

Fox Dennis

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During my FURSCA research project (under my faculty advisor Shauna Merriman) I utilized my interests in art history, sculpture, and fashion/costuming to create a series of three wearable sculptures titled *Sacred Forms*. These three sculptures include *The Performer*, on gender queerness and divinity, and how gender is a social construct to be performed; *The Lover*, on devotion, nostalgia, and how love is preserved or experienced; and *The Chronicler*, on childhood trauma and how mental trauma shows up in the physical body. My goal with the three was to share my deeply personal stories to provide representation to non-binary bodies, to provide a loving connection between the body and mind, and not only to encourage sustainability in art and life through found objects/thrifted but to present textiles as an artistic option at Albion College.

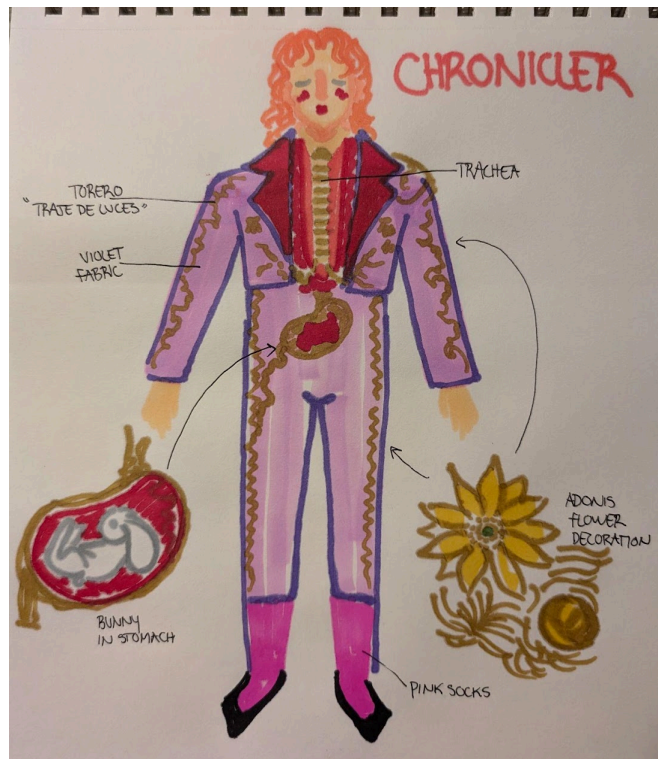
My method of creation first included the making of concept drawings and historical and symbolic research; then, finding “Readymades” or thrifted materials in my case, making test pieces (ceramic/glaze/overglaze, fabric stiffener, wire screen, organ and bone structures, garment patterns and assembly, chainmail, paint, etc), and then finally the slow simultaneous creation of each sculpture. By the end of the 8 weeks, I had completed more than half of each of the sculptures: about 75% of *The Chronicler*, 75% of *The Lover*, and 85% of *The Performer*. I plan to continue working over the Summer and into the school year to have this project done and photographed by the end of the year. During the research portion of this project, I acquired a lot of new artistic skills; such as making chainmail, patterning and creating high-quality garments, using fabric stiffener, working with/sewing on metal screens, creating delicate porcelain objects, using ceramic kilns on my own, and working with overglazes.

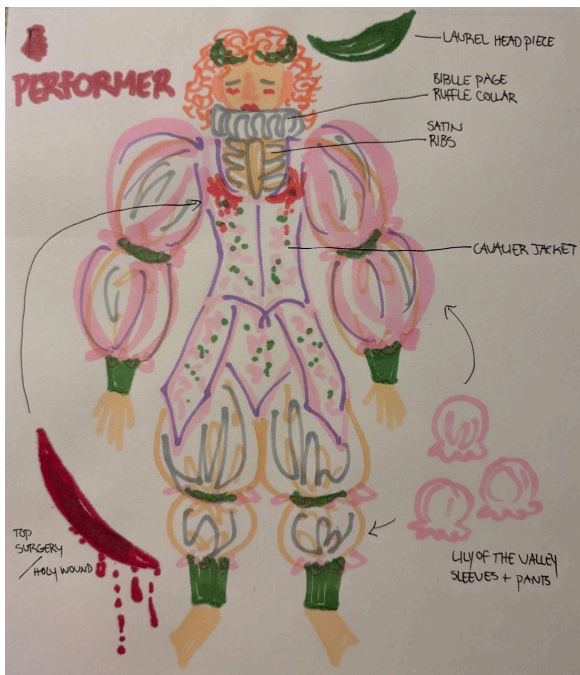
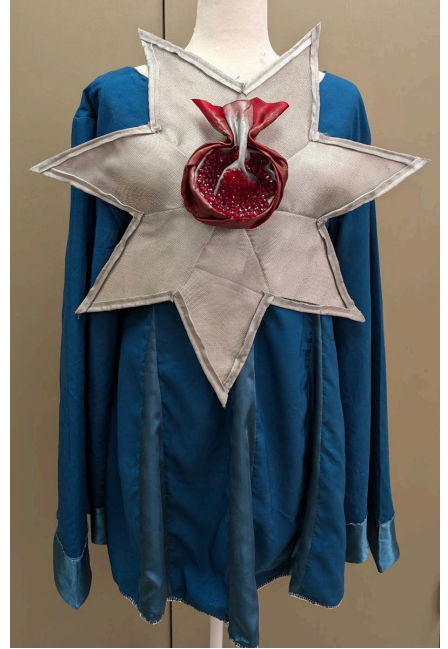
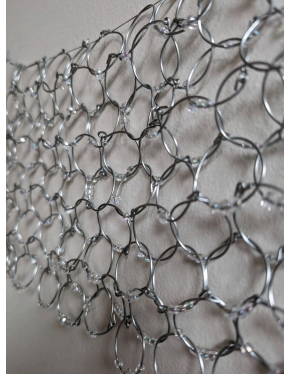
I first began with *The Chronicler*; representing some of the most traumatic and defining moments or experiences of my childhood and my perseverance in the face of adversity. I believe that memory is stored not only in the brain but also in the body. I feel and associate the things I have experienced with specific parts of my body. This sculpture displays several combined

stories that I have survived and grown from, that I have healed from, but that I find important to carry with me.

The second of the three sculptures I began was *The Lover*: representing love in all forms; familial, platonic, romantic, love between body and environment, and love between animal and human companions. I believe that one of the greatest ways that we are shaped as individuals is through how, what, and to who we dedicate our affections. This sculpture displays the places, people, and things I associate with loving and feeling loved.

The last of the sculptures that I began was *The Performer*: representing the gender nonconforming, specifically trans-masculine and nonbinary genders as a performance, one that can be joyful or depressing. I believe in gender fluidity, that our bodies were meant to be changed to fit our minds, that experimentation is necessary, and that our bodies were meant to be treated with kindness above all else. This work displays religious connections with gender nonconformity, both positive and negative, and encourages a reconnection of the body and gender with nature.





This opportunity was one that I believe greatly benefited my progress as an artist and researcher. I have many ideas for future projects based on what I have done with *Sacred Forms* as well as the skills to work with new mediums in any other future works that I will create. This experience will prove very important as I begin my senior year at Albion, it will inspire my final

showcase of works and help me think about where I want to go with my art after graduation. Also during my senior year, I will present my works not only at the Elkin Isaac Research Symposium but also in a show with the other art department FURSCA researchers.

I am very thankful to my benefactors who provided me with the Vernon and Gladys B. Lawson Endowed Research Fellowship and in doing so fueled this project and provided an upcoming artist with important education that is rare for one to receive. This experience has helped me as an artist and as an individual; I have gained more confidence in my ideas, in presenting to a crowd and answering questions, skills in personal time management, and knowing when to take a step back to breathe amid a project.