Freedom Within, Freedom Without

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by
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor Lisa Sanditz for inspiring me and listening to me so well over this past year, especially when I didn’t make much sense. Thank you for helping me focus on what really matters to me, thank you for reminding me why I’m here: I’m here to paint!
It has always been hard for me to talk about my art. I used to not think about it so much, it was just a way that I could communicate what was important to me without having to say it. Being a shy person socially, painting gives me a way to be bold yet still be somewhat separate from what I feel; once it’s outside of me, I don’t have to “own” it. I can paint the dark things I feel, and people don’t have to associate those dark emotions with me; I can say I’m just “going for something,” I can still hide. I’ve been told over and over again that I am vague, mysterious, deceptively nonchalant. I liked that description, because it meant that I still wasn’t figured out, that I still could keep secrets to myself. This project is not the case.

The body of work is, stroke for stroke, the translation of my personal emotional existence of my early twenties; it begins during the most transformative time of my life, which happened in the Peruvian Amazon the summer I turned 20. This moment of transformation was a gateway to a whole new perspective, and I know that I never saw the world the same way afterwards. Instead of blurring text and hiding the true meaning behind the paintings, I leave it all in. There are layers and layers of information, given in the text on the walls and then the paintings and then the drawings layered over them. I want to take the viewer on the journey I have been on in the last three years, one of personal destruction and transformation. While it is disorienting, all of the information is there—some of it covered up, some of it masked as something else, and some of it blinking in literal red neon lights—like life, everything is there, all around, all the time. We chose to see what we want, and gloss over the rest. I wanted to make something that was hard to gloss over, something urgent and important.

The journey begins in the Amazon, but all of the obstacles and victories happen within, inside my soul. I want to bring the viewer inside that space in my heart, and let them walk with
me in the place where I have dwelled alone for so long. I don’t want to have secrets anymore.

The paintings show these moments of radical transformation, mental and emotional shifts that left me changed. I am no longer the same. Welcome to my world.