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## My Beulah

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My Beulah

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

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2023

My mom and dad owned two sister cats when I was born, Beulah and Yoyo. Yoyo was shy and moody, while Beulah was patient, kind and wide faced. Beulah was my chariot and my stuffed animal. She was almost like an older sister to me. So patient with me even when I would try to ride her like a pack animal.

It wasn't until this year that I decided to look into the etymology of the name Beulah. I don't think I'd ever heard of anyone named Beulah other than my cat, but I knew it had to come from somewhere.

One of the first days of being in my studio I had brought a box of blackberries to snack on. I had just got into a fight with my ex-boyfriend, and as I sat on the floor of my studio I grabbed a handful of berries, crushed them, and threw them against the wall in anger. This was the genesis of my senior project. I began to create shapes and eventually figures with the blackberries, which culminated in my first "piece:" a wall painting depicting two figures in a struggle/embrace. While I was exploring this new avenue of wall paintings, I was also sorting through family photos. I came across a photo of Beulah and Yoyo in an embrace. This is what prompted me to look into what Beulah means. The first definition I came across was of biblical Hebrew origins, "bride; espoused", according to dictionary.com. Upon further research, I found that William Blake used the name Beulah extensively in his mythological writings. I had already been a fan of Blake's paintings, so this piqued my interest. A description of his usage of Beulah goes as follows:

"a dreamy paradise where the sexes, though divided, blissfully converse in shameless selflessness. Beulah is available through dreams and visions to those in Ulro, the utterly fallen world." Between Eternity and Ulro, it is imagined as a place without conflict similar to a conventional image of heaven or Eternity. However, for Blake, the idea of an everlasting peaceful Eternity is misguided and fallen." (Gourlay, Alexander S. "An Emergency Glossary of Terms, Names, and Concepts in Blake")

Blake also refers to Beulah as "a place where Contraries are equally True" (*Milton. Book the second, 30:1-31:11*)

As I would stare at the growing mural I created inside the walls of my studio, I realized not only that Blake's description of Beulah seemed to touch a deep place within the process I was going through concerning several personal struggles, but that my artwork seemed to emulate the ephemeral and flowing qualities of Blake's paintings and prints. Figures moving within swirling and snaking shapes, natural colors, I had inadvertently echoed Blake's mythical visions.

I felt that I had found that sweet spot of personal expression and universality. Each day I went into my studio and expanded my map of personal progress through grief and suffering. I intended to ultimately visualize my own Beulah, something not necessarily tangible, but a place of overcoming earthly tribulations. I did not want to explicitly name what dark place I was departing from, as to open up the images to a more elevated and open space.

This project is the culmination of what at one point was almost the death of me. Because of that photo of sisterly feline love I have found a small plot of soil to germinate the possibility of a different kind of life, as well as the acceptance that it may not be exactly what I thought it would be. The messiness, the spirituality, the joy and pain that brings healing is my Beulah.







