

Relational Imprints: How I Love Ester Fleckner's Queer Abstraction
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How I love the backward belongings
How I love the collisions between the grid and the pulse
How I love the tradition as an improvised dress
How I love the combination of questions
How I love the wig and the humping of individuals
How I love that words can be negotiated like bodies and histories

How I love. Sentences starting with these three words are scribbled in pencil across the upper margin of a monoprint in Ester Fleckner's series of woodcuts, *Clit-dick Register* (2013–2014) (pp. 4–27). Like a chant or an incantation, the sentences present declarations of desire, fascination, and inspiration. Some lines verge towards the poetic and dreamlike. Others bear semblance to an artist statement in describing a preference for aesthetic collisions, questions, and negotiations. Play with signs and signification is also central to the image in the center of the print that pictures hundreds of white signs in the shape of the letter U on a dark background. The U-signs are organized in sixteen horizontal lines that increase in size from small rows on the top to larger rows towards the bottom. Even though the same form is repeated numerous times, the U's do not appear standardized, as each line bears a trace of a hand having worked the wood. This dynamism between seriality and singularity is also central to the twenty-two monoprints that comprise the *Clit-dick Register* series. While all of the prints stem from the same wood block, they are far from identical, in part due to the different densities of ink used in the printing process that make the backgrounds span from dark black to ash gray, and in part due to the varied textual snippets written in the margins and on top of the prints in both Danish and English.

When seen from a distance, the prints with their distinct lines of U's look like a concrete poem or a notation score for the sound of an increasingly intense howl or orgasm. But the title of the series suggests a shift in interpretive orientation from text and sound towards visuality: Approached as a "clit-dick register," the prints appear as a visual record of genital forms. "Clit-dick" is an ambiguous word that conjoins body parts usually understood in binary terms. While the word "clit-dick" has been used as a misogynist epithet for small dick or extraordinarily large clitoris, the word also holds possibilities for referencing gendered multiplicity and variety. This is also the case with the curvy U-shapes that can pass as letters or breasts or tongues or dicks or clits or something in between. Their formal simplicity resists easy identification and classification. Operating in the switch-point between representation and abstraction, repetition and difference, reading and sensing, *Clit-dick Register's* concern for nonconforming signs, words, and bodies represents one of the foundational tenets of what I see as Ester Fleckner's relational practice of queer abstraction.

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Like abstraction, queer is a fundamentally relational term. As art historian David J. Getsy has noted, "one cannot be queer alone."¹ In their adjective forms, both queer and abstract only take on meaning in relation to the subject they are describing. To call something queer implies marking a difference from something straight, linear, or normative. Similarly, abstract describes a move away from representation, figuration, and transparency. Approaching queerness and abstraction as relational terms means letting go of ideas that some forms are intrinsically or essentially queer or abstract. Instead, queerness and abstraction are best understood as what Getsy describes as "capacities" that "are engendered by activating relations—between forms, against an opposition or context, or (in the case of complex forms) among the internal dynamics of their components."² Considering the importance of asserting queer visibility in the history of the Euro-American LGBT* movement, the turn towards abstraction could easily appear as a formalist retreat from the political. But if we understand queer politics as more than being "out and proud" and also about the work of reimagining relations of power, difference, and desire, this inevitably involves questions on the politics of form. As Getsy explains, "Queer existence is always wrapped up in an attention to form, whether in the survival tactic of shaping oneself to the camouflage of the normal, the defiant assembling of new patterns of lineage and succession, or the picturing of new configurations of desire, bodies, sex, and sodality."³ Getsy's relational approach to what he terms "queer formalism" calls attention to how queer artists use abstraction to criticize questions around identity, representation, or iconography. Yet queer formalism is not only about critique but also about the desire to explore the creative potential in what he beautifully calls "the intercourse of forms." How do different

forms “get on” with each other?

The relations activated by this intercourse of forms not only take place within the frame of the artwork but also involve those who engage with the work. Queer abstraction “stages new spectatorial possibilities,” writes art historian Lex Morgan Lancaster in *Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art*.⁴ Lancaster introduces the concept of “dragging away” as a framework for analyzing how queer abstraction “offers visual and material tools for queer resistance.”⁵ Referencing both the Latin root of the verb “abstract” (*ab*: away, *trahere*: drawing or pulling), as well as the queer performance tradition of drag, Lancaster pays special attention to how the “active, often unruly process” of abstraction works to hamper, obstruct, or slow down our interpretive operations in ways that emphasize the material and embodied experience of art.⁶ In contrast to how modernist artists in the early twentieth century turned to abstraction in search of a universal language of transparent symbolism, Lancaster shows how queer artists use strategies of abstraction—from hard-edged geometry to glistening grids to bright colors to visual distortion—as aesthetic tactics to work against dominant representational logics of surveillance, visibility, and legibility. The artistic work of “dragging away from representation” thus holds potential in instigating performative processes that also drag us viewers “in multiple aesthetic, material, historical and political ways.”⁷

Getsy and Lancaster’s takes on queer abstraction offer inspirational perspectives for analyzing Ester Fleckner’s work with letters, signs, and primary forms in their woodcuts and concrete sculptures. Returning to *Clit-dick Register* with these relational and embodied processes in mind, other aspects of Fleckner’s formal politics come forth. The act of translating these works into words, for instance, makes me painstakingly conscious of the creative *and* coercive force in assigning names and categories to forms and figures in difference. Fleckner’s visual vocabulary of abstracted U-shapes, which appear as letters as much as visual representations of body parts, not only complicate an easy “reading” of the prints but also suggest an ethical investment in the coexistence or inter- course of multiple frameworks of meaning-making including language, visuality, tactility, and embodiment. It is difficult to describe the unruly interplay between these elements without straightening them out, literally speaking, in the linear format of writing. After all, Fleckner does not provide any guide for how to analyze the prints, and the works work differently depending on the movements of my body. One needs, for instance, to be quite close to the prints to read the notes written in pencil in the margin.

But is “margin” really the right word to use for the white space surrounding the printed image in these artworks? Does this not risk implying a hierarchy between the center and periphery of the work, which risks positioning the written love notes as a *marginal* rather than as a coeval partner in the work’s formal intercourse? When I pull back to get a better view of the printed image, the rhythmic variation between the seemingly similar U-shapes come to the fore. Despite the title’s invitation to read the U’s as a visual representation of body parts, to claim them as “clit-dicks” would disregard the productive friction between the visual and textual components of the image, including the title. The phrase *Clit-dick Register* drags along associations to histories of violence perpetrated by medical institutions against intersex bodies, trans*bodies, and other bodies whose visual morphology have failed to match the shifting biopolitical doctrines of the sex/gender-binary. Yet these heavy-hearted allusions clash with the light-heartedness I see in the simple, almost childlike play with rendering gendered and sexual forms that seem to signal how ridiculous it is to reduce bodily difference to the form of a singular body part. A note scribbled in pencil at the bottom corner of the margin of a print in the series points to these dynamics: “How I love the components of failure.” While the note does not explicate which standards or measures it loves to betray, its appearance in proximity to the gender ambiguous U-shapes makes it tempting to read it as a statement that flirts with the generative possibilities of failing to conform to normative taxonomies of gender, sexuality, and language. Importantly, though, the note expresses a love of *components* of failure, not failure per se. For how to love, or rather, who is able to love falling between the cracks of *all* frameworks of recognition?

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A desire for connection and belonging runs through Fleckner’s series of woodcuts titled *I navigate in collisions* (2014–2015) (pp. 41–57). The series is introduced by a print subtitled *flyer* that includes a hand-carved text in capital letters in white on an almost black background:

I NAVIGATE IN COLLISIONS
WOODCUTS BY ESTER FLECKNER
RELATION. YOU TALK IN A WAY THAT I DON’T KNOW BUT
THAT I’M MISSING. YOU TALK ABOUT BELONGING

DIFFERENTLY. I BIKE THROUGH THE CITY WITH MY EYES
CLOSED, OR ALMOST. I THINK ABOUT IMAGES ONE
CAN RECOGNIZE ONESELF IN OR NOT. I THINK ABOUT
FAMILY TREES. AND HAVING READ THAT IT DEMANDS
SYNCHRONICITY WITH THE PATTERNS AND RHYTHMS
OF A PLACE TO FEEL THAT ONE BELONGS. I WANT TO
HAVE A RELATION TO YOU AND UNDERSTAND THAT WE
ALREADY HAVE ONE.

The letter-like text addresses an unidentified “you”—a friend or lover?—that the “I” seeks to get closer to. In linguistics, words such as “I” and “you” are called shifters because their meaning shifts depending on the context of the enunciation and reception. I’m often drawn to shifters such as “you” in artworks that permit me to imagine myself in the position of the one who is being addressed. Although I know I am not the “you” that is occasioned by the text, since I first encountered this print, taped to the window of the gallery C4 Projects in Copenhagen in 2014, I have felt a strong pull towards the “you” in *I navigate in collisions* that first dragged me into the gallery.⁸

In contrast to the prints in *Clit-dick Register* that are based on the same woodblock, the twelve prints in *I navigate in collisions* are all radically different. Yet they all appear to present alternative takes on the concept of a family tree. Traditionally, a family tree is a visual representation of a person’s ancestry organized in a hierarchical order, where the hetero-generational bloodline constitutes the roots of the tree’s branches that chart paternal and maternal lineages in successive strings of coupled relations. By contrast, the visual diagrams presented in *I navigate in collisions* are weird and wild, and seem to operate according to their own queer logics that favor the rhizomatic structures of weeds or undergrowth over the vertical form of trees. In *I navigate in collisions*, 2 (p. 43), for instance, thin white lines stand out from a black-gray background and form a precarious architectural structure that resembles an electrical tower or a ship’s mast more than a tree. A series of U-shapes hang side by side, like bats, from the seven large parallel branches or beams affixed to the trunk that balances on a scanty road. A similar structure appears in *I navigate in collisions*, 3 (p. 46), but this time all of the U-shapes have fallen off the branches and float individually in space. In *I navigate in collisions*, 4 (p. 47) the structure has grown and multiplied in all directions: Three parallel trunks are connected by countless overlapping beams that hold single or small clusters of U’s in a complex web of connections. In several prints the U-shapes are accompanied by a small hand-carved sign that looks like a star or asterisk—or anus. When the *-signs made their first appearance in a series of prints entitled *Arguments for desire* (2013–2018) (pp. 28–39), Fleckner introduced them as “anus stars,”⁹ and this beautiful term has saturated my view of star signs both within and outside of their work. If seen as indexes of bodies, the *-signs are as undecidedly gendered as the U-signs, and with a similar sexual potentiality.

The intimate constellations of unruly lines and erotic forms that appear across the print series *I navigate in collisions* chart alternative constellations of intimacy. This cartography of desirable connections points to a utopian territory of strange connectivities that I have a hard time fleshing out but that feels fleshy enough. By utopian I do not mean that *I navigate in collisions* presents political blueprints for the ideal organization of relational attachments, far from it. But confronted with these seemingly unrestrained and undomesticated charts, I become painfully aware of my limited ability to imagine a relational world beyond the gravitational pull of conventional coupledness that informs my own life as a married gay man living in a rainbow family with kids. How I love getting lost in the polymorphous perverse swarm of anonymous, gender-ambiguous figures that connect across these prints. Standing in front of the large diptych *I navigate in collisions*, 8 (pp. 52–53), with its beehive-looking cloud of attachments where U meets U meets U in an assemblage of virtual intimacies, I cannot help but wonder how this world would work if the transmission of history and heritage, love, and economy were structured according to the logics of affinity and community rather than identity and family.

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As you have probably realized by now, I do not pretend to write about Fleckner’s practice from a “disinterested” or “objective” scholarly perspective. This has never been an option, as I have been hooked on Fleckner’s practice since I first encountered their work more than a decade ago. Since then, I have not been able to stop thinking, talking, and writing about their work, hence, my approach draws on my expertise in art history mixed with the love of a fan and the critical intimacy of a friend.¹⁰ Confessing to relational bonds in an essay like this could be seen as a break of protocol. The discipline of art history has had a long tradition of avoiding or hiding forms of affective attachments, as separation and detachment have been seen as foundational for upholding ideals of neutrality, impartiality, and objectivity. But just as critical distance is not a prophylactic for bias, partiality, or prejudice, critical intimacy is not necessarily an obstacle for scholarly practice. Emotional reactions—from desire and frustration to curiosity or love—are often what compels one to think and write in the first place, and

physical and affective proximity can potentially give access to different perspectives and contextual frameworks. In the context of my take on Fleckner's practice, my approach is highly indebted to my long-term engagement in what we could call Copenhagen's queer scene, referencing the different but often overlapping arenas oriented around queer and/or LGBT* lives and politics, including bars, clubs, festivals, events, and even at times also art spaces. And it was also within the queer scene that I first encountered Fleckner's work.

In November 2012 Fleckner exhibited a series of small, mesmerizing photo-based collages at the queer feminist pop-up art bar *BarHvaViHar* at the queer performance institution Warehouse 9 in Copenhagen. Fleckner started the itinerant *BarHvaViHar* earlier that year together with Mette Clausen, Line Hvidbjerg, and Mo Maja Moesgaard, a group of fellow students at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. As a much-needed alternative to Copenhagen's straight, white male-dominated art scene, *BarHvaViHar* attracted a diverse crowd from the overlapping networks of people engaged in the DIY-inspired queer activist scene, that had developed in Copenhagen in the early 2000s, in addition to artists and academics working with queer art and performance. For me, who was struggling to finish a PhD in queer art history while mustering the courage to finally leave my then-boyfriend, *BarHvaViHar* felt like a safe refuge and energy boost. Its collectivist ethos not only provided a fertile site for seeing, sharing, and talking about queer feminist art, it also did so in a space that invited flirting and dancing. Beside working with the pop-up bar, Fleckner, Clausen, Hvidbjerg, and Moesgaard also organized a reading group at the art academy where art students and academics met to discuss new work by feminist, queer, and trans scholars such as Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Tobias Raun, and Sara Ahmed, to only mention a few. *BarHvaViHar* quickly became an important meeting place for people interested in developing new forms and formats to talk about the politics of gender, sexuality, and difference in our local context, and it was where I started my dialogue with Fleckner and their work—a dialogue that has continued to this day.

When Fleckner presented *Clit-dick Register* at their graduation show at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen in 2013, it was not difficult to see the relational imprints from these queer networks in the series. The experiments with gender-nonconforming signs and the textual notes clearly referenced the ongoing discussions on visibility, failure, and passing, taking place in queer and trans*-oriented spaces such as *BarHvaVi-Har* at the time. Yet *Clit-dick Register* did not represent or document these political debates but recast them in formal terms. This turn towards formalism allowed Fleckner to bring urgent questions being asked at the so-called margins of society into a mainstream art institution without contributing to the growing commodification and spectacularization of "difference" and "diversity."

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The queer and trans* political dimensions in Fleckner's work may not be immediately available for viewers glancing at the prints for a minute or two in the gallery. But this does not mean that they are hidden from view. In contrast to historical as well as contemporary artists who work in contexts where exhibiting art with explicit queer content poses risks of criminalization, exclusion, or censorship, Fleckner does not use abstraction as a form of queer coding. After all, sexual and gendered body signs are often literally imprinted onto the surface of Fleckner's works, as in *Clit-dick Register* and *Arguments for desire*. Other series' address the conditions for public visibility and knowledge of sexuality and gender identity in slightly different terms, such as the prints in the series *A closet does not connect under the bed* (2016) (pp. 100–123), that deconstruct and disassemble the material and metaphorical idea of "the closet."¹¹ A similar resistance to the social expectation for transparency and recognizability of bodily difference can be found in a monoprint such as *Contraposer (Back-facing)* (2018) (p. 155), where constellations of small cubes create fragmented bodies that seem to turn their abstracted butts towards the viewer. The gesture of turning away can also appear in the prints *Cruising horizontal lines (silver)* (2022) (pp. 200–204) where numerous carefully carved eyelashes appear on a silver background. Whether alluding to closed eyes, withheld gazes, or make-up as an attention-grabbing cover, the prints rework the act of seeing and being seen in a shiny aesthetic that references exaggerated femininity in drag performance.

Fleckner's varied practice accommodates both forms of figuration and language that place bodies center stage, yet their prints are never straightforward. One needs to work to unleash the queer potential in these prints. As José Muñoz writes in *Cruising Utopia*, "to access queer visibility we may need to squint, to strain our vision and force it to see otherwise, beyond the limited vista of the here and now."¹² Even the most literal forms, like the stars that appear in multiple series, can be seen to function as "wildcard characters," akin to how asterisks are used in digital search engines to secure an open range of meanings.¹³ Jack Halberstam's discussion of the use of the asterisk in trans*political contexts speaks not only to the stars in Fleckner's prints but to their use of abstraction more generally, "The

asterisk holds off the certainty of diagnosis; it keeps at bay any sense of knowing in advance what the meaning of this or that gender variant form may be.”¹⁴ The recurrence of primary forms and signs in Fleckner’s practice signals an ethical resistance to reducing the transition and transmission of meanings, bodies, and language to “a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity.”¹⁵

Nowhere is this investment in the process of seeing and sensing difference more evident than in the most recent works in the series *Woodbeds, brimming* (2019–) (pp. 158–198).¹⁶ In the large-scale woodcuts in the series, printed in radiant blue, we are presented with white outlines of tens of thousands of small hand-carved geometric shapes that are lined up beside each other in successive horizontal rows, often with additional forms drawn in pencil on the perimeter of the printed image. The sheer size of the large prints in this series, with their insistent repetition of primary forms—from tiny down-pointing triangles to small right angled squares to rhomboids and trapeziums—overpowers me with a sense of awe and exhaustion. This concatenation of contrasting affective states can perhaps best be described with what cultural theorist Sianne Ngai, writing about the aesthetic of tedium in the poet Gertrude Stein’s writing, terms “stuplimity.” Evoking the sublime, the stupefying, as well as the stupid, Ngai uses the term stuplimate to describe the way certain aesthetic forms can register “as at once exciting and enervating, astonishing yet tedious.”¹⁷ Ngai’s take on Stein is helpful in this regard, for besides calling attention to the formal affinities between Fleckner and Stein, whose quotes appear in several of Fleckner’s prints, Ngai’s writing about stuplimate aesthetics also puts pressure on the temporal dimensions in these artworks. Ngai argues that Stein’s use of repetition creates a “slowdown of language” that shifts focus from formal differences to modal or *moody* differences centered around constantly shifting temperamental variations. When standing in front of *Woodbeds, brimming*, my astonishment at thinking about the time it must have taken to individually carve these minute forms is accompanied by a sense of exhaustion at the artistic labor as much as my limited ability for comprehending the abundance of repetition and difference.

Stuplimate aesthetics do not describe a privileged political state to Ngai, since stuplimate works, such as those of Stein, offer no progression, no release, and no transcendence. But stuplimate artworks can “provide small subjects with what Stein calls ‘a little resistance’ in their confrontation with larger systems,” writes Ngai.¹⁸ I see “a little resistance” in Fleckner’s approach to the abstract language of geometry in *Woodbeds, brimming*. The insistent modulation of primary forms in these prints pays little heed to geometry’s standardized relationships between shapes and forms. In contrast to the tradition of seeing geometric abstraction as a universal language, Fleckner has instead turned geometric shapes into a malleable material for materializing difference.

It is precisely the formal unruliness that distinguishes Fleckner from some of the key modernist artists working with abstraction, such as the painter Agnes Martin (1912–2004) with whom they are often compared. There are surely visual semblances between Fleckner’s patterns of geometric modulations in *Woodbeds, brimming* and Martin’s famous grid paintings, for instance *Night Sea* (1963), with its individually painted blue rectangles carefully inlaid in a negative orthogonal grid. But while Martin and Fleckner share a dedication to the slow and meticulous craft of handmade image-making, the effects of their use of primary forms and repeated structures could hardly be more different. The smooth and calm surfaces of Martin’s late paintings have often been described as “seamless” since it is “hard to see how she does what she does.”¹⁹ Fleckner, on the other hand, consistently brings the process to the front in their prints: Words and signs are frequently crossed out in the prints, and the text fragments written in pencil often bear traces of having been erased or rewritten. This embodied, processual transparency stands in stark contrast to Martin’s impersonal brushstrokes and compositional defiance of explicit personal perspectives or singular vantage points.

Martin was in dialogue with the American uptake of Zen Buddhism at the time, and this shows in her visual orientation towards what art historian Jonathan D. Katz calls a “pictorial realization of equilibrium” where all visual elements are balanced by negating counterpoints.²⁰ Katz finds a queer or rather lesbian ethic in Martin’s use of visual binaries that chronicles “difference within sameness.”²¹ The power of Martin’s paintings lies, according to Katz, in the artist’s ability to halt and seemingly transcend any dialectic or progressive movement within the binary structure they construct. The visual forms in Fleckner’s prints, by contrast, do not hinge on the “tense stasis” in symmetric and balanced compositions. Instead, Fleckner uses abstraction to set signs, figures, and meanings in motion. The queer abstraction at play in prints such as *Woodbeds, brimming* chronicles difference differently than Martin’s paintings, for the constellation of forms do not cohere around a binary logic of either/or but appear instead to operate according to the relational force of the conjunction “and.” The shapeshifting triangles lined up in *Woodbeds, brimming (to)* (2021) (p. 187), for instance, read as geometric forms, and as references to symbols such as the pink triangle, and as representations of bodies, for instance a crotch, and..., and..., and...

While Martin’s paintings flirt with the idea of freedom in transcending the powergame of identity, Fleckner’s prints offer no release from embodiment and materialism—instead they work on reshaping a sense of the present, one form at a time.

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“If at first you don’t succeed, failure may be your style.” The quote from the beautifully eccentric actor and writer Quentin Crisp is one of the starting points of Jack Halberstam’s book *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), where he makes a compelling argument about failure as a queer style that can be mobilized to refuse or resist the punishing norms that organize the measurements of success and failure in capitalist society.²² Failure, like abstract and queer, is a relational term that can be used as a tactic for unlearning systems, disturbing expectations, and provoking new orienting points. As someone who has struggled with perfectionism my whole life—a problem intimately connected to growing up in a homophobic society that worked to install a kernel of shame into my sense of self—I find comfort in Fleckner’s consistent work of bringing the often unruly and imperfect process to the front in their prints. The cross-out signs and snippets of texts that Fleckner chooses to leave in the prints not only provide a processual transparency to the non-linear process of making these works, these so-called errors also contribute to the overall function of the image.

It is precisely this uncompromising embrace of the irregular, the quaint, and the weird that have made me turn and return to Fleckner’s practice, again and again, for close to a decade. Fleckner’s persistent work on carving out space for the imperfect and uneven figures that fail to conform to normative standards functions as a training ground and testing site for my ability to imagine difference differently.

How I love being caught up in the relational intercourse of visuality, textuality, and tactility offered in these prints.

How I love the challenges they pose to me as a viewer and reader.

How I love how queer they make me feel.

Endnotes

1 David J. Getsy, “Queer Relations,” *ASAP/Journal* 2:2, 2017, 255.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, 256.

4 See: Lex Morgan Lancaster, *Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2022).

5 Ibid, 9.

6 Ibid, 11, 13.

7 Ibid, 9.

8 Parts of the analysis that follows are drawn from previous attempts at writing about this series, including Mathias Danbolt, “Fragments of Failure: A Conversation Between Mathias Danbolt & Ester Fleckner,” *FRANK Conversations* (Oslo & Berlin: FRANK, 2015), and Mathias Danbolt & Ester Fleckner, “Intimate Constellations/Constellations of Intimacy: An Exchange on Navigating in Collisions,” *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 29:3, 2019, 303-331, DOI: 10.1080/0740770X.2019.1671102.

9 When a print from *Arguments for desire* was presented in the context of the art association Den Danske Radeerforening in 2018, Fleckner presented the star as an “anus star.” This was picked up by art historian Rune Gade in his presentation of the print in the art association’s magazine. See: Rune Gade, “Argumenter for begær—et træsnit af Ester Fleckner,” *Den Danske Radeerforening – Medlemsnyt*, December 2013.

10 I borrow the term “critical intimacy” from art historian Mieke Bal who develops the concept in dialogue with the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. See Bal “Critical Intimacy,” *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 283-323. Yet, it is the writings of art historians such as Carol Mavor and Helen Molesworth that have taught me to value the mixture of desire, fandom, and love in the writing of art history. See in particular Carol Mavor, *Becoming: The Photographs of Clementina, Viscountess Hawarden* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), and Helen Molesworth, “Introduction,” *Open Questions: Thirty Years of Writing About Art*, ed. Donna Wingate (London & New York: Phaidon, 2023), 13.

11 For a discussion of this series, see Mathias Danbolt, “Closet Constructs: Reflections on Ester Fleckner’s *A closet does not connect under the bed*,” Copenhagen: Overgaden Institute for Contemporary Art, 2016.

12 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York & London: New York University Press, 2009), 22.

13 Avery Tompkins, “Asterisk,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1:1-2, 2014, 26.

14 Jack Halberstam, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (Oakland: California

University Press, 2018), 4.

15 Ibid.

16 The series *Woodbeds, brimming* contains both large and small prints. The prints made in 2019 are relatively small, with one larger print as the outlier, while the works in this series, made in 2020, 2021, and 2023 are all large format. My focus in this text is on the recent large-scale prints.

17 Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 264.

18 Ibid, 294.

19 Zoe Leonard, "A Wild Patience," *Agnes Martin*, eds. Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder (New York & New Haven: Dia Art Foundation & Yale University Press, 2011), 79.

20 Jonathan D. Katz, "Agnes Martin and the Sexuality of Abstraction," *Agnes Martin*, eds. Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder (New York & New Haven: Dia Art Foundation & Yale University Press, 2011), 186.

21 Ibid, 187.

22 Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011).