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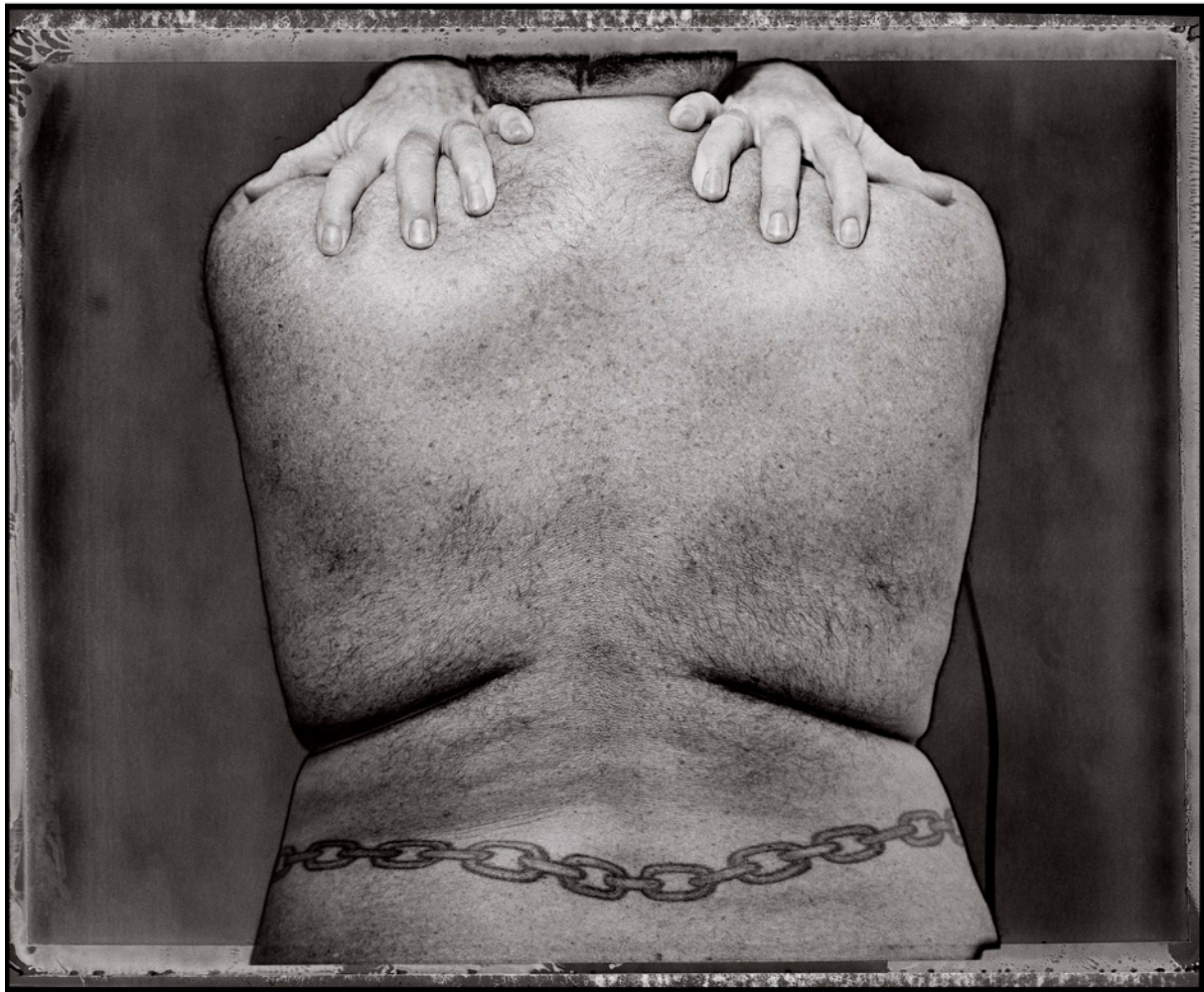


fig. 1

DEAD NAMES AND THE ETHICS OF BEFORE

1. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917/1964, ceramic, glaze, and paint, 15 × 19 ¼ × 24 ¾ in.; Sherrie Levine, *Untitled (After Edward Weston)*, 1980, C-type color print, 19 ½ × 14 ¾ in.

2. During the first decade of the nineteenth century Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin, removed numerous significant sculptures from the Acropolis of Athens, including about half the Parthenon frieze. Despite nearly two hundred years of continuous pressure for their return, they remain in the British Museum and are usually referred to as the “Elgin Marbles.”

3. Richard Prince, *Untitled (cowboy)* (series), 1980–92, photographic prints, dimensions variable.

4. Jerry Saltz, <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/saltz/saltz5-18-09.asp>.

5. Gran Fury (1988–1995) was an activist art collective allied with ACT UP. The pink triangle accompanying their iconic *SILENCE = DEATH* appropriated the identifying badge gay men were required to wear in Nazi death camps, asserting a visual analogy between the Holocaust and the AIDS epidemic. See Avram Finkelstein, *After Silence: A History of AIDS Through Its Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

6. Dana Schultz, *Open Casket*, 2017, oil on canvas, 39 × 53 in.

7. Glenn Ligon, *Untitled (I Am a Man)*, 1988, oil and enamel on canvas, 40 × 25 in. Ligon updated this work with *Condition Report*, 2000, Iris print and screen print, dip-tych, each 31 ⅞ × 22 ⅞ in.

8. Sharon Hayes: “*In the Near Future* is a performance-based artwork in which I stage anachronistic and speculative protest actions in an ongoing investigation into the figure of the protester, the speech act of the protest sign and the contemporary political construction of public space and public speech”; <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/sharon-hayes>.

Fifty years after Stonewall, we are now in the era of trans. This acknowledgement is merely a new discursive recognition, since trans folk have been a major part of the queer movement all along. . . . Thus to be queer is to be a hybrid thing. —Jonathan D. Katz, *About Face* (2021)

There is no before. —*The Queen* (1968)

1. QUEER AND TRANS GO TO COUPLES COUNSELING

My boyfriend is a marriage and family counselor. When I told him about this project, he replied with therapist questions:

I hear you two have been family for a long time. And what does that mean to you? What is the texture and import of this intimacy? Is it hostile, is it egalitarian, is it enmeshed? You say you’re related; how? Is trans a queer stepparent, a sibling, the offspring of a secret affair? Is your relationship public knowledge? What will you do in its name? Have you ever betrayed one another? Did trans abandon queer? What has queer inherited from trans? Is trans something queer disowned and now wants to reclaim? If there’s been a rupture in the relationship, has it been repaired? Does queer owe trans an apology?

2. APPROPRIATION

I’m teaching an MFA seminar on modes of repetition: layering, replication, reenactment, accumulation, updating, and so on. We talk about what names mean and what happens when you rename something. Marcel Duchamp called a urinal *Fountain*, and signed it “R. Mutt”; Sherrie Levine reproduced iconic photographs and named her series *Untitled (After Edward Weston, ca. 1925)*.¹ Such gestures work like rooting hormone: dip the sprout before you bed it in its new medium, and your transplants are much more likely to take root.

I use metaphors because my grad students smell a rat anytime I mention appropriation. To them, “appropriation” is another name for “arrogant,” “grasping,” “entitled”: the vampirism of colonial elites (looking at you, Lord Elgin).² These young artists are determined not to despoil other people’s lifeworlds or to claim credit for things they did not dream into being. Some of their stance is principled. Some is fear of giving offense. They protect themselves by speaking only in “I statements.” They protect themselves with layers and layers of identity papers to certify their cultural interventions as legitimate.

I think they are forgetting that intervention is their job as artists. I say: some worldviews should be dismantled, and appropriation can be, has

been, a powerful tool toward that end. Richard Prince appropriated cigarette ads to confront us with image makers’ complicity in romanticizing the toxic masculinity and murderous violence at the heart of the cowboy nation. Sherrie Levine hijacked patriarchal authority by claiming images that help to define the fine-art canon.³ I’m getting excited; I tell my students that critic Jerry Saltz understood “appropriation” as a euphemism for ransacking or theft.⁴ I want them to understand that these may be good things, or at least that they can be leveraged for good and interesting ends. Queer artists, I tell them, didn’t ask permission to turn the pink triangle upside down.⁵ We took it because we needed it to express our rage and grief in the face of mass death from AIDS, and yes, we felt entitled to wear it in our own way.

My students close ranks. They say: well, that was the ’80s; the strategy’s no longer critically useful. Look at that white woman who painted Emmett Till in his casket. Someone should have told her not to.⁶

I veer from the politics of portraiture, pushing them to explore the broader question of context and who owns culture. We consider how in 1787 Josiah Wedgwood designed an abolitionist medallion bearing a banner with the slogan “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” In 1968, striking Memphis sanitation workers marched carrying signs updating the old plea by asserting, “I AM A MAN.” When Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered in Memphis that spring, marchers in his funeral procession took up the sanitation workers’ sign. African American labor activists brought it out again in Atlanta in 1970 and in New Orleans in 2020; in 2018, thousands carried it in marches commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of King’s assassination. In 1988 conceptual artist Glenn Ligon reformatted the slogan in one of a series of paintings that live on museum walls.⁷ In 2005 Sharon Hayes held the sign in one of a series of live performances in which she carries past protest signs as reminders of ongoing injustices; the Guggenheim glosses her work as “keeping history alive.”⁸ We talk about originals, multiples, and who can sign the permission slip for each new circulation of a political slogan. My students are cautiously interested in Ligon, whose name they’ve heard before, but Hayes hits their sore spot. No way, they say. A white woman just can’t wear that sign. It’s not about her. It’s not her history, not her story to tell.

I let the silence stand. I have not disclosed my transsexuality to them. Someone, finally, says: well . . . does it mean something different because she appears to be a woman?

Nobody looks at me. They care so much about giving people the names they’d choose for themselves. At the end of class, they decide that Sharon Hayes could have held that sign if she’d been Black.



fig. 2

3. TRANSGRESSIONS

Anne Moody was a civil rights activist who came up in late 1950s Mississippi. Once her name was common culture on the Left, but if any young artists know her now, it is through her image.⁹ You’ve probably seen photographs of 1960s lunch-counter sit-ins. In one of the most iconic, almost half the image is a dynamic mass of white faces, dark holes of shouting mouths and eyes squinting with hate. At the center are three bodies in a steep, diagonal row. Left to right we see a white dress shirt slashed with black traces of ketchup, and a white man’s clenched jaw; then the decorous coil of a white woman’s hair somehow gleaming under its mustard squiggles; toward the top a Black woman, chin and eyes tilted down like the corners of her mouth, the center of her head striped with a broad, white line of sugar. That’s Anne Moody. Her 1968 memoir, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, shows us that moment in Woolworth’s not as a snapshot of moral triumph but as yet another incident in the ongoing violence wreaked on Black women’s bodies caught between white racism and the sexism widespread among civil rights activists.

This isn’t a movie, and she isn’t turned toward the camera. She is turned away from the thick stream of sugar that is still being poured, that goes on being poured, that continues to weigh down her head and eyes and mouth in their permanent movement toward her elbows flattened on the counter.

As a historian, activist, and choreographer, I’m inclined to see that stance as enacting refusal and determination: *We shall not be moved*. To the extent that the meaning and measure of a performance is in its aftereffects—what lingers—then such defiant strength is part of its truth, and it makes sense to interpret that posture’s groundedness as preparation for rebound. I want to trust in an equal and opposite reaction: *We shall overcome*. Yet the weight on Moody’s downturned face is not the kind that reaches for the ground to empower the next upward spring. She retreated from the spotlight at the center of cruelty, moved north, then overseas; there was trouble, an eviction, a rumor of bad mental health; and the story tapers off with a private pang. It did not get better.

What gives white me the right to barge into Anne Moody’s story? As I write I am recontextualizing the documentary trace of Moody’s activism, treating it as an aesthetic object and, I admit, as conceptual provocation; I am putting her in conversation with queer and trans in ways I’m certain her estate would not appreciate, nor my students allow. I didn’t ask permission.

9. Fred Blackwell, *Untitled* (Woolworth’s lunch counter), May 28, 1963, photograph, dimensions unknown. Blackwell was a staff photographer for the Jackson City News.

10. Jan Verwoert, “Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art,” *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts, and Methods*, 1, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 3.

11. Françoise N. Hamlin, “Historians and Ethics: Finding Anne Moody,” *American Historical Review* (April 2020): 483–97.

12. Jonathan David Katz, Exhibition wall label for *About Face: Stonewall, Revolt, and New Queer Art*

13. Section 6 is excerpted from Peter Fimrite, “Indian Artifact Treasure Trove Paved over for Marin County Homes: Archaeologists Crushed That Tribe Declined to Protect Burial Site,” *SFGate*, April 23, 2014. I have edited Fimrite’s article lightly for clarity and concision. <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Indian-artifact-treasure-trove-paved-over-for-5422603.php#page=1>.

4. LIVING WITH GHOSTS

“How would you clarify the status of ownership of something that inhabits different times, that travels through time and repeats itself in unpredictable intervals, like for instance, a recurring style in fashion [or] a folkloristic symbol that is revived by a new political movement. . . . Who owns a recurring style, a collective symbol or a haunted house?”¹⁰

5. REPATRIATION ETHICS

After 1985 Anne Moody pretty much disappeared from public life—until someone stopped paying the rent on a storage locker out in Warner Robins, Georgia.¹¹ There’s not much there but the Air Force base. Otherwise just one secretive gay bar, squat squares of cinderblock houses, and a few run-down motels along state Highway 41. A self-storage unit or ten would blend right in. Anyway, around 2010 someone stopped paying the rent and the contents went to auction, as they do. An antiques dealer in Macon saw the ad and laid down a little coin for a box of papers. How did they get to the Emory University Archives again? A historian carefully documented that provenance in the *American Historical Review*. I can’t remember the historian’s name, and I could look it up, but what matters to me is her brief description of Moody’s notebooks. They were cheap spiral-bound things, their covers collaged with newsprint. Ballpoint pages. They must have been crumbling. They must have been turning brown.

The historian brings this story up to tell us why we can’t read them. She explains that Moody never meant them to be preserved; her research revealed decades of instability, suspicion, and withdrawal that eventually intensified into paranoid schizophrenia. Moody had a horror of being observed. The historian tells us that the notebooks were filled at random, some entries scribbled in the margins, others begun at the back. She evaluates their literary and documentary value as low, and their references to fourteen unpublished manuscripts improbable. She makes mention of ranting. Her point in documenting all this is to make the case that no one has the right to access the record of Moody’s mental deterioration. These notebooks don’t belong to us. Even if they had been richer sources, she writes, she thought it was wrong to include them in the archive—not only at Emory, but anywhere. Moody never intended her private papers to survive. Besides, her legal and financial records were mixed in. In the end an ethic of care drove the historian bring the mess to Emory’s attention. Emory contacted the family, handed over the boxes. A sister burned them; it was her right.

6. “DISSIDENCE WITHOUT RESOLUTION”¹²

“A treasure trove of Coast Miwok life dating back 4,500 years—older than King Tut’s tomb—was discovered in Marin County and then destroyed to make way for multimillion-dollar homes, archaeologists told the *Chronicle* this week. The American Indian burial ground and village site, so rich in history that it was dubbed the ‘grandfather midden,’ was examined and categorized under a shroud of secrecy before construction began this month on the \$55 million Rose Lane development in Larkspur.

The three-hundred-foot-long site contained six hundred human burials, tools, musical instruments, harpoon tips, spears, and throwing sticks from a time long before the introduction of the bow and arrow. The bones of grizzly and black bears were also found, along with a ceremonial California condor burial. . . . All of it, including stone tools and idols apparently created for trade with other tribes, was removed, reburied in an undisclosed location on-site and apparently graded over, destroying the geologic record and ending any chance of future study, archaeologists said. Not a single artifact was saved.

[The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria are the most likely descendants of Larkspur’s Indigenous people, and as such they made the decision to remove and rebury.] ‘The philosophy of the tribe in general is that we would like to protect our cultural resources and leave them as is,’ said Nick Tipon, a longtime member of the Sacred Sites Protection Committee of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. ‘The notion that these cultural artifacts belong to the public is a colonial view.’”¹³

7. PROVENANCE

Can’t do without identity documents or you’ll never be sure that you existed. This is, of course, why they are such effective tools of oppression.

Do you have the papers that document where you were born and that yes, you do live in this neighborhood? Can you vote, or open a bank account, or get through airport security, with your current ID? Can you produce a previous landlord’s reference for that apartment? Can you produce the proof of kinship you need to visit your lover in the ICU? Does the name on your diploma match the name under which you applied for that job? When you die, if your biological family claims your body as theirs, will they plant you with a dead name over your head?

fig. 1
Del LaGrace Volcano, *MY 4*
BAX, 2011

fig. 2
Gail Thacker, *Rafael Holding*
Death, 2003

14. Ellis Martin and Zach Ozma, eds., *"We Both Laughed in Pleasure": The Selected Diaries of Lou Sullivan, 1961–1991* (Brooklyn: Nightboat Press, 2020).

FTM (female-to-male) activist Lou Sullivan (1951–1991). In 1976 Sullivan began seeking sex reassignment but was routinely rejected from gender clinics because then-current medical protocols defined eligibility for sex change according to medico-psychiatric gatekeepers' assessments of whether the person seeking to transition would be able to function socially as a "normal" man or woman. As a woman whose erotic gestures were directed toward men, Sullivan's social movements already appeared to conform to normative expectations for his embodiment; therefore, his desire for transition seemed simply perverse to his doctors. His insistence on the legitimacy of his intention to move in the world as a gay man, and his persistent post-transition engagement with psychiatrists, positioned to parlay their convictions into recommendations for practice, were instrumental in changing standards of care to accommodate queer outcomes. Sullivan's trailblazing activities expanded opportunities for medically assisted transition toward embodiments legible as gay for later generations of trans men. He also helped found an international FTM community, initially through a support group in San Francisco and later through editing a newsletter that circulated nationally and internationally, linking its readers through community announcements, political and medical news, and historical anecdotes.

15. Jerome Caja (1958–1995) was a San Francisco–based mixed-media painter and performer whose work features saints and drag queens. See The Jerome Project; <http://www.thejeromeproject.com/>. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self-Portrait with Whip*, 1978, gelatin silver print, 7 1/16 × 7 1/16 in.

16. Talia Mae Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers." *Hypatia* 22:3 (Summer 2007), 43–65.

17. Abram Lewis, "Trans History in a Moment of Danger," in *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, ed. Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2017), 65.

8. TRANSPOSITION

When the person who became gay FTM activist Lou Sullivan was thirteen, shortly after she began keeping a diary, she catalogued her Christmas haul.¹⁴ Along with a \$6 Beatles album, a three-quarter-length black leather coat, and bubble bath, she got a new diary and twelve pencils stamped with her girlhood name. Lou continued to document his possessions for the rest of his life. Shortly before he died from AIDS-related illness in 1991, his mother gave him a particularly brilliant opal she had had reset from his great-great-grandmother's wedding ring. It was a deliberately despoiled artifact of impeccable provenance. Lou wrote in his diary: "It is so incredibly gorgeous that I can't even express it. It will bring such pleasure in my life every day!"

The new setting holds an old promise of kinship and belonging, broken and reframed yet preserved intact. Time swirls in the object like the fire shifting in the stone. It is not housed in the Louis Graydon Sullivan Papers. I could probably find out if he was buried with it on, but I would rather entertain the trans temporality of lineage than research the opal. Perhaps his family retrieved it and will continue to pass it forward with its story now supplemented by the account written in its wearer's hand.

A jewel in the archive: that's how historians refer to an artifact that miraculously contains the past, glittering and unscathed by time, in its wholeness and integrity. Its preciousness is measured by its impossible plenitude. For me, the jewel in Sullivan's archive would not have been the opal but the Christmas pencils from 1963, and yet their preciousness lies precisely and paradoxically in the fact that they *didn't* survive. Their disappearance condenses the trans history that enabled my own. Every time the person who would become Lou inscribed her story in her journal, the pencil inscribed with her name wore away just a little more. Eventually, she sharpened it right off. I think: not dead so much as done, used up, no longer useful—and yet the trace of her agency persists. She wrote herself down.

I wanted to try that magic for myself. I spent almost \$30 on a dozen Blackwing pencils and a fine gold pen, and carefully inscribed their barrels with her name.

9. FAMILIES

Not all appropriation is the ransacking of culture my students find unbearable. It could be about salvaging something worth loving.

During the plague years, an incalculable number of gay men's lives went straight into the dumpster when they died from AIDS, regardless

of their wishes or whatever their chosen families wanted. Those men's queerness already rendered their desires illegitimate to the legal next of kin. They took the iconoclast's revenge, simultaneously eradicating the evidence of perversion and punishing those who valued what they called trash. Or—and I'm reaching for compassion here—perhaps sometimes their decisions reflected cultural illiteracy as much as malice. Perhaps they simply had no way to understand the preciousness of the people and things their queer sons and brothers had left behind. In a way, it's understandable. What on earth were they supposed to do with a nail-polish painting of a green drag queen executed with the exuberant recklessness of a five-year-old? Where could they possibly hang an enormous photograph of a man with a whip up his ass?¹⁵

Anne Moody's notebooks didn't make the preservation cut. The historian tells us, as a passing gloss on her paranoia, that Moody didn't trust her family, yet the historian also believed that giving the papers to her sister was the best way to honor what she guessed Moody's wishes would have been. I wonder whether a queer historian would have understood Moody's distrust differently. Maybe she would have been reluctant to give the sister the last word.

What are the secrets our families would be ashamed of? Are they the same ones we would choose to conceal? The point is: we have different standards, different ethics of care.

10. DEAD NAME (A PARANOID RANT)

My students aren't alone in their conviction that there are very few if any circumstances in which it is appropriate to refer to a trans person by their dead name or pronoun. Even in its least malicious form, it carries disproportionate affective charge—that is, it's disproportionate unless you are the person experiencing what might seem like a minor social slip as the theft of your agency, an appropriation of your right to define the terms of your own representation. From there, dead naming's impact is completely reasonable.

The voice in my head interrupts the argument to whisper: but isn't transsexuality inherently *unreasonable*? It takes place outside the sphere of reason, a truth that haters deploy in characterizing us as chronic liars, batshit crazy, or both.¹⁶ No fully rational person believes in any simple way that they are not the sex they evidently are. This is a good thing, or at least it can be leveraged for good and interesting ends—it points to the ways that reason isn't sufficient to define reality. I say back to myself: we don't talk about that in public, though. We're too vulnerable. It's relatively recent that psychiatric



figs. 3, 4

All figs. Del LaGrace Volcano

fig. 3
Dred King Club Cassanova,
NYC, 2000

fig. 4
HERM TORSO: Svar, London,
1999

standards of trans-sanity have expanded to include the possibility that we're not inherently delusional. It's relatively recent that standards of care have shifted so that our condition can be treated with appropriately prescribed medication. Another voice argues: access to care doesn't in itself guarantee we aren't nuts. Lots of people need meds to keep from losing their grip. Besides, even if we didn't start out delusional, occupying a reality that isn't immediately available to others can be dangerous to your mental health. Bracing yourself against an invisible but pervasive harm feels as well as looks a lot like paranoia.¹⁷ I should probably rein the voices in so I don't sound like I'm ranting. Only so much crazy you can show before people turn away.

I don't think Anne Moody was trans, but I do think I recognize her madness. I don't think Anne Moody was queer, but I know she didn't trust her relatives, and I know they were ashamed of her pain. The point is that I feel the loss of Moody's notebooks like the loss of a family jewel. The point is that maybe there are times when we need to know and speak dead names, like there are times when love says you need to let the crazy show. Lou Sullivan's dead name is all over those diaries and sometimes it feels like twisting objective truth to refer to him with words that didn't apply at the time he was writing. The name on those pencils is part of the child he was, the one who established her own provenance. Still, if you're not trans, my students would not concede your right to refer to him by that name. It's not your history. It's not your story to tell. Part of me is not sure I don't agree.

11. FACT

Anne was Moody's chosen name. Her parents called her Essie Mae.

12. QUEER ETHICS

"Hi, everyone, I've been approached with a question by a museum curator, and I'd appreciate your feedback on how to advise them. . . . A person who was important in the field that this museum covers died earlier this year. That person left everything (EVERYTHING) to this museum. The museum staff went through all of this person's things and found ample evidence of a sixty-year same-sex relationship in their home, such as love letters and photo albums. This person was out to a small social circle (including the attorney handling the estate) but not publicly and was generally a private person. Before their death, this person called their partner their 'roommate' to museum staff.



figs. 5, 6

Some of the museum staff (and those outside as well) do not want the museum’s press release planned for later this year to mention this relationship because they feel it is ‘salacious,’ and that this person would not want it shared, and that it is not the museum’s story to tell. The person writing to me disagrees since the person who passed left all of this to the museum.

The complication is that the partner is alive, and this would out the partner. The partner is in a nursing home with advanced Alzheimer’s. How would you advise the museum to proceed considering this?”¹⁸

13. LOVE AND THEFT¹⁹

I give my MFA students an assignment to find something made by an acknowledged master in their field and appropriate it as faithfully as possible. One young man frames, stretches, and paints a canvas exactly like the color-registration swatches on the inside bottom flap of the American Spirit cigarette pack. In critique, he tells the story of how his grandmother took him in when his mother threw him out for being gay. When she died, his brother and aunt took all her stuff. He painted her cigarette-box flap because her brand was the only thing in the world she loved as much as she loved him. And because it was what survived.

14. FRAGMENTATION THEORY

“The Pig Point site on the Patuxent River in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, has proven to have been a highly significant ritual locale for prehistoric populations. Included are over five centuries of mortuary behavior associated with the Delmarva Adena as well as indications of other forms of ritual significance perhaps lasting millennia. Five years of excavations at this site have produced a large number of slate gorget fragments, mostly recovered slightly downhill from the ritual mortuary hilltop. Like many of the objects contained in the ritual pits, the slate gorgets appear to be deliberately broken or ‘killed’ and a number have undergone subsequent modification, mainly through fine-line incising, gouging, and battering. . . .

It is quite common to come across broken objects in the archeological record. When these objects are found in good context, and not mangled by a plow, the question should be asked as to why these artifacts are broken. Did the object break from usage or unintentional damage? Has it been somehow broken during excavation, or was it deliberately destroyed by the people who once carried and used it? . . . Chapman’s (2000)

18. A post on the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History listserv, July 27, 2020.

19. This is the title of Eric Lott’s groundbreaking study of white appropriation of an imagined Blackness, *Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Bob Dylan later appropriated Lott’s title for his 2001 album *Love and Theft*. Incidentally, Lott’s book *Black Mirror* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017) bears a reproduction of a Glenn Ligon text piece on its cover.

20. Mandy Melton and Al Luckenbach. “The Ritual Killing of Slate Gorgets at the Pig Point Site 18AN50,” *Maryland Archeology* 49, no. 2 (September 2013): 21–27; citing John Chapman, *Fragmentation in Archaeology: People, Places and Broken Objects in the Prehistory of South-Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2000).

theory of fragmentation and enchainment may be used here to shine a light on this find. He presents the idea that an object’s deconstruction—symbolizing life and death—links objects and people through a sense of enchainment:

people who wish to establish some form of social relationship or conclude some kind of transaction agree on a specific artifact appropriate to the interaction in question and break it in two or more parts, each keeping one or more parts as token of the relationship. . . . the part of the object may itself be further broken and part passed on down the chain, to a third party . . . The example of the enchained relations between the newly dead and close kin amongst the living is just one kind of enchained relation between kinsfolk which could be envisaged. Chapman 2000:6

This fragmentation theory may explain why the objects were originally broken and why, with one exception, mendable fragments were not recovered.”²⁰

15. THE VALUE OF MASS REPRODUCTION

I can’t help thinking of those paired gold-tone pendants from middle school, a heart shape split in two by a zigzag not to represent heart-break but to document and announce the special intimacy of best friends. Fragments made in order to be mended. Or not: those tokens were, after all, interchangeable, so that if you broke up or lost your half you could always get another at the mall.

The same thing can be said about Anne Moody’s cheap spiral notebooks. They were always intended to be as disposable as a cigarette box. The historian couldn’t find anything in them to treasure; the sister sent their record of alienation up in smoke. Faithful appropriation: my grad student re-created the hidden underside of the American Spirit box in commemoration of the lost grandmother whose relationship to love was routed through a mass-produced and toxic tranquilizer. I stole what I learned from his work. Spent \$2 on a yellow spiral notebook, collaged the cover with newspaper, and commemorated Anne Moody’s paranoia by stapling it shut.

16. TRANS FORMATIONS

I have my own story of the incoherent historical and aesthetic chains that link appropriation and love, kinship and misrecognition, queer and trans. My version begins where Anne Moody’s

All figs. Del LaGrace Volcano

fig. 5
Pride is a Protest, 2018

fig. 6
MIKA MAGNIFIED, 2017