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Spring 4-2018

# The Adjacent

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Jan-McMahon, Phoebe, "The Adjacent" (2018). *Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design*. 126.

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**The Adjacent**

By

Phoebe Jan-McMahon

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 Matthew Sontheimer

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 2018

# THE ADJACENT

Phoebe Jan-McMahon

University of Nebraska, 2018

Advisor Matthew Sontheimer

There are few times when my mind quiets; painting is one of them. A universe exists adjacent to this one where I process thoughts in a quiet space, free from the streaming cacophony of various devices. This adjacent space is where my mind is able to process the state of the world. I think it is essential that everyone knows what is going on around them, especially if the issues they hear about do not affect their daily life. I want to be an active participant in the world but find myself bogged down by the unrelenting events cycling through each day. I paint not to answer a question or find a new thought, but instead to thrive.

I had breast reduction surgery after my first year as a Graduate student. I was excited to get this literal weight off my chest, but I was not ready for the time the body needed to heal. With incisions covering my chest, my cathartic building process was out of reach. I started drawing more, observing my living space as I recovered.

Two large-scale self-portraits set in my apartment shifted my focus from portraiture to interior still lifes. I found I was more interested in the patterns and representing the spaces around the figure than dealing with my outward appearance. This coincided with the onslaught of political noise that began with the Presidential election in 2016. My need to withdraw from sensory input and people intensified. I am an introvert, and as such I require time to myself to mentally recharge.

These paintings start as snapshots taken in my apartment. The action of taking a picture of where my eye sits as I think is a practice in mindfulness. It is not always easy to understand what visual mechanism drew you away from whatever was at hand and why. The white-on-white interiors make for close studies of color; delicate patterns are observable in intersecting lines in the architecture, furniture, and plants. I am drawn to the places where lines draw multiple objects together--the edge of a radiator, a windowsill, the corner of two walls. I often think of them as visual knots. A tangle of pattern where thoughts can bounce, spin, or sit. I find the Adjacent again, entering the space through my studio as I paint.

These paintings are an offering of hope. A chance for a moment of calm in the eye of the storm. I want to share the Adjacent, perhaps by spending a moment here you will be able to find portals to the Adjacent in your daily life.



*Aloe*, Oil on linen, 20" x 16" 2018



*Portal*, Oil on linen, 11" x 9" 2018





*Doorknob*, Oil on panel, 13" x 17" 2017



*Lemongrass*, Oil on linen, 11" x 9" 2018





*Medicine Cabinet*, Oil on linen, 11" x 9" 2018



*Pillows*, Oil on linen, 9" x 11" 2018





*Legs*, Oil on Linen, 9" x 11" 2018



*Closet*, Oil on linen, 16" x 20" 2018





*Rice*, Oil on panel, 9" x 11" 2017





*Backside*, Oil on linen, 9" x 11" 2018



*Vertebrae*, Oil on linen, 20" x 16" 2018





*Fridge*, Oil on linen, 20" x 16" 2018



*Fish*, Oil on linen, 20" x 16" 2018