
Senior Projects Spring 2024

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2024

Fruiting Bodies

Equiano Shurriah Hunter

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Fruiting Bodies

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Equiano Hunter

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2024

In its earliest stages, this series was meant to be directly inspired by John vandermeer's novel *Annihilation*. At the heart of the book, as well as its film adaptation of the same name, is the notion that transformation necessitates the destruction of the first state in order to facilitate the birth of the second; though it is the same animal, a caterpillar will never again exist as it once was in order to become a butterfly. I believe the same is true for people as well, that in order to become the person you want to be, you must, to some extent, kill the person you were. Since arriving at Bard, I have experienced so much personal growth at the cost of countless past iterations of myself, and so I chose generative self-destruction to be the subject of my senior exhibition.

In the beginning, I wanted to represent this theme with more literal, recognizable organic forms; overgrown fungus, cellular cultures, mutated plants and animals; cancer, rot and mold. Subjects that are at once morbid and flourishing, all to interrogate the threshold past which growth becomes detrimental to the organism. In fact, this is where I derived the title *Fruiting Bodies* from.

But you'll find that the images you see before you don't conform with the vision I've described. Indeed, with three short months between the beginning of the spring semester and the exhibition opening, I realized that rendering mycelia and microorganisms in painstaking detail would prove too great an undertaking. How apropos then, that in order to produce the amount of work necessary, I would have to transition from hard realism to surrealism and abstraction. Having made this conclusion, visceral amalgamations of organic material rarefied into shimmering angels and beasts made of smoke, and just like that, I renounced the artist I was in order to become the artist I needed to be.

In this same vein, many of the paintings themselves have passed through several iterations before arriving at the final products you see now, with but a few of them beginning in states that were unrecognizable to the end results. Rather than planning compositions before proceeding to the final draft, I instead worked through each image as it was being painted. If I could not think of how to resolve a work as it was, I would paint over it and begin again, allowing elements of the now half-hidden underpainting to bleed through to the surface. In one painting, you might see a wilted flower winking from beneath a layer of paint, in another, the face of an anthropomorphic figure half-buried. Just as the caterpillar remains indelible within the butterfly, the paintings that result from this process are just as much their most salient images as they are culminations of all of their past instantiations.

Though I've never considered myself a spiritual person, I have no doubt regarding the inherent magic contained in these paintings. I felt like an alchemist producing this series, creating living, breathing works from inert materials, and the pieces themselves reference esoteric symbolism to reflect this. It sounds insane, but there have been moments when, alone in my studio, I've held an ear against a given artwork, listening for arcane secrets contained within their multitudes, for traces of my own past lives hidden beneath the surface. I invite you to do the same.

Fruiting Bodies

Equiano Hunter • Senior Exhibition

Fisher Studio Arts Gallery

Opening Reception

Bard College

Saturday May 4th, 2024

North Ravine Road

6:00pm — 8:00pm

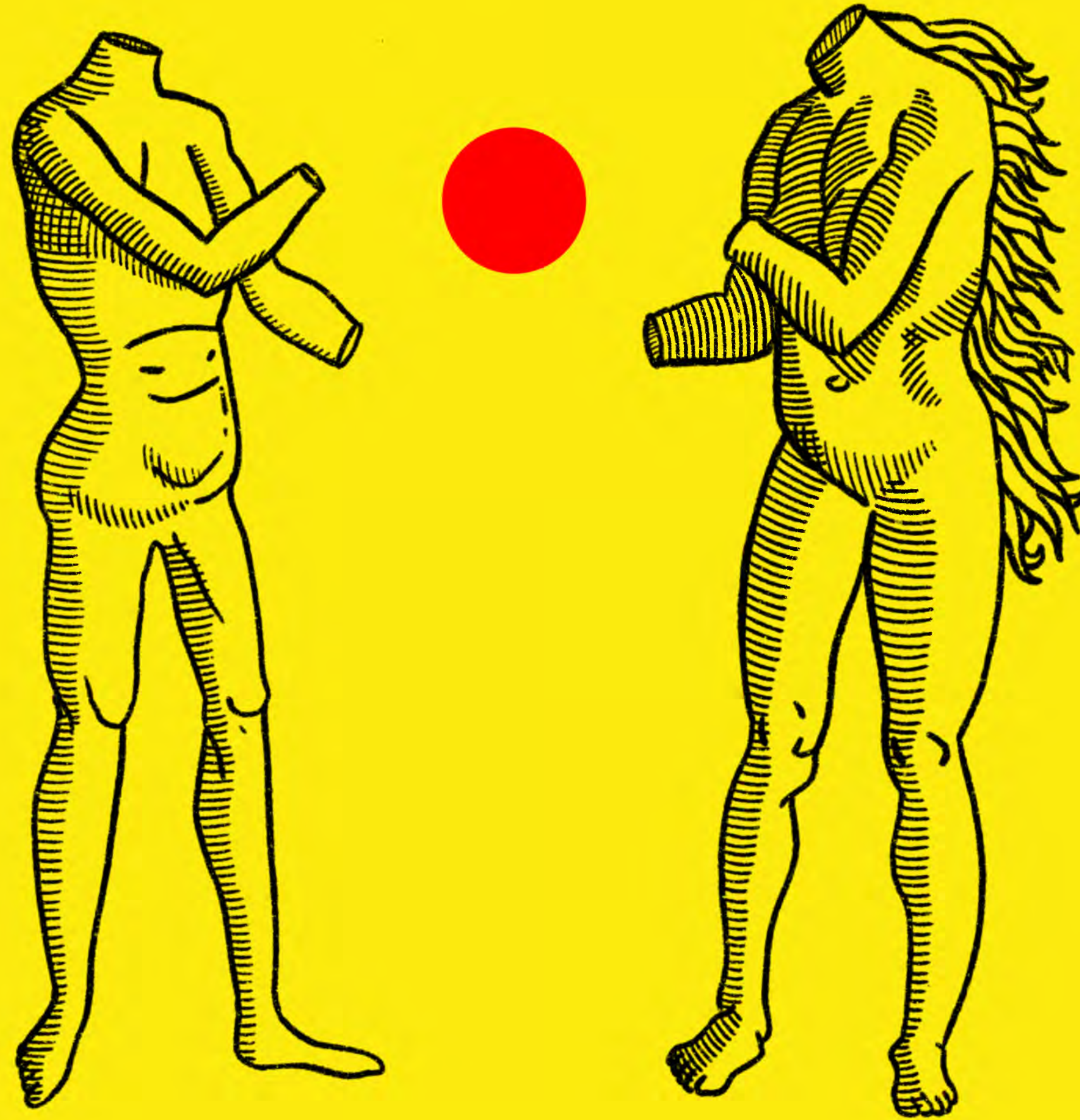
30 Campus Road

Closing May 7th

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

12504

Fruiting Bodies



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