

The Days Blend Together

JADA HARRIS

This artwork is inspired by the long hours I've spent inside because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Like many others, I had at first treated the pandemic like a much-needed break from daily life but unlike a regular vacation, this one has had no end in sight. Covid-19 has drastically changed the way that we are used to living and "the new normal" requires that we be confined to our homes in a state where space is often limited. As a result, this situation has provided me with an abundance of time to reflect on the space that I live in and not being able to leave the house is an experience that has left me alone too long with my thoughts. My bedroom has a very large mirror and as I spend more time at home, I notice the days passing but very little changes to mark that passage of time. It is in this mirror that I've also noticed the toll that social isolation has taken on my mental health and that of others around me. Even as restrictions are slowly lifting, I think the fear of spreading Covid to my loved ones will always stay with me.

I made this piece over several weeks in response to quarantine, as a way to both document time in a situation where the days seem to blend together and also to explore those feelings of timelessness and solitude. I've gradually built up the overlapping figures and texture depicted with graphite to demonstrate how this strange feeling affects the body physically and mentally. Though we all live different lives, as a society we are collectively enduring the same crisis and the emotions that accompany it. In a way, this pandemic has separated us by more space than we have ever known, yet has also brought us closer than ever before.

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Jada Harris is an artist based in Honolulu, Hawai'i. She works with ink, graphite, and charcoal media on paper based on everyday experiences that relate to society at large. She has received her BFA with a concentration in drawing from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her work has been included in various group shows, the UH Mānoa 2021 BFA exhibition, and is also featured in the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts collections.



work as I try to document it by making a physical representation of a moment through drawing it, and I also see the act of drawing as a representation of time. I've spent much of the pandemic in the four walls of my bedroom, one of which contains a very large mirror. As I look into this mirror every day, I notice the days pass by but little in my environment changes to distinguish one day from the next. Some items are shuffled around my room, I change my clothes, but everything in my environment stays the same and that makes it seem like time is standing still. I turn to drawing to cope with this experience.

In my work I often reference photographs that I've taken in order to represent a subject as realistically as possible. My process involves taking a photograph and then creating a drawing based on that photograph. In this way I am taking a

moment in time from my life, making it digital, then bringing it back into reality through drawing. Sometimes I will set up an environment to create the exact photograph that I want and other times I will choose a photograph to draw days, weeks, or months after it has been in my camera roll. Small details and slight imperfections in my artwork let the viewer know that it is not a photograph and instead an object made by actual human hands; it contains a quality that could never be replicated by a machine. For this specific piece, I chose to photograph myself through my mirror in the various positions I often find myself in when boredom sets in. I then used those photos as a reference to begin my drawing.

I started by drawing multiple figures with graphite to determine the composition of my image and decided to com-

bine all of the figures into one. Instead of depicting a single moment as I often do, I put together a series of figures that demonstrated the loneliness and restlessness I've felt over the past year. The overlapping figures that sit within the page create a sense of restriction and confinement. A few parts of the body are able to hang off the page but ultimately they are stuck within this space. Some parts of the figure are solid while others seem to intersect, demonstrating how an altered sense of time can make the body feel disconnected from reality. They are surrounded by the dark values I've built up, with no end or exit in sight, unable to pinpoint exactly where they are situated in time and space.

Each figure is androgynous in appearance and without a face, the part of the body that represents individual identity and most distinguishes us from others. As I worked on this drawing and thought about my experience, I realized that a lot

of other people were also coping with the same feelings. What was once a representation of my own physical and emotional solitude began to represent what was being felt by my community and the rest of the world. Though we all live different lives, as a society, we are collectively enduring the same crisis and the emotions that accompany it. This work is not just about my body and what it has tolerated, but a mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by measures put in place to protect our physical health. I know that my experience is not an isolated incident and many have found comfort in sharing the last year of their life with others as I have. This time in my life has felt surreal and uncertain, like the overlapping figures on this page who don't seem to start or end. In a way, this pandemic has separated us by more space than we have ever known yet has also brought us closer than ever before.