

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

*FULL SPARKLE*

Misty Long-Donoho

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts, School of Art and Design

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Abstract:

Through the investigation of my life I have discovered central practices that contribute to my flourishing wellbeing, or what I now call Full Sparkle. The practices of Full Sparkle are connection with community, liberating trickster energy, playfully subverting people and places, and mindfulness. Utilizing the practices of Full Sparkle, I create participatory sculpture that calls into question the societal norms and restrictions of places and why as individuals we continue to follow them. By playfully subverting places and people, my work challenges and changes the rules and restrictions of said place. It bolsters the wellbeing of the folks that connect with it and fosters meaningful connection with them to build community.

Dedication

to the many

to the few

to myself

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# Full Sparkle Manifesto

Full Sparkle: noun; a balance of the inner and outer self, embracing both hedonic and eudemonic living/practices so that my (Misty Long-Donoho) wellbeing flourishes.

Bulleted items are subject to change from day to day and moment to moment.

Refer to the end of the thesis for your own flourishing wellbeing manifesto worksheet.

What it is	What it is not
<p>Thursday April 15<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hitting the snooze on the alarm</li> <li>• Half of my everything bagel</li> <li>• Styling my hair to look like a badass</li> <li>• Wearing a hot pink shirt</li> <li>• Resonating with an article about socially engaged art</li> <li>• Sharing the best part of my week in class</li> <li>• Hearing the best part of my classmate's week</li> <li>• Sharing a meal and conversation with Kat not in Alfred</li> <li>• When Kat said, "I just want to roll around in the sand with you"</li> <li>• Having a funny awkward moment with a cashier at Lowes</li> <li>• Writing my thesis</li> <li>• Rediscovering a gif of Turtle the cat I made last year</li> </ul>	<p>Thursday April 15<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress from not waking up early to begin working</li> <li>• The other half of the bagel</li> <li>• Chugging my coffee so I wasn't late</li> <li>• Cutting Kat off mid-sentence</li> <li>• Trying to carry too much stuff to school</li> <li>• Working on my thesis poster</li> <li>• Writing my thesis</li> </ul>

What it is	What it is not
<p>Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking with Sam and experiencing her glowing calm energy</li> <li>• Working with Brett to make my thesis posters</li> <li>• Having lunch with Kim</li> <li>• A test of my patience with folks who aren't putting in effort</li> <li>• Playing with the bike horns in my studio</li> <li>• My mom reaching out to me via text</li> <li>• Putting up my thesis posters</li> </ul>	<p>Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A test of my patience with folks who aren't putting in effort</li> <li>• Shopping too quickly at Lowes before the store closes</li> <li>• Feeling anxious about all the little things for this show</li> <li>• My mom reaching out to me via text</li> <li>• All the people in Walmart not wearing masks</li> <li>• The Butterfinger I ate</li> </ul>

What it is	What it is not
<p>Saturday April 17<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating donuts with Kat</li> <li>• Having a good moment of writing</li> <li>• Viewing my colleagues' art</li> <li>• Receiving a hug</li> <li>• Avoiding someone</li> </ul>	<p>Saturday April 17<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching a cat get mauled by a huge racoon ☹</li> <li>• Avoiding someone</li> </ul>

What it is	What it is not
<p>Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A surprise piece of cheesecake</li> <li>• Working with Kat on the sewing</li> <li>• A short educational video about dolphins and sound</li> <li>• Eating a salad</li> </ul>	<p>Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing unfinished work to upset me</li> <li>• Cleaning up cat vomit</li> </ul>

What it is	What it is not
<p>Monday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A plain bagel with blueberry jam</li> <li>• A lemon bar that Kim bought me</li> <li>• Giving flowers to friends</li> <li>• The food and moment spent with Kat at dinner</li> <li>• Sunshine</li> <li>• The neighbor's fluffy dog dashing about</li> <li>• Having a friend offer their support for installing my show</li> <li>• Simone caring for my wellbeing by giving encouraging words and offering a coffee drink when I need one</li> </ul>	<p>Monday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biting my nails to numbs</li> <li>• An overload of emails</li> <li>• Two friends not seeing me wave like a fool at them through the window</li> <li>• Burning my mouth on coffee</li> <li>• Formatting this thesis</li> </ul>

## Introduction

“ ‘...well-being is not so much an outcome or end state as it is a process of fulfilling or realizing one’s daimon or true nature—that is, of fulfilling one’s virtuous potentials and living as one was inherently intended to live.’ ”

– Deci and Ryan, ‘Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. Journal of Happiness Studies’  
– Catherine Moore, ‘PositivePsychology.com’

“There is no way to repress pleasure and expect liberation, satisfaction, or joy.”

—adrienne maree brown, ‘Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good’

Imagine hundreds of balloons being let go, hugs and cheers from loved ones, and a feeling of warmth inside of you, like your whole being is smiling. That is the feeling of Full Sparkle. My lived experience as a queer/lesbian woman did not have this reaction or feeling when coming out, at least not with those closest in blood to me. Despite this dark moment of rejection from family there were lights of acceptance emanating from numerous points, including myself. The folks that I connected with outside of my family were some of those lights. The connection to the community outside of the community I was born into has been a practice of mine since before my



coming out. Yet, it was my coming out experience that really highlighted how vital making connections and building community is. The light inside myself was the acceptance of myself as a queer/lesbian person. This acceptance was paramount to my acceptance of myself as a whole - eccentricities and all. Yet, this understanding and desire to accept my entirety has been difficult. For years, I've been talking and partially living this way, but it wasn't until recently that I learned how to actually own it.

I believe every human wants to live their fullest life, however we are not taught how to search within ourselves to find what that means and how to apply it. Instead, we are sold and marketed pre-packaged, subjective, and vague directions on what a full life looks like. The typical "full life" our society in the United States idealizes is focused on one thing: money (and the easiest way to make it). At least, this is what I have experienced growing up in Midwestern America. This idea of looking outward instead of reflecting on what is available inside is connected to a denial of one's pleasures, which in part negatively affects our wellbeing. Pleasure Activist adrienne maree brown speaks to the origin of this construct. "Part of the reason so few of us have a healthy relationship with pleasure is because a small minority of our species hoards the excess of resources, creating a false scarcity and then trying to sell us joy, sell us back to ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian M. Brown, *Pleasure Activism: the Politics of Feeling Good* (AK Press, 2019), 15.

As a white, cis woman, I acknowledge my privilege allows me to more easily access and enjoy my true self and pleasures than folks that don't identify like me. However, as a young woman, growing up, I experienced the many archaic expectations and persuasions of what a woman should be. I witnessed most of the women in my family follow those paths, which led them to repress and deny their inner truths and pleasures. I say FULL SPARKLE!

## FULL SPARKLE

1 act play

A play within a thesis about the flourishing wellbeing and artwork of Misty Long-Donoho.

### Characters

Misty the Martyr- a timid and doubtful lesbian/queer woman who believes suffering is the way of life. In short - a party pooper. Played by Misty Long-Donoho.

Misty the Trickster- a curious and mischievous lesbian/queer woman who knows that life is what you make it. In short - a party starter. Played by Misty Long-Donoho.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Full Sparkle

*Cue twinkling windchimes and a fluctuation of 30 bike horns trumpeting in and out.*

*[Enter Misty the Trickster]*

*[Misty the Trickster exits the elevator on the second floor of the art building on her bicycle. Hanging off a carabiner from her hip she has a 3lb bag of gummy bears. She is on her way to relax and share a moment with a friend. She speeds down the hall while orchestrating a bike horn and three bike bells. She is practicing Full Sparkle.]*

*[Enter Misty the Martyr]*

*\*No Misty the Martyr in this scene due to cliff injury.*

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“It doesn’t matter what we call our Knowing. What matters -if we want to live our singular shooting star of a life- is that we call it.”

– Glennon Doyle, ‘Untamed’

“A balance of the inner and outer self, embracing both hedonic and eudemonic living/practices so that my wellbeing flourishes. What I call FULL SPARKLE.”

– Misty Long-Donoho

I aim to live my life fully, loudly, and unapologetically how I want and deserve. Living with Full Sparkle is how I will achieve this life.

Understanding what makes up my Full Sparkle is key. Full Sparkle is meant to be a continual effort and practice. This means that the parts that make up Full Sparkle are shifting, irregular, and not mutually exclusive. Full Sparkle is not an end state of being; I do not achieve it and then it's over.<sup>2</sup> Full Sparkle is a balancing act of many practices and while these practices can shift and change, there are a few that have remained with me throughout my life. It all begins with the practices of connection to community<sup>3</sup>, liberating my trickster self, playfully subverting places and people, and being mindful of my wellbeing and the people I connect with. These four practices are significant to my Full Sparkle and I actively lean in to practicing them in my life and in my artwork.

Just as my practices connect me to people, tricksterdom, playfulness, and mindfulness, I aim to connect those who interact with my work to the questions and actions these practices pose and do. It is my hope through interacting with my work, participants connect to themselves and to each other and build meaningful connections that boost their own and each other's wellbeing. This is achieved through playful and intervening interactions with participatory sculpture.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of my works is to subvert the societal norms and restrictions of the places the work is placed into. These places are both

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<sup>2</sup> That's like meditating once and saying you've done all there is and you never meditate again.

<sup>3</sup> Wondering which community I'm talking about? You'll find out in the Act 1 Scene 2.

<sup>4</sup> Or participatory thesis writing...

physical, like a university hallway, and conceptual, like an internal conflict in the mind.<sup>5</sup> The norms of a place may be what the function or use of that place traditionally is, for example a hallway is for connecting areas of different spaces together. A restriction may be the rules, written or invisible that are given to that space, such as no running in the hallway. By subverting norms and restrictions, my work questions why these norms and restrictions exist and it reimagines the place and its possibilities.

Making my work interactive actively reimagines the possibilities and questions the work puts forward. The participant takes an active role in changing the societal norms and restrictions through actively challenging them through participation. The interaction empowers participants to see and feel that change is possible because it is occurring in the moment of the interaction.

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<sup>5</sup> Sorry SpongeBob, you are no longer safe inside your mind.

## ACT ONE

## Scene 2

## Connection and Community

*Set scene with blue pom pom and new friend.*

*[Enter Misty the Trickster]*

*[Misty the Trickster holds out both hands with closed fists to a new friend. She smiles at them and nods for them to choose one. She is practicing Connection.]*

*[Enter Misty the Martyr]*

*[Misty the Martyr holds a pom pom in her hand. She hesitates to playfully give the pom pom to her new friend. The friend walks away. A missed connection.]*

“The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, form as a bridge between the shares which can have the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.”

– Audre Lorde, ‘Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power’

Community, to me is the ongoing opportunity to create meaningful moments of connection. Cultivating (try to acquire and develop) community is an integral practice of Full Sparkle. I must connect with the community around me to feel balanced and whole. While I connect with many

communities,<sup>6</sup> my main focus is to connect to the communities that I physically occupy.<sup>7</sup> Connections such as conversations, skill sharing, brief nonverbal gestures (waving/smiling), playful performance and sculpture are all interactions that I choose to engage in when attempting to connect with another person. These intentional interactions are part of my practice because the unseen exchange happening is one meant for boosting wellbeing both for myself and the other person.

The *Pom Pom Project* exemplifies this connection well (and optimally when I am there to encourage and experience the connections among participants). In this work, a shared conversational connection is created between myself and the participant through the instruction and making of the yarn pom pom. The activity is done at a uniquely shaped cart reminiscent of a wheel barrow. It has a raw wooden finish with two multi-colored sequin sides<sup>8</sup>. This work puts forth an opportunity to pause and interact with someone. It encourages people to share a simple unplanned moment from their life with others. Participants also get to share some positivity with the larger community. The final aspect of this work is when I ask them to share what brought them joy this week before they finish making their pom pom. I have always been drawn to meeting people and learning something about

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks internet! Where would I be without your ability to connect me to anyone anywhere at any time?

<sup>7</sup> Ding ding ding! Here is where I referred to earlier when I said you'd find out what communities I meant.

<sup>8</sup> For funsies. Also, sequins are awesome.



them. I like to learn what makes others joyful and happy. The idea of sharing your joy and pleasure oftentimes feels taboo, jinxing, and self-centered.

However, this work makes space for joy and connection without judgement.

The work *Le Tour de Harder BM<sup>9</sup>* is an example of a trickster connection. This recurring spontaneous performance consists of a brightly colored bike with bells, horn, lights, and pinwheel. This bike has specifically become my inside bike for riding around the halls and pathways of Harder and Binns-Merrill.<sup>10</sup> The intention is to intervene, disrupt, and subvert the current state of the art building and its occupants at whatever moment it is in. The surprise of sound and uncanny transportation makes waves in the normalcy of the day to day. These waves can cause many emotions and reactions - joy, laughter, frustration, anger, and confusion, among other responses. It zaps people to the present moment and intervenes in their thoughts, movements, and emotions. This action/performance is a way of connecting and disconnecting from my current thoughts. It puts me in physical motion so that I can think in the present and disconnect with burdensome thoughts by meeting people.

Connecting with people as the trickster is how I share my way of stepping away from things and achieving balance. It is the epitome of the trickster and a fundamental aspect of Full Sparkle. The performance is also

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<sup>9</sup> Tee hee get it Harder BM," hard BM." Yea poop jokes are still funny.

<sup>10</sup> Yes, I said inside bike. It's a fixed speed bike no one would want to ride that up the hills of Alfred!

an act of rebellion and defiance against societal restrictions such as the invisible rules of what's allowed in a place. My ridiculous act of sounding a horn and riding through the building brings those unspoken rules to question.



*Pom Pom Project, 2019*



*Pom Pom Project, 2019.*

Participant writes a message of joy to share (above).

Pom poms created from previous participants (below).







*Le Tour de Harder BM, 2019-2021.*

ACT ONE

Scene 3

Trickster

*Set scene with 150 pounds of glitter, curtains, and one large sculpture with 8,000 pipe cleaners.*

*[Enter Misty the Trickster]*

*[Misty the Trickster begins by hanging the curtains and placing the large sculpture at the farthest part of the room. She then rolls over a 50-gallon storage container filled with glitter, she reaches in and pulls out a sifter. She carefully scoops the glitter into the sifter and begins to coat the floor. She is practicing Tricksterdom.]*

*[Enter Misty the Martyr]*

*[Misty the Martyr skeptically looks at the materials and sculpture. She doubts that her idea is worth doing and worries that the glitter will be a nightmare to clean up or she will get in trouble for putting that much glitter on a public floor. She doubts the importance of her vision and scraps the entire idea. No mischief is created.]*

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“For as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society.”

– Audre Lorde, ‘Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power’

“But in order to let go of the addiction to creative suffering, you must reject the way of the martyr and embrace the way of the trickster.”

– Elizabeth Gilbert, ‘Big Magic’

The Trickster was here; no, the trickster is here.<sup>11</sup>

A trickster has a dynamic personality, one that excites and energizes mundane life. This is due to the many qualities they possess; tricksters are playful, humorous, witty, subversive, curious, annoying, loveable, clever, disruptive, charming, and mischievous.<sup>12</sup> An example of a trickster would be Captain Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the Caribbean* or the Weasley twins Fred and George from *Harry Potter*. These qualities allow them to live in the in-between-- neither on the good or bad side of things, but in the middle. This in-between or middle area allows them to intervene and disrupt life to create a little or a lot of chaos for the betterment of those around them, usually. The opposite of a trickster is a martyr, not in the context of someone dying for a cause, but someone who actively chooses to suffer in life. Characteristics of a martyr are reserved, timid, shrewd, dull, stern, formal, etc. An example of a martyr would be Severus Snape from *Harry Potter* and all of us, because we all have a tendency to be a martyr at times.

It is vital to have trickster energy for Full Sparkle because it allows for flourishing not suffering. Trickster energy is something I have had my whole life and it has enabled me to live with abandon<sup>13</sup>. Hell, I came out of the womb purple just to frighten my mom and the medical staff.<sup>14</sup> I have played

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<sup>11</sup> I am here, right here, I have been with you since the beginning. Let's have some fun and subvert this thesis. ☺

<sup>12</sup> While this list of qualities is not all encompassing, they are some of my favorite trickster qualities. I also happen to possess these qualities, so I'm rather partial to them.

<sup>13</sup> No, not the biblical meaning and No I don't live so recklessly that I don't think things through.

<sup>14</sup> Seriously, call my mom and ask about it. Ginger Long, 309-229-3446.

many subversive roles in my oeuvre and keep to the mottos of “going against the grain,” “living with abandon,” “YOLO,” and most recently one of my own creating “DHYP4M.”<sup>15</sup>

Here is how to channel trickster energy.

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<sup>15</sup> Don't hold your pee for me. Damn right, I am aware of other people's needs!



Instructions for channeling your inner trickster and get rid of the inner martyr.

1. Stare directly at yourself in a mirror or reflective surface.
2. Playfully stick out your tongue.
3. In a silly accent (pirate is my go-to), shout the words below.

TRICKSTERS DON'T DOUBT

THEMSELVES!

MARTYRS DOUBT!

NOW PUSH THAT MARTYR OFF A CLIFF

<sup>16</sup> AND BE ON YOUR MERRY WAY!<sup>17</sup>

Hot Tip: The martyr will return at some point. Upon their inevitable return, repeat the above immediately.

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<sup>16</sup> No living physical being was harmed in the making of this manifesto.

<sup>17</sup> Nice work, now go live your fucking life.

It is no surprise that I have brilliantly played (and still do) the roles of wonder seeker, pleasure activist<sup>18</sup>, mischief maker, and facilitator of play. As a bona fide trickster I delight in the exploration of creating art that feeds Full Sparkle. Now, I give a real damn about my wellbeing. Selfish, you say? Nay, I say! As the airplane safety guideline states, “Put your oxygen mask on before helping others.” If you are dead, how are you going to be of help to anyone else?<sup>19</sup> It is not selfish to care for yourself.<sup>20</sup>

My physical and mental wellbeing requires a balance of altruism and egotism. What does that mean? It means I gotta give a shit. More specifically, as a trickster I flourish when fostering and building connections with folks in the various communities that I interact with on a daily basis.<sup>21</sup> After all, what is a trickster without an audience or fellow hell raisers?<sup>22</sup>

Tricksterdom also has a direct relationship with queerness and my queer identity. These two ways of identifying myself are non-normative and have characteristics of rebelling against and subverting standard rules in all spaces to see things new. In recognizing the connection, I draw on them for the material choices I use in the work I make. I gravitate toward materials

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<sup>18</sup> I may be a novice but I do feel attune to this “Pleasure activists seek to understand and learn from the politics and power dynamics inside of everything that makes us feel good. This includes sex and the erotic, drugs, fashion, humor, passion work, connection, reading, cooking and/or eating, music, and other arts, and so much more.” adrienne maree brown, *Pleasure Activism* pg. 13.

<sup>19</sup> The only place this would benefit others is if they are starving and need to eat your dead flesh in order to survive...Donner Party vibes, anyone? No thank you!

<sup>20</sup> Misty, are you listening? It is NOT selfish to care for yourself! Geez woman.

<sup>21</sup> Communities such as: AU art students, queer folks, ladies, gents, cat lovers...you get the idea.

<sup>22</sup> Hell raisers are folks who want to cause a ruckus!

not typically considered to be fine art materials, what I call the “underdog” materials; pipe cleaners, glitter, gummy bears, bent nails, sequins, etc. I also use materials that have a label of fine art, such as studio glass and I subvert its function and form in a way to make it an underdog material. Actively choosing and making with these materials is my own act of rebellion against material stratification and societal expectations and restrictions of what art is and should be made of but also at a basic level what is acceptable in any context in life.<sup>23</sup>

Unleashing my trickster energy when connecting with people can be found in the work *What’s all the fuss?* At the start of this room, the participant is confronted with trickster fuckery.<sup>24</sup> This full room installation is comprised of the entire floor covered in glitter with three black curtains concealing three items. My “trickster trap<sup>25,26</sup>” creates a pause and an abrupt jolt to the present by forcing participants to wade through a large quantity of material that creates an internal conflict within the participant; participants desperately want to see what is behind the curtains...but they do not want to wade through glitter to get there! Glitter has the bad reputation of being a contagious material and of course, the environmental thing. If the

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<sup>23</sup> Who decides what’s acceptable anyway? Down with material hierarchy! Hell, down with all hierarchies!

<sup>24</sup> Still waiting on Merriam-Webster to add this one to the dictionary.

<sup>25</sup> A clever way to trick a process, person, or yourself into achieving something without suffering. Thinking, “how would a trickster work through this?”

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Gilbert, *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2015), 225.

participants decide to go in, they discover layers of absurdity behind each curtain. One curtain has an iridescent white pedestal with a tiny note that says try again, the second is just empty space, and the final is a large clear glass sculpture holding a few thousand colorful pipe cleaners in its once hollow center. The message is one of humor and joy. As a trickster, I lure the participant in by concealing the work and making them cross a field of glitter. Once they take the bait, they discover the play at hand and the possible pleasure of giving into desire, pausing to play and enjoying the moment.



*What's all the fuss?, 2020.*

View when walking into the space (above). Back corner of the space (below).







*What's all the fuss?*, 2020.

The third curtain and third item (above). Participants dancing in the glitter (below).



# ACT ONE

## Scene 4

### Play<sup>27</sup>

*Set scene with a roll of duct tape and two whoopie cushions in the Binns-Merrill and Harder buildings.*

*[Enter Misty the Trickster]*

*[Misty the Trickster carefully tapes both whoopie cushions to the bottom of both of her boots. Marching in place she gives them a test and heads out to fart-march around the buildings. She is practicing Play.]*

*[Enter Misty the Martyr]*

*[Misty the Martyr looks at the roll of duct tape and wonders if the sticky residue will ruin her boots. She also thinks that the whoopie cushions will burst because of her weight. She leaves the tape and cushions on the shelf. No play was had.]*

“Play is one of our greatest means of accessing delight, with deep roots in human life.

— Ingrid Fetell Lee, ‘Joyful: The surprising power of ordinary things to create extraordinary happiness’

“Pleasure is the point. Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom.”

— adrienne maree brown, ‘Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good’

<sup>27</sup> YAY! Let’s ruin it by describing it.

As a trickster, the practice of playing is deeply entangled in me, so much so that it is basically inseparable to my being. It is through the practice of play that I view and approach life, how I connect with people and community, and how I create art. Play for me is being curious, rebellious, and sensual, which is essential to Full Sparkle. In my work I use play as a form of interaction, which allows for meaningful connection with and between people, it requires participants to take immediate action that affects their wellbeing, it shifts the power dynamics from artist to the participant, and it subverts societal restrictions and intervenes with the mundane of life. Play is powerful.

The work *This is just a swing, This is just a swing, This is just a swing* clearly affirms that this is a work created for the pure pleasure of play, so let's not ruin it. A blazing yellow floofy triangular structure with a hanging ball of yellow floof chills in the far corner of the gallery. The structure is one reminiscent of a playground swing, but has been altered with a shaggy felt skin/surface. The desire to have my own swing that supports my weight and fits my ass transcends the past few years.<sup>28</sup> *The Pom Pom Project* was part of the inspiration for this swing, along with my authentic desire to make a swing. An absurd and magical vision of swinging on a giant pom pom has never left my mind.<sup>29</sup> This work is me making a place for my desire to play

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<sup>28</sup> Brett, out of all the advisors I have probably spent the most time talking to you about building this damn swing. I appreciate your patience.

<sup>29</sup> Ever seen Miley Cyrus' "Wrecking Ball" music video? Similar, but with more clothes. And also a much more ergonomic seat.



for the sake of playing. For me, this fulfills the play practice for Full Sparkle. The choice to not make this swing too far from a swing is an act of subverting the rules of the gallery and art world. Covering the swing with the material of felt is a choice to elevate the materials stratification. The material also invites touch and participatory inclusion, something not standard in gallery rules. This work subverts the rules of what is considered and not considered art by using the rules of the gallery, that rule being that the space of the gallery contains art. The placement of this swing in the gallery space - legitimizes it as art, and in the legitimizing of the object, the idea of a simple concept like desire being art is also legitimized. In trickster fashion, this work subverts another rule of the gallery, the “no touching”. Each new participant who interacts with this piece continually subverts this “no touching” rule. This work speaks to the idea that all art does not need to be so packed full of deep meaning and thought to be meaningful art. It speaks to the small joys in our lives being enough. It encourages the participant to make space for those joys/pleasures by participation and action. Enjoying something for what it is is enough. A simply felt-covered swing is enough.<sup>30</sup>

The disruption of silence is another playful way to subvert social norms and restrictions, and to enliven mundane life. As I mentioned earlier, I aim to live fully and loudly, and I mean that in many ways, but here I mean it literally. The surprise of a sound can alert us to the present moment.<sup>31</sup> It can

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<sup>30</sup> Now get on that damn swing!

<sup>31</sup> That damn volunteer firefighter siren gets me every time.

be freeing to yell and release energy/frustration.<sup>32</sup> I can remember being taught that certain places are silent and as a child I was disciplined with silence as the consequence. While I agree silence is important and needed for certain reasons, like my mindfulness practice, I disagree that being loud should be repressed to a point of never being loud or creating a fear of loudness.

The work *LOUDER!* is a piece that surprises the participant and breaks the silence of the gallery and possibly the entire building.<sup>33</sup> Placed at the entrance of the gallery is a 3'x 4' curtain of sequins that hangs about a foot off of the wall framed with pink wooden boards. The curtain is shimmering with red, magenta, and gold rectangular sequins. Four clear hoses extend from the bottom of the work down the wall and across the floor. The end of each hose is attached to a foot bellow. The tubes and bellows are placed ten feet out from the wall and directly in front of the curtain. On a circular piece of pink vinyl near the foot bellow is the word "Step". The one-word instruction doesn't give any indication of what will happen if stepped on or what is behind the curtain. When the foot bellow is stepped on, air is forced through the tube and activates a set of 5 bike horns. Depending on the participants pressure and duration of stepping, the sound varies between a short burst of wailing trumpets or a long slow howl.<sup>34</sup> When the foot is

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<sup>32</sup> Primal scream anyone?

AA

<sup>33</sup> It's gonna get loud. Promise.

<sup>34</sup> Are you imagining the sound?

removed and the bellow inflates, the second pipe with horns is activated.<sup>35</sup>

The second bellow has an entire set of its own pipe system and horns. This way multiple participants can create a unique composition of sound together. This work explodes with sound and disrupts the silence of the gallery and building. Its mysterious sequin curtain conceals the pipe and horn system and allows for curiosity and exploration to happen. It gives power to the participant to subvert the restrictions of the “silent” gallery and indulge in being loud. It also sounds the siren indicating that Full Sparkle is in session.

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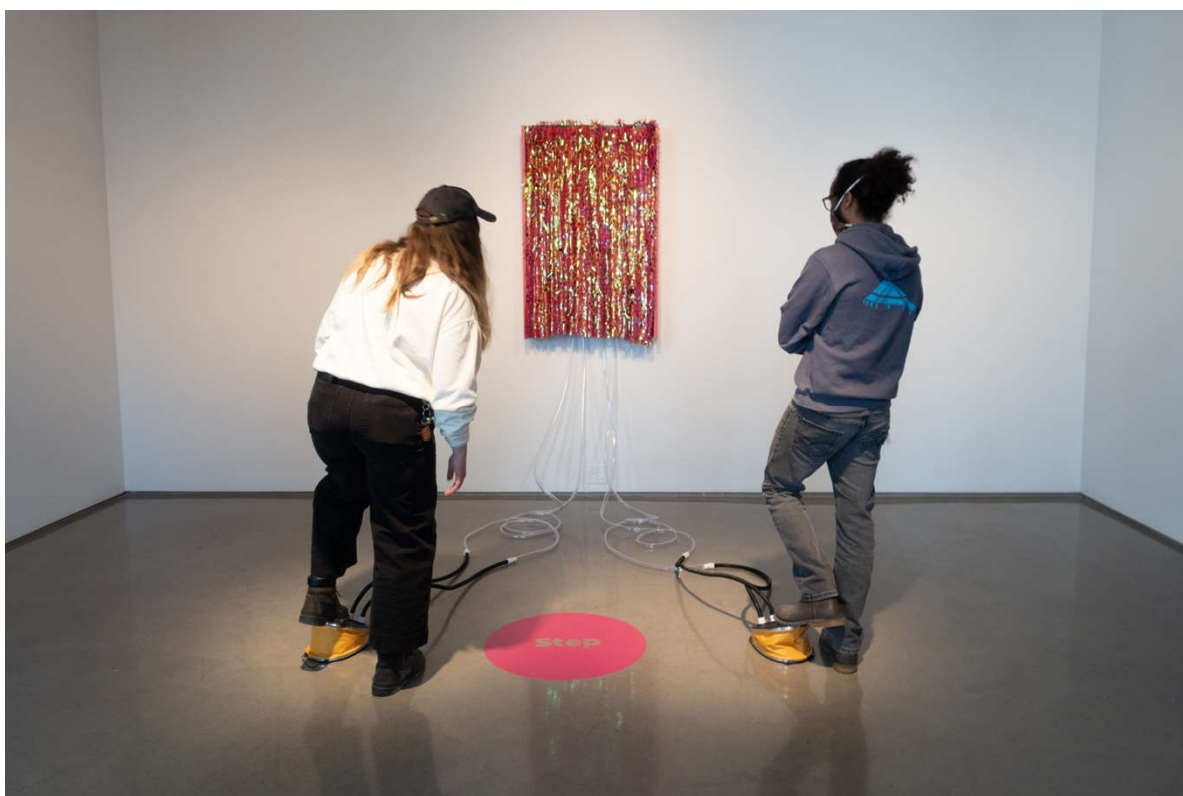
<sup>35</sup> The compression and inflation are reminiscent of the hee haw of a donkey with a touch of dolphin chirps...but louder.



*This is just a swing, This is just a swing, This is just a swing, 2021.*



*This is just a swing, This is just a swing, This is just a swing, 2021.*



*LOUDER!, 2021.*

Participants activating the horns behind the curtain via the foot bellows.

ACT ONE

Scene 5

Mindfulness

*Set scene with large studio table, yards of sequin fabric, and clamp lights.*

*[Enter Misty the Trickster]*

*[Misty the Trickster is laying on the floor of her studio. She has made a fort out of sequin fabric to surround her. She is sitting still and in silence looking at the glimmer of the sequins. Her thoughts fluctuate in and out. She is practicing Mindfulness]*

*[Enter Misty the Martyr]*

*[Misty the Martyr is standing and staring at the sequin fabric. She starts to unfold the fabric, but stops and paces the studio while thinking about how to build this fort and all the other work that needs to be done. Her breathing increases and her feet hurt. She leaves go work on something else. She does not take a pause.]*

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“StopMovingStopTalkingStopSearchingStopPanickingStopFlailing. If you just stop doing, you’ll start knowing.”

– Glennon Doyle, ‘Untamed’

“if you stop making, you don’t stop existing”

– Unknown, ‘Instagram Post<sup>36</sup>’

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<sup>36</sup> If you’ve seen this please let me know so I can credit them.

When I speak of mindfulness, I am speaking to the conscious awareness of my mental and physical wellbeing. Through introspection, I can see what is either positively or negatively affecting my wellbeing, and determine what action I must take. These actions loop back to the practices that make up Full Sparkle. Examples of these actions include when I am speaking or taking a walk with someone, creating a mischievous artwork, performing a playful act, or encountering an artifact from an art project. My mindfulness practices combine both solo and accompanied actions to achieve introspection.

As a social creature, I tend to seek out connection with others or physically move to find clarity when I am emotionally spinning.<sup>37</sup> When these choices aren't available, I can sometimes find myself struggling and wondering what I should do. This need to actively "do" and keep going, instead of pausing or stopping, is directly connected with the societal pressures of productivity and success. My experience of growing up, living, and working in the Midwestern United States has given me this understanding. Western social norms equate productivity with output; stopping means less production, which apparently means failure.<sup>38</sup> Then there is the uncomfortable and narrow view of failure, which ties back to what success means for a society based on capitalism. We<sup>39</sup> also make

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<sup>37</sup> Examples include writing this thesis, after an advisor meeting, getting word that my Gammy died.

<sup>38</sup> What jerk made these rules? Only pushing people to never stop? They sound like an ass.

<sup>39</sup> Americans, but I know people in other countries do the same.

this into a moral connection where productivity equals good and rest equals bad.<sup>40</sup> In the spirit of mindfulness let's take a three-page intermission for you to step away from this thesis. You could get up and stretch, go pee- remember DHYP4M, sit with your thoughts, or use the next three pages to do some breathing<sup>41</sup>. I would encourage you to not check your phone, email, or anything else that takes you away from yourself. Break starts now.

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<sup>40</sup> This is a heaping pile of bullshit.

<sup>41</sup> Oxygen: it's my drug of choice.



Slowly breathe in

Hold

Hold

Hold

Slowly breathe out

Slowly breathe in

Hold

Hold

Hold

Slowly breathe out

Slowly breathe in

Hold

Hold

Hold

Slowly breathe out

All of the works that I make challenge the societal norms of what is productive, successful and good for one's wellbeing.<sup>42</sup> My work subverts these through making interactive sculptures for pause, play, joy, and connectedness for the sake of bettering our wellbeing, not money.

*Surrender you fool, surrender*<sup>43</sup>, is a work that recognizes and dedicates a place for my need and the universal need for pause. Pausing in a gallery is not unheard of but the intention of the piece is not to pause and look at the art or ponder a prompt I give. It is to pause for the participant to do whatever they want in that pause.<sup>44</sup> Coming off the wall is a sparkling, curved form. The shape resembles a quartered wheel of gouda cheese with a chunk of center cut out.<sup>45</sup> The curve of the form is an awning made up of two ten-foot pieces of reversible sequin fabric. The inside sequins are white with hints of pink and a reverse of multicolored metallic iridescence. The outside sequins are rosy pink and a reverse gold. Under the curve of the sequin awning and up the wall are large bronze vinyl cushions. Once the participant is inside, the awning shields their forward view with sparkling sequins. The material invites a moment of sensory pleasure and a place to lose yourself through the visual and touch senses.

The work *Earthly Delights* makes a holding place for some of my simple moments and pleasures. A large structure made up of dark teal and

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<sup>42</sup> The practices of Full Sparkle sure do.

<sup>43</sup> A great spot to listen to 4.33 by John Cage.

<sup>44</sup> All I can think about is PAWS when I read pause.

<sup>45</sup> Good golly do I LOVE CHEESE!

sea foam green wooden panels occupies the center of the gallery. It runs diagonally and spans 8 feet long and 3 feet wide. The wooden panels are rounded on both ends and reminiscent of a popsicle stick fence. Above are three curved yellow neon tubes that give light and life to the garden. The structure contains over two dozen rounded solid glass forms nesting in a bed of purple, magenta and silver glitter. Each glass form has a hole or multiple holes punched through of varying size. The majority of the holes are filled with objects from various categories. Items include gummy bears, Fireball whiskey, balloons, a hula hoop, pinwheels, pipe cleaners, googly eyes, whoopie cushions, a vibrator, flowers, and many others. It is a manifestation of my hedonic<sup>46</sup> pleasures. I connect with the viewer through the public display of this garden and the glass forms that are empty so that the viewer can project their own pleasures in the open space. The choice to use glass is one of pleasure and the intent to subvert the materials fine art label by making it a storage container for my simple joys.<sup>47</sup> Most if not all of the items in the glass holes are items that I share or use to connect with others. The items are ones of hedonistic origin but they are catalysts for more meaningful eudemonic<sup>48</sup> connections. The placement of this work in a gallery legitimizes these simple pleasures. Through the context of the gallery it becomes art and as such poses questions about why we may suppress our joys and who/what

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<sup>46</sup> Happiness built from pleasure.

<sup>47</sup> Poking fun at all the glass artist or any artist that takes their work too seriously.

<sup>48</sup> Happiness built from meaningful purpose.

may be oppressing them. My display is a tribute, if you will, to the importance of making a place for these simple but important pleasures.

*The floor is yours* is made up of six large pink circles of vinyl arranged on the floor in a circular formation. Above the circles are 8 cantaloupe size gold mirror balls and 24 clementine size gold mirror balls. In vinyl on the wall it says “Echo, Play Dance Now on Spotify”. An Amazon Echo Dot sits on a shelf with a large speaker connected to it. This space is the participants dance floor. The playlist “Dance Now” is made up of a few songs of my choosing that boost my wellbeing. These few songs after one repeat would drive the participant to leave or to request their own.<sup>49</sup> The pink vinyl circles have messages like; Loud? Soft? Fast? Slow? What song do you want to hear? to nudge the participant to realize that they have the authority to choose a song they need/want. This work is created for moving and release. It is also a place for the participant to be mindful of their emotions by using a song to connect with those feelings. Music taps in to our emotions and has the ability to be emotionally contagious.<sup>50</sup> The intention is to give power to the participant to choose what they need after hearing what I need from my playlist. Publicly playing a song connects the participant with others in the room, and if they are alone it connects them to their needs and wellbeing. This work also connects us to one another through a shared experience of

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<sup>49</sup> I am hoping people play their own music, fingers crossed.

<sup>50</sup> I am not a musician or musically inclined, but I do know how to feel. Also, I will not explain deeply the emotional effects of music or dancing. Let's just listen and move.

singing and dancing. It subverts the norms of the hierarchical artist viewer relationship by giving participants the control of the work and gallery.

Through this control, the potential for chaos is present, and through ensued chaos, the atmosphere and rules of the entire space are in flux.<sup>51</sup>

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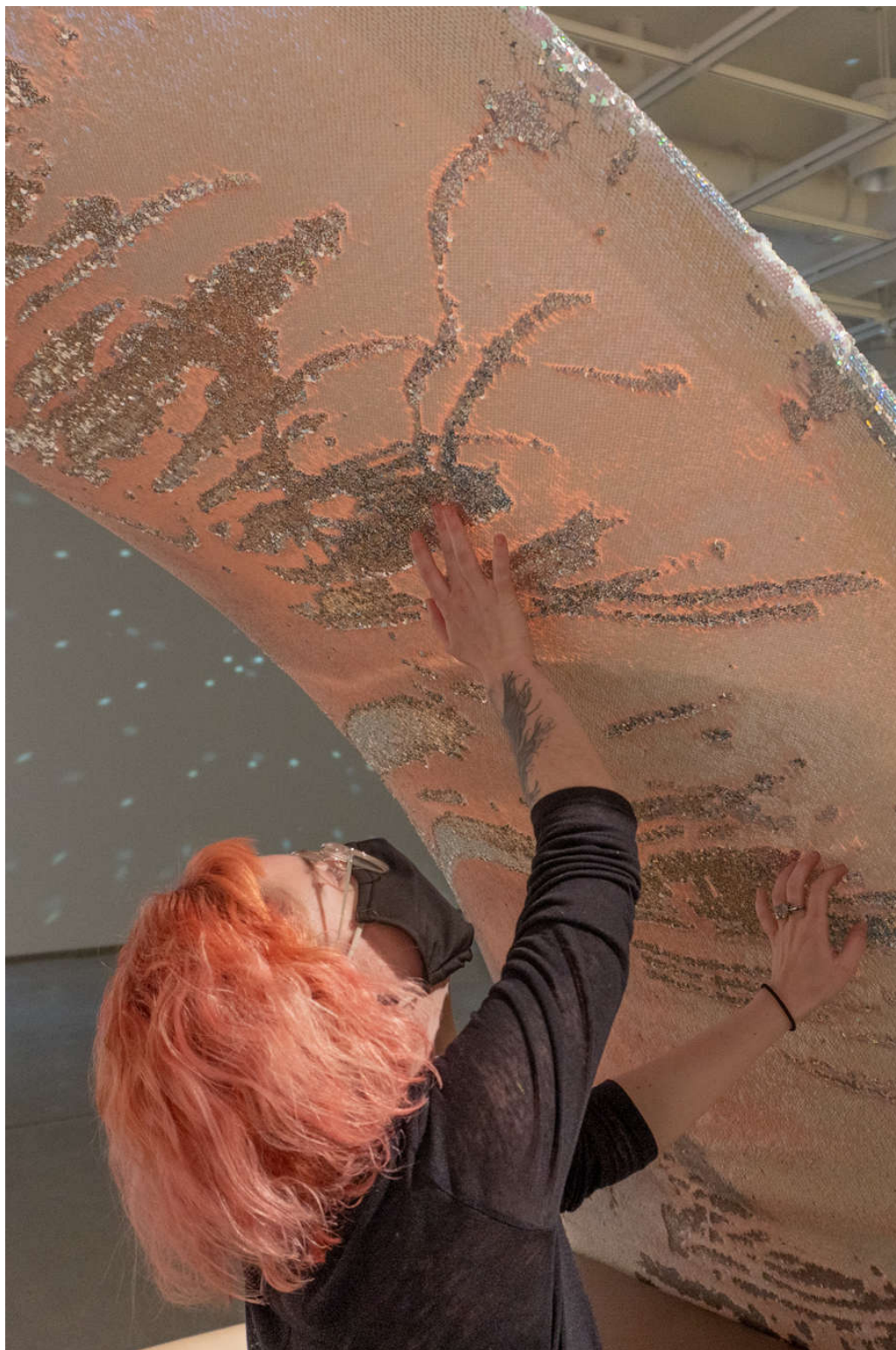
<sup>51</sup> As a trickster I am excited to see this happen.



*Surrender you fool, surrender*, 2020-2021.  
Side view (above) and outside front view (below).







*Surrender you fool, surrender*, 2020-2021. Inside view.



*Earthly Delights*, 2021.

Full view of garden and neon lighting (above). Detail image of items in garden (below).







*Earthly Delights*, 2021. Detail image of items in garden.



*Earthly Delights*, 2021. Side view of garden and neon lighting



*The floor is yours, 2021.*

Participant requesting a song from Amazon Echo Dot (above). Participants dancing to music (below).



## Conclusion and Continuation

Through the practices of Full Sparkle, I create participatory sculpture that calls into question the societal norms and restrictions of places and why as individuals we continue to follow them. By playfully subverting places and people my work challenges and changes the rules and restrictions of said place. It bolsters the wellbeing of the folks that connect with it and fosters meaningful connection with them to build community.

My work is also made so that I continue to exercise the practices of Full Sparkle. Simply put, I want to flourish and I want you to flourish too. Let's all actively choose to live well and encourage and empower each other to do so. Full Sparkle is how I do this. What do you do and call your flourishing wellbeing?

Flourishing Wellbeing Manifesto Worksheet

Name your flourishing wellbeing: \_\_\_\_\_

Define: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Bulleted items are subject to change from day to day and moment to moment.

What it is.	What it is not.
Date • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	Date ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
What it is.	What it is not.
Date • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	Date ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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