

Spring 2023

## Contained Messes

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Contained Messes

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

by  
Cora Quinlan

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2023

Contained Messes is an installation consisting of a range of sculptures or bundles that communicate my urgency for self-preservation. I put up massive boundaries when other people try to tell me about myself. When I think of setting boundaries, I think of building walls and I've built a lot of walls at Bard. The threat level determines the height and durability of the walls I build. When I started this project, I took a step back to look around and realized that I built myself a big house, an oyster shell if you will, suitable only for myself. Here, I have free reign to be my authentic self, I can be as messy, loud, sad, and profane as I want to without worrying about other people's space or happiness. Everything within the walls belongs to me, I decide who is allowed to enter, and nothing festers or rots without me knowing about it. I don't have this control when I am outside of my oyster shell. There have been times at Bard when I slipped and sliced open my belly, spilling out my guts in front of everyone I had come to know. Each time something bad happens outside, I return to my oyster shell to recollect myself and I garnish my wall with the remains. I have used elements from personal collections, obsessions, and vices to spew my own entrails that contain secrets, past lives, and residue of the one I am living now, elevating the lows and celebrating them; eating them, and puking them back out.

The sculptures in Contained Messes largely consist of materials I have sourced from inside my oyster shell. Living with my three closest friends provided me with a unique accumulation of materials that convey the raw femininity we have cultivated. Candy and junk food wrappers, antidepressants, stimulants, and dead vapes can all be found in Contained Messes. I preferred the stories told by the plastic bags, balloons, lost trinkets, and beer caps that littered our floor the day after parties over the stories of

my roommates recounting their night; they didn't remind me how alienated I had become. The hairy lint roller sheets from our living room rug, our broken nails, and the pile of dirt speak to mortality, accumulation, and the passage of time. I use highly saturated colors to draw my audience in and the waste from my home to drive them away as if to say, "PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH OR FEED THE ANIMALS". I believe the things we shed and discard can tell more about a person than the things we cherish and keep.

I contained my sculptures in metal grids, nets, and nylons so that the contents would warp and protrude outward as if there was no room to breathe. These types of containers also appeal to my desire to be inaccessible but not invisible, like animals at the zoo. Exterminating or uprooting animals that live among us is analogous to how I was discarded merely for getting in someone else's way. We assume that we are entitled to take up as much space as we want without considering how it affects life around us. Contained Messes condemns the notion that "the world is your oyster", for it consists of 7 billion other people who also think the exact same thing. Instead, make the oyster your world, and it will grow with you.

# CONTAINED MESSAGES

A SENIOR THESIS SHOW  
BY CORA QUINLAN

Sat. April 8, 3-6 pm

Bard Exhibition Center  
45 O'Callaghan Lane  
Red Hook, NY

on view until April 22





















