes, of a sinuous, ever growing maze which would take in both past and future and would somehow involve the stars.

Lost in these imaginary illusions I forgot my destiny—that of the hunted. For an undetermined period of time I felt myself cut off from the world, an abstract spectator. The hazy and murmuring countryside, the moon, the decline of the evening, stirred within me. Going down the gently sloping road I could not feel fatigue. The evening was at once intimate and infinite.

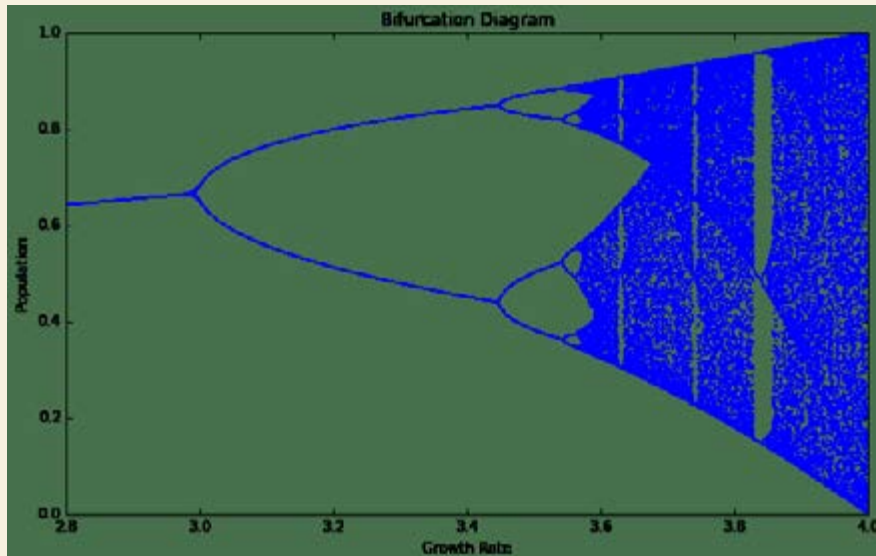
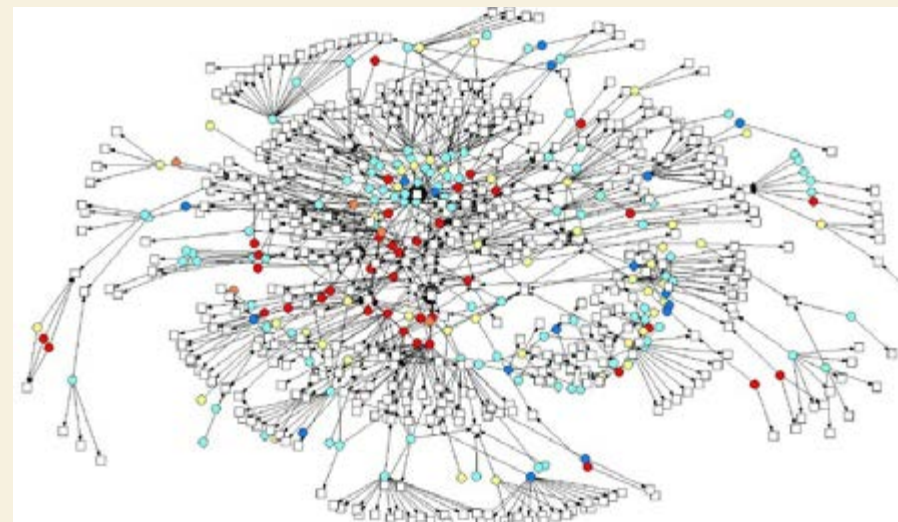
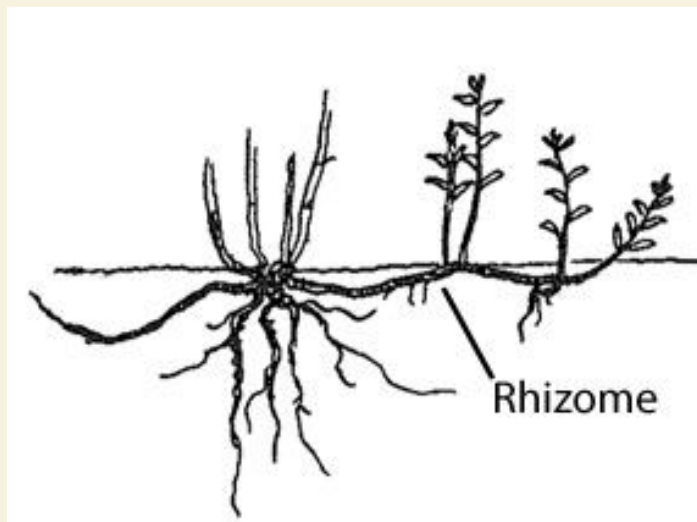
Jorge Luis Borges *The Garden of Forking Paths*



Tree

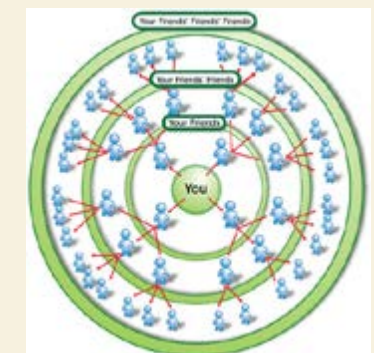
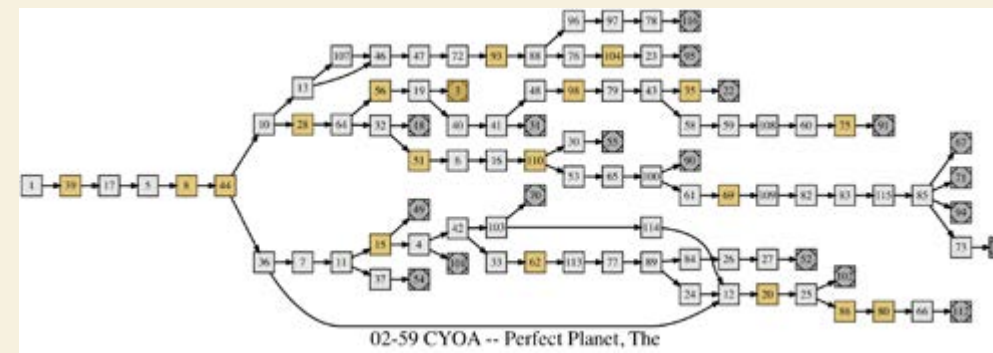
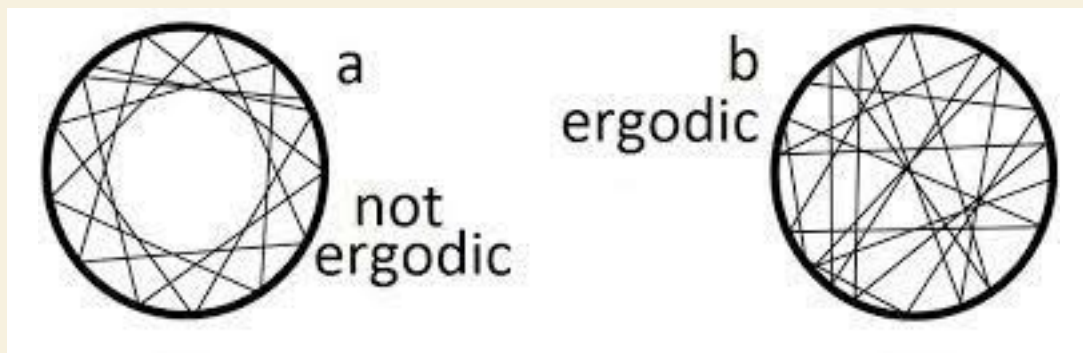


Rhizome



98 / Jorge Luis Borges

The Garden of Forking Paths was the chaotic novel itself. The phrase 'to various future times, but not to all' suggested the image of bifurcating in time, not in space. Re-reading the whole work confirmed this theory. In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives he chooses one at the expense of the others. In the almost unfathomable *Ts'ui Pên*, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them. He thus creates various futures, various times which start others that will in their turn branch out and bifurcate in other times. This is the cause of the contradictions in the novel.





You have taken on the role of an investigator:

You are searching.

You crawl on the forest floor and looking through a magnifying glass you see how an ant colony is digging the channels between their underground tunnels.

You pull out a patch of seedling and study the structure of the roots, how they've spread underground from the mother plant to sprout new off-shoots.

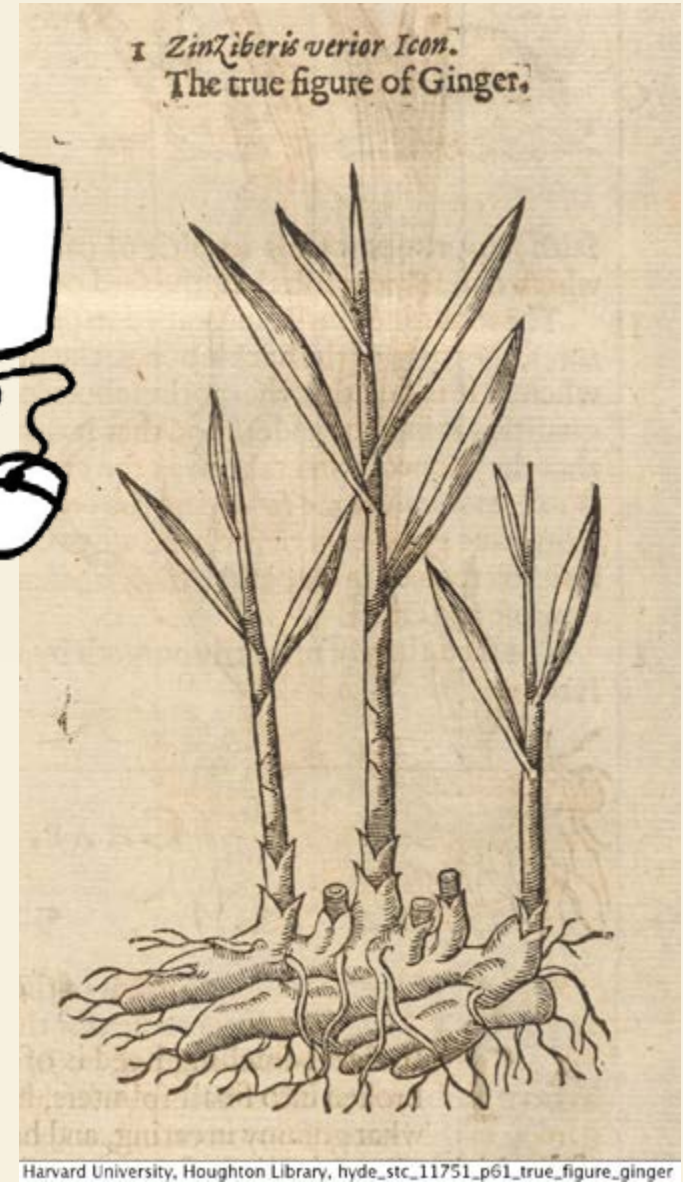
You enter the old library and pull a book called *The garden of forking paths* off the shelf.



You pick up William Gibson's book *Neuromancer* and flip through the pages to his description of cyberspace:

"Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data."

You turn on the computer and look behind the screen. You see links, connections, between servers, people, networks of information. Images repeat and spread like the ant colony grows.



Blog environments - The Anonumous Author - Confiding in the internet - Queer Memories - Self-fictioning

But what, you might ask, does this have to do with sexuality and/or queer history? As an experiment in queer metahistory, this project is premised on the following hypothesis: Any history which purports to engage queer identity must itself be queer, and in order to write queer history, the historian must venture beyond that linear, singular subjectivity s/he has long inhabited. It is thus to the nonlinear, intersubjective narratives found in such places as the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series that I suggest we turn as a means of escaping the predicament in which those of us currently witnessing the "coming out" of traditional history--which before did not embrace queer identity--into an era which insists upon this embrace find ourselves. Suddenly tuned in to a supposedly heretofore-latent "gaydar," today's historian faces a perplexing conundrum: official documentation of queer identity both preceding and including the twentieth century is exceedingly difficult to procure; however, the historian faces this conundrum in the wake of an ever-increasing awareness that, for a variety of reasons, much documentation which once appeared official—and was on this basis ceded status as "traditional history"—does so no longer, and that the preservation, circulation, and interpretation of such "evidence" has often better reflected present politics than past realities. Thus, the best intentions of such gay liberationist historians as Duberman—who writes that "the history of gay people shows that despite repression, secrecy and shame, we as a people have nonetheless survived.... and therefore this history can provide real inspiration to everyone else to be just as different as they really are"—and D'Emilio—who writes that "...only the conviction that the [gay liberation] movement would be strengthened by the retrieval of its hidden early history kept me at it"—to add official documentation and evidence of queer identity to the snowball of "traditional history" sadly coincide with the melting of this same snowball. To borrow from Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, queer history endeavors to "replenish the gaps of memory" as traditional history begins to "challenge even those memories that have survived intact."

Screenshots from *Choose your own sexuality: An Adventure in Queer History* by Brooke M. Campbell, 2004
<http://www.rhizomes.net/issue8/campbell/campintr.htm>

Writing is a key aspect of my art practice. This year, considering how memories work, how malleable and unreliable the present remembering the past is, has led me to a focus on re-constructing memories. Writing about remembering and revising the past has been a way for me to explore sexuality and identity. Continuing with my research into the rhizome I found that the best format to work with these themes is non-linear.

"Any history which purports to engage queer identity must itself be queer, and in order to write queer history, the historian must venture beyond that linear, singular subjectivity s/he has long inhabited."

- Brooke M. Campbell.

"To truly capture such cascading permutations, one would need a computer."

- Janet H. Murray.

part of the way we experience the world. To be alive in the twentieth century is to be aware of the alternative possible selves, of alternative possible worlds, and of the limitless intersecting stories of the actual world. To capture such a constantly bifurcating plotline, however, one would need more than a thick labyrinthine novel or a sequence of films. To truly capture such cascading permutations, one would need a computer.

Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet On the Holodeck : the Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, 1997.

"Janet H. Murray, author of *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, traces the history of similar such narratives all the way back to the tradition of oral storytelling - wherein the storyteller calibrated both the style and content of narration to the tenor of audience response - through a twentieth century gravitation toward narratives evincing 'multiple intersecting points of view.'"

Brooke M. Campbell, *Choose your own sexuality: An Adventure in Queer History*, 2004.

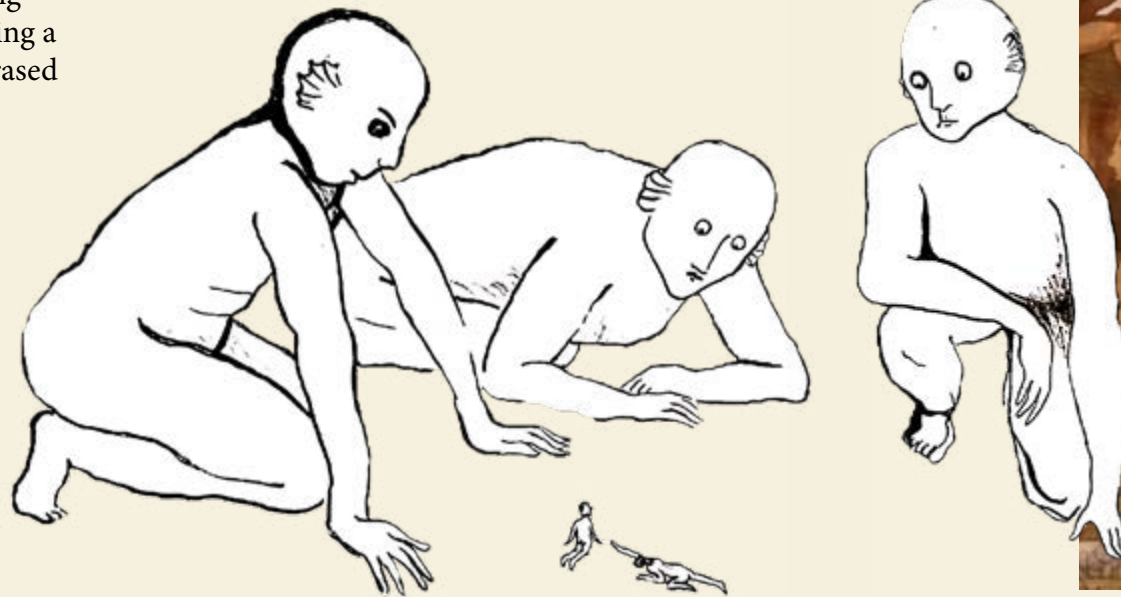
Moulding the queer body though animation.

I participated in the Edinburgh College of Art Animation Department's creative marathon *10x10x21*, creating a new film within 24 hours for 10 work days in a row. As I was already experimenting with creating visualisations of my written concepts, this high-pressure animation schedule pushed me to experiment with new techniques. I found animating with charcoal and ink on acetate, reminiscent as a medium, of my theme.

This has led me to playing with the materiality of animation, rub out charcoal animations with the paper capturing the texture of the movement, creating a smudged effect as the frames get erased and redrawn.

Animation is a medium which allows for exploration and transformation. It's unique in its moldability, whether referring to the actual moldability of Claymation; as seen in the work of Czech filmmaker Jan Švankmajer or the painterly fluidity of 2d animation like the surreal landscapes and character design of the meditating giants in *Fantastic Planet*.

Italian Renaissance Fresco compositions have fed my portrayal of actions, characters and relational bodies.



La Planète Sauvage (Fantastic Planet), 1973,
below is my sketch of this still.



The Last Judgement, Fresco,
begun 1572 by Giorgio Vasari.



La Planète Sauvage (Fantastic Planet), 1973.



The animated body is imagined, sculpted, painted, de-constructed, reconstructed, inhabited, mechanized, projected and forsaken.



Above: Quay Brothers' *Street of Crocodiles*, 1986.

To the left: Selected works by Jan Švankmajer: (*Darkness/Light/Darkness*), 1989, *Dimensions of Dialogue*, 1982, and *Punch and Judy*, 1966.



***Stroke(whisper* combines different elements of my methods and research.**

With *Stroke(whisper* I aimed to create a browser based work with a slow tempo, and a focus on visual storytelling.

I wanted the freedom to both talk directly about some of the things I have been researching as well as exploring the themes through more abstract forms of drawing and animation.

I liked looking at characters from Renaissance frescos, and wanted to explore how my compositions of androgynous bodies all twisted together would lend itself to ideas of queer revisionist history.

I worked on a collection of cyber vignettes, little humans moving through times within times within time. Again referring to previously found theories of the graveyard, the Rhizome and the ant colony. The viewer moves through a browser maze and the animations unfold and change with their movement.

I use this website to display my animations as full-page interactive drawings. This both captures my interest in the Rhizome, different events unfolding simultaneously, and my work with memories and queerness, as the androgynous figures reach for each other again and again, the charcoal traces captures their movements in time, like whispers of a brushstroke.

Watch my animation work process here:

<https://vimeo.com/516435796>

and

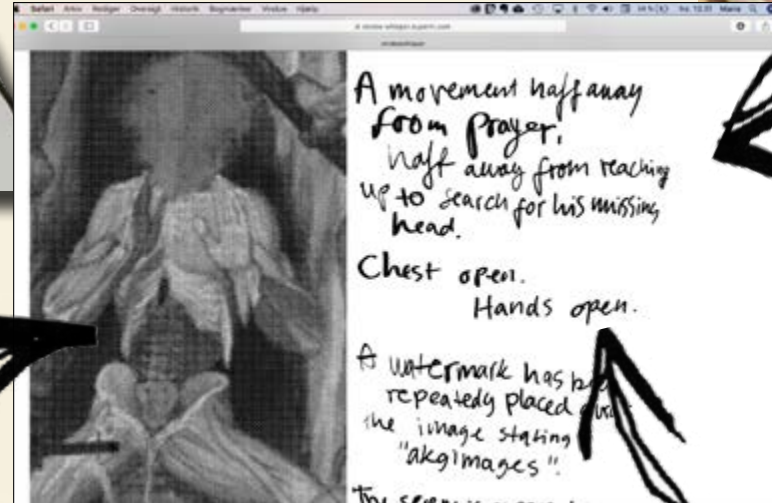
<https://vimeocom/548600381>

In *Stroke(whisper)* I combine the at times grotesque renaissance figures with my own iterations of androgynous characters.

Through peeling back layers of skin, bodily organs, and corporeal forms, creating simplified expressions of humans, I move outside the boundaries of gender as a way to explore queer-ness and intimacy.



2D
Hand drawn
Animation



Charcoal
Drawing

Fresco
Inspired
Compositions



You have travelled back in time.

It is 1580 and you are in Florence, Italy.

You are walking into the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore,
the cathedral of Florence.

As you move through the cathedral, you come to a stop
under the dome and you look up at the newly finished
fresco decorating the inside.

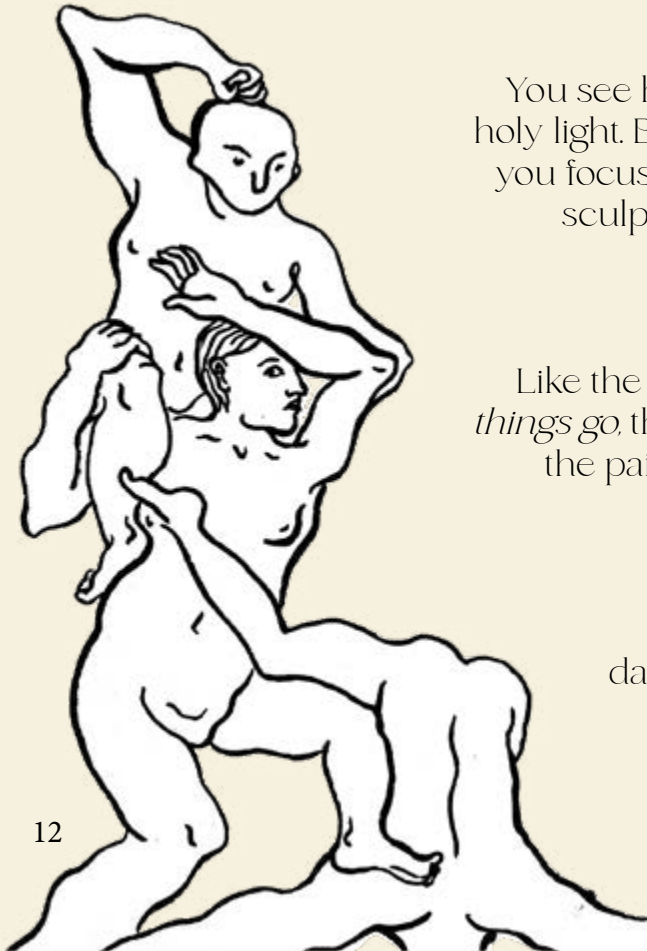
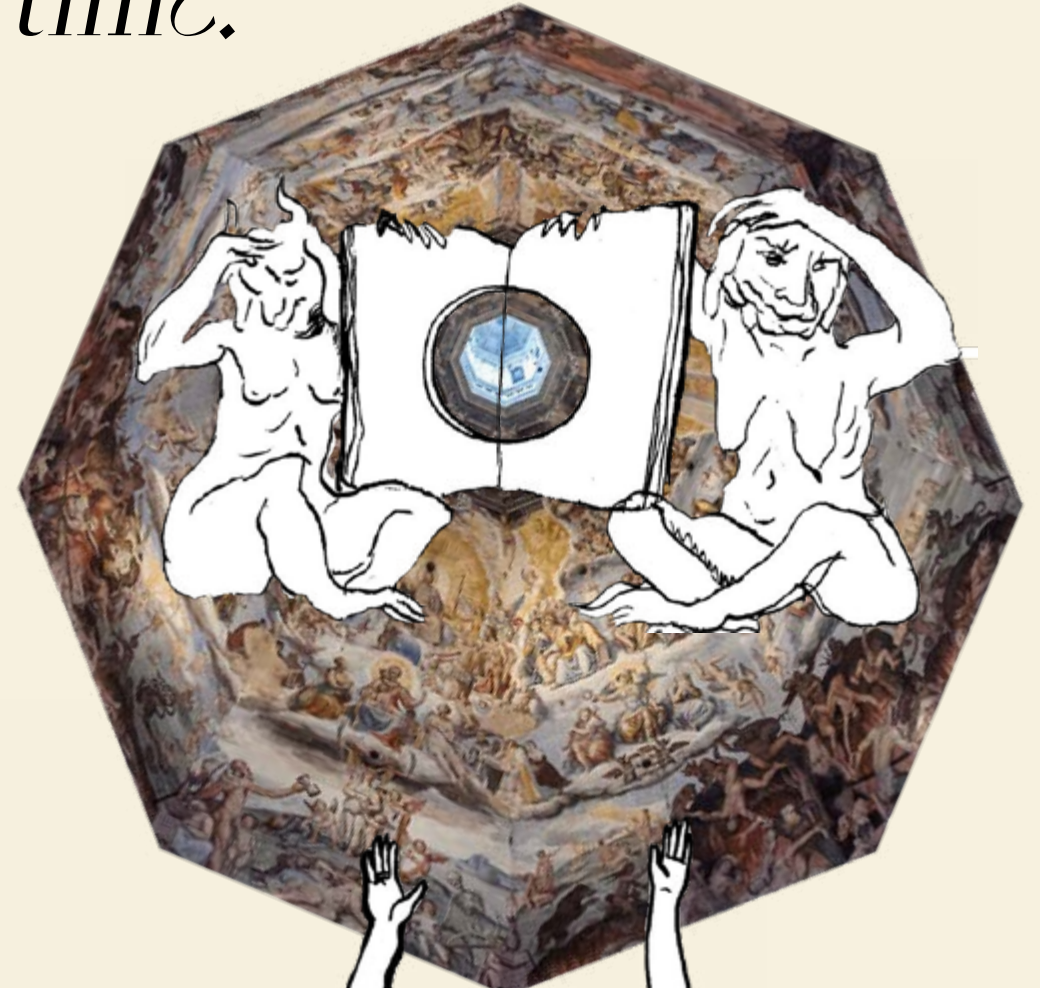
You see hundreds of characters ascending towards the
holy light. But instead of imagining the bottom layers of hell,
you focus in on the composition, how the characters are
sculpted and muscular; how they twist together:

Bodies on bodies on bodies.

Like the chain reaction in Fischli and Weiss's *The way
things go*, the characters prompt each other's movement as
the painting wraps around the inside of the dome.

The bodies are alive.

They are
dancing, embracing, touching, and kissing.





Michelangelo Medici Chapel marble sculpture for the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, 1520–34.



Details from charcoal drawing,
Everything all at once one by one.



Details from charcoal drawing,
Everything all at once one by one.



Expulsion from the Garden of Eden,
Fresco by Masaccio, 1425

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