

MATS DAHLBERG AND EMMAYLN MUELLER SUPER FRUITY



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

SEPTEMBER 22–OCTOBER 5, 2022

EMMALYN MUELLER

Emmalyn Mueller's art is a love letter to the feminine experience. Femininity is beautiful yet grotesque, joyful yet heartbreaking. their work explores this duality and expands past traditional notions of femininity. mueller focuses on themes of identity, sexuality, and queer joy, and they use art as a tool to appreciate the body they inhabit. mueller relies heavily on symbolism, and the strawberry is their favorite stand-in for themselves.

Improvisation and materiality are important aspects of mueller's practice, and experimenting with media allows me to approach complex processes and ideas with a sense of humor and imagination. Bright colors, glitter, fibers, and unconventional materials help them inject their work with fun, and they use "crafty" media to honor artists whose practices have been dismissed for being too feminine or decorative. mueller believes that the distinction between art and craft is rooted in misogyny, and it is their goal as an artist to fight back against the cisheteropatriarchy. Overall, they aim to continue the traditions of feminist artists while inputting their own queer perspective.

emmalyn mueller is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice includes painting, drawing, printmaking, bookmaking, sewing, and other fiber arts techniques. They use bright colors, glittery materials, and fruity imagery to create work that centers around themes of queerness and femininity. mueller will earn their BFA at Columbia College Chicago in spring 2023.

Emmalyn Mueller on Instagram: [@emmalyn.mueller](https://www.instagram.com/emmalyn.mueller)

MATTS DAHLBERG

Through painting, collage, various fiber practices, and the art of drag performance and embodiment **Mats Dahlberg** utilizes color and the layering of materials and subjects to create vibrant, vehemently queer, work. With a contemporary take on historical craft techniques like embroidery, crochet, and rhinestoning, they hope to honor those of marginalized genders who cultivated these practices and have long been neglected for their complex histories. Through the use of colorful, inviting, subjects they aim to lure viewers into a candy-like exterior while a closer look can reveal more serious undertones and complex issues.

Using cheeky double entendre, Dalberg aims to explore the modern queer experience in relation to social media, body image, sex, love, and self-worth. Through the queering of familiar icons and homage to my queer ancestors, they aim to express my gratitude for the rejection of cis-heteronormativity and the embrace of boundlessness. Dalberg's depictions of the human form break the confines of the linear body and push to critique the absurdity of the accepted binary gender structure and beauty ideals while exploring the possibilities of the noncorporeal, trans body. Their work explores the vastness of life in many forms, from single cell organisms, to bugs, to wholly imagined forms as an invitation to viewers to examine what connects living creatures and destroy human-made hierarchies.

Mats Dahlberg was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota where they grew up creating, frolicking, and dressing up; things they never stopped doing. After high school, they moved to Chicago to pursue a degree in Fine Arts at Columbia College Chicago. They are currently a practicing multidisciplinary artist and member of the Chicago drag collective Haus of Paint.

Mats Dahlberg on Instagram and TikTok: @monarchmats



Mats Dahlberg, *tooth tunic* (detail), 2022, raw canvas, acrylic paint, rhinestones, thread, ribbon, acrylic appliques, vintage familial linens



Super Fruity installation view



Emmalyn Mueller, *nothing gold can stay*, 2021, acrylic and glitter on canvas, ribbons and beads



Emmalyn Mueller and Mats Dahlberg, *it's a fruity fruit party*, 2022, acrylic and glitter on canvas



Super Fruity installation view



Mats Dahlberg, *carcinization* (detail), 2021, acrylic on raw canvas and thread



Emmalyn Mueller, *have your cake and eat it too*, 2021, acrylic paint, india ink, glitter



Super Fruity title sign, 2022, mural gallery installation with acrylic paint

INTERVIEW WITH MATTS DAHLBERG & EMMALYN MUELLER

Conducted by Mariana Belaval

Mariana Belaval: Tell me about your journeys. Where are you each from, what is your major, and where do you currently find yourself?

Mats Dahlberg: Originally, I'm from Saint Paul, Minnesota but I came here to Chicago for college where I am a Fine Arts major in my senior year. Currently, my practice revolves around painting, fiber arts, drag performance, and self-portraiture.

emmalyn mueller: I am from a small town in rural Illinois called Cordova, and I moved to Chicago to attend school at Columbia. I am a senior in the Fine Arts BFA Program, and my current practice centers around glitter, painting, printmaking, bookmaking, and fiber arts.

MB: Companionship within the queer experience is crucial. Do you find that company within each other, and if so, has it served as a base for your unified artistic expression?

MD: Beyond artistic collaborators, Emmalyn and I are classmates, coworkers, roommates, and best friends. So much of the show is born out of our comradeship and similar styles. There were also a few inside jokes hidden throughout the exhibit. Taking on a project of this scale with someone I'm this close to is not something I went into lightly, but looking back, I cannot imagine doing something like this with anyone but Emmalyn.

em: Mats' companionship has been vital for my success as an artist and as a human. Mats and I operate on the same wavelength, and our friendship has definitely allowed us to have a uniquely unified sense of artistic expression. Mats is the only person I could imagine taking on a project like *Super Fruity* with, and I know our friendship will serve as a base for more artistic endeavors in the future.

MB: Has the creation of this exhibition allowed you to explore a new way to communicate?

MD: Absolutely! Before *Super Fruity*, I had never made wearable art objects meant to be tried on by others. I have always loved clothes and dressing up. When I was a child, I wanted to be a fashion designer, and I love making garments for myself in drag, but seeing these pieces through the lens of fine artwork allowed me to deconstruct some of assumptions I held around what clothes can look like and seeing them more as paintings or soft sculpture that are designed to directly engage the body.

em: Yes! Mats and I were able to curate the entire show, which was a new experience for both of us. I discovered how displaying my work in a gallery setting can completely transform it; there's a new collective energy amongst the works that communicates something entirely new. Also, I have never created wearable artworks before this exhibition, so it was exciting to see how the interactive aspects of our show engaged viewers.

MB: What is queer joy and is it possible?

MD: Queer joy is not only possible, it is NECESSARY for our survival. In a world that preys so much on our pain and continued struggle in the face of oppression at the hands of the government, ecological collapse, and the rampant effects of late-stage capitalism, joy is a radical act. Finding ways to pursue pleasure and feel-good despite everything around us is transformative. This is not to say we need to drown out the world or be ignorant to current events but fostering community and prioritizing feeling good is a vital part of our survival and community legacy.

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

Conducted by Mariana Belaval

em: Queer joy is a necessary refuge in a world filled with so much hate and hardship. Existing as a queer person can be scary and difficult, but it can also be beautiful and healing. Queer joy allows us to acknowledge and celebrate the things that make life worth living. Queer joy is not ignorance, but rather it is the acknowledgement that we must prioritize our emotional wellbeing and foster community in order to survive and continue making progress.

MB: Is queer joy directly tied to the manifestation of identity and sexuality, or is it something of its own?

MD: Queer joy can be linked to the manifestation of identity. I can see queer joy as an individual act of resistance, but mainly, when I think of queer joy I think of feeling at home in community. A space created between queer people where they feel safe with one another and do not have to feel any of the baggage of cis-heteronormative society. A feeling of boundlessness, care, and protection.

em: Queer joy is ambiguous because it can look different for different people, but for me, i do associate queer joy with the ability to happily express my identity and sexuality. However, I also associate queer joy with other things, like the feelings of safety and comfort i experience when i am with other queer people.

MB: What's your favorite fruit?

MD: Raspberries!

em: My favorite fruit to use in art is strawberries, but my favorite fruits to eat are cherries and cantaloupe!

MB: What are you working on next?

MD: One of the pieces from *Super Fruity* will be on view at Chicago Fine Artist Salon at 2623 W. Chicago Ave from October 21–October 29, 2022. I'm performing in drag shows around the city. You can follow me on Instagram @monarchmats to stay up to date on all those shows. I will also have work in the BA show at Manifest this spring.

em: i am currently working on starting my largest portrait yet! It will be displayed at the end of next semester in the BFA Manifest exhibition. Also, i have a plethora of other projects in the works (like books, prints, paintings, etc.), and i am working on getting a tattoo apprenticeship! Follow my Instagram @emmalyn.mueller to stay updated on my work.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Mariana Belaval. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

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C33 Gallery: 33 E. Ida B. Wells Dr., First Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

Gallery Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.