



Winter 2020

Chalk Drawings: A Series

Sophia Marble

Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwu_honors



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marble, Sophia, "Chalk Drawings: A Series" (2020). *WWU Honors Program Senior Projects*. 351.
https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwu_honors/351

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in WWU Honors Program Senior Projects by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

CHALK DRAWINGS

a five-piece written gallery exploring
writing as visual art
writing as emotion
writing as conversation
& writing as resistance

by Sophia Marble
in conjunction with Professor Yanara Friedland

Honors Senior Capstone Project
fall 2019 – winter 2020

presentation / Thursday / 12 March 2020

14 March 2020

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

This project is a five-piece solo exhibition of my written work. I attempted to portray and process my own perspectives, as a white woman, around topics like climbing, outdoors accessibility, and land contestation. My gallery was displayed at Vital Climbing Gym in downtown Bellingham for the months of January and February 2020.

Dear thanks to my advisor and collaborator Professor Yanara Friedland, who without fail, always asked me the question that was hardest for me to ask myself: *but, Sophia, what is your intention? Take it back to that.* Through this, she allowed me time to explore all my different ideas, but reminded me to ultimately be realistic, reminded me to sit down and think about what actually wanted to do and why I was making those particular choices.

...

Initially, over a year ago, I was talking to one of the Vital Climbing managers and expressing my curiosity about their artist space. *Have there ever been writers who display here?*

At the time, I was a member of the climbing gym. Every month-or-so I stopped above the steps to view and appreciate the variety of visual artists and photographers who showcase at this location. The artist space is small, a section of brick wall at the entry of their gym. Lights above the posted art highlights the works as climbers walk up and down the stairs. It's so fun to identify people I had chatted with as climbers, and later recognize them as fellow creators. But, I never saw writing as a form of art here, only photos and prints (mainly of mountains, sunsets, and other climber-related adventures). And so my conversation with a Vital manager, which began with curiosity, ended with me putting my name on a 12-month waitlist to reserve my spot on Vital's artist wall. I wanted to show writing could be visually appealing.

Realizing this big opportunity, and intending to spend time creating new and polished pieces, I tucked my confirmation email from Vital into my archived folder until I was ready to begin working on this project. Flash forward about 6 months, at the end of August 2019, I began to formulate a plan to build this opportunity into my senior capstone project. And so, I slowly began researching—collecting bits from my own journals and practice, as well as reading up on moments and conversations going on in the outdoors community.

Though this project functions as a final product of my entire time as a university student, during the period where I was creating the pieces for this gallery, there were some immediate influences that played a large role in the ways I framed my intention. One influence was a course during fall quarter 2019 from the English department. It was focused on multi-genre writing in collaborative ways, taught by Professor Kelly Magee. Through this course, I practiced letting go of my own work and what I want it to sound like, and allow various messages or voices to shine through. Another influence was the process of writing my Fairhaven degree, or my interdisciplinary concentration. My degree, titled “Stories of Perspective and Place” helped me hone in on my curiosities and goals regarding the interconnectedness of Creative Writing, Environmental Education, and Community Perspectives, which I was able to put into practice through this project.



When displaying this gallery, I created a visual of an abstract body with white yarn, not only to thread together the pieces visually, but also to identify the cohesion under the title “Chalk Drawings”. I chose this title because of its layered meaning in the context of my work—chalk and drawing both as forms of collaborative play and learning, chalk as a temporary medium, drawing as a method of capturing a particular moment in time, and chalk as a tool for climbing and finding climbing beta. Next to each displayed piece, I also provided a blurb of who or what I was in conversation with, in order to give the audience some context for the individual piece.

Here, I have provided the titles with a similar contextual blurb, to identify my conversations. I also have provided footnotes which reference the sources that I have pulled or quoted from.

“Untitled”: a re-erasure in conversation with a blog post by climber Jenni Abegg on climbing Devil’s Tower in June.¹

“Pla(y)ce”: a piece in conversation with Eve Tuck and reddit user, over top of a map from Murrin Park, a section of BC Public Parks in the Squamish region.^{2,3,4}

“Of Fall Evenings”: a braided piece, one voice discussing the documentary on Nalle Hukkatival’s monumental boulder climb, another voice discussing an experience of sexual harassment.⁵

“# 2”: a piece born out of play with my roommate, Ginger Gionet. She took the photo, on which the writing is over top. The piece feels through moments of falling.

“Reading is (Optional)”: a piece coming from a class-time seminar with Carolyn Finney, in conversation with lyrics by the music group Atmosphere, from their song “Yesterday”, discussing outdoors accessibility.⁶

...

This project was impactful, overall, mainly because it served as a big learning experience in coordination and intention. Though I have contributed writings and doodles to house-show style exhibitions, I have never set up my own gallery of polished works. This was challenging for me to coordinate the timing of the gallery, and the timing of my editing process. Then, once I was quickly

¹ Abegg, Jenny. “Devils Tower: Why I Can’t Write About the Voluntary Closure.” *Jenny Abegg*, 24 June 2017, <https://jennyabegg.com/2017/06/24/devils-tower-why-i-cant-write-about-the-voluntary-closure-2/>.

² Tuck, Eve. “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities.” *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 79, no. 3, Sept. 2009, pp. 409–28. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, doi:[10.1177/0361687809343115](https://doi.org/10.1177/0361687809343115).

³ “R/Vancouver - Crown Land to Be Returned to Squamish Nation, Including World-Class Rock Climbing Area | CBC News.” *Reddit*, Nov. 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/vancouver/comments/dodstd/crown_land_to_be_returned_to_squamish_nation/.

⁴ Hennig, Clare. “Crown Land to Be Returned to Squamish Nation, Including World-Class Rock Climbing Area | CBC News.” *CBC News*, 28 Oct. 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/land-transfer-murrin-park-climbing-1.5337627>.

⁵ *The Lappnor Project - A Documentary about Not Giving Up*. 2017, <http://www.thelappnorproject.com/>.

⁶ Atmosphere. *Yesterday*. *Ant. genius.com*, <https://genius.com/Atmosphere-yesterday-lyrics>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2020.

approaching display time, I struggled with the idea of *what's next*, constantly brainstorming ways that I could essentially force the audience to participate and be in conversation with me. In the beginning of January, I had multiple conversations with Yanara about my ideas and desires for definite interaction, and through some lengthy (and distressed) conversations with those close to me. But feeling discouraged in myself and worried I was not working hard enough on this project, I had to reflect: the more I brainstormed hosting collaborative writing nights or refrigerator magnets or discussions, the more I realized I didn't want to host anything. I was done with this project for now. It didn't need a second step. What this distress and reflection revealed to me was that, as a writer, I have this idea that every reader has to understand how much emotion I put behind each piece, and how "deep" the piece truly is. In forgoing the what's-next-second-step that I was trying to force, not only on the audience but on myself, I was able to allow the pieces to just live as they were created, live as visual art.

...

Following are the pieces in the order I have listed them previously. Thank you to all else who supported or looked at or are currently looking at my project. This is such a small sliver of something I hope to do in the future, but so many big questions and reflections came out of this self-directed experience.

Untitled

“I certainly know I couldn’t write
a piece entitled *Devils Tower:
Why We Climb in June*, and that concerns
me, because I’m
climbing”

I turn

myself climbing not so nuanced
information across closure

black

red

get up

maybe good or bad

criticizing friends

criticizing culture

choosing a side too easy

we will

m

j

u

p

in June
we

stand
talk
climb

on them

reservation has no
b

o

un

d

a

r

i

es

MIXED-BLOOD STONE FORGOTTEN

I stood on the scene to see the cracks

You'll come You'll sit You'll listen You'll hear You'll see You'll meet You'll learn

(verbs)

You'll come You'll sit You'll listen You'll hear You'll see You'll meet You'll learn

(verbs)

You'll come You'll sit You'll listen You'll hear You'll see You'll meet You'll learn

(verbs)

You'll come You'll sit You'll listen You'll hear You'll see You'll meet You'll learn

and then climb on

point at
people,

let me.

“And then,
I'd absolutely
love to hear
what you
have
to say.”

Of Fall Evenings

Forty-five degrees of overhanging granite.

V17, 9A.

The boulder,

the first 9A boulder ever sent.

12-year-old Nalle Hukkataival found himself bored with indoor bouldering, found himself feeling contrived.

The forest was different. No lights or music or plastic. No colors or patterns or rules.

Just a bike ride away, down the road and into the Finnish forest behind his house.

A whole other way to move, the rock polished and shifting and cracked.

And there, between the thick trunks of pine and moss, Nalle found the boulder.

: **crack** / krak / break or cause to break without a complete separation of the parts / make or cause to make a sudden sharp or explosive sound

Hot skin and fake laughs.

Friend is playing air guitar and you are dancing along. Friend is talking loudly and you are shouting along. Speakers are signing boldly and you are belting-out along. Pretzels. No shirt. Wrapping paper.

The microwave clock says 11:13pm and you hear another carbonated crack. The foam is white.

White is the same color of your teeth in the mirror, the same color as the microwave on the counter, the sock on that door handle.

: **dance** / dans / move rhythmically to music, typically following a set sequence of steps / (of a person) move in a quick and lively way

Five hand moves separated possible from the impossible. Nalle swung from training to the boulder,
 from travels to the boulder,
 from indoor gym and back to the boulder.

Eight seasons, every season.

The link, a sequence of 5

4

3

2

1

hand over foot over head over hand,
 the beta of the beast.

: **burden** / 'bɜːdn / a load, typically a heavy one / a duty or misfortune that causes
 hardship, anxiety, or grief

One friend, two miles. Walking home. Crawling to bed.

The bedroom is hot and the air outside feels cool. You stick your head out the window above your
 bed. You stare at the ferns below and it reminds you of camping, the warmth of the summer earth,
 the warmth of the campfire, the burning fire that is coming up your throat.

A hand lays on your back. It's warm, so you leave it there. You turn towards the hand. They rub
 your back and close the window. The bed is warm. They whisper to you. Friend is sleeping in the
 bath tub, but you will be okay.

These hands, they have control. But all you feel is warmth.

These hands have control.

: **dream** / drēm / a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person's mind
 during sleep / a cherished aspiration, ambition, or ideal

back to the boulder

It's October in Lappnor,

Finland in 2016

on a dry fall evening, on the twenty sixth of the month

the harsh white bulbs pulled back the night's thick curtain,

while flitters of chalk suspended in the air, caught in the floodlights, and clouded around each other. The camcorder behind the tree blinked red.

Topping out, Nalle stood up and looked at the boulder below, the thing he hated most yet loved more. He roared amongst the life in the forest and jumped down to the pads below. They quaked at his joy among the stars.

: **proj·ect** /'prä,jekt / an individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned and designed to achieve a particular aim / plan (a scheme or undertaking)

The pounding of the morning rain startles your brain awake. The gray light sinks into your skin. Your eyes make out shapes on the ceiling. Shapes you do not recognize.

You jump down off the bed and stare into the quiet forest outside the window. Watch the stars twinkle and fade.

No one saw. No one will know.

The leaves clatter together in the wind, the trees applaud as you leave the bedroom and walk down the hall.

“A documentary [about]

not giving up :

[The Lappnor Project]”.

Reading is (Optional)

Dreads are not the point.

Dreads are not the point.

Dread(s) are (is) not the point.

Dread this time as in fear

they dread the trees that strangled once upon a time

time as in now the past follows you

follows you because it was only once upon a yesterday.

“was that you? looked just like you”

singing about the d(r)ead rapping about your dread(s)

But d(read)s are not the point.

Point this time as in direction hu(man)s are to nature like a gun pointed to your head asking

“do you come here often?” you as

in all (of you)

you hold up your hands and they stretch out like branches waving in the breeze breeze shaking

leaves leaves falling (lighting striking / you are)

falling

down

below

gathering the branches smelling the
campfire smoke.

The black(ening branches) burn but

we can't breathe the smoke but it feels familiar.

It's cold outside but we are fine. cold outside but we don't mind.

Mind this time as in brain, as in mind

over

matter

material. (It's cold outside but we are) wearing puffy coats puffy like swollen and bulbous and red

Anti(his)ta(mine) but you cannot have any

You don't b(e)elong

look at your Reflection Reflection in the mirror

Reflection in the lake

Reflection as in looking back at yourself

your dreads

your dread(s)

But that is not the poi(nt).

P(erson) O(f) I(nterest):

telling you, "you can(nt)

"you won(nt)

"you should(nt)

Someone once told me parentheses mean to say "reading is optional"

Is that based on the color of your skin?

Or are you afraid to look between the lines,

(Dread is not the point).

at something staring

you in the face?

: the panoramic views surrounding you, leaves piling at your feet, crisp clouds caressing your cheeks.

once (twice, three times, again) upon a time (now)

“own your shit”, she replied.