

# CHELSEA NOELLE FETHERLIN

2021 ART & ART HISTORY  
MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 5 - 21 2021

# 2021 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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DEPS is pleased to present the *2021 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition*. This exhibition showcases a body of work from each artist formed and refined during their time in the MFA program, and features a range of media from painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and beyond. Taking place at Glass Curtain Gallery during Columbia's Manifest festival, this edition of the DEPS Artist Profile series is a way to connect audiences with the artists of the exhibition and give you an in-depth look into the processes and ideas that have informed this body of work.

Jack Bradley

Josué Esaú

Chelsea Noelle Fetherlin

Jake Himovitz

Ava Makenali

Sabrina Pastard

# RADICAL BEINGS: HERE TO COLONIZE YOUR PATRIARCHY

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Chelsea Noelle Fetherlin's artworks are a multi-modal examination of feminist issues and topics of women's health. Progress in women's health is being made at a painstakingly slow rate; A woman's body is not yet normalized in medicine and medical research and is considered only secondary to the male body or as a child bearer. They believe the act of being a woman is inherently political. They create space for women through educating, empowering, and liberating women's bodies from anonymity and objectification with the goal of normalizing speaking about issues of a woman's health —especially with each other. Change needs to happen. It starts with women understanding who we are, knowing what we need, and then demanding more.

**Chelsea Noelle Fetherlin** is a Pittsburgh-native feminist, Riot Grrrl, activist, mixed media artist, and A-sexual gender outlaw whose work is centered on women's health. Their works include books, zines, music, drawing, painting, sculpture, and other combinations of techniques. Through their experience as a woman, their naturally weird sense of humor, and their friendly, outspoken personality, they educate others empowering them to take charge of their health by embracing, understanding, and normalizing talking about their health to bring about change and create spaces for women. Fetherlin will earn their MFA at Columbia College Chicago in Spring 2021.

[shoutshoutforyourhealth.com](http://shoutshoutforyourhealth.com)

[@chelseathefolkpunkartist](https://www.instagram.com/chelseathefolkpunkartist)

[@shoutshoutgrrlzine](https://www.instagram.com/shoutshoutgrrlzine)

[Bandcamp](https://www.bandcamp.com/artist/chelsea-noelle-fetherlin)



*Sorry, Sweetheart, 2020*  
Mixed media on Masonite



*Thirsting for Absolute Silence, 2020*  
Mixed media on Masonite



*The Game, 2020*  
Mixed media on Masonite



*Shout! Shout! for Your Health!, 2020*  
Logo for zine and journals  
Sharpie

From VAGINISMUS.COM:

**"Be Bold- Advocate for Yourself"**  
Obtaining an accurate diagnosis can be challenging. Some women have been misdiagnosed, resulting in unnecessary, invasive, and potentially harmful surgeries and medications. Often, women have been ignored and left undiagnosed. In some cases, doctors who see nothing physically wrong and have not received training in diagnosing vaginismus, fail to give due attention to the woman's concerns and do not consider researching a proper diagnosis. Seek a second opinion if you are not satisfied with the results of your examination. Vaginismus symptoms generally do not resolve on their own. We encourage you to be bold and advocate for your health to receive diagnostic and treatment care."

WHY DO I HAVE SEX OR EVEN TAMPON USE TO BE EXTREMELY PAINFUL OR IMPOSSIBLE

"It is helpful to be familiar with both terms - vaginismus and CPPD in educating yourself about your condition. Change filters slowly both inside and outside of medical and academic communities and thus it is common for older terms to persevere. Vaginismus will likely continue to be used when referring to penetration problems both over the Internet and by health professionals for many more years."

From Brooke:  
This was something I had a lot of trouble with when I was becoming sexually active and I always hated tampons because the pain was excruciating. I literally had a gyno think that my pelvic floor was just prolapsed when it was literally my muscles clamping shut. It wasn't until a different gyno was like "no, this is textbook vaginismus" that I ever had an answer!! And it's so common!!

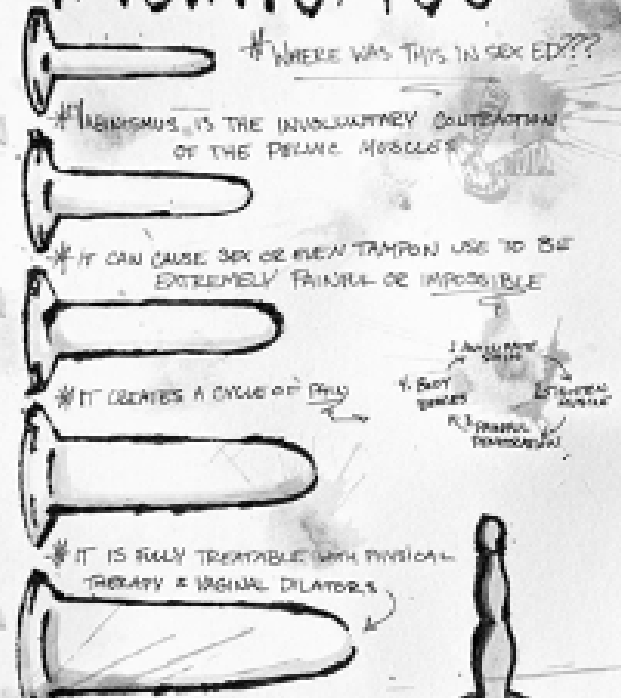
OTHER RESOURCES:

<https://www.thevaginismusnetwork.com/blog>

<http://www.vaginismusawareness.com/>

SHOUT-Tactic Cover By:  
Brooke Ebeling  
Instagram: @brookebelingsart

# VAGINISMUS



Submissions:  
Email: [shoutshoutgrrr123@gmail.com](mailto:shoutshoutgrrr123@gmail.com)  
Insta: @shoutshoutgrrrzine

Shout! Shout! , 2020  
Page from zine, Issue 5  
Collaboration with Brooke Ebeling



# INTERVIEW WITH CHELSEA NOELLE FETHERLIN

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

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**Kaylee Fowler:** A lot of your work is inspired by or focuses on your experiences as a woman living with chronic illness and brain injury. Has centering your own experiences in this way affected the ways you create and distribute your work? Are there barriers in place in traditional art practices that someone without these experiences might not realize?

**Chelsea Fetherlin:** I think that being a woman who has lived with chronic illness has made me passionate about what I do because I have seen the injustice that women suffer. I have health issues that have taken years to correctly diagnose, and even then I have to justify that diagnosis with every new doctor that I see when new issues arise. I have had to (and still do) fight tooth and nail for access to care. I am fortunate enough that I have some medical background and that my issues are not life-threatening so that I have had the ability to fight for myself—not everyone has this option. The first place that women turn is to Google or WebMD, both of which will tell you that you've got cancer and scare the hell out of you. The research for women is just not there or, if it is, it is not accessible. That doesn't even touch on topics of women's safety or social conditioning that leads to death or health issues. I don't want to see future generations have to live in fear or ignorance like women do now.

**KF:** You created Shout! Shout! zine as a resource to talk about health issues and advocacy within the US health-capitalist system. How do you keep the information within up-to-date and accurate when there is not a lot of research on the topic of women's health readily available in the first place? What role do you think self-advocacy and sharing of personal experiences should have in mainstream discussions around health?

**CF:** The medical system is something that I have been attached to from many sides as a patient and a professional. The atrocities of health-capitalism in the United States have been a bane of my existence since I was a child, swollen so much that I could not see because of a rare allergy with little research; to my young adulthood as a woman and dismissed patient care technician watching patients suffer; to today where I have to battle for insurance and access to care. In these experiences, I am not alone. These experiences are not in any way unique in this country—especially as a woman, where research has a broad data gap that leaves us misdiagnosed, ignored, sick or endangered. My health and the health-capitalist system in this country are intertwined, and so I use my artwork and research to speak of my experiences in an attempt to connect with and engage other women.

I have a history in medicine, and so I do my best to both research as a person without that background might (to find the accessibility of information and identify areas where information is missing. Many times, it can act as a lead-in to more focused research) and also to really dig in and find the most up-to-date information available that I can. I love research. The hardest part, as you mentioned, is that the research is scant or nonexistent! That's where people come in. One of the best ways to find the most up-to-date information is to look at the testimonies of real people, while calling out where information is missing. The experiences of women, their research, and their long journeys are oftentimes what bring about the change for medical research through self and collective advocacy. A woman's lived experience is her truth, and it is powerful. There is a taboo about talking about your health. It can be ostracizing,

# INTERVIEW CONTINUED

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and that is what I think is one of the reasons that research and medical practice is so far behind. Normalizing speaking about medical issues will strengthen the collective and become a force for positive growth and change. And it will empower and comfort other people who might be going through similar circumstances. It also educates with a genuine authority.

**KF:** Does your experience as someone with an impaired visual memory affect how you interpret common narratives around shared social memory and the idea of identity formed around our histories? Does this in turn affect your practice in any way?

**CF:** Not really. It does make for a unique existence as a visual artist, but it doesn't affect my interpretation of narratives outside of myself. It does connect me to others who suffer from chronic illness, especially others who have suffered from brain trauma.

**KF:** Can you tell me more about your music and your recently released EP?

**CF:** The Feminist EP by my one-gal-band "Self-Titled" are several songs that I've written and DIY-recorded that talk about issues of women's health and safety. Humor is something that I adore, so these folk punk songs are tinged with laughter, but by no means do they make light of the serious issues that they're about. "Stalk U Back" is a song about stalker-revenge. Almost every girl you meet will have experienced stalker obsession. "Little Blue Pills (Ode to Viagra)" is a song about how a 2013 study found that the active ingredient in Viagra could be a complete cure for cramps with no side-effects, but how pharmaceutical companies will not fund it in fear that it will hurt the male market for erectile dysfunction (even though 90% of menstruating women experience cramps). "Girl Crush on My Gynecologist" is a song about how awesome it is to get your yearly exam and talk to your Lady-Doc, peppered with personal experiences.

**KF:** Can you talk about the importance of *Mia Famiglia* as both an archive for yourself as your memories fade over time, and as a work to present to an audience as insight into yourself? How do you expect others response to the piece to differ or be similar to your relationship to the work?

**CF:** *Mia Famiglia* is so near and dear to my heart. It is not just a collection of my own experience, but also the experience of eight of my family members during this uniquely difficult time of change as people and as a family. It begins with the death of my grandfather and spans the year following his death. It is an intergenerational archive, and I think that there is something beautiful about that. We are all growing up and overcoming challenges at the same time, but at different points in our lives amidst the collective challenges of a global pandemic, civil unrest, and isolation. Making this project has brought me closer to my family. I don't know how others will respond to it, but it is honest; I find honest accounts of life to be the most relatable.

**KF:** Whether for your practice or your personal life or the world at large, is there something you are looking forward to for this upcoming year?

**CF:** There are a lot of unknowns about the coming year. I can't tell you where I will be six months from now. That alone is exciting.

# DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

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**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 Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Kaylee Fowler. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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

MFA Thesis Exhibition

May 5 – 21, 2021

Glass Curtain Gallery–Columbia College Chicago

1104 S Wabash Ave, 1st Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

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

Capacity of gallery is 10 visitors, and masks are required.

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