Autopathography

Aurora Berger

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autopathography
Claremont Graduate University
East Gallery
251 East 10th Street
Claremont, CA, 91711
Gallery Hours: M-F 10am-5pm

autopathography

Aurora Berger
MFA Thesis Exhibition

April 1st-5th
Reception:
Tuesday, April 2nd, 6-9 pm

www.auroraberger.com
https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_mfatheses/162

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Artist’s Statement

Aurora Berger

For centuries the stories of disabled people were not our own to tell. We were silenced by politics and power dynamics beyond our control, and when we succeeded it was “in spite of” our disabilities. I am interested in the reframing of this narrative and discovering my place in this historic trajectory.

I am a disabled artist. I have claimed this identity. It is critical that this identity remains tied to my work as I navigate the worlds of fine art, academia, and critical theory. My art is intrinsically tied to my academic work. They are inseparably bonded through my sense of identity. My visual art creates an expansive body of self-portraiture which is supported by my writing and theoretical contributions.

I have no interest in the common narratives of disability in art. The stories of overcoming, the tortured artists isolated by their illnesses. The story that I want to tell is my own, one of reckoning with mortality. I approach my work with a sense of morbid optimism. Life is short, make art about the things that you care about.

Cumulatively my work creates an expansive self-portrait. Some images are literal—photographs of my body, documentations of my life. Others build on environmental cues that place the viewer in my position through fragmented imagery and visual confrontation. Regardless of individual content, the photographs work together to tell my story from my own perspective. Through this work, I’m interested in investigating ideas of capacity, normalcy, disability, agency, visual acuity, and interpretation.

I have been visually impaired for my entire life, and as such I fell in love with cameras at an early age. The lenses and resulting imagery create extensions of my visual field. After years of experimentation with different subject matter, I finally turned the camera on myself. I set up a backdrop and lights in my studio apartment in Arizona, grabbed my remote, and began shooting. I didn’t know what I was looking for, but I knew it was time to reckon with this body that I lived in. I didn’t want to be trapped by its restrictions anymore.

As I inspected the prints weeks later, I began to see the parts of my body that I had never noticed before: the delicate stretch marks spanning my thighs, hips, and chest; the tension in my back muscles; the thin dark veins against my pale wrists and feet. I saw for the first time a body that was working overtime to exist every day. I left my coveted normal label behind and embraced my disability for the first time.

I feel that my role as a disabled artist and writer is to bridge the divide between the private disabled spaces that I inhabit and the public spaces that I share with other people. As an artist I do this by creating documentation of these private moments, forging insight, a visual guide to navigating my experience. My practice is always, foremost, about creating the work that I need. Some days it is a need for expression, a visual answer to a question that has worked its way into my private life and desperately seeks a formal solution. Other days my work is a form of therapy, the act of photographing allowing me to work out my own questions. Much of this work will never see the light of day, and that is okay. My work is not about production, but processing.

As a photographer I am immersed in the visible. As an invisibly disabled artist I am constantly searching for the edges of that vision. My photographs are a vindication of my fears, a declaration of humanity. I am here. I am disabled. I am telling my own story.
1. **EKG 8-FEB-2004**
   Wall Painting
   24x1074
   2019

2. **Perceptions XVIII**
   Archival Pigment Print
   30x40
   2016

3. **Perceptions XVII**
   Archival Pigment Print
   30x40
   2016

4. **Perceptions XIV**
   Archival Pigment Print
   30x40
   2016

5. **Remnants from the Medical Industrial Complex**
   Archival Pigment Prints
   105x140
   2018
6. *Reclamation*
Archival Pigment Print
40x60
2018

7. *In the Ferns*
Archival Pigment Print
40x60
2018

8. *Autopathography*
Gallery Overview
2019

9. *Autopathography*
Gallery Overview
2019

10. *Autopathography*
Catalogue
2019
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**BERGER, AURORA**

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