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Matters of the Heart

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Matters of the Heart

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

By
Eavan Burke

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2020
The collection of pieces I have produced has more or less functioned as an exercise in redistributing value into a tired symbol. I’ve worked to assign my own meaning to the heart, as the over-saturation of its image seems to have worked towards its degradation. The heart has become almost unimportant. Comparatively, I feel that idioms of the heart function as a language parallel to this dilemma. They are treated as the doodles of language. This connection between the heart as symbol and the heart as language made me realize that the ease at which both are used is actually what makes the idiom and symbol important. Their popularity is due to the weight they hold in our reality. Both the idiom and symbol derive meaning from an individual’s personal context and associations to them. Through connecting idiom to image, I’ve attempted to build a world for my version of the heart. In this body of work, each piece represents a different idiom of the heart and showcases the visual manifestation of what I imagine them to mean. With the understanding that each of our associations are specific to our lived experience, I’ve taken this project as an opportunity to track my personal map of associations to the heart and its language.

Originally, when the plan was to display this work in a gallery setting with real-life viewing, I had found a momentum in my work that was rooted in sculptural investigation. I was excited about the movement and tactile quality of my work, finding that the content was functioning as a way to direct that investigation. When we learned that the nature of work had to change due to the circumstances of COVID-19, I was completely stuck and unable to move forward. It felt like I was mourning the loss of a year’s worth of progress and personal growth in my practice. In focusing on the technical aspects of making, I needed to find a new way to
translate what I was making into something accessible under our new reality. Initially, my project focused on finding a way to mesh the digital world with the handmade, but I had put that idea on the back burner once I got caught up in the sculptural process. Now, this mission has resurfaced as an essential undertaking, causing me to direct my focus on translating my old and new pieces into the digital sphere.

With regards to the content of the work, I’ve made a shift towards the diaristic; the new restrictions on making have pushed me to make this work more personal and specific to myself. Initially, I was afraid of having to be vulnerable in my art, as before all of this I had consciously focused on making things that felt more detached from self. I have never before included my image in anything I’ve made. However, through doing so I’ve realized an increased sense of ownership over my work, like it’s part of me in a more tangible way.

While this collection has on one hand been an exercise in refreshing the familiar and bringing it into a different context, it has also been an exercise in intimacy. I’ve spent so much time trying to understand how webs of associations work and how to communicate that the pieces reflect my connections to the phrases, all the while struggling with trying to keep the interpretations of language as general as I could in effort to maintain a degree of accessibility to my work. Yet, by relaxing my attachment to that goal, I see that this work is about my thought processes and how I personally have understood the symbol and language that I’ve dissected. I have bred an intimacy between myself and the heart, and the work produced functions as an investigation of the connections between us.
Works Included

*My heart skips a beat*, 2019
3D rendered paper mache sculpture projected onto sewn paper quilt. Sound by Riley Burke.

*Wear my heart on my sleeve*, 2020
Video documenting performance of handmade garments, dyed with walnut ink. Sound by Clay Hillenburg.
My heart is racing, 2020
Video of motorcycle riding in circles around me, shot on 360 camera. Natural sound from footage.

Melt my heart, 2019
Video of cast wax heart melting down. Sound by Nick Fopeano.
**Tug at my heart-strings, 2020**
Video documenting performance of tuggable sculptures. Sound by Eavan Burke.

**Home is where my heart is, 2020**
Video documenting memory quilt made from fabrics dyed with walnut ink and dipped in wax. Drawings of collected memories from loved ones embedded into quilt. Natural sound from footage.
**Put my heart on the line, 2020**
Video performance of repetitive walking around a concrete block. Shot on 360 camera. Can be viewed in VR or 360 sphere. Sound by Maeve Schallert.

**Listen to my heart, 2020**
A collection of sound works created in response to the phrase *listen to my heart*. Intended to be paired with each visual piece as a sonic element.
Produced by:
Ezra Kahn
Clay Hillenburg
Maeve Schallert
Nick Fopeano
Riley Burke
Eavan Burke

All work can be viewed at: heartfelt.cargo.site