

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE HOME WE CAN NEVER LEAVE

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Growing up, I performed aerial arts in a circus. In the circus, a web of interdependence keeps you off the ground—the tightness of your grip, the strength of your friend holding you up, the trust in an apparatus to hold your weight. In my own body now, I feel the residual stretch, tension, and ache the circus left in me—remnants of bodies pushing through pain, defying gravity to hold one another up. Via soft sculpture and performance, I negotiate the body as a site of both liberating autonomy and confining oppression.

THE HOME WE CAN NEVER LEAVE

by

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University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Professor Cy Keener, Chair
Professor Shannon Collis
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Preface

I have always trusted my body. Confidence to climb a ladder, a wall, a tree. Faith in myself, my capability and capacity, a supreme trust in my body to know its ability. All of us, from childhood, have this to some extent—we all trust our bodies until we don't anymore. Until someone teaches us not to trust our bodies, inhibiting us with caution, or until we climb and fall, and the memory of that pain, the consequence to our trustful freedom, inhibits us forevermore.

Feeling the freedom and utter joy of embodiment; feeling the pain and constraint of embodiment. As humans we are always trying to pursue the former and avoid the latter.

My work foregrounds these experiences side by side. To offer that the body is a vessel for trust and delight with the simultaneous reality of the body as a site of oppression, discomfort, and pain.

I was an aerialist in a circus from ages 11-17. From 17 until now, I exist in my post-circus body, where I experience chronic pain and migraines resulting from the physical intensity of my time in the circus. My work negotiates how we can inhabit a body, my body, our bodies when they are our one and only site through which we experience the world and connect with others. Our bodies in all their glory of contradictions: they are the home we can never leave.

Dedication

To my MFA cohort, for their unceasing care, conversation, and camaraderie.

To my family—mom, dad, and Louisa—for loving and supporting me always.

And to Gab—my rock, my partner, my love. I'm so glad you chose me.

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To Climb

Growing up, I was in the circus. At eleven years old, I began taking classes at Circus Juventas in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was everything I could have dreamed of—I was a wiry bundle of energy who loved to climb and prove myself to the world. And here, I could climb and flip and dangle by my ankles or my toes and get stronger and faster and be upside down. It appealed to all the parts of me: I loved the spotlight, but I also loved working for it. Pushing through pains felt adult and powerful; here, I could learn to be graceful and effortless and beautiful while also being gritty and strong.

The joy I feel when I climb, when I am up high (in a tree, on a roof, a ladder, a trapeze—the apparatus doesn't matter much, only the height) is unparalleled. I feel giddy, free, high on myself. I am told that at ages 2 and 3, if left unsupervised, I would climb bookshelves, tables, and especially the upright piano in my family's living room. Later, this became my special and most favorite chore (just for me, the youngest and smallest member of my family): I got to dust the piano, crawling on my hands and knees across the top of it, staying up there as long as I could, able to touch the ceiling, to look down on my domain: the living room kingdom below, feeling gleeful and separate and special. I remember climbing 20 or 30 feet up a pine tree at age 5. Coming down, I noted my mother's concern with a vague disinterest, a mere footnote to the joy of climbing up and up and up without thought or plan. I scrambled up the doorways in my family's home, bracing myself on either side and leaving special treasures on top of the molding, miniature worlds only I could visit through my special propensity for getting up. Then, starting at 11, I learned to master the 35-foot climb up aerial silks or

ropes. When I performed, I was always so preoccupied with making sure that I was high enough to do tricks, that I hadn't slipped down, that my coaches would tell me to climb slower, less high, because it looked uneven when I was closer to the ceiling than the other 6 girls doing our routine.

Post-circus, in college: I would climb 80 feet up a pine tree. It felt like the easiest thing in the world: a simple, scrambling staircase that I could scurry up without thought, without plan, just following the simple message of my body that urged me up, up, up. I would be so high the wind would sway my body along with the branches and trunk. I felt transcendent, apart, cold and alone in a pure, human way—just me, the tree that I gripped—bark crumbling, hands scratched, my heart pounding and eyes burning. When I was stressed or sad, swimming in the intensity of art and homework and deadlines and breakups, I could go and climb and climb. Once, for a theater class, we all had to demonstrate a special talent. I brought the class outside and climbed and climbed; one of my professors started yelling at me to stop (I was only 20 or 30 feet above the ground, barely up at all!). I could tell he was afraid of heights, afraid for me, though I regarded this with a sort of amusing feeling of superiority for I knew I would not fall: I trusted myself in this, and he did not trust himself, or by extension, me.



Figure 1—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of the artist at age 6 or 7. I am learning how to climb a Spanish web (the rope apparatus) at my family friends' circus school in Seattle. This is probably my first time using any aerial apparatus. 2004



Figure 2— Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of the artist at age 10 or 11. I felt clear and strong and free when I climbed or hung upside down. This was pre-circus. I love my unruly hair, the strength of my grip: unselfconscious and filled with joy. 2008



Figure 3—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of the artist at the top of a pine tree during college. This was my go-to tree to climb. 2015

The Circus

In the pictures above, I see myself unbridled and giddy with the satisfaction of what my body can do. I also see it unfiltered by training or stylistic intervention. Seven years of circus training that happened concurrently with puberty changed my body and mind in many ways. In the photos below, I can see the polish that comes with years of training. I am still up high, yes; but I am performing in a way that contrasts the unselfconscious nature of the earlier images.



Figure 4—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of the artist performing on the Spanish web at age 14 (left) and on the silks at age 17 (right). 2012, 2015

Interdependence

As a girl, now as a woman—as a person raised girl and woman in our world. Trappings of patriarchy, sexism, misogyny creep into us, undermine our innate childhood body-confidence. As a teenage girl in the circus: I was strong and powerful. I could climb 35 feet up, wrap myself and the silks around each other, and drop 20 feet. I could do this every day. I was surrounded by other girls and women who could do this every day too. The web of social expectations followed us when we climbed the silks, ensnared us fully when we were back on the ground. We were strong, yes, and powerful: seemingly autonomous. We were also part of a carefully staged production, a performance for thousands of paying customers per summer. We had to put on glittering bodysuits and climb 30 feet in the air and not just do the stunt, no, but also perform: most of all we had to smile. We wanted to be here, yes—I think there were parts of it we all loved dearly. But also: our bodies hurt and we pushed past it. The pain of our bodies was subsumed in pursuit of tricks and routines and the expectations of our coaches and our friends and ourselves. We didn't control the roles we were assigned to act and dance in or the stories that played out under the big top. We were striving to succeed, at times giving one another utter solidarity and support: I will hang upside down by my ankle and hold you up even though my body is in pain, pain, pain, because if I let go you will fall. I will not let you fall.

What does it mean to take on bodily pain to prevent someone else from experiencing pain? How does one's relationship to pain change when the stakes are so high—someone else will fall or you yourself will fall. To bear pain and smile at

the same time, bigger and bigger. And to choose to bear pain again and again, show after show after show.

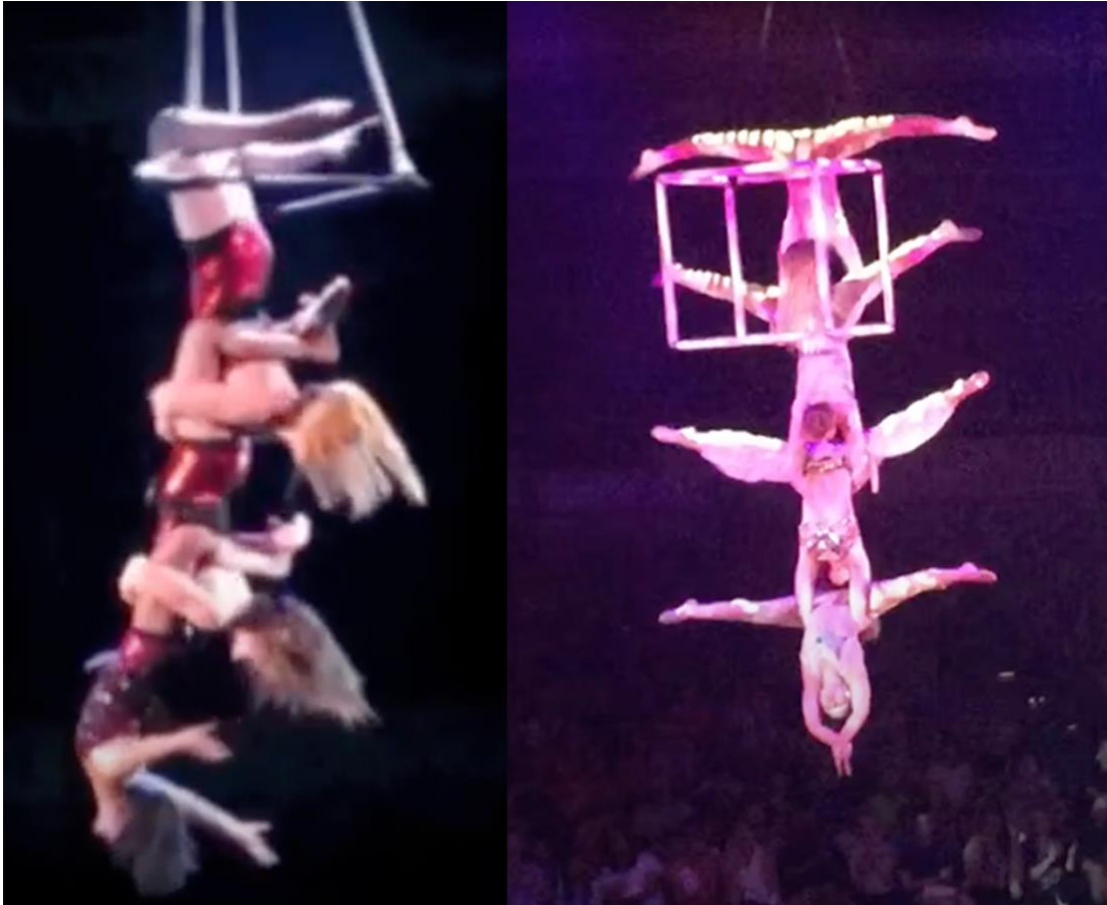


Figure 5—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Film stills from video of the artist performing with peers at Circus Juventas in St. Paul, MN. 2013, 2015

These are both pictures of “three-highs,” tricks where people are suspended or stacked on one another, either hanging down from an aerial apparatus, or stacking up from the floor. The left image is from triangle trapeze performance where I am the middle person; the right image is from spinning cube performance, where I am the second person from the top, basing the three-high—holding up the two people hanging off me. The person above me is helping me not slide off the bar, but she is not holding my weight. What I remember from this trick is pain radiating from the

metal bar pressing into my tailbone, and grimly counting the 10 seconds that the trick was held. You can see the crowd in the stands behind us—900 people in the audience every night.

As I progressed in the circus, more was asked of me, and I rose to meet these challenges. Can you hang upside down and hold one person? What about two? How long can you hold this position? 10 seconds? 15? What if we raise you up into the air? What if we make this the finale trick, the centerpiece of this act? In my senior year of high school, I think things flipped from meaningful, safe, exciting challenges to painful, past-my-boundaries challenges. It started to tear my body apart. I have a distinct memory of unlacing the long black leather gauntlets I wore from foot to knee and seeing blood spill out.

Collective Girlhood Pain

I remember my coach sitting on my back as I stretched, pulling my leg higher behind my head, placing a weight on my back in my middle split. We walked on each other's backs and stretched each other's limbs. We took each other's bodies into our arms and did not let each other fall. Our bodies were the conduits that made it possible to let go and know that someone else was holding us up. We exercised constantly. My senior year of high school, I worked out desperately. I needed to so that I could have the stamina to make it through my acts, to not drop my friends when I held them up many feet above the ground.

The trick that fucked up my body the most was from a duo act performed on the Spanish web. Spanish web is a 35' rope with a loop attached to it about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up.

By my junior and senior years of high school, I was basing tricks—at 5'4" and 140lbs, I was too big to be a flyer—there were plenty of girls my age who were 5' or less and less than 115lbs. So I was hanging upside down holding other girls.

Claire and I had a special featured act, partnered Spanish web in the middle of the arena. For the finale, our coaches pushed for a trick where I hung upside down by my right leg. Then I had a loop around my right hand, with the other half of the loop around the back of Claire's neck. Then I spun Claire, first by both arms, then removing my left arm, so that she was spinning, face toward the ceiling, body parallel to the ground, only supported by the loop around the back of her neck.



Figure 6—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of the artist holding a loop used in aerial circus arts. 2023

The image above shows a loop. The brown leather piece is called a keeper. You use a loop to hang from an apparatus or a person by putting your hand or foot into the loop and sliding the keeper down to meet your ankle or wrist.

Over winter break, I remember I brought a loop home with me to practice hanging upside down. Not to perfect any technique, but simply to get used to the pain of it—to drill it out through the repetition of simply enduring.

In retrospect, I see many red flags. I shouldn't have been doing a trick that was on the edge of my body's capacity. I shouldn't have felt like I had to, that I must, that if it was painful that meant I just had to do more. No coach offered an alternative—there was only the uniform encouragement of striving to do it better. I don't think it would have even crossed my mind to stop trying or to say that I

couldn't do it. There was only the pain of it, the flush of pride at conquering it, and the exhaustion that overwhelmed me after every show.

Now, there is just the persistent ache, almost gentle in its constancy, of the whole right side of my body. Its centers lie under my right shoulder blade and deep in my right hip, but the pain of those two places connect to each other through my back and spread tendrils out through my right arm into my hand, down my right leg through my foot, and up the right side of my neck.

For me, it will always come back to the body. My body, others' bodies, an abstract idea of body-ness, or my physical, warm, weighty self. What can a body do? What does a body know? More than my mind, I think; more than what reasons my brain can count, tally, or list. It is hard to listen to your body, especially in a culture that fawns over denial of care, rest, and tending to basic physical needs.

The Fall

My first year of college: back pain. Sharp, constant, ebbing and flowing in intensity, but ever-present. I can no longer wear a backpack. I beg my boyfriend to carry mine for me, which he does chivalrously, his own on his back, mine on his front. He is rounded, stooped but strong, a double-turtle shell holding my hand as we cross campus. I buy a rolling backpack and look like a nerd. People always think I'm leaving town or just getting back from a trip when all I've done is walk to class from my dorm. I get an MRI, go to physical therapy. Nothing changes. I see a chiropractor. He wants me to buy a \$60 pillow filled with water. I don't buy it. My pain does not change.

My second year: the headaches begin. Tension headaches, the pain from my back, unsolved, migrating up into my neck, my forehead, my eyes. I take Excedrin religiously. I wear a backpacking backpack, with a hip belt and chest straps: this takes the unbearable weight of my laptop, my few books and pens, off my shoulders. People still think I'm always leaving for a trip. I see a pain specialist who tells me that it is all in my head: that my nervous system is wired wrong to expect this pain, so that this pain is my responsibility (my fault); I now must train myself to not feel it. I cry in his office.

My third year: the migraines begin. Not just a headache, but shapes shifting in front of my eyes: light, patterns, neon colors. Auras, I am told these are called. I wear sunglasses everywhere, day and night. I wear sunglasses while studying in the library, while writing papers. I have a migraine every day, my migraine will not stop, it just fluctuates. Over winter break, I finally see a neurologist. I remember sitting in the

lobby, filling out a survey about how much my migraines impact my life. How many days a week does it stop you from doing schoolwork? How many days a week do you have to cancel on friends? I add up my score and it is 35 out of a possible 40 points. The survey labels me “severely disabled.” This is the first time I have ever considered the word disability applying to me. I am very afraid of its stigma, its finality, the way it feels like a pronouncement of lack, of failure. A swift blade of judgment declaring me unfit. (I will later learn to make friends with this word: the way disability resists capitalism, the way it whispers sweet spells of rest and respite. The way it compels community, organizing, and political body of action. The way it fights and languishes in equal measure.)

The Trials

I am given medication. Daily: an antidepressant that actually treats nerve pain; a muscle relaxer typically used by people who have had strokes. They both make me fall asleep. The muscle relaxer makes me hallucinate: dragons, monsters, writhing balls of neon worms, all looming three feet above me in bed. I always wake up, blinking, still seeing the afterimage as it fades before going back to sleep.

I am also given a rescue medication that I am supposed to take as soon as I feel a migraine coming on. I take it frequently, even though for me, my migraines are low-level constancy rather than sharp “attacks” that other people describe. I can never tell if it works. I think it is more a placebo effect than anything else. The medications do help, but not completely. My migraines reduce in size by two-thirds. This still means I have a migraine once or twice a week. My neurologist is wonderful, a funny, kind man. He tells me never to take my nightly medications until I’m actually in bed, because people have fallen asleep while brushing their teeth and ended up collapsed on the bathroom floor. He is always trying to add something to my migraine war plan, using the analogy of a house on fire: the more fire hoses, the more streams of water battling it, the better. (My brain, my skull, my nervous system: this is the house on fire).

The year after I graduate from college, I go to therapy: both physical and mental. I drive 40 minutes to a wealthy suburb to see my physical therapist, the only one in the Twin Cities that my neurologist trusts. I immediately like her. She is a fast-talking, deeply practical woman named Nannette. She is from New York City and I find her brusqueness a deeply refreshing contrast from the sea of Minnesota nice that

we both swim in. Her specialty is in caring for people with chronic pain (this endears me to her right away: she will not shy away from the kind of pain that resists solution, resists logic. She will hold my hand even when we do not and will not ever find the one perfect solution, the thing that will fix it for once and all). She makes me exercise in ways that are both brutal and mundane: planks on moving rubber balls, neck exercises that leave me trembling. Half the time the exercises lessen my pain; half the time they increase it. My favorite is when she massages me. Her hands on me are a deep and painful relief. She stretches me through my pain, a gentle but firm guide. She never forces, and never relishes the pain she causes (this is different, then, from coaches or weights placed on my back to coerce my body into new shapes). She massages my jaw muscle from inside my mouth, donning a nitrile glove and treating me with a gentle professional tenderness, even as my jaw locks and pops around her fingers, my spit trailing from her glove. I think I remind her of her daughters. They, like me, turn up at her door with new tattoos that she shakes her head at but grudgingly accepts.

My least favorite aspect of physical therapy is called deep tissue needling. For this, I go down the hall to a tall ex-volleyball player, a Minnesota mom of two boys. She talks up a storm. I take off my shirt on her table; she compliments my bravery for growing out my armpit hair, something that she, in her waxed and spray tanned glory, would never deign to do. “Good for you, girl!” she says cheerily. (She also finds it fascinating that my career of choice is “artist,” just like my romantic partner of choice is not a man. I never feel queerer, in all senses of the word, then when I am on her table, at both her verbal and physical mercy). She punches a two-inch long needle

into select points in my shoulder, my neck, my hip. She clips a wire onto the needles that sends an electrical current through them, cranking the electricity up until the selected muscle jumps of its own accord. It feels like someone is playing guitar inside my back, plucking a string with increasing frenzy. It is how I imagine an exorcism would feel: ghosts, spirits, something that is not-me but is in-me, dancing and laughing and reveling in my discomfort. (After our first session, I cry in the car.)

The Aftermath

Now, my condition is managed, more or less. My pain is kept at bay by sleep, boring and responsible choices, medication, stability, routine. It emerges daily and weekly in affecting but livable ways—but how do I determine what is livable when it must be, because living is my only choice? If it is not too presumptuous, I think that living with chronic pain makes the human condition clearer to me. Foregrounding the daily things that make life worthwhile, shouldering the pains each person experiences in their own way, in their own web of living-with.

Material Resonance

In the circus, we were all worried, consumed by our appearances. Even off stage we were always performing for each other, for our coaches, for ourselves. Leggings and leotards and tights, false eyelashes and gel nails and hairspray and bobby pins. Underneath that, our bodies, rippling with muscle and grace, as strong as our iron wills, as flexible as we could push them.



Figure 7—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Getting my hair done by a peer before the show. 2014

We all did each other's elaborate hair and makeup starting 3 hours before the show, sticking to a strict timed schedule. If you were on the hair and makeup crew, you didn't have to stay late to clean up after the shows.

We all wore leggings. Sports bra, leotard, leggings. No socks—you needed your feet, even your toes, to grip. Leggings protected your legs (mostly) from rope burn. Leotards ensured your shirt didn't ride up, shielding your back and abdomen.

Leggings showed off our bodies. Leggings were a symbol of class—athleisure luxury—lululemon was the best, but Athleta was pretty good. Leggings were the most practical thing to wear to train on an aerial apparatus, sure, but it was also cool to have a new pair of lululemon leggings and to wear them knowing you were the most strong and flexible you’d ever been. What did leggings enable, or direct, us to do? How did they function to let us climb without rope burn, but also to compress and mold our bodies in specific ways, into specific aesthetics? To insert our bodies into the grand conversation on ideals of beauty and thinness?



Figure 8—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Labels from leggings. 2022

What messages do “DOUBLE ZERO” “PRETTYLITTLETHING” “made for Life” and “PHYSICAL ATTRACTION” send to teenage girls about their bodies, about the value of their legs clad in skin-tight stretchy fabric?

Yellow

It follows, then, that my work would have to do with the tension and stretch of both bodies and textiles.

My collaborator MK and I began this performance piece holding each other, rocking gently back and forth. Through two years of friendship, MK and I have nurtured our collaboration to a place of easeful interdependence. We don't choreograph so much as talk about general ideas, then start moving, letting our movements be shaped by the possibilities and restrictions of the wearable sculptures I design for us. In this case, a yellow garment that interconnects us at the limbs, with about ten feet of space between us when pulled taut.

In the thesis exhibition, this piece was installed as a photo series that highlighted limb extensions, tangling, and holding tension: a garment as playful as it is restricting. Someone who'd never seen my work before commented that this piece reminds them of the genre of "body horror" but far gentler—it highlights eerie distortions of bodily impulses, sometimes playful, sometimes unsettling, but never horrifying. My artwork is an attempt to portray inner narratives of bodies that are not externally or physically visible.



Figure 9—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image from *Yellow*. 2023



Figure 10—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image from *Yellow*. 2023



Figure 11—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image from *Yellow*. 2023



Figure 12—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. *Yellow* installed in the UMD Art Gallery. 2023

Blue

Blue is a singular counterpart to the partnered nature of *Yellow*, originally performed after *Yellow*. In my thesis exhibition, I presented it as a body-scale print on aluminum composite. Mounted on the first wall leading into the gallery, it invites viewers into a world of tangled limbs and bodily distortion.

From the outside: otherworldly blue limbs on a form of vaguely human proportions, the humanness obscured even as you slowly realize that the limbs are exceedingly human, all elbows and knees, collars and necks, made from sweatshirts in all shades of blue.

From inside: I am wearing a morph suit, thin synthetic fabric stretched tightly over my whole body and face. Countless limbs stuffed with poly-fil weigh me down from all angles. I breathe stiffly, working to stay upright. If I fall, no harm will come to me, surrounded as I am in soft, pliable arms. But I am deeply alone in a structure I can't get in or out of by myself. Like the pine tree I climbed in college, I am removed from the world, separate but surrounded by limbs. Cradled but sequestered, enmeshed but apart from. Insulated, but isolated.



Figure 13—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of *Blue*. 2023

Red

Nine people—none of us men, most of us women. Gathered to wear a nine-person garment: nine leggings and nine sweatshirts, extended and attached to one another in a circular formation by red tubular sleeves. This garment and its ensuing movement explorations resulted in a film that was projected in my thesis exhibition.

When we first tried them on, the garments were a container, a foil—we laughed as we stumbled and flailed, trying to get our bearings, unused to being (physically) connected to so many others.

In the game “Human Knot,” you stick your hands in the middle and grab the hands of others before working together to untangle and return to holding hands in a circle. These garments extend and complicate the game, adding legs into the equation and allowing for the possibility of tension—one person leaning on the stretch of sleeve between two others.

During the film shoot, giddy merriment and the laser focus of a pack of people committed to a task were equally present. We all laughed when someone fell, before immediately working hard to pull them back up.



Figure 14—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Film still from *Red*. 2023



Figure 15—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Film still from *Red*. 2023



Figure 16—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Film still from *Red*. 2023



Figure 17—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Film still from *Red*. 2023

Black

A spider's web, for trapping and consuming; a fisherman's net, for catching and harvesting. Bodies get stuck in these structures, thrashing to get out. A net in the circus: spread out across the whole arena, underneath the flying trapeze or the high wire: safety, safety. A soft, bouncy landing, a clause ensuring that a dangerous feat will end in a bow and a smile, not death or mortal injury. Fishnet tights: worn to perform, encasing our teenage legs in tight, squeezing diamond patterns. No real protection from rope burn, but they look good for the show. Black leggings: soft, comfortable, relaxed, ubiquitous. And: form fitting athleisure, a picture of healthy, wealthy, (white?) womanhood.



Figure 18– Mitchell, Jeff J / Getty. Obtained from the Guardian. Image of fish in net. 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/01/led-lights-halve-unwanted-fish-in-nets-research-finds> Accessed May 6, 2023. Zibik. “Fly.” Obtained from Unsplash. Image of fly in spiderweb. 2019. <https://unsplash.com/photos/DrNorlNP9cs> Accessed May 6 2023. Hedin, Kate. “DSC_0028” and “DSC_0016.” Obtained from Flickr Public Domain. Images of flying trapeze performers and safety net. 2012, 2013. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/katehedin/> Accessed May 6 2023.



Figure 19—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Screenshot of google search for fishnet tights.
 <<https://shorturl.at/wENUW>> Accessed May 6 2023. Screenshot of google search for black leggings.
 <<https://shorturl.at/iyGX5>> Accessed May 6 2023.

As girls nearing womanhood in the circus, we braided each other's hair and massaged each other's backs. We hung our bodies off the bodies of our friends: ankles to armpits, arms wrapped around hips, my hands grasping your forearms and your hands clasping mine. Our bodies were intimately intertwined, experiencing collective euphoria and collective pain. We were squabbling and caring in equal measure, hurting each other's feelings in the same breath as we saved each other's lives.

For my thesis exhibition, I created *Black*, a soft-sculpture installation made of 27 pairs of black leggings. The sculpture is stuffed with poly-fil and lined with black webbing, pulled taut by the webbing and two 30-pound dumbbells.



Figure 20—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of *Black* installed in the UMD Art Gallery. 2023



Figure 21—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Detail image of *Black* installed in the UMD Art Gallery. 2023



Figure 22—Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte. Image of *Black* installed in the UMD Art Gallery. 2023

A web is a spider's home. I once felt at home on the silks, the Spanish web, as at home as a fish in water or a bird in the sky. The hidden trap of this home was insidious, subtle, wrapped up in the pressures of performing: as an aerialist, yes, but also as a woman and a girl, equally trapped in gender norms, body expectations, compulsory heterosexuality, and competitive femininity as in doing aerial tricks that have left my body in pain for the rest of my life. My body, its physical pain: an analogue for our bodies, collective pain. The circus: a microcosm of hierarchy and oppression, spliced with equal parts of autonomy and freedom.

The Home We Can Never Leave

I was caught, thrashing, in the thrall of the circus. The net I fell in was equal parts made of giddy joy and closely guarded pain.

From here: I know I move from joy and pain in equal measure. I know I will keep living in this body, my one and only true home. I will keep climbing and trusting, relying and interdepending, and I know inevitably I will fall. Where I will land, I do not know.