

text by Graham Feyl
on Faysal Altunbozar's work Heavy Duty
presented at Bird Show Chicago July 11 -25, 2021
organized by Erin Toale



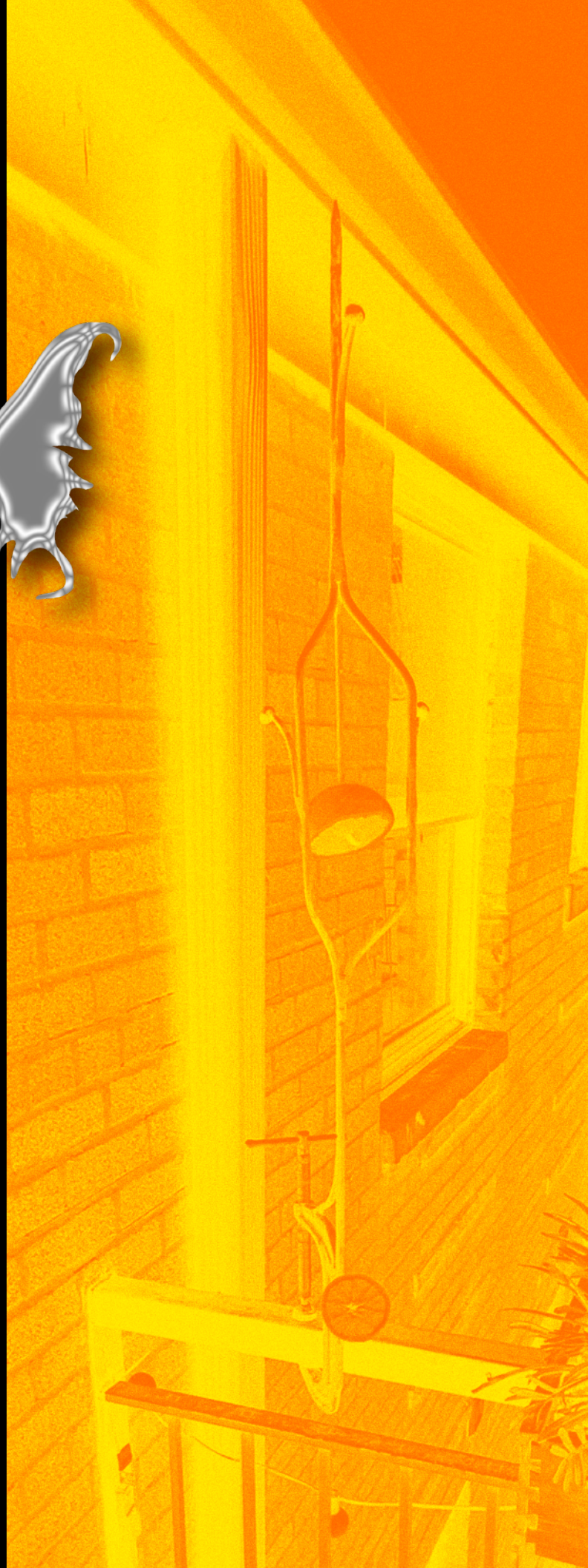
This was compiled from notes taken
between July 1st and July 23rd, 2021.
Italics connote stidethoughts.

July 1st

(Flight from Chicago to Santa Barbara)



Erin asked me to write for BirdShow; the next iteration will be of Faysal's work **Heavy Duty**. The piece is a pair of wrought iron spikes; modified c-clamps fasten down on a surface, and the spikes rise from this support system. They reflect the bars of gates (*who is let in? who is being kept out?*). The spikes pierce pieces of fruit: blackberries, cherries and oranges become sort of severed heads on the ends of the prongs. These transplanted wrought iron bars – *their slightly limp wristed points caress the sky* – stand tall while the juices of the fruit drip down their shafts. The gates submit to the fruit; what has been used to create a barrier - and the c-clamps that could easily crush something between their metal mouths – become simple holders for fruit and the creatures that feast on them.





Heavy Duty, 2020
modified steel c-clamps, seasonal fruits.



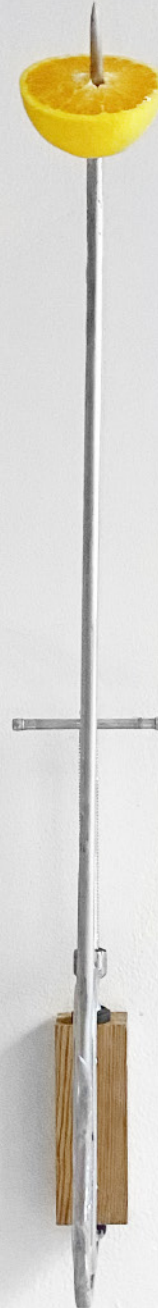
Heavy Duty, 2020
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July 2

What do I think of when I think of a gate?:

- Entry and Exit (But for those with access)
- This is mine: birth of private property
- Capitalism (see point above)
- Bodies: our movement is controlled by bars

What gates do best is move, manipulate, place, halt, and shift bodies. The pieces of wood or metal become a means of orientation. "Orientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space. We move toward and away from the objects depending on how we are moved by them." [Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects and Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), 26.]





Heavy Duty, 2020
modified steel c-clamps, seasonal fruits.



Cuckold /kʌk(ə)ld/

(noun): The husband of an unfaithful wife.

(verb): to make a cuckold of (a husband).

Origin (up for debate): The Cuckoo bird. The cuckoo will lay its eggs in the nest of another bird and have the host mother warm and care for the eggs. This eventually forces them into caring for the cuckoo babies as they hatch and develop. This makes the cuckoo a brood parasite.

July 6

The term cuckold was used to describe the tension between the bars and the fruit.

Honestly, I had no idea what that meant.

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Parasite makes me think of toxic relationships; one species is forced to deal with the problems of another (*Who wants to carry that emotional baggage?*). But I can't help but find some fascination in this dynamic of laying eggs in another's nest. Does the laying of the eggs shift the meaning of the other bird? Do they become a whole other species when they adopt these parasitic offspring?

Cuckold, in its verb form, has been used as a form of emasculation of some sort. But, cuckold has also become a fetish (*How do I cite Pornhub in Chicago Style?*). Sexual pleasure comes from knowing this open secret; it becomes a fruitful relationship in which both partners (Seem) to get off.

What **Heavy Duty** is, and emphasizes, is a relationship. Is it sexual? Does the fruit need the spike? Or does the fruit dominate the spikes? Does the mere presence of the fruit - *fruit as in that fruity man over there* - transform the spikes? Emasculate them in some way?







July 14

*I'm watching a Sex and the City marathon as I write this; four single women explore the sexual possibilities of New York City. Oh Honey, sex is with the city itself. Architecture? HORNY! What would it mean for a gate – that which is meant to keep out and coordinate bodies in certain spaces (You're welcome here....oh. But you aren't) –to be horny? How have I not considered the sexual portion of sexuality in this conversation yet? Hard and firm, they rise up and ask us to submit; they emit a sense of domination (Take me over, daddy). But, their curves and superfluous décor (why do we need patterning on something that is inevitably meant to bar people from entering spaces?) make it submissive (I'll do as you say). **Heavy Duty** places itself in the middle of this relationship. The juices of the fruit leak down the shaft and off the tip.*

Drip, drip.

Scene from Sex and the City: "I love my Stanford, but he is a FRUIT!"

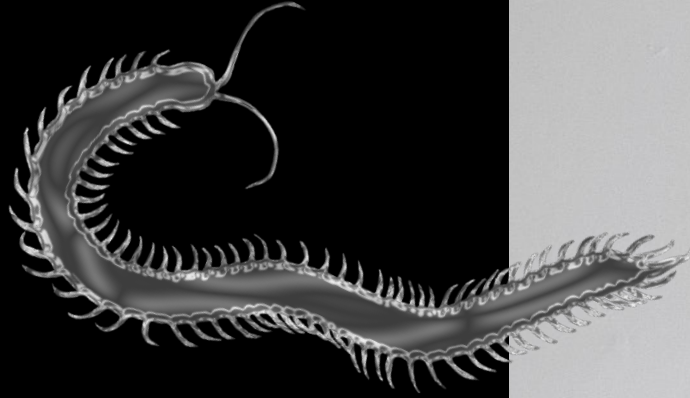
July 16

I want to approach this dynamic at the pace that juices of the fruits drip down the spikes. I like to think of the spikes being in a symbiotic relationship with the fruit: they work with each other. The spikes may pierce the fruit, but together they form one.





July 17



Who would have thought that a gate could be queer? I want to say that this relationship is queer, but I feel that is such an overused term. I am even unsure if that is the word I want to use; everything seems to be queer at this point. *Queering this....that is queer...what does that mean anymore?* But I think we are on to something by using it: queer is everything and nothing. The use of queer to focus on difference seems to be superfluous; it is more than that. Queerness does not mean soft. It is nebulous, yes, but that doesn't mean we can poke at it and watch it morph. Though it moves in and through things – as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick noted it is “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t* be made) to signify monolithically.” [*Tendencies*, (Duke University Press, 1993), 8]. It doesn't mean it is pliable; it more or less just denies a form of perception.

But I feel that I am running in circles with this idea. *Why can't horny or hot be used?*

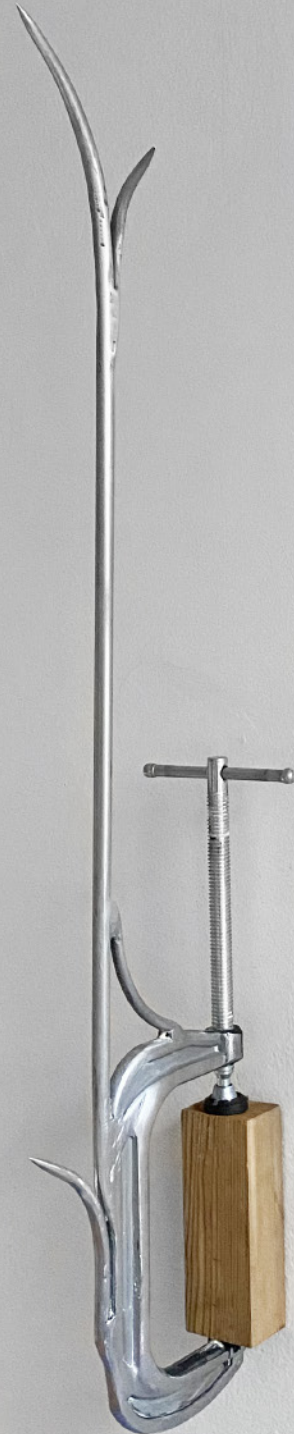






July 20

The fruit transforms the spikes. They no longer block, but beckon. The tiny feet of butterflies and other insects dance on the fruits. Metal itself connotes a sense of exclusion and firmness; *DO NOT TRESPASS!* But yet, these delicate organisms dominate these structures. What can barely hold their own in the animal kingdom – *just this week I saw the remnants of a half-eaten cocooned caterpillar. The culprit? A lizard that just sat in the sun and licked it's eyes when I moved closer as if to say "so?"* – now become the ones that get away from the spikes. The spikes, though within a short span of time, would probably rust; the juices of the fruit and exposure would collide to create a microcosm of decay; life and death dance within this space.





July 22

The show closes soon. Live recordings have shown that the fruit have offered some form of nourishment to wildlife. I like to imagine the butterflies kissing the surfaces of the exposed fruit; kissing their wounds that the spikes have made. Ever so gentle. *Butterfly kisses.*

I think my trouble with using queer to describe the relationship falls into an art historical pitfall at the current moment. This idea comes from a brief note by art critic William J. Simmons. He writes that queer abstraction and queer formalism “can fall prey to an ongoing fetishization of liminality that reduces queer theory and queer art history to a never-ending hunt for the clichés of in-betweenness, interdisciplinary, anti-narrativity, and being beyond-all-categories. In any case, materialism or formalism are not enough because inevitably they fetishize matter or arrangements of matter as somehow being prior to subjectivity, or they fetishize art history’s methodology of formal analysis as being the truest and having the most explanatory power.” [*Queer Formalism: The Return*, (Floating Opera Press 2021), 64.]

Simmons emphasizes an almost return to the figure; formalism is welcomed back because the body is sort of always present. I think I need to frame the relationship not as queer, but as a formalism of some sort. Within the relationship of the bars and fruits, and the butterflies that flutter around them, a body is present; it is represented in the bars; the way they orient bodies but also how they reflect one. Tall (*upright*), strong (*firm, maybe cold?*), curved (*the limp wrists held to the heavens*).

I think the queerness that I am picking up is just that the work is what it is. Within it, entire moments collide. The body is there, it is a gate, it is an insect feeder, it is a relationship and will rust. It is queer because it just is. As Simmons wrote: “Let us leave “queering” to straight people and instead draw queerness out of objects without applying it as an exterior force.” [*Queer Formalism: The Return*, 63].

Heavy Duty allows its firm shafts to rise, penetrate fruit, and be kissed by butterflies. The curved spikes don't beg us to ask “Are they...you know...?”, but instead just are. They exist among the flowers on the porch. And exist as they are.

