

# ASH HUSE

2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

# 2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

5th Floor Student Center May 6–28, 2024

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*The 2024 MFA Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Art I Design and Photography Departments. The exhibition, which includes paintings, prints, drawings, photography, sound, and installation, captures the extensive research, exploration, critical analysis, creative inquiry, productivity, practice, and achievement these emerging artists have maintained throughout their time in the programs. With varied approaches to subject matter, distinct methods of creation, and a unique blending of personal, political, and historical narratives, the artists in this show weave together the nuanced strands of the contemporary moment.

**Participating Artists:** Andre Barker Jr, Nora Benjamin, Callie Clark Wiren, Noah Fodor, Eli Giclas, Ash Huse, Hillary Irene Johnson, Adam MacArthur, Giselle Mira-Diaz, Grace Papineau-Couture, Arrietta van der Voort, and andrew vogelpohl

*The 2024 MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Art I Design Department, and the Photography Department.

# ASH HUSE

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*DEADNAME*, explores concepts of identity, queerness, self image and mental health. Destabilizing photographic portraiture, Ash Huse creates images of their own body using music software, changing the code of digital files, and rephotographing images on screens. Huse investigates ideas of bodily metamorphosis by using a process of corruption and digital abstractions; moving past binary or traditional views in portraiture. The chaos conveys a sense of anxiety and depression that has been attached to their own sense of queerness. Huse combines all of these elements in my work to have a larger discussion about their gender dysphoria and unease of not feeling wholly male or female, but nonbinary. This series showcases how both revealing and concealing can act in a transformation of self. By performing for the camera and experimenting with a distorted process in the images, Huse seeks out new ways to tell the story of how queer bodies can be a site of transformation and self-discovery.

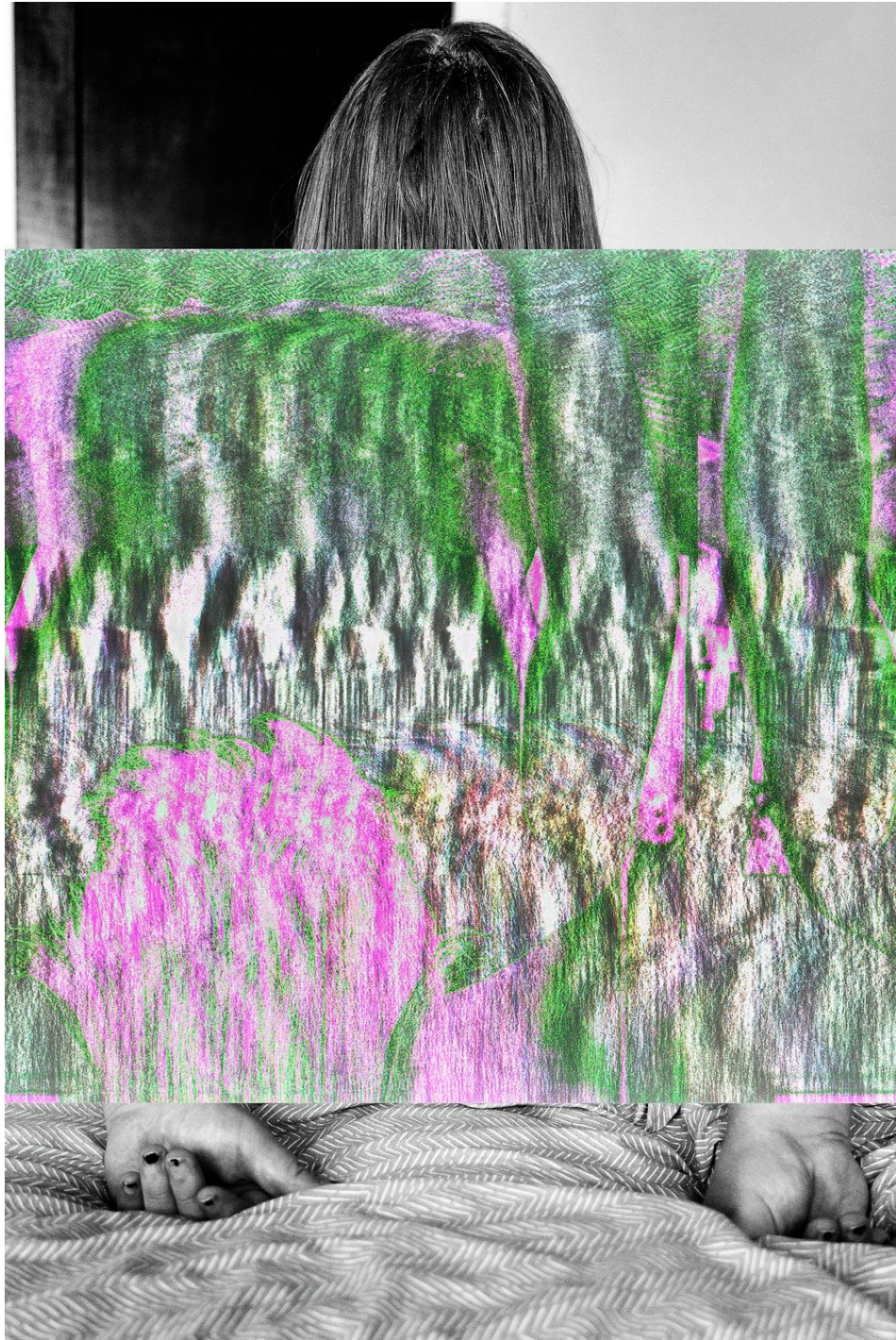
**Ash Huse** (They/Them) (b. 1997) is a queer lens-based artist established in Chicago, Illinois. Ash's body of work surrounds LGBTQ+ identity through portraiture. Their work also explores themes of queerness, transformation and mental illness through abstract and experimental photographic methods using music software, text/hex editing and rephotographing images on screens. They obtained their Bachelor's Degree in Photography at Columbia College Chicago and are currently pursuing their MFA in Fine Art Photography at Columbia College Chicago. Their work has been featured at Filter Space in Chicago and the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design.

**Website:** <https://www.ashhuse.com/>

**Instagram:** [@ash.huse](https://www.instagram.com/ash.huse)



*I Feel Like I Know Them, but Sometimes My Arms Bend Back*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 16" x 20"



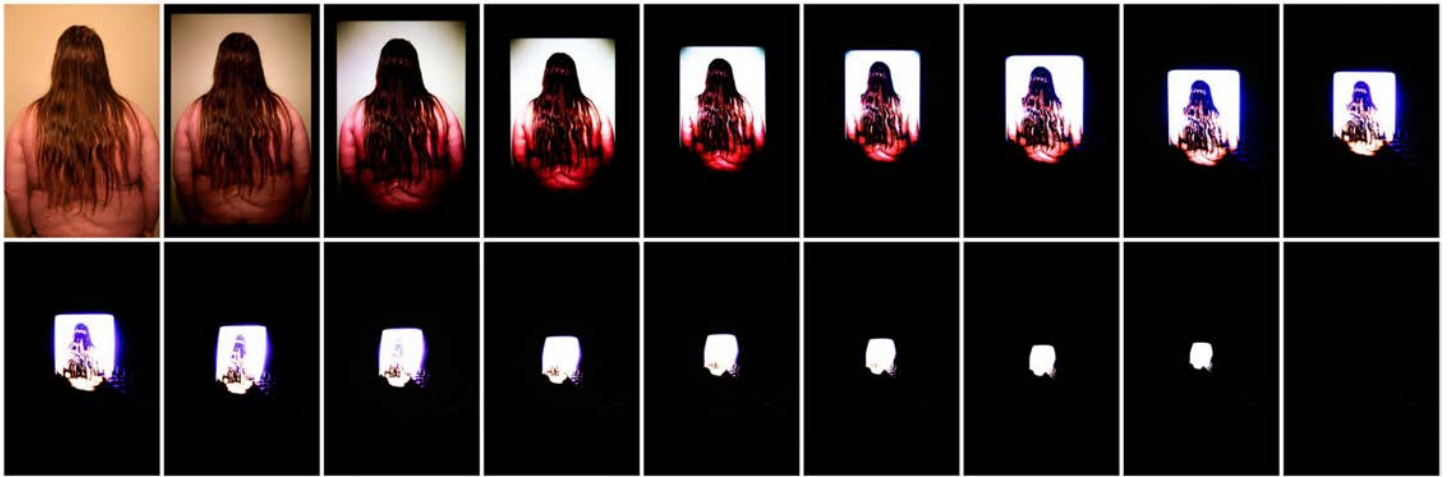
*Self Corruption 3*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 44" x 60"



*Self Corruption 12*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 20" x 16"

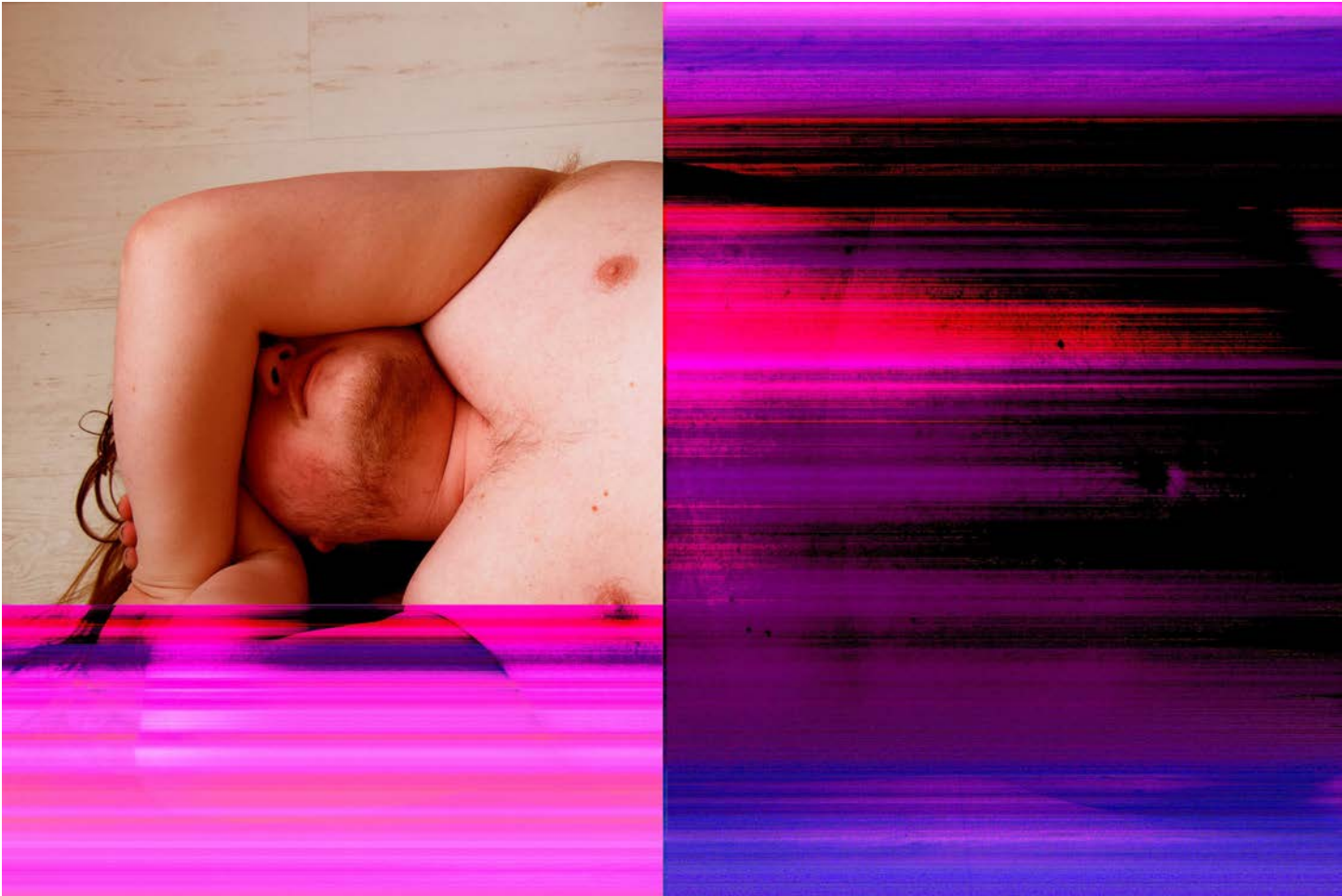


*HAR TO ASH 2*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 30"



*Disintegration*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 44" x 20"





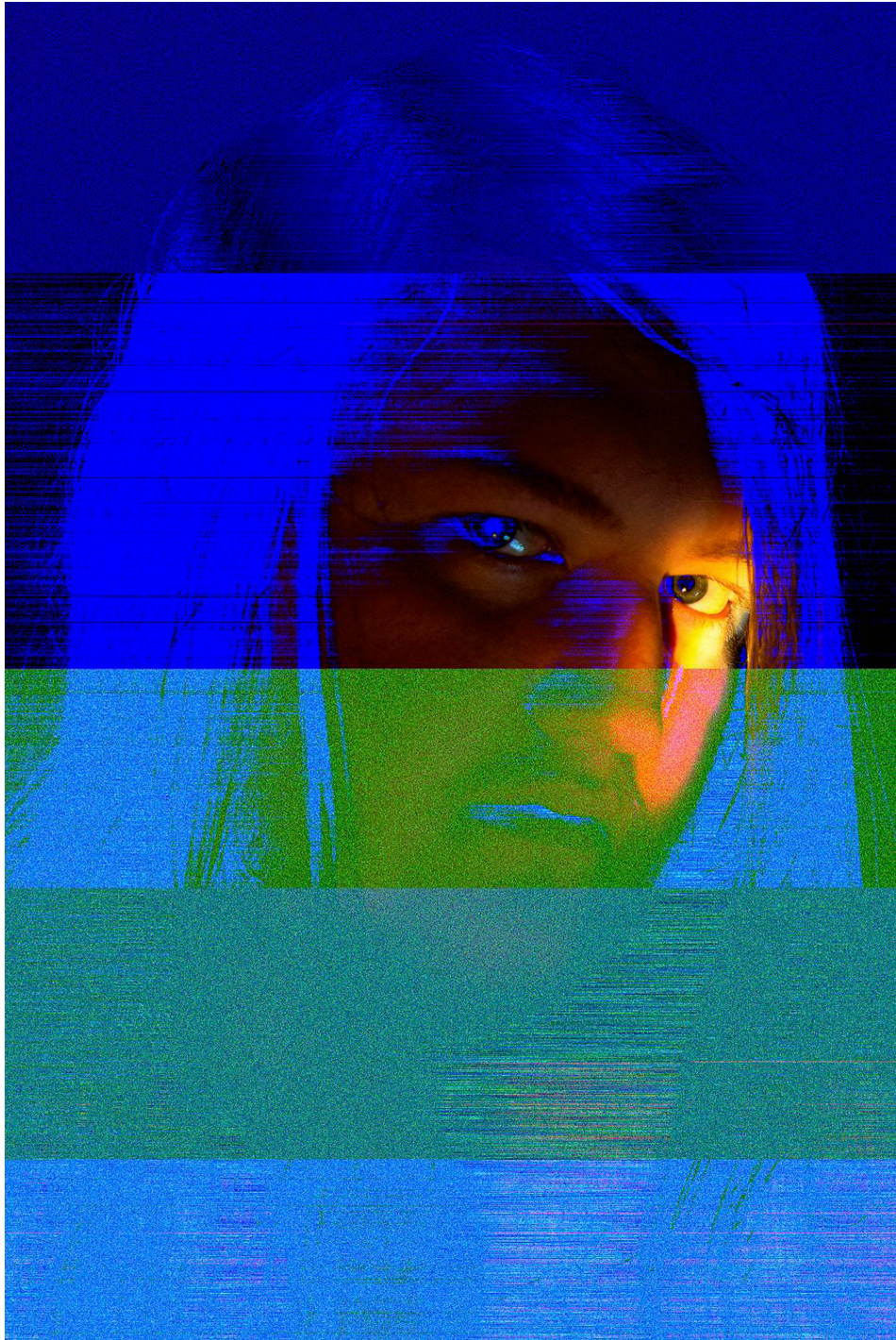
*HAR TO ASH 10*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 24" x 20"



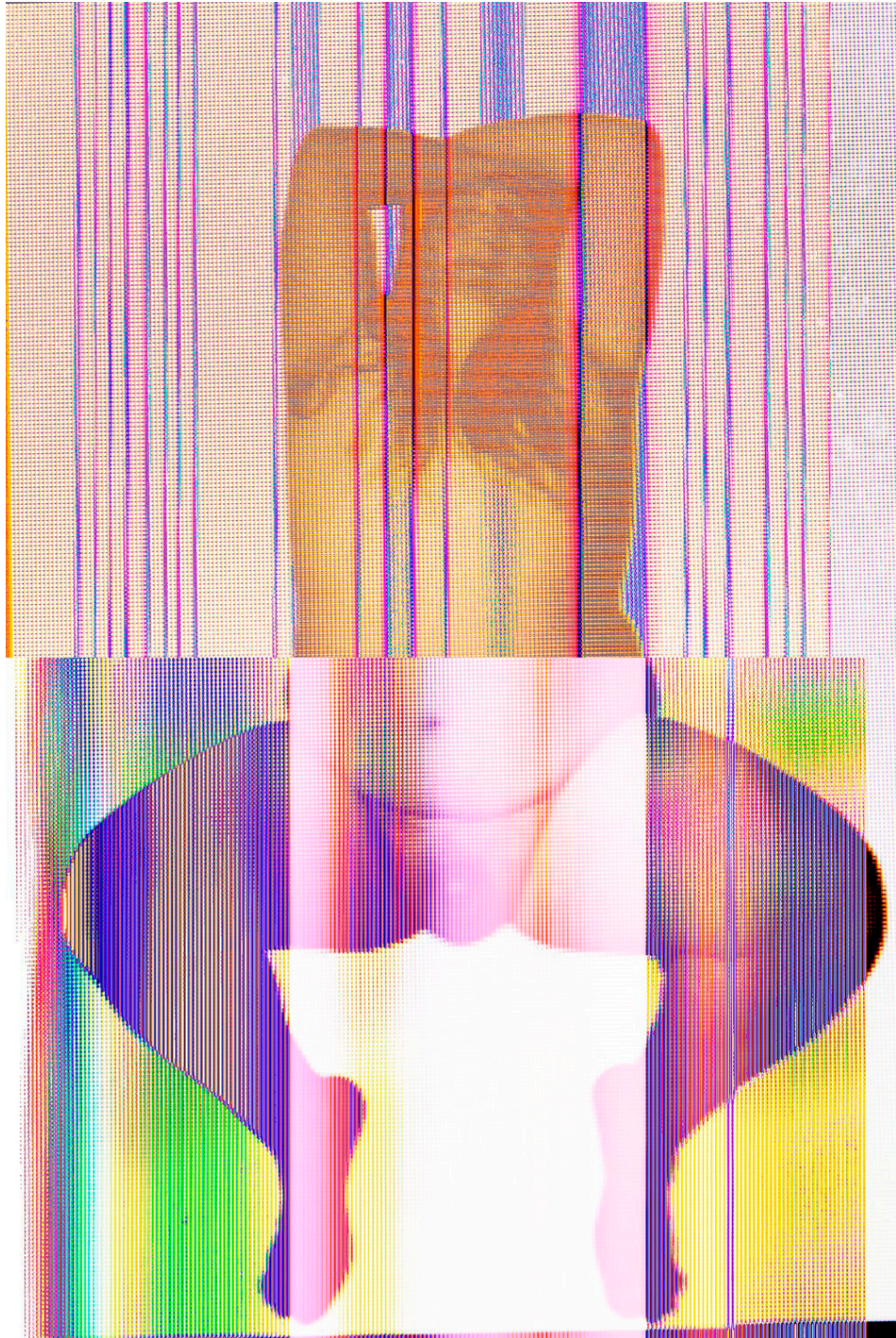
*Self Corruption 14*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 16" x 20"



*HAR TO ASH 15*, 2024, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 30"



*HAR TO ASH 6*, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 20" x 16"



*HAR TO ASH 16, 2024, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 30"*

# INTERVIEW WITH ASH HUSE

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

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**Rachel Manlubatan:** How do the bright, bold colors that come out of using music software and altering code shift the meaning of your pieces? How do you use color blocking to simultaneously convey chaos and calmness?

**Ash Huse:** At first when I was creating these I didn't really have color in mind. When I started in graduate school I was actually afraid of utilizing color in my work because my background was very rooted in traditional B&W portraiture. It was through testing and talking with my cohort and teachers that I started seeing a pattern of magenta and blue being at the forefront of these corruptions. I started to think about the use of pink throughout queer history and the prominence it has to identity for many people and thought it was interesting that this calculated computer program kept picking that tone for the themes I was addressing in the work. The actual composition of colors, block and texture really played into this tension I was aiming for. Simultaneously the explosion of color is so much to take in all at once it has that moment of negotiation with the viewer, "Should I look more? Can I look more?" and then the waves of the data create this also calm effect, like waves of distortion in music. I like the ideas of polars in my work, I'm generally a person of balance and this project is very much a balance of a person through this idea of queerness and data.

**RM:** As you use unconventional techniques such as changing the code of digital files and rephotographing images on screens, how do you move past binary views in both portraiture and real-life concepts of identity? How do the grid structures and collage-like compositions you play with relate to themes of self-image?

**AH:** Portraiture, especially in photography, is based in the representational. We see a photograph of a person and we as humans recognize them as human as well so we have

an easier time connecting with the image. The work that I do is to complicate that idea of seeing a person. "Do I want to be viewed? Do I want to be seen?" and then those moments of, "This is who I am and I don't give a damn what you think." The concept of reclamation through using code and music software is so integral to the images. I physically alter the DNA of the photos to take agency for the image of queerness that I want to represent.

**RM:** How has modeling for your photos and being physically present in all parts of the photo-making process affected your relationship with your body, mental health, and queerness? Why have you chosen to take self-portraits, and what do you hope audiences learn from your art?

**AH:** When I was first doing my first body of work, *To Find The Wholeness That You Seek*, back in undergrad I was more focused on my partner. I had really just started using the camera as a means to talk about larger concepts of love, transitioning and relationships. That project made me feel close to my boyfriend and was an accessible way for me to begin to think about myself, my role, who I am. It wasn't until the start of COVID (I graduated from undergrad in December of 2019) that I truly had, for the first time in my life, real time to think without having a job or school. Through that time I started to think a lot about myself as a person and started doing more self portraits of myself, not fully knowing why. I came out as nonbinary in 2021 and looked back at older images of myself that I had taken, but under this different context and headspace I was in. Through this process and attending graduate school it was like therapy for me. I worked through a lot of hardships both externally with the work and internally with my own mental health issues. I found this new power to actually have agency for myself and my image and to control that when others view me. I want people to look at my work and

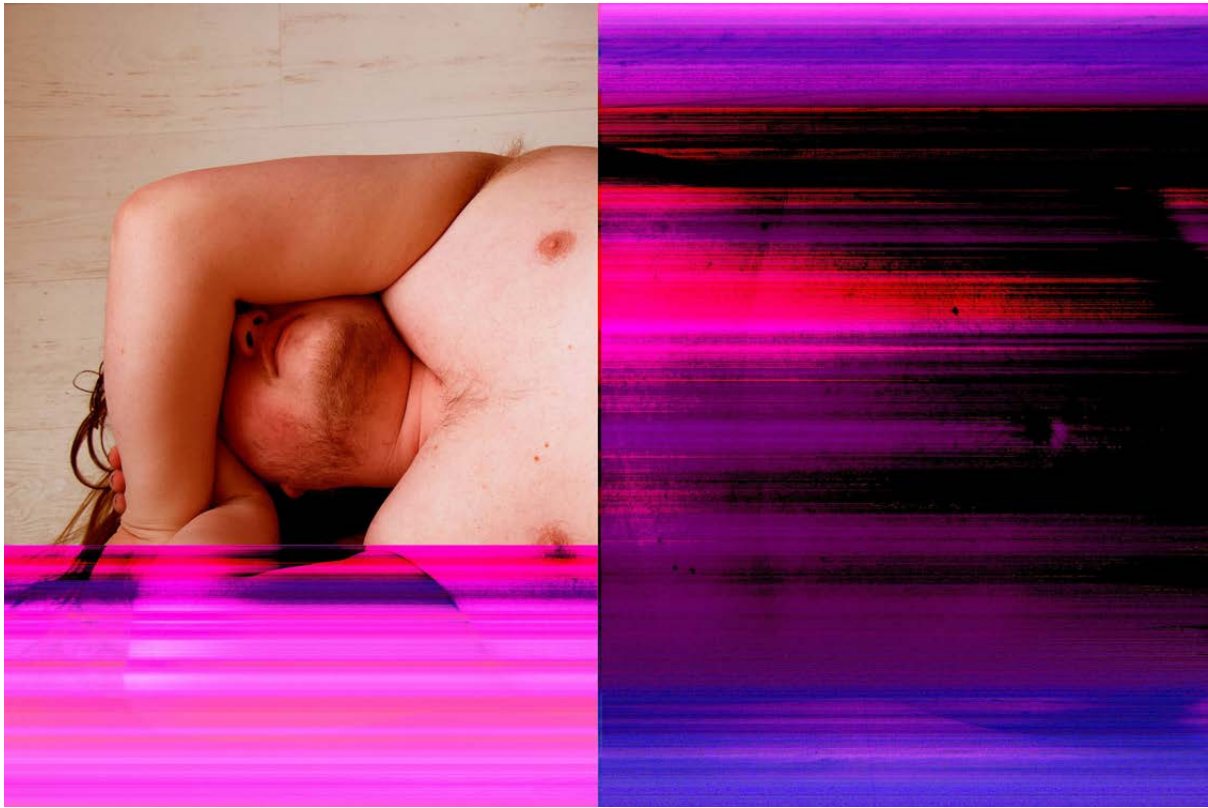
## INTERVIEW CONTINUED

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to think about the power they do have to talk about these narratives in their life, to use the camera as a tool that opens that dialogue with the self, while also talking about it with the public.

**RM:** What do you look for when adding texture to your artwork? How does grittiness, softness, or complete obstruction of parts of a photo act as a window into your personal life and feelings?

**AH:** I have always been a very texture based person in general. I love tactileness in everyday life and seeing textures in images activates something in my head that I can't look away from. I knew that in creating the images that the computerized texture would end up harsh to look at. The intense textures are very reflective of the state my severe depression and anxiety leaves me in. Yet at the same time I find comfort in that distortion, it becomes almost meditative when you view it for long enough. You see those human elements after a while and it feels like a blending instead of something lying over top of it. I am mixed with these feelings as a person, there's beauty and seduction about it and yet you feel the discordantness of it all too. The euphoria and dysphoria of being nonbinary, of being a person in general.



## 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 and graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: [colum.edu/deps](http://colum.edu/deps)

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