

Critical Issues

- The most prominent issue in the body of work from my independent study is the use of the figure, and specifically, the figure as having a history or past. My work differs from most in that most of the self-portraits are life-scale or even a tiny bit larger than life-scale, whereas many artists attempt to present the whole figure, and must make it much smaller. The use of a life-sized scale makes us relate with the body more. It is not simply a small rendition of a body but is more of a real person. I played with this idea of reality by often presenting various views of myself at once, on the same sheet of paper, which is most prominent in my largest piece “Every Hour.” I do not know of any artists who have done this, but I wouldn’t be surprised if they had. This is how I attempted to break the reality of the space within the picture and present myself as existing through time and therefore having a history. The figure has been used to do this before, some through the use of depicting an old and decaying body, and others by using performance pieces to suggest the existence and change of the body through time (such as Marina Abramovic). The ideas of history and past are connected to death and impermanence, which are two ideas that I am very much trying to engage in my work more and more.
- The issue of history and past lead to the issue of narrative. In all of my works, I have been trying to tell a story in some way, though this comes out most directly in *Every Hour*, and *Time Was*, which engage the issue of time, and also the *Shapeshifter* books, which very much tell a specific story through the use of a poem that emphasizes a narrative. Again I come back to Marina Abramovic’s work here to think about how she was interested in the process of disappearance, especially related to one’s body, as well as the storing and editing of memory. This is very much a theme in my work as I am trying to get at the change of the body and the self through time, but also trying to capture moments in time and set them down to look back on later, sort of a documentation of history. Many artists have engaged the issue of how we set down cultural history, such as Mark Tansey, who painted imagined histories related to art, but this was by inventing stories that were not true. I am more so trying to emphasize capturing a moment that is happening right now and then letting it become the past and a record of that past than create alternative pasts for myself.
- The narrative is very much bound up in the form of the book, and I know that with my book piece that I engage this issue very directly. Ever since we were little we found that books contain stories, something that continues into adulthood with reading novels. The act of turning pages is a temporal thing, and so the reader is necessarily engaged in a temporal act, and also understanding a temporal story in their head at the same time. Pages and specifically the turning of pages emphasize the issue of time and narrative within the book. The artist’s book, however, can simply engage a visual progression of things through time, not telling a conventional story, but just a sequence of images. The story I told are not completely conventional—they are not strict narratives—because they are in the form of poetry. In my two books, I was trying to get at the same story in two different ways, partly by breaking out of the conventional codex binding in the first book and instead using an accordion structure.

- The issue of autobiography is obviously an important one in my work as most of this body of work is self-portraiture. I am very influenced by Janine Antoni by her use of autobiography, specifically in the ways that she creates her “self” and then breaks that down, either through a process of wearing away (as in her chocolate and soap busts) or by making connections to others (as in her rope piece). It is less about the self and more about the self as existing through time and also as being in context with others. In my work, I am emphasizing the self as it exists through time, and also the inability to get at the source of the self.
- Source of identity/identification/meaning—Something that is most prominent in *Every Hour* is my fascination with not being able to pin down the self because we exist through time, which is similar to an idea engaged by Joseph Kosuth in *One and Three Chairs*. His work dealt more with the finding of meaning between words, images, and objects, but it is that same between-ness that I am trying to get at by presenting multiple images of myself at once, as he presented multiple “chairs” at once.

Artist Statement

PP1: Introduction—Start with specifics of where this body of work comes from, and introduce important issues in my work.

Purpose: background information and introduce important issues

Topic Sentence: This last fall, I signed up for an independent study on figure drawing rather than signing up for another regular art class.

Component Ideas: Finding interests about perceptions of life through subject matter of the figure, body conveys a sense of time and contains a record of the past, impermanence and self being broken down by time, self-portraiture as a means of exploring issues of the body and the self through time in order to come to a better understanding of our perceptions of change in everyday life; block out impermanence and change because they lead to death; the ever-shifting nature of time that leaves us ungrounded, in an in-between place, which can be frightening, but it is this space that I am interested in exploring through my artwork.

PP2: begin discussing issue of body and time

Purpose: describe issue of time and body and how I engage this compared with other artists

Topic Sentence: As the body is something that we all share and can all relate to, artists throughout history have used it as a way for people to relate to various ideas about life, and often about impermanence and death.

Component Ideas: Marina Abramovic's performance pieces engaging issues of impermanence and memory; wish to engage same issues in my work; I focused on capturing moments that could later be reflected on again and again; description of self portraits and drawing them

PP3: continue explaining self-portraits; portraits as showing me through time

Purpose: describe engagement of time in my self-portraits

Topic Sentence: I was not interested in making a single or set view of myself because this would deny the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself.

Component ideas: began drawing various views of myself within each drawing; multiplicity breaks the reality of space and time within the work; suggests an experience of myself through time rather than presenting a set "Bonnie Veblen"

PP4: describe how every hour engages issues of time and inability to pin down the "self"

Purpose: continue describing issue from PP3 and introduce new issue that this work specifically engages

Topic Sentence: I began presenting myself in different moments in my life-sized self-portrait series, but developed this idea into an entire work in *Every Hour*.

Component Ideas: describe work; engages issues of the self existing through time much in the same way that my other self-portraits do; opened up another issue of the inability to pin down the "self"; Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* as related to *Every Hour*; extreme multiplicity presents the viewer with the conundrum of where my "self" really lies; I am not contained within any single image of myself from this work, but rather in looking at the piece, my "self" begins to rest somewhere in the indefinable space between these instances

PP5: describe issue of narrative in my work and books

Purpose: introduce topic of narrative and explain specific instances

Topic Sentence: While all of my self-portraits acted as a way of making records of myself in time, when seen together, they begin forming a narrative about myself through time.

Component Ideas: not a conventional sort of narrative—the viewer gathers a story of how I perceived myself and how this changed over time; *Shapeshifter* books tell a more conventional narrative; book format as inherently temporal; two books tell same narrative, from Lucille Clifton's *Shapeshifter Poems*, in two different ways; describe story; books mimic how it feels to be caught up in an abusive situation and then how it feels to have distanced oneself from that abuse and begun to heal.

PP6: acknowledge personal nature of my work (autobiography); wrap up ideas, revisit impermanence, etc.

Purpose: conclude paper

Topic Sentence: I am aware of the highly personal nature of my work—I tell emotional narratives dealing with sensitive subjects, and look into the complex idea of where my “self” resides.

Component ideas: my past and my “self” as starting places for me to explore ideas about life, time, impermanence, and death; desire to continue working outwards from myself, begin exploring relationships with others more and more

Bonnie Veblen
Rough Draft

Artist Statement

This last fall, I signed up for an independent study on figure drawing rather than signing up for another regular art class. I knew that I had been interested in the figure, but I had not quite yet figured out what it was that intrigued me so much within this huge subject matter. Within a little over a month, I came to realize that I am deeply interested in the ways that the body conveys a sense of time and contains a record of the past. These ideas of time lead to issues of impermanence, and I soon became interested in the ways that the self is broken down by time—there cannot ever be a “me” because the next moment, that “me” is different. In my recent work, I have used self-portraiture as a means of exploring issues of the body and the self through time in order to come to a better understanding of our perceptions of change in everyday life. We tend to block out impermanence and change because they lead to death of the self, an idea to which we cling so strongly that we don’t know how to begin to let go. It is the ever-shifting nature of time that leave us ungrounded, in an in-between place, which can be frightening, but it is this space that I am interested in exploring through my artwork.

As the body is something that we all share and can all relate to, artists throughout history have used it as a way for people to relate to various ideas about life, and often about impermanence and death. Marina Abramovic’s performance pieces specifically engage issues surrounding bodily relationships and bodily vulnerability, but because her performance pieces necessarily occur at a single moment of time and then are in the past, issues of impermanence and memory underlie all of Abramovic’s work. It is these same time-body relationships that I wish to engage with my own work. However, in this body of work, I was more focused on capturing moments that could later be reflected on again and again. Rather than performing a transient piece and letting that moment and work pass by, I drew self-portraits. In each work, I captured the way in which I was seeing my self and my emotions in that moment, and also the action of my drawing. Capturing this action was important as the idea of action brings attention to the moment and time in which the piece was created. (After I had finished drawing myself, and having such an extended meditation on self existing through time, I still had a physical object left over through which I and others could revisit this moment and meditation.)

I was not interested in making a single or set view of myself because this would deny the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself. So instead of continuing to draw singular images of myself, I began drawing various views of myself within each drawing. We all know that the same person cannot be in two places at once, and so this multiplicity works to break the reality of space and time within the work, suggesting an experience of myself through time rather than presenting a set “Bonnie Veblen.”

I began presenting myself in different moments in my life-sized self-portrait series, but developed this idea into an entire work in *Every Hour*. This work is a self-portrait in which I drew myself at every hour, on the hour, for a full day. The work consists of fourteen drawings in total, all of which I drew on the same sheet of paper. While *Every Hour* engages issues of the self existing through time much in the same way that my other self-portraits do, it opened up another issue in my work, which is the inability to pin down the “self.” Much like Joseph Kosuth presents multiple ideas of “chair” at once in *One and Three Chairs*, I present multiple instances of myself at once in *Every Hour*. While they are all me, they do vary quite a bit, and to look at all of them at once presents the viewer with the conundrum of where my “self” really lies. I don’t have a concrete answer to this, but the best I can say after reflecting on this problem is that I am

not contained within any single image of myself from this work, but rather in looking at the piece, my “self” begins to rest somewhere in the indefinable space between these instances.

While all of my self-portraits acted as a way of making records of myself in time, when seen together, they begin forming a narrative about myself through time. This is not a very conventional sort of narrative—the viewer does not gather a story that speaks about events in my life, but instead the viewer gathers a story of how I perceived myself and how this changed over time. My *Shapeshifter* books allowed me to tell a more conventional narrative partly because the book format lends itself to “stories” more easily. The reading and turning of pages in a book is a temporal action, and as such, narratives fit easily into this format. The two different books present the same narrative, from Lucille Clifton’s *Shapeshifter Poems*, in two different ways. The poem tells the story of a little girl in a situation with an abusive father, and my books mimic how it feels to be caught up in an abusive situation and then how it feels to have distanced oneself from that abuse and begun to heal.

I am aware of the highly personal nature of my work—I tell emotional narratives dealing with sensitive subjects, and look into the complex idea of where my “self” resides. My past and my “self” have acted as starting places for me to explore ideas about life, time, impermanence, and death. I have started with myself and begun reaching outwards, and I hope to continue going beyond exploring my self, and into exploring my relationships with others.

Bonnie Veblen Assessment w/ Writing Assessment Prompts

Thesis Assessment:

- Does your thesis directly address your conclusions about the content of the work?
- Yes, I engage issues of time, impermanence, and self through the body

- Is the answer to the question “What is this work about?” contained within your thesis?
- Yes, except I don’t really mention narrative—this section does feel a little bit stuck in there, actually, less part of the cohesive whole

- Is your thesis too general or too specific?
- Perhaps too specific if I wish to include ideas about narrative. I could open it up, but as it is I feel like it is concise and well-supported

- Is it written in a way that is both clear and engaging?
- I think it is, but I’m wondering if someone else might get lost reading it—I think about these issues all the time, so I don’t know how clear they would be to others

Thesis Support Assessment: Are the points you make to support your thesis well selected...

- Do they locate meaning in a diversity of elements in the work (subject matter, material, rendering style, formal properties, title, context, attitude etc)
- Yes, I only touch on elements in each work, but I do use concrete examples in my work to support my ideas in my overall issues

- Do they address the most relevant elements? Are you missing obvious things, do you include things that are not central to your argument?
- Yes, though the narrative part is a little rough. It’s a hard transition to make after talking about time and impermanence and inability to locate self to just jump into narratives. I am wondering if I should leave this part out.

- Is your argument well grounded in observations? Do your observations make the point you need them to make. In other words, is the purpose of an observation clear? Are your descriptions simply factual or are they written in a way that supports your interpretation?
- Yes, I think my references to my work are clear and make good points. My references to Kosuth and Abramovic could be explained a little further—more details about their work perhaps
- I feel like I am just stating facts at this point, but I have trouble using words to describe issues of time and self without starting to sound too theoretical. I should perhaps look at some Thich Nhat Hanh writings and see how he grounds these things in reality, not just theory.

- Are there gaps in your thinking? Is there a coherent cause and effect relationship between your thesis and supporting elements? Do you assume things that are left unsaid?
- The only gap is between the section on self and the one on narrative—it’s a hard gap to close though. Otherwise, I don’t really see places that don’t connect too well.

Paragraph Topic Assessment:

- Is the topic a full, specific idea? (“The artist chooses colors to create a mood” isn’t a full idea. The artist chooses dreary, muted colors to create a mood of hopelessness” is.)
- not for many of them, esp. first and last paragraphs—so what? Is my reaction reading them now

-Is or isn't the topic clearly stated and located in such a way as to help the reader understand the point you are making?
-It is for the others, the first and last are a little too vague and general to add much meaning

-How effectively have you connected it to your thesis/over arching idea?
-The end part—about narrative doesn't really connect much. It does loosely, but when I begin coming back to it in the conclusion it feels a little out of place. I could move this idea up, connecting it to the body through time as a narrative, then it wouldn't seem so random.

Overall Connective Structure Assessment:

-When are ideas connected from paragraph to paragraph and when are they not?
-NOT around the "narrative" paragraph. It feels very much stuck in there.
-are around PP3, which is about my intentions in including multiple views of myself at once

-Are the paragraphs in a good order? Why or why not?
-No—as mentioned, I think I need to move my ideas about narrative into the essay earlier. I may or may not readdress them later, but I think there is definitely a way to fit them in earlier, which will give more concreteness to the idea of time, perhaps—people understand "narrative," I am worried that they won't understand the more abstract ways I'm talking about time and reality

-Do you move your reader through your ideas in a clear and logical manner?
-Yes for the most part—except ideas about narrative

-How might the essay be rearranged and why?
-See second question in this section

Assess the clarity of your essay structure and your writing:

-Are each of your supporting arguments written in a clear and understandable manner? Do they make the point they need to make?
-I think they could be clearer. Some of them don't really seem to go towards a point, but just sort of talk a lot, even after editing them some. I think I could give them more direction.

-Do your descriptive passages just describe or are they written in such a way that they anticipate and advance your thesis?
-Well, I don't think that my language choices are particularly evocative of what I'm trying to talk about, but I really don't know a better way to talk about these things than simply using "impermanence" and "self"—I feel like I should introduce these terms though.
-My description is fairly dry and technical or abstract, though what I include does support my thesis

-Is your argument structured in a logical way? Do you create paragraphs and topic sentences in a way that helps the reader follow your argument?
-Yes, except ideas on narrative—see above questions

-Are you choosing language that says what you mean to say?
-Not always. See second question in this section.

-Is each sentence well written (clear, no passive voice, not awkward and wordy)
-There are a lot of places that I'm catching with passive voice, and of course awkward, wordy things, per usual with my writing

-Are you writing your ideas in such a way as to engage your audience? Does your writing seem dry and technical or does it communicate the expressive character of the work?

-I don't think it really is engaging. Like I said, it does seem dry and technical, and not expressive. I am afraid of coming across with the tone I used in my intention statement, which I didn't really like that much, but I didn't know how to strike a middle ground between it and this sort of technical description. That's what I need to do—find the middle ground.

Sentence level Assessment: Review each sentence in the paragraph noting how what you say in each sentence does or doesn't advance the reader's understanding of the topic.

-Is each sentence's relationship to the paragraph's topic evident? Are any sentences off topic?

-Most of my paragraphs seem cohesive—less so with my one about narrative, but I think that'll be better when I move those ideas up.

-Are ideas repeated? Can sentences be combined?

-I noticed a lot of these spots while I was writing, so I am sure there are more that I am just not seeing right now, but I am on the watch for them.

-What sentences seem most effective?

- I was not interested in making a single or set view of myself because this would deny the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself. (clearly introduces paragraph topic)

- Much like Joseph Kosuth presents multiple ideas of “chair” at once in *One and Three Chairs*, I present multiple instances of myself at once in *Every Hour*.

-What sentences could use the most work?

- This last fall, I signed up for an independent study on figure drawing rather than signing up for another regular art class. (blah! Why would you want to keep reading—and this is my first sentence, which is a bad sign)

- As the body is something that we all share and can all relate to, artists throughout history have used it as a way for people to relate to various ideas about life, and often about impermanence and death. (also a little blah, though less so. I think the “throughout art history” is the generality trap I'm falling into here)

-Are there persistent grammatical/mechanical problems or questions

-passive voice, wordiness, dry technical language

-Overall: I think I have a good start on ideas here, but they really need to be more interesting and better organized. It is confusing to only mention narratives at the end, and moving this up may help unify my ideas some. I would really like to make my writing more engaging and interesting because right now, I can hardly make myself care about it, and I know that that is bad. I need to work on my intro and conclusion a lot because they're very general and not very engaging at all. I think I'll start by making these changes and see where that takes me.

Bonnie Veblen
Rough Draft

Artist Statement

~~This last fall, I signed up for an independent study on figure drawing rather than signing up for another regular art class. I knew that I had been interested in the figure, but I had not quite yet figured out what it was that intrigued me so much within this huge subject matter. Within a little over a month, I came to realize that~~ While most of my artwork is a form of self-portraiture, I am not interested in presenting a set view of myself as an artist, but instead I am deeply interested in the ways that the body conveys a sense of time and change, but also acts as a record of those changes, telling stories of our pasts. ~~and contains a record of the past. These ideas of time lead to issues of~~ We all have narratives within us, and these past memories are the things that we choose to hold onto and make into our “selves.” It is this holding on that is so interesting to me. In my work, I attempt to get at the constancy-impermanence as told by our bodies through time, and ~~I soon became interested in~~ subsequently, I tell the story of the ways that the “self” is broken down by time—~~t~~. By this, I mean simply that there cannot ever really be a “me” because the next ~~moment~~second, that “me” is different, even if it is in barely noticeable ways. We see changes through larger periods of time, but usually live with the mindset that we are stable, unchanging, grounded. In my recent work, I have used self-portraiture as a means of exploring issues of the body and the self existing through time, which has led me to ~~in order to come to~~ a better understanding of ~~our~~ how we perceptions of ~~ive~~ change in everyday life. We tend to block out impermanence and change because they lead to death of the self, an idea to which we cling so strongly that we don’t know how to begin to let go. It is the ever-shifting nature of time that leave us ungrounded, in an in-between place, ~~which a place that~~ can be frightening, but it is this space that I am interested in exploring through my artwork.

First of all, I am interested in telling stories. The past is made up only of strings of memories, jumbled together, and yet our pasts feel so real that it is hard to think that they are not so hard and solid after all. In my *Shapeshifter* books, I wanted to make past memories real again by forming them into solid objects. I needed an outlet for that story, which has made up a part of my life, a story that I found connection to in Lucille Clifton's *Shapeshifter Poems*, and so decided to use her words to help tell the story, which is neither entirely hers nor entirely mine. The two books look at the same story, but it as if one is told by the girl inside the story and the other is told as if it is an onlooker watching the story happen in front of them. I was interesting in capturing the way in which memories can feel so close that you could almost touch them, and at other times can feel like they might not even be your memories, but a stranger's.

Telling stories like this deals with issues of memory, but I was not just interested in exploring how we remember moments, but also how we experience them in the present, and more specifically, how we experience ourselves in the present. The body became the vehicle through which I began exploring these issues of time and impermanence, partly because it is something that we all share and can all relate to.

~~As the body is something that we all share and can all relate to, artists throughout history have used it as a way for people to relate to various ideas about life, and often about impermanence and death.~~ Many artists have used the body to engage issues about impermanence and death, but often these pieces emphasize the fleeting nature of experience through a performance that occurs and then is gone. Marina Abramovic's performance pieces specifically engage issues surrounding bodily relationships and bodily vulnerability, but because her performance pieces necessarily occur at a single moment of time and then are in the past, issues of impermanence and memory underlie all of Abramovic's work. It is these same time-body relationships that I wish to engage with my own work. However, in this body of work, I wanted to engage the idea of memory-making, and the ways that we attempt to document ourselves

through time. ~~was more focused on capturing moments that could later be reflected on again and again.~~ Rather than performing a transient piece and letting that moment and work pass by, I drew self-portraits. In each work, I captured the way in which I was seeing myself and my emotions in that moment, ~~and also the action of my drawing.~~ Capturing ~~this action~~ my act of drawing was also very important ~~as the idea of action~~ because I wanted to bring attention to the moment ~~and in time in which the piece was created~~ I was drawing myself. The importance of having a drawing was that it was fixed, something that I could go back to and see again and again, even after that interaction of drawing myself was over. ~~(After I had finished drawing myself, and having such an extended meditation on self existing through time, I still had a physical object left over through which I and others could revisit this moment and meditation.)~~

However, I became uncomfortable with this idea of fixing myself in time because while I was making the drawings it did not seem to be the truth. I was not interested in making a single or set view of myself because this would deny the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself. So instead of continuing to draw singular images of myself, I began drawing various views of myself **at once** within each drawing. We all know that the same person cannot be in two places at once, and so ~~this~~ the multiplicity of many me's ~~works to break~~ broke the reality of the space and time within the work, suggesting an experience of myself through time rather than presenting a set "Bonnie Veblen."

I began ~~presenting myself in different moments~~ drawing myself through time in my ~~life-sized~~ self-portrait series, but developed this idea into an entire work in *Every Hour*. This work is a self-portrait in which I drew myself at every hour, on the hour, for a full day. The work consists of fourteen drawings in total, all of which I drew on the same sheet of paper. While *Every Hour* engages issues of the "self" existing through time much in the same way that my other self-portraits do, it opened up another issue in my work, which is the inability to pin down the "self." Much like Joseph Kosuth presents multiple ideas of "chair" at once in *One and Three Chairs*, I

present multiple instances of myself at once in *Every Hour*. In his work, Kosuth presents the viewer with a definition of “chair,” a photograph of a chair, and an actual chair, bringing attention to the fact that the idea of “chair” doesn’t exist in any one of those manifestations of “chair,” but instead it exists somewhere between them. Similarly, ~~While they~~ all of the drawings in *Every Hour* are ~~all an instance of “me”~~, ~~they do vary quite a bit~~, and to look at all of them at once presents the viewer with the conundrum of where my “self” really lies. ~~I don’t have a concrete answer to this, but the best I can say after reflecting on this problem is that~~ Like Kosuth’s “chair,” I ~~am cannot be~~ not contained within any single image of myself from this work, but rather ~~in looking at the piece~~, my “self” ~~begins to rest~~ rests somewhere in the indefinable space between these ~~separate~~ instances.

~~While all of my self-portraits acted as a way of making records of myself in time, when seen together, they begin forming a narrative about myself through time. This is not a very conventional sort of narrative—the viewer does not gather a story that speaks about events in my life, but instead the viewer gathers a story of how I perceived myself and how this changed over time. My *Shapeshifter* books allowed me to tell a more conventional narrative partly because the book format lends itself to “stories” more easily. The reading and turning of pages in a book is a temporal action, and as such, narratives fit easily into this format. The two different books present the same narrative, from Lucille Clifton’s *Shapeshifter Poems*, in two different ways. The poem tells the story of a little girl in a situation with an abusive father, and my books mimic how it feels to be caught up in an abusive situation and then how it feels to have distanced oneself from that abuse and begun to heal.~~

~~I am aware of the highly personal nature of my work~~ The nature of my work is one of intimacy ~~of my work~~—I tell emotional narratives dealing with sensitive subjects, and look into the complex idea of where my “self” resides. ~~My past and my “self” have acted~~ I have used both my past and my body as starting places for me to explore ideas about ~~life~~, time, ~~memory~~, and impermanence,

and death. I have started with myself and begun reaching outwards, and ~~In my future work, I~~
hope to continue ~~going beyond exploring my self, and into exploring my relationships with~~
~~others.~~to explore the world and the vast questions about life by starting with myself and then
circling, reaching outwards to things beyond myself.

Bonnie Veblen
First Draft

Artist Statement

While most of my artwork is a form of self-portraiture, I am not interested in presenting a set view of myself as an artist, but instead I am deeply interested in the ways that the body conveys a sense of time and change, but also acts as a record of those changes, telling stories of our pasts. We all have narratives within us, and these past memories are the things that we choose to hold onto and make into our “selves.” It is this holding on that is so interesting to me. In my work, I attempt to get at the constant impermanence of experience as told by our bodies, and subsequently, I tell the story of the ways that the “self” is broken down by time. By this, I mean simply that there cannot ever really be a “me” because the next second, that “me” is different, even if it is in barely noticeable ways. We see changes through larger periods of time, but usually live with the mindset that we are stable, unchanging, grounded.

In my recent work, I have used self-portraiture as a means of exploring issues of the body and the self existing through time, which has led me to a better understanding of how we perceive change in everyday life. We tend to block out impermanence and change because they lead to death of the self, an idea to which we cling so strongly that we don’t know how to begin to let go. It is the ever-shifting nature of time that leave us ungrounded, in an in-between place, a place that can be frightening, but it is this space that I am interested in exploring through my artwork.

First of all, I am interested in telling stories. The past is made up only of strings of memories, jumbled together, and yet our pasts feel so real that it is hard to think that they are not so hard and solid after all. In my *Shapeshifter* books, I wanted to make past memories real again by forming them into solid objects. I needed an outlet for that story, which has made up a part of my life, a story that I found connection to in Lucille Clifton’s *Shapeshifter Poems*, and so decided to use her words to help tell the story, which is neither entirely hers nor entirely mine. The two books look at the same story, but it as if the first is told by the girl inside the story and the second is told as if it is an onlooker watching the story happen before them. I was interesting in capturing the way in which memories can feel so close that you could almost touch them, and at other times can feel like they might not even be your memories, but a stranger’s.

Telling stories like this deals with issues of memory, but I was not just interested in exploring how we remember moments, but also how we experience them in the present, and more specifically, how we experience ourselves in the present. The body became the vehicle through which I began exploring these issues of time and impermanence, partly because it is something that we all share and can all relate to. Many artists have used the body to engage issues about impermanence and death, but often these pieces emphasize the fleeting nature of experience through a performance that occurs and then is gone. Marina Abramovic’s performance pieces engage issues surrounding bodily relationships and bodily vulnerability, but because her performance pieces necessarily occur at a single moment of time and then are in the past, issues of impermanence and memory underlie all of Abramovic’s work. It is these same time-body relationships that I wish to engage with my own work. However, in this body of work, I wanted to engage the idea of memory-making, and the ways that we attempt to document ourselves through time. Rather than performing a transient piece and letting that moment and work pass by, I drew self-portraits. In each work, I captured the way in which I was seeing myself and my emotions in that moment. Capturing my act of drawing was also very important because I wanted to bring attention to the moment in time I was drawing myself. The importance

of having a drawing was that it was fixed—something that I could go back to and see again and again, even after that interaction of drawing myself was over.

However, I became uncomfortable with this idea of fixing myself in time because while I was making the drawings it did not seem to be the truth. I was not interested in making a single or set view of myself because this would deny the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself. So instead of continuing to draw singular images of myself, I began drawing various views of myself at once within each drawing. We all know that the same person cannot be in two places at once, and so the multiplicity of “me’s” broke the reality of the space and time within the work, suggesting an experience of myself through time rather than presenting a set “Bonnie Veblen.”

I began drawing myself through time in my self-portrait series, but developed this idea into an entire work in *Every Hour*. This work is a self-portrait in which I drew myself at every hour, on the hour, for a full day. The work consists of fourteen drawings in total, all of which I drew on the same sheet of paper. While *Every Hour* engages issues of the “self” existing through time much in the same way that my other self-portraits do, it opened up another issue in my work, which is the inability to pin down the “self.” Much like Joseph Kosuth presents multiple ideas of “chair” at once in *One and Three Chairs*, I present multiple instances of myself at once in *Every Hour*. In his work, Kosuth presents the viewer with a definition of “chair,” a photograph of a chair, and an actual chair, bringing attention to the fact that the idea of “chair” doesn’t exist in any one of those manifestations of “chair,” but instead it exists somewhere between them. Similarly, all of the drawings in *Every Hour* are an instance of “me”, and to look at all of them at once presents the viewer with the conundrum of where my “self” really lies. Like Kosuth’s “chair,” I cannot be contained within any single image of myself from this work, but rather, my “self” rests somewhere in the indefinable space between these separate instances.

The nature of my work is one of intimacy—I tell emotional narratives dealing with sensitive subjects, and look into the complex idea of where my “self” resides. I have used both my past and my body as starting places for me to explore ideas about time, memory, and impermanence. In my future work, I hope to continue to explore the world and the vast questions about life by starting with myself and then circling, reaching outwards to things beyond myself.

Bonnie Veblen
First Draft

Artist Statement

~~While most of my artwork is a form of self-portraiture, I am not interested in presenting a set view of myself as an artist, but instead~~ I am deeply interested in the ways ~~that the our~~ **body bodies** convey *a sense of* (weak) time and change, ~~but also~~ how they become a physical ~~acts as~~ **a**-record of *those changes* (vague), telling **the** stories of our pasts. (see endnote) We all have narratives within us, ~~and~~ these past memories are the things that we choose to hold onto and make into our “selves.” (see endnote) It is ~~this-the~~ holding on that is so interesting to me. In my work, *I attempt to get at* (awkward) *the constant impermanence of experience as told by our bodies*, and subsequently, I tell the story of the ways that the “self” *is broken down by time*. By this, I mean simply that there *cannot ever really be a “me”* because the next second, that “me” is different, even if it is in barely noticeable ways. We see changes through larger periods of time, but usually live with the mindset that we are stable, unchanging, grounded.

Lets look at this ambitious PP very closely ...

On 1st sentence: You voice this first sentence as a contingency (‘while’) and in the negative (‘I am not interested..’). How might you rephrase it to make it positive? See how I suggest beginning with “I am deeply interested in...” As for the part I deleted...I don’t know if you need it because it comes up in the second PP. I also have a problem with your “but also” it makes it sound like the two ideas are not related- are they not in fact one and the same? I also signal certain phrasing that I think weakens and makes vague your point. Conceptual writing like this demands very careful re-editing- searching for ways to say most clearly your meaning.

On 2nd sentence: How might you make this less general and more vivid? I begin by getting rid of the weak relationship that the ‘and’ creates. See what else you can do- how can this sentence better acknowledge the point made in the first sentence? How one sentence picks up and advances the idea of the preceding one is all-important because that is how one builds a single yet complex idea.

On last three sentences: The ideas you hope to express in these last three sentences are not yet clear enough - I find myself reading them but not fully grasping your meaning. Try again and see if you can replace certain key terms that weaken due to vagueness. Building a complex idea is like building a house. If you build on off of something that is not well defined, it brings down the clarity of everything added on top of it. So for instance, I find the notion of “*constant*

impermanence” confusing- like you’ve left out a step in your construction. You almost seem to contradict yourself because you first say the body is a record, holding onto the past experience and then you say the body tells of impermanence of experience.

In my recent work, I have used self-portraiture as a means of exploring issues of the body and the self existing through time, which has led me to a better understanding of how we perceive change in everyday life. We tend to block out impermanence and change because they lead to death of the self, an idea to which we cling so strongly that we don’t know how to begin to let go. It is the ever-shifting nature of time that leave us ungrounded, in an in-between place, a place that can be frightening, but it is this space that I am interested in exploring through my artwork.

This feels like you are trying to rephrase the ideas of the first PP allover again. I think you need to edit out that which you have already said and combine what remains. I want you to rewrite this opening PP and then lets look at it together and see what

~~First of all, I am interested in~~ A good deal of my artwork has been devoted to exploring how to ~~telling~~ stories in ways that effectively capture true nature of memory. The past is made up only of strings of memories, jumbled together, and yet ~~our pasts~~ it can feel so real that it is hard to ~~think~~ imagine that they are not so hard and solid after all. (rephrase) In my *Shapeshifter* books, I wanted to make past memories real again by forming them into solid objects. I needed an outlet (word choice) for that story, (what story?) which has made up a part of my life, a story that I found connection to in Lucille Clifton’s *Shapeshifter Poems*, and so decided to use her words to help tell the story, which is neither entirely hers nor entirely mine. (Can you see that this sentence needs rewriting for various reasons.) The two books ~~look at~~ tell the same story, but it as if the first is told by the girl inside the story and the second is told as if it is an onlooker watching the story happen before them. (clunky) I was interesting in capturing the way in which

memories can feel so close that you could almost touch them, and at other times can feel like they might not even be your memories, but a stranger's.

Telling stories like this deals with issues of memory, but I was not just interested in exploring how we remember moments, but also how we experience them in the present, and more specifically, how we experience ourselves in the present. (Now that I changed the first sentence of the preceding PP to better name the topic (telling stories that reflect the nature of memory) How can this sentence be rewritten to transition to this new yet connected topic.) My focus shifted to ~~T~~the body ~~became the vehicle through which I began~~ as a basis for exploring these ~~same~~ issues of time and impermanence, ~~partly because it is something that we all share and can all relate to~~. Many artists have used the body to engage issues about impermanence and death, ~~but~~ often ~~these pieces~~ emphasize the fleeting nature of experience ~~through~~ ~~by~~ opting to work in performance ~~because ...that occurs and then is gone~~. (rewrite) Marina Abramovic's performance pieces engage issues surrounding bodily relationships and bodily vulnerability, but because ~~her~~ performance is a time-base medium, ~~pieces necessarily occur at a single moment of time and then are in the past, issues of impermanence and memory underlie all of Abramovic's work~~. (rewrite) (Maybe you need a new PP here as to better intro this body of work...)

It is these same time-body relationships that I ~~wish~~ wanted to engage ~~with~~ in my series of self-portrait drawings ~~my own work~~. However, in this body of work, I wanted to engage the idea of memory-making, and the ways that we attempt to document ourselves through time. Rather than performing a transient piece and letting that moment and work pass by, I drew self-portraits. (rewrite to adapt to this being a new PP.) In each work, I captured the way in which I was seeing myself and my emotions in ~~that~~ a given moment. Capturing my act of drawing was also very important because I wanted to bring attention to the moment in time I was drawing myself.

(unclear) The importance of having a drawing was that it was fixed—something that I could go back to and see again and again, even after that interaction of drawing myself was over. (why not reintroduce the idea of concrete ‘record’)

However, I became uncomfortable with this idea of fixing myself in time because while I was making the drawings it did not seem to be the truth. (This could be a better transition and more clearly express your on-going process ... In the midst of making these self-portraits I became increasingly dissatisfied with...) ~~I was not interested in making a~~ A single or set view of myself ~~because this would deny~~ (didn't reflect?) the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself. So instead of continuing to draw singular images of myself, I began drawing various views of myself at once within each drawing. We all know that the same person cannot be in two places at once, and so the multiplicity of “me’s” *broke the reality of the space and time within the work,* (not sure what reality refers to- be more specific.) suggesting an experience of myself through time rather than presenting a ~~set-fixed image of~~ “Bonnie Veblen.”

I pushed this idea of ~~I began~~ drawing myself through time ~~in my self-portrait series, but developed this idea into an entire work to an extreme~~ in my drawing entitled *Every Hour*, ~~This work is~~ a self-portrait ~~in which~~ where I drew myself at every hour, on the hour, for a full day. The work consists of fourteen drawings in total, all of which I drew on the same sheet of paper. While *Every Hour* engages issues of the “self” existing through time much in the same way that my other self-portraits do, *it opened up another issue in my work, which is (a bit cumbersome)* the inability to ~~ever~~ pin down the “self.” Much like Joseph Kosuth presents multiple ~~ideas-~~(weak word choice) ~~states of~~ “chair” ~~at once~~ concurrently in his work *One and Three Chairs*, I present multiple instances of myself ~~at once~~ in my one drawing *Every Hour*. In his work, Kosuth presents the viewer with ~~three versions of the same chair;~~ a ~~text-based definition, -of “chair,”~~ a

photograph ~~of a chair~~, and ~~an~~ the actual chair *itself*, bringing attention to the fact that the “idea” of “chair” doesn’t exist in any one of those *individual* manifestations ~~of “chair,”~~, but instead it exists *somewhere between them*. (Does it exist in between? Or is it about existing as a totality?) Similarly, all of the drawings in *Every Hour* are an instance of “me”, and to look at all of them at once presents the viewer with the conundrum of where my “self” really lies. Like Kosuth’s “chair,” I cannot be contained within any single image of myself from this work, but rather, my “self” rests somewhere in the *indefinable space between these separate instances*. (same question.)

The nature of my work is one of *intimacy*—I tell emotional narratives dealing with sensitive subjects, and look into the complex idea of where my “self” resides. I have used both ~~my~~ *stories from my* past and my body as starting places for me to explore ideas about time, memory, and impermanence. In my future work, I hope to continue to explore the world and the vast questions about life by starting with myself and then circling, reaching outwards to things beyond myself.

I’m not sure about interjecting “intimacy” here. It is the first you’ve spoken of it and so seems off topic. I bet there is another way to say this without feeling like it is a new topic.

A very ambitious writing. You did a very good job with this first draft. Notice how I hardly balk about content or structure (indicates that this part of the writing is well established. The real thing to focus on now is the specific ways you articulate your meanings. If you work hard at the rewrite you are likely to pull off a major accomplishment- writing clearly about a very complex idea 😊

Grade: A-

Bonnie Veblen
Final Draft

Artist Statement

In the age of the digital camera, the abundance of personal photographs has made these images of our bodies a significant influence in how we create and hold onto memories of ourselves. Our lives are periodically recorded and marked by photos of ourselves, images that we then internalize, understanding them to be part of “me” or the “self.” In this way, we build up an idea of “self” based on punctuated moments in time that have been recorded, fixed, and then later remembered. We perceive change in ourselves from image to image, from each singular moment to the next, and yet we fail to fill in the spaces between the photographs that we see.

In actuality, we are always changing. We change so gradually from each second to the next that we often do not recognize how we are constantly undergoing gradual shifts, always existing in transition. Photographs permanently hold onto singular moments of our lives and in doing so they create the impression that we are either in one state or another, ignoring the fact that we are constantly shifting. Drawings are different. A drawing is not created with the press of a button and the quick click of a shutter, but *through* time, and so in drawing an image, both the subject and the artist changes throughout the process. The artist has the choice whether or not to recognize and reflect these changes in his or her drawing, but most artists do not choose to do so, and settle for a singular representation of their subject. Their reticence is understandable. Recognizing the constancy of change means recognizing the fact of our impermanence, a difficult position because it serves as a reminder that we are always growing older, getting closer and closer to death. This recognition also leaves us in a frightening in-between place—ungrounded and without a solid and defined “self” to hold onto. In my artwork, I explore how time allows us to let go of the idea that we each have a solid “self” from each moment to the next and instead recognize the constancy of change within ourselves through time.

While many important self-defining moments in our lives are recorded as images, many are not, and so we must often rely only on our memories in shaping our perceptions of our “selves.” While the past sometimes feels so real it could almost be solid, it is really just made up of strings of memories that are jumbled together in our heads, and can sometimes feel like it is about to slip just out of reach. In my *Shapeshifter* books, I wanted to make my memories of growing up real again by forming them into concrete objects. I made two different books, each of which tells the same story of a little girl, but the two books approach the same subject from two different perspectives. The first book is told from the perspective of the little girl, as though the reader becomes a part of the story, while the second is from the perspective of an onlooker who is outside of the story, as though he or she is watching from a distance. In these books, I was interested in capturing how memories sometimes feel so close that you could almost touch them, as if you were still experiencing that moment from your past. At other times the same memory can feel so distanced from you that it might not even be your own but a stranger’s instead. And yet, in either case, the memory is still part of “you,” contributing to how you define and perceive your “self.”

While memories of the past are important in shaping how we perceive our “selves,” I am equally interested in how we experience our “selves” in the present moment. So at the same time

I was dealing with memories in my books, I began using my body as a basis to explore issues of time and impermanence in the present moment through drawing. Many artists have used the body to engage issues of impermanence, often expressing the fleeting nature of experience through the innately temporal nature of the artistic process—whether it is by using the pure action of performance or by using processes to transform materials that are seen after the action on them is completed. For example, Marina Abramovic simply performs acts with her body in order to discuss the ways that relationships form and change between people. Her work is necessarily caught up in the idea of the present and the impermanent because it is performative, and she has cited this as an important part of her work because it means that the moment can never be directly re-experienced once it has passed, and therefore only exists in our memories.

I am interested in direct and strictly impermanent performance work like Abramovic's, but even more so in how images act as markers for our memories. Janine Antoni's work is compelling because while she focuses on process, she makes physical objects or environments on which both she and her audience can later reflect after her action on the materials is over. The objects or materials serve to point back to her actions on them. For example, in *Lick and Lather* Antoni cast her head and bust several times both in chocolate and in soap, and then respectively licked and washed away the busts. While the busts are the objects on display in a gallery, they do not act as records of her "self," but as records of her actions—licking and washing herself away.

Similarly, in my self-portrait drawings, the resulting image points back to the act and process of drawing myself in a given period of time. In each work, I wanted to capture the way that I was seeing myself and feeling my emotions in a given moment. I began this series by repeatedly drawing a single image of myself over the course of several hours, but in the midst of making these self-portraits, I found myself becoming increasingly agitated with the fact that I was attempting to fix myself in time. As I was drawing, I knew that I was not experiencing myself in the same way from one moment to the next. Instead the way that I saw myself kept changing, and so making a single set view of myself was untruthful and thus discomforting because it didn't reflect the fact that time was passing while I was drawing myself or the fact that I was changing through that period of time. So instead of continuing to draw singular self-portraits, I began drawing various views of myself at once within each drawing. The multiple images of myself are simultaneously seen, suggesting an experience of myself *through* time rather than presenting a fixed image of "Bonnie Veblen."

I pushed this idea of drawing myself through time to an extreme in my drawing entitled *Every Hour*, a self-portrait where I drew myself at every hour, on the hour, for a full day. The work consists of fourteen drawings in total, all of which appear on the same sheet of paper. While *Every Hour* engages issues of the "self" existing through time much in the same way that my other self-portraits do, it also brings up the impossibility of ever concretely defining the "self." Much like Joseph Kosuth presents multiple states of "chair" concurrently in his work *One and Three Chairs*, I present multiple instances of myself in my one drawing. In his work, Kosuth presents the viewer with three versions of the same chair: a text-based definition, a photograph, and the actual chair itself. The three different appearances of a chair in the same space brings attention to the fact that "chair" doesn't exist solely in any one of those individual manifestations, but instead it exists in all of them, and even beyond them in other states that Kosuth does not present in his work but that still exist. Similarly, each of the drawings in *Every*

Hour is an individual instance of “me,” much like a photograph would take a quick snapshot. However, unlike a photograph, I capture all of these instances of myself in the same space and in doing so, present the viewer with the conundrum of questioning where my “self” really lies. Like Kosuth’s “chair,” I cannot be singly contained within any individual image, but rather, my “self” is in all of the instances I presented, and also beyond these instances—between them, before them and after them.

My works that deal with personal narratives and the “self” through time have given me a place to start exploring issues of time, memory and impermanence in relationship to ideas about “self.” They have also made me aware of how we fall back on representations of our bodies to convey the “self” due to the way in which we so strongly link our external appearances with our “selves.” In the future, I hope to explore issues of the “self” with this in mind, and perhaps begin to stretch the definition of my “self” further than just my body and memories existing through time.