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Closely Distant

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Closely Distant

By

Crisha Yantis

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Margaret Bohls

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 2014

Closely Distant

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University of Nebraska, 2014

Advisor: Margaret Bohls

Drawing upon my own experiences and observations of the world around me I use the figure to explore what it means to be human. This body of work addresses the universal experience of anxiety through the dynamics of both personal and interpersonal relationships, specifically focusing on fear of the unknown or what subconsciously lies just out of our comfort or understanding.

Often what is unknown is also what brings about questions of our own power and what we can or cannot control. In my work, I address ideas of power and powerlessness formally through what the figures lack. Their control is represented through their rigidity and by being safely bound in their circumstance. This intended discomfort is expressed through the figures' high level of awareness, and their inability to physically act on their concerns. The eyes are windows of awareness within which consciousness is held. I wish the facial features and the abstracted forms to draw the viewer to each piece for further investigations. Together the two offering a place for one to relate, experience the discomfort, question the circumstances.

It is in our nature to assign gender; I address gender through the sexual ambiguity of my figures, evoking questions and creating the desires to understand what it means to be visually male or female. We try to assign a gender even to an object made

of non-living material. Assigning gender is one way we deal with an unknown, yet assigning a specific gender to my work is not necessary to feeling their discomfort and perhaps speaks to the discomfort of not knowing.

Using the color pink to further the idea of vulnerability, or yellow to enhance areas of anxiety, I work at understanding the emotional qualities of color; the way color can draw you in and highlight important details, yet also invoke an emotional response, which might be different for each viewer.

Space is important in my work, whether it's the space within one figure, or between a pair or grouping. I use this space for several purposes; it can represent the area between the conscious and subconscious, it can be a place to contemplate the unknown. It might be a storage space for emotion, or represent that which makes one vulnerable. Together the bound or abstracted portion of the figure and the highly conscious and aware faces offer a starting point for a larger psychological context.