

When You're Above Me



Camille Casemier



*A bucket, a door, two cardboard boxes, a stick, a roll  
of yellow fabric, a pillow, a microphone, a loop pedal,  
red fabric, chalk.*

A walk can save my life. I started my walks a  
few years ago, I prefer alleys to sidewalks,  
I prefer my mind when my body is in motion.

In time, everything I started to perform with was either found in an  
alley or looked like it might have been. I am still trying to define this  
current sensibility—the objects I am drawn to, the process we go through,  
seeing something and being magnetized toward some aspect of its  
physical properties, building a relationship with it and recovering  
something in myself simultaneously, not quite constructing analogies  
or metaphors, and not only systems or images, but somewhere within  
reach of each of those words.

As a kid I played soccer and was really bad at it. I've been trying to  
find the words to talk about any of this and I am reminded of the way I  
played soccer. I would kick the ball so far ahead of me up the field and  
then chase madly after it and if I was lucky I'd finally catch up to it and  
then blast it off again, just this ongoing kick chase kick chase. For me at  
this moment there is a sense of this in being an artist, like I make some-  
thing and then I get close enough to it for just a moment, maybe some  
words will align with it, just for a moment, and then I go off and kick it  
far away again restarting the chase to find new words that feel  
momentarily true.



A yellow fabric unfurls across the floor  
I lay down the right thing and the wrong thing and a deciding line  
I take off my coat and lower myself onto it  
it holds me  
people told me they wondered about my father in this moment

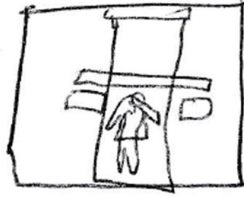
mirror and become  
remove a layer and then lay with it

*“I have a hard time talking. I am the youngest of six and growing up it was never easy to get a word in. I’ve always been worried I would say the wrong thing or at least not the right thing. It just takes time to gather myself. I think that is why I started performing, to carve out a space for myself to take my time.”*





had  
time  
talking



search  
to bell  
around  
me

### Journal sketch, January 2022<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is a sketch from my journal months prior to the performance. I did not have an opportunity to rehearse in the gallery in advance of tech week but I had an understanding of the size of the space, the audience's view, and my materials. I composed images in my head, the endeavor felt quite screenic, positioning objects in my head like pngs on my computer screen when I am working on a video. I experimented with the images in the studio by taping a camera to the ceiling, organizing myself and objects according to sketches in my journal, discovering different relationships and feelings as I spent time with the materials, reviewing the rehearsal footage later. I used a microphone throughout my rehearsal process, simultaneously developing the text and images, allowing myself to speak and freely associate images/movements with thoughts/memories. I approached some images with a sense of what emotional resonance they carried for me, others I am still understanding. As the performance approached, I set a series of images and text and played with improvised arrivals and departures between these moments.





Enter door. <sup>1</sup>

The door is from the closet  
in my bedroom a few apartments ago.

I brought it to my studio at the time to use as a  
desk and it stayed. <sup>2</sup>

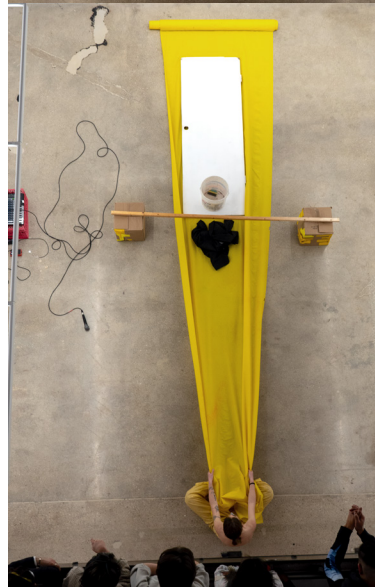
I read the essay “Lost and Found” by Colson  
Whitehead in my first apartment while I was  
briefly studying dance at the New School. It  
stayed with me too.

“We can never make proper goodbyes. It was  
your last ride in a Checker cab, and you had no  
warning. It was the last time you were going to  
have Lake Tung Ting shrimp in that entirely  
suspect Chinese restaurant, and you had no  
idea. If you had known, perhaps you would  
have stepped behind the counter and shaken  
everyone’s hand, pulled out the disposable  
camera and issued posing instructions. But  
you had no idea. There are unheralded tipping  
points, a certain number of times that we will  
unlock the front door of an apartment. At some  
point you were closer to the last time than you  
were to the first time, and you didn’t even know  
it. You didn’t know that each time you passed  
the threshold you were saying goodbye.”

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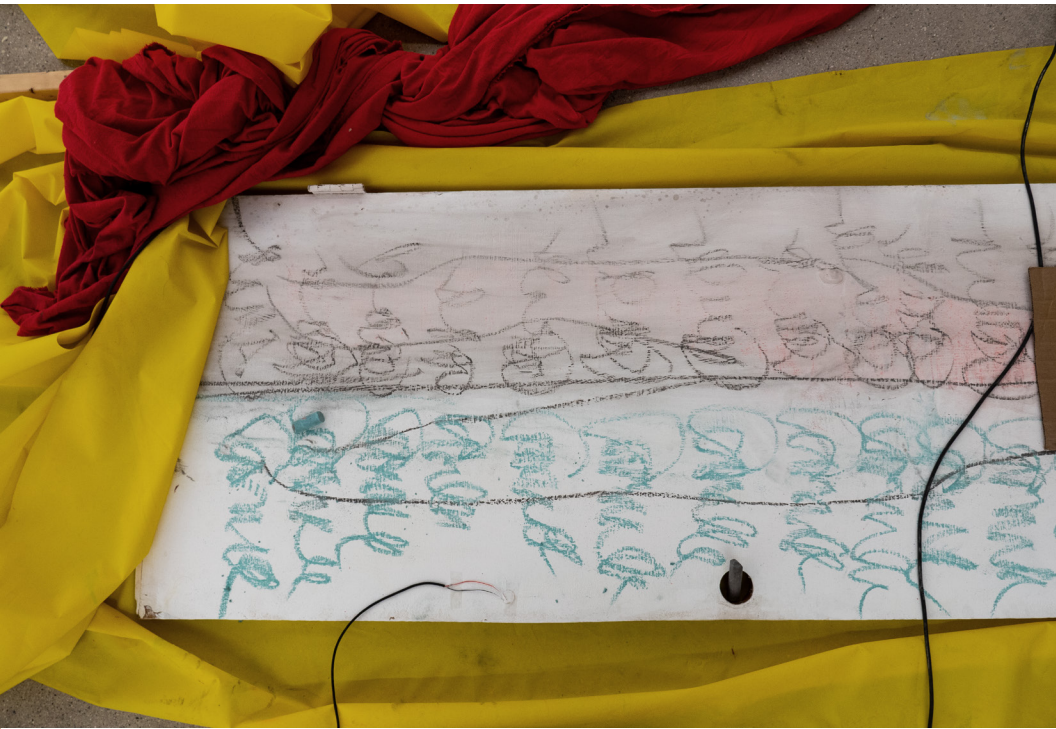
1 I hold the yellow fabric like reins and begin to  
pull. The door slid on the yellow fabric, the bucket  
approaching the stick propped on the two boxes.

The bucket meets the stick and is pushed down the  
length of the door as it progresses beneath.  
2 The door performed as a table, a bed, and a body.  
I carried the door out on my back. I stopped and  
picked up the microphone at my feet, balancing  
the door across my back at 90 degree angle with  
my legs. I spoke about dinner time with my family,  
how I started stacking and organizing things on the table  
around me when I had a hard time talking.



“Life is much much more than is necessary... and much, much more than any of us can bear, so we erase it or it erases us, we ourselves are an erasure of everything we have forgotten or don’t know or haven’t experienced.” Mary Ruffle.

*“What is wrong?”<sup>1</sup>*  
*“What is left?”<sup>2</sup>*  
Are the questions.<sup>3</sup>



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1 I lay on the door and trace an outline of my body in chalk. I draw a line down the middle. I write my name with both hands in both directions.

2 I open a box and remove a red fabric. I cover the half of the door with fabric and begin to smudge and erase the left side of my body.

3 The door is contact mic-ed. I use a loop pedal to create a sound scape of my mark making.





Handwritten text on a whiteboard, including words like "love", "hate", "fear", "hope", "faith", "trust", "joy", "peace", "wisdom", "strength", "courage", "compassion", "kindness", "patience", "self-control", "humility", "gentleness", "meekness", "temperance", "modesty", "prudence", "bravery", "loyalty", "honesty", "integrity", "justice", "mercy", "grace", "forgiveness", "reconciliation", "healing", "restoration", "renewal", "transformation", "redemption", "salvation", "eternity", "infinity", "omnipotence", "omniscience", "omnipresence", "eternality", "infinity", "omnipotence", "omniscience", "omnipresence".



Making this piece was structured  
around instances of clarity and distraction.  
I become visible to myself though these things in time.

Merleau Ponty described a shape as simply some  
thing seen  
from a limited point of view-

a shape's contour was made by the perspective of the beholder.  
An audience above me. *What is left. What is wrong.*



As for my unavoidable ways of doing and being, alright. I'll create the  
conditions for you.

Formalizing the personal, perhaps.

“There is no possibility of perceiving the world outside of embodiment and it is not possible to be embodied in isolation from the body’s relation with matter.” From the 1901 book “Matter and Memory” by Henri Bergson, brought to my attention in Dorota Sosnowska’s essay “Ephemera: Matter and Memory”

Unfinished connections continue exerting a force toward me,  
I can construct something rather than an expression alone, and so I will  
not be alone.





