[54321] Feeling

Summer Jade Leavitt
Language is Leaving Me

July 8 – August 15, 2020

Originally scheduled to open in conjunction with Pride Month, Summer Jade Leavitt's project in the Project Room II, *Language is Leaving Me*, is a new multimedia installation reckoning with heteropatriarchal structures that disseminate through the body in language, time, and memory. The project transforms Locust Projects' Project Room II into a dream-like queer bar environment.

With his hands in my mouth, a man told me "you have very unfortunate teeth." That man was a dentist, so in this scenario, he had an authority over my body I did not. He said it in a way that was meant to be funny, but true. And I've thought about it every single

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I've had other dentists say outlandish things to me since then ("you're on your way to immortality"; another sends me a monthly newsletter full of typos and life advice.) It's become an inside joke with myself. Some kind of inner monologue meme.

One summer, while researching quantum feminism in Berlin, I suddenly had a toothache unlike any other pain I had felt before. On my way to a hastily made appointment with a German dentist an hour and a half away, I realized my dentist jokes weren't funny. They were hurting me.

This is about the pain we carry in our mouths: language. How the ways we think and express ourselves can reflect the wounds created by a white supremacist heteropatriarchal state even when we do not intend for them to. Their harm penetrates us in ways we cannot immediately recognize.

When we carry patriarchy's language, systems, stories, thought processes in us, their power recreates itself. Phantom penetration: when our bodies are used to keep their authority strong, their force alive, our selves compliant and unknowing, When we cannot talk about the wound without the wound reproducing itself. When we carry their structures within us. Their control finds ways of infiltrating, making delusions of itself, encrypting into our ways of being.

I think about my queerness, where it goes, where it has taken me. In one of the most literal examples it has taken me to gay bars, where belonging is a potential never quite reached but adorns the atmosphere with desperation. I think about my memories, my knowledges, my feelings, those which were passed down to me and those which I formed life around. I think about the languages I was given to relay them. A gay dive bar, where I went for some time weekly like a ritual, to perform karaoke. Spending a week with my feelings, and choosing a song that could offer a ceremony of speaking that reality into the world and releasing it. A liberating performance of desire, of calling, calling out, of where and who. A rehearsal space of identity, of being, becoming, imitating, mutating.

I think about voicelessness, bodilessness, spacelessness. Being outside of time, outside of space, outside of reality. I think about how we frame our realities. How long memory echoes out.

What is a queer memory? How does it move? What is a queer space? Where does it exist? What is a feeling? Where can it go?

I think about when my mouth was in pain and how I swished saltwater to remove the bacteria, protect myself from hurting. Letting the pain play in my mouth again and again like a song. Letting the joke of my bad teeth repeat and repeat until it became accepted as my reality.

I think about possible futures untangled from these systems and how to get there. A locating of the wound within and excavating it from the body. A constant holding accountable of complicity. Abolition. A daily exorcism. Of their languages, structures, ideals.

I think about echoing out. Disowning language, ceremoniously releasing, removing bacteria, excavating wounds, reinventing. Not reinventing. Newness altogether. This frozen space of

memory. Always replaying. A permanently held space for practicing removal and searching for possible, joyful futures.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Summer Jade Leavitt is an artist and writer whose work considers what queer future looks like. Through text, photo, artifacts, and video, she approaches everyday life as a site for performance, documenting gestures large and small to archive and historicize them. Looking at pop culture, history, music videos, film, and theory, she aims to confuse lineages and authenticity. Her performative existence is a sci-fi documentary: all real, all fake. She seeks to locate origins of trauma and excavate them from the body, creating space for all that has been lost, and all that is yet to come.

Summer Jade Leavitt's publications include Mad Girl's Crush Tweet, published by Headmistress Press; "Carol" published by Poets.org; and "Carol", "Carol Too", "Remains", and "This is Not Fiction", published by The Oakland Review. Leavitt's work has been exhibited at many galleries and museums nationwide, with recent exhibitions including: Possible Bodies, Phosphor Project Space, Pittsburgh, PA (2019); Nearest Neighbors, Powder Room, Pittsburgh, PA (2019); Headmistress Press AWP reading at Like Nobody's Business, Portland, OR (2019); The Self, Realized: Queering the Art of Self-Portraiture, Brew House Association, Pittsburgh, PA (2019); Ten Futures, 937 Gallery, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Pittsburgh, PA (2019); Erotica Night, Bunker Projects, Pittsburgh, PA (2019); Matter & Memory Group Show, The Factory at Bard, Berlin, DE (2018); Dot Gov, Miller Institute of Contemporary Art, Pittsburgh, PA (2018); ephemera, Future Tenant, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Pittsburgh, PA (2018); Erotica Night, Bunker Projects, Pittsburgh, PA (2018); We Have a Future, Perhaps, The Frame at Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA (2017); "Untitled (Making Myself into a Monument)", Pittsburgh Performance Art Festival, Pittsburgh, PA (2017); The Kitchen Sink, 3577 Studios, Pittsburgh, PA (2017); Power & The Soul, The Frame at Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh PA (2017); Be Somebody With A Body, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA (2016); Nightmare, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA (2016); From The Dream To The Cosmos, The Frame at Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA (2016); Stairwell Show, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY (2014); Scholastic Gold Key Winners, Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL (2013); Senior Showcase, Artseen, Miami, FL (2013); Works of Eight, New World Gallery, Miami, FL (2011); Fluxus, Culture Center, Chicago, IL (2011); Showcase, Grossman Gallery, Boston, MA (2011).

ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Founded by artists for artists in 1998, Locust Projects is Miami's longest running nonprofit alternative art space. We produce, present, and nurture ambitious and experimental new art and the exchange of ideas through commissioned exhibitions and projects, artist residencies, summer art intensives for teens, and public programs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. As a leading incubator of new art and ideas, Locust Projects emphasizes boundary-pushing creative endeavors, risk-taking and experimentation by local, national and international artists. We invest in South Florida's arts community by providing artists with project grants and empower creative careers by supporting the administrative work of being an artist through an onsite artist resource hub and access to pro bono legal services.

ART HAPPENS HERE.

3852 North Miami Avenue,
Miami FL 33127