

Pins & Needles:
An Introduction to Play Piercing

A Short Documentary by Juno Valentine Cohen

Content Warning

This book contains imagery of needles, blood, the pulling and penetration of skin, as well as discussion of topics of a sexual nature in regards to BDSM.

Read at your own risk.

All actions of piercing and modification are performed by trained and experienced piercers. These actions should **NOT** be imitated without proper education.

Table of Contents

Goals and Thesis Statement	1
Research	3
Quotes	5
Definitions of Note	7
The Anatomy of a Needle	9
Play Piercing Supply List	10
The Piercers I Worked With	11
Writing A Talent Contract	13
The Interview Questions	15
Early Exploration	17
Animation Tests	19
Style Tests	21
Lighting Tests	28
Piercing Set - Final Product	33
Editing Notes	35
My Work As A Piercer	37

The Goal of Making this Film

I wanted to make a 2-5 minute documentary interviewing a piercer about play piercings. The intention of this film is to explain what purpose this piercing serves for both piercers and pincushions.

The Intial Concept

Play piercings among other types of extreme body modification is frequently misunderstood in its purpose and process. Oftentimes images and stories of play piercings that are done incorrectly circulate the internet with a lot of misinformation in tow. The goal of this film would be to shed some light on what play piercing is like, from the perspective of a professional.

The Logline

Piercer Coralia Meri speaks on their experience with and knowledge of play piercings, while rotoscope animation of the act of piercing visualizes the process described.

The Thesis Statement

While many people have an initial reaction of discomfort to the idea, extreme body modification is a beautiful and misunderstood process. It is often used as an art form, a spiritual tool, a controlled form of pain and pleasure, and in all of its forms should be appreciated for the versatile practice that it is.

Research

Resources Utilized:

On Tender Hooks

Film by Kate Shenton

Flesh & Blood

Documentary by Larry Silverman

Play Piercing

Book by Deborah Addington

In The Flesh

Book by Victoria Pitts

Play Piercing

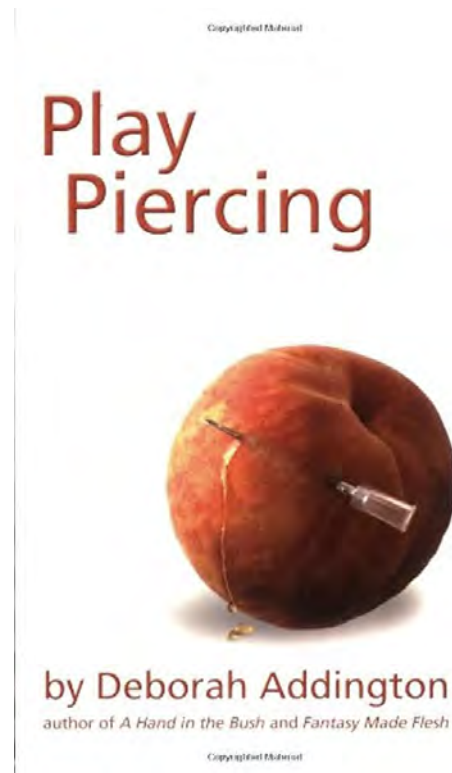
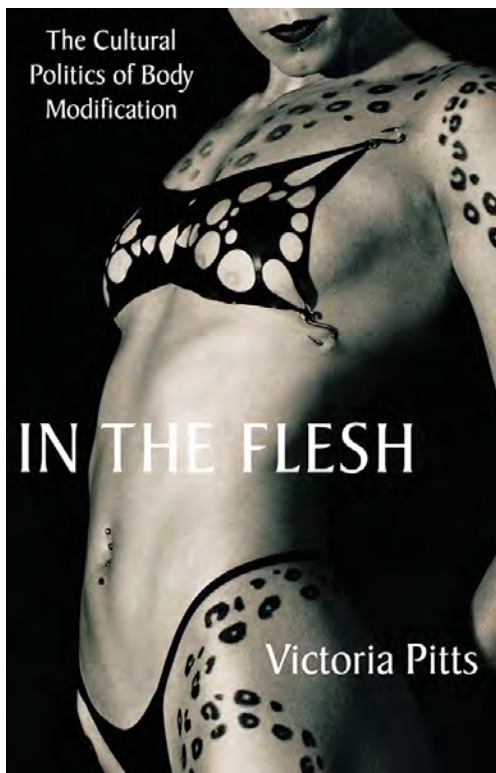
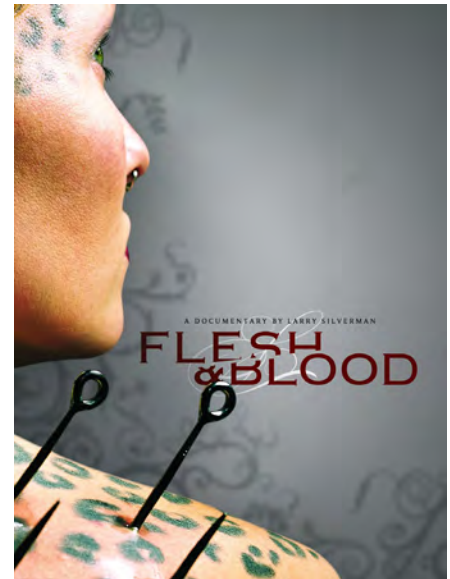
Blog Post by Lynn Loheide

We Bleed Because We Need

Blog Post by Lynn Loheide

sharpsnet.org

Website



Quotes From Research

“Play piercing is socially taboo, physically challenging and psychologically edgy. We’re not supposed to enjoy poking people with needles, or enjoy getting poked. Society seems to think that people who do that sort of thing are weird, dangerous and possibly even sick. Taboos hold a great deal of power, which we can then play with as we choose, using it for our own pleasure and evolution. Claiming one’s power and using it in ways that make one happy is not sick; surrendering one’s personal authority to inappropriate cultural, social or religious mandates is sick.” (Addington p10)

“Play piercing is done for pain, for pleasure, for transcendent experience. It is done for bloodletting, for the opportunity to play with and consume that powerful, sacred elixir of life. It is done for decoration, from the patterning of needles to additions of dangly bits to lacing and “corsetry.” It’s done for the temporary modification of the body, a stitched reconfiguration of parts that is pleasing to the eye or to the senses. It is versatile, potent and lends itself well to a variety of applications, from [sadoomasochism] to artistry.” (Addington p11)

“The power embedded in a taboo is naturally strong; it must be in order to act as a self-regulating method of social control. Some taboos, like not urinating in public, are a good idea: hygienic treatment of bodily wastes inhibits spread of disease, keeping everyone safer and healthier. Other taboos, like those around sexuality, at one time may have served a general social purpose but many have outlived that purpose. When we break a taboo, whether in private or public, we take the lid off that enormous can of power and have at our disposal a tremendous creative force with which to sculpt a public scene, a private interaction or anything else we desire.” (Addington p69)



Defintions of Note

Piercer - The person who is performing a play piercing on their recipient; In the context of Play Piercing, sometimes referred to as a **Top**

Pincushion - The person recieving the needles or play piercing; sometimes referred to as a **Bottom** or **Recipient**

Bottom - In the context of **BDSM** subcultures, the partner who takes a passive or often submissive role in contrast to the **Top**

Top - In the context of **BDSM** subcultures, the partner who is in control during kink or fetish related activities

Sadomasochism - The deriving of sexual, or otherwise, pleasure from the infliction of physical pain or humiliation onto someone else or oneself

Hypodermic Needle - Within the category of "sharps", a small, hollow, metal tube with a sharp tip utilized by body modifiers to perform piercing

Body Modification - The intentional act of altering one's physical appearance in a permanent or semi-permanent way

Body Piercing - The piercing of holes into the body through which permanent jewelry can be inserted, often simply referred to as Piercing

Play Piercing - The temporary subdermal insertion of sterile hypodermic needles for pleasure, pain, aesthetics, and ritual experience

Body Suspension - The act of rigging a human body to hang from hooks or impliments through temporary holes in the skin; Also referred to as Hook Suspension



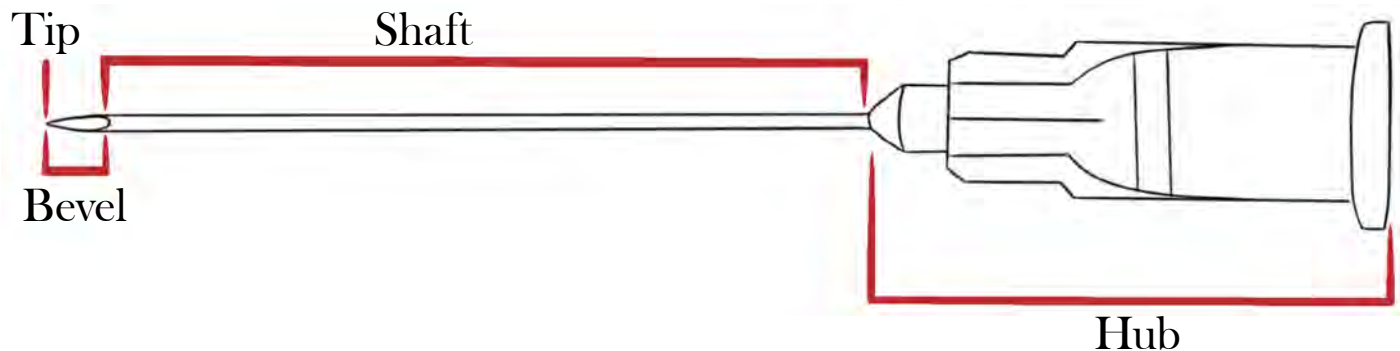
The Anatomy of a Needle

Hub - The plastic end of a needle opposite to the Tip; in medical settings, used to attach the needle to a syringe

Shaft - The long shiny silver stick that will eventually rest underneath the flesh

Bevel - The slanted edges that surround the opening of the needle

Tip - The very sharp point at the end of the needle opposite to the Hub



Play Piercing Supply List

- Surface Disinfectant
- Skin Disinfectant (Alcohol Prep Pads)
- Fresh Clean Gloves (make sure they are hypoallergenic to any participants)
- Needles (Length and Gauge that fit the needs of the Piercer and Pincushion)
- Surgical Marker (Optional, Cannot use gel pens)
- Lubricant (Topical Antibiotic, ex: Bacitracin)
- Hydrogen Peroxide (for blood clean up)
- Bandages or Gauze [as desired]
- Trash Receptacle
- Sharps Disposal (NOT TRASH RECEPTACLE)
- Scissors (preferably small)
- Decorations as Desired (Ribbons, Feathers, Chains, Etc.)
- Towels, Puppy Pads, Etc. (to protect furniture from blood exposure)

The Piercers I Worked With

Coral Meri

@coral_carnival on Instagram

Play Piercer of 5 years

I found Coral through Instagram on which I had been following them for several months. I reached out expressing my interest in working with them and they agreed to participate in the film.

Examples of Coral's Work



Photos pictured belong to Coral Meri

The Piercers I Worked With

Vexin Verdant AKA Vex

@nightmarish.x on Instagram

Play Piercer of 4 years

After setting up the initial details of the piercing session that I would be filming, Coral brought Vex onto the project as the reciever, because the two had worked together before. This decision was made to make sure that the process would be as safe, controlled, and predictable as possible.

Examples of Vex's Work



Photos pictured belong to Vexin Verdant

Writing A Talent Contract

The process of writing a talent contract was necessary for the making of my film. The contract would need to define payments, ownership, how the film would be distributed, etc.

The process of writing the contract took just over one month and totaled to 4 different drafts. Each draft would be sent between all parties, edits would be made, legal language would be studied, and nothing was finalized until all parties were in agreement that the contract was fair and reasonable.

The final agreement made note of how much talent would be paid, what the talent and myself would own, how footage was shared and who would be credited or tagged. There was also a thorough study of the Cleveland Institute of Art's distribution rights and how they would affect all parties involved. The agreement in the student handbook regarding the school's ownership of content was included as a separate page of the contract.

Use of Student Images and Creative Work

As a condition of enrollment, students give permission for photos of themselves and their work to be used by CIA for educational purposes or for the promotion of CIA and its educational or institutional objectives, including but not limited to CIA-related recruiting, publicity, advancement, promotions, or other related purposes, and not for commercial purposes. Any original work(s) of art or other forms of intellectual property created by a student shall belong to the student(s) who created them. CIA reserves the right to photograph, reproduce, and use for display the works of art produced by students during and after their college enrollment for educational purposes or for the promotion of CIA and its educational or institutional objectives, including but not limited to education and for non-commercial purposes, including but not limited to education and CIA-related recruiting, publicity, advancement, promotions, or other related purposes, and not for commercial purposes. CIA shall derive no income from the use of any such student work.

Talent Release – Video/Photo/Audio Consent Form

I, the undersigned, do hereby consent to the use by Juno Cohen and the Cleveland Institute of Art of my image, voice, or both described below, in (1) the video, photograph, or audio recording described below; and (2) any video, photograph, or audio recording reproduced either in whole or in part from the video, photograph or audio recording described below: regardless of whether these materials are used for advertising, publicity, or any other purpose on behalf of either Juno Cohen or the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Further, I hereby grant to the Cleveland Institute of Art the absolute and irrevocable right and permission to use, re-use, publish, and re-publish, and otherwise modify, and display, in whole or in part, individually or in conjunction with other information, and in conjunction with any copyrighted matter, in any and all media now or hereafter known, for illustration, promotion, art, advertising, and trade, news, informational and educational purposes and to copyright the same, in its own name or otherwise and assign my rights throughout the world in the following information related to me.

I warrant that I have the full right and authority to grant this consent.

In addition, I waive all claims to compensation or damages based on the use of my image, voice, or both, by either Juno Cohen or the Cleveland Institute of Art when notified by Juno Cohen. Any use of my image, voice, or both by the Cleveland Institute of Art will fall under the parameters of the *Use of Student Images and Work* section of the Cleveland Institute of Art's Student Handbook, parameters that have been provided to me by Juno Cohen. Throughout the process of editing and animating I will be given updates on how my likeness is used and will have to give my verbal or written permission for the process to continue. I may request edits or removal of some, but not all, content that includes my likeness should I see fit.

I will have the right to access and claim partial ownership of all photography, video, or audio recording for my own personal uses, including for profitable distribution. Any personal profitable use of my photo, video, or audio will include credit to Juno Cohen as photographer or videographer, but any profits made belong solely to me and I am not required to give a percentage to Juno Cohen. I will not have the right to claim ownership of any animated content that includes my image, though I will be credited for my participation by way of film credits, content in the film, specifically in the form of my Instagram handle, and in the caption or account tags on any social media to which the film is posted.

I understand that this consent is perpetual, that I may not revoke it, and that it is binding on me, my heirs and assigns.

I understand that I will receive remuneration of \$300, 25% of which will be paid in a deposit, from Juno Cohen's personal funds for use of my image, voice or both. Any potential further monetary profit derived from the film will be divided amongst the participants equally by 33.3%.

I warrant that I am at least 18 years of age and that I am competent in my own name insofar as this consent is concerned. I further attest that I have read this consent form and fully understand its contents.

Description of video, photograph, or audio recording:

Printed name of talent:

Age of talent:

Address of talent:

Signature of talent:

Date:

Name of photographer/videographer:

Address:

The Interview Questions

Who are you?

How long have you been doing play piercings?

What is play piercing?

What kind of people want to get play piercings? What type of people are your recipients?

Why would someone want a temporary piercing? What does the experience provide for them?

How do you view the experience as the piercer?

What's your favorite part about this process?

Where would you suggest to start for someone who is seeking out the experience of play piercing?

What value have you found in reclaiming something that is often considered taboo?

For you personally, what has play piercing or suspension given you? Why do you find value in the practice for yourself?

What kind of negative responses have you received in regards to your work? What is your response to people who feel that way?*

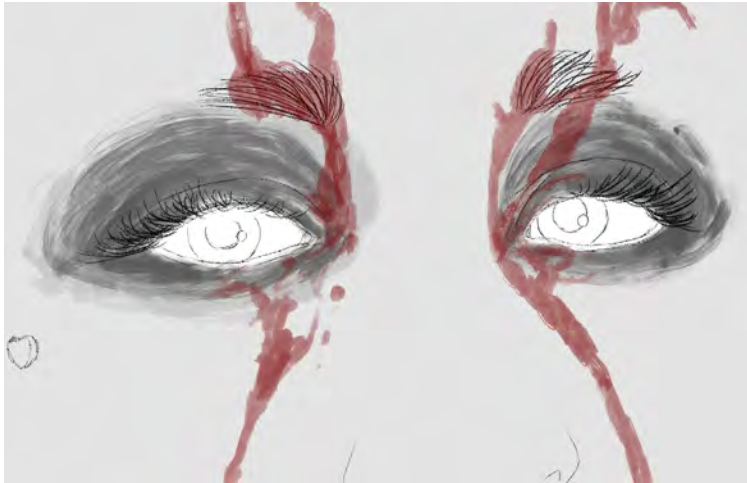
*This question was not intended to be included in the film, rather, it was further information for me to use while writing my thesis paper.



Early Exploration

Summer 2022

Original Photo Belongs to Lynn Loheide



When I started creating style tests, the idea for this film wasn't completely fleshed out. My style frames started out looking more like illustrations than animation. This particular frame is a good example of that. It is far too detailed to be animated on a large scale. Despite being unable to animate something this detailed, this initial drawing fed my inspiration for the film heavily.

In continuing my initial tests, I started playing with digital texture, environment, and color. What I found was that darker colors gave the imagery a sense of dark subject. As this was something I wanted to avoid in my representations, from this point on I exclusively worked with bright colors, specifically making sure to leave out the color black.





Original Photo Belongs to @iliketopokeholes2.0 on Instagram

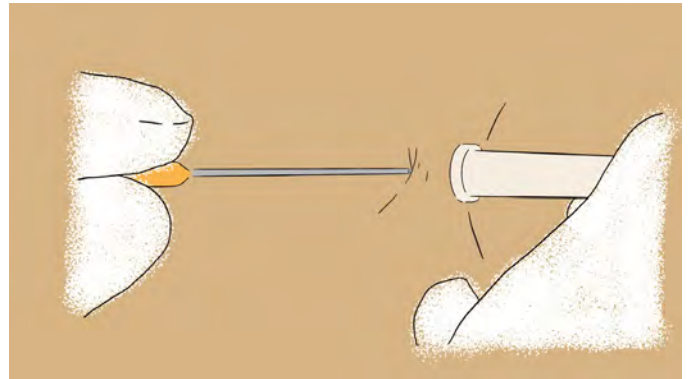
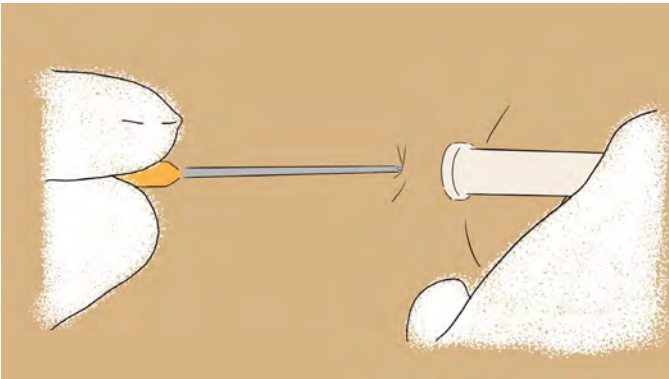
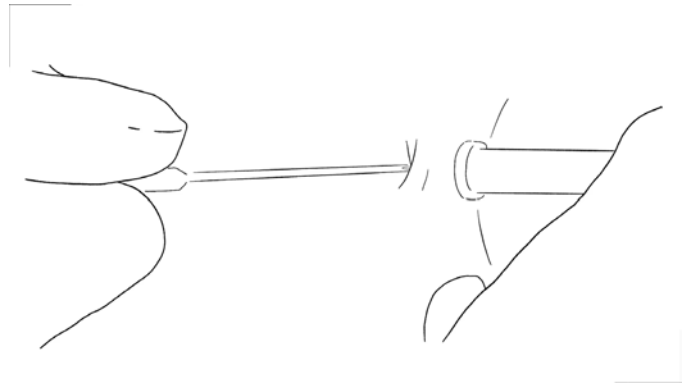
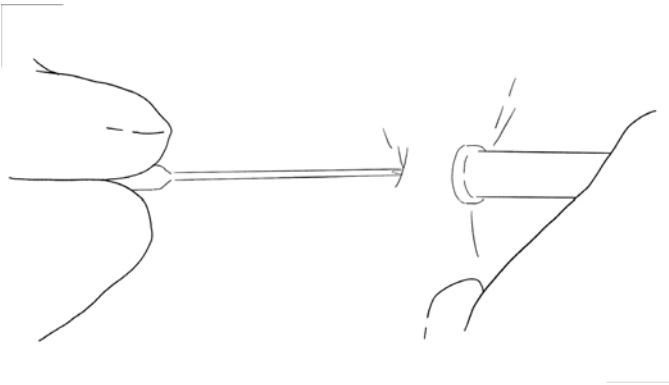
The final illustration I made during the summer got several steps closer to what would end up becoming my final style for the film. I started playing with textures including the look of paint, markers, and pens and pencils. One thing I was able to learn from this experimentation was that complex needle designs (shapes, non-simple patterns, etc.) were a little bit too complex to animate long term. I knew that when I started contacting piercers that I would have to make sure that the final design of the piercing would have to be simple enough to animate. Eventually this would lead to more collaboration with the piercers that I would go on to work with.

Animation Tests

During my summer exploration I made an animation test with simple linework to see what rotoscoping piercing would be like. Following that I started playing with color and texture in a very neutral palette. I enjoyed the texture, but the colors were not quite to my liking in the beginning.

During the fall, once I had decided on the style that I wished to move forward with, I expanded on my initial animation test so that I could see my chosen style in motion.





Early Sketches/Storyboards



My first sketches were done as part of the storyboards that would plot out how the reference footage would be filmed. In these initial sketches my goal was to practice drawing Coral and Vex in the process of piercing. I wanted to make sure that I would be able to capture their likenesses while still simplifying the imagery.



Original Photos Belong to Coral and Vex



Dusty Deen Style Tests

Examples of Dusty Deen's Work:



Dusty Deen is an animator I have followed on social media for several years. He works primarily with mixed media and rotoscoping, something I wanted to emulate in my film. His work often involves hand-drawn elements using markers, crayons, pens, etc. I wanted to give my film a bright and almost childish feeling, similar to how Dusty Deen's work can often look. My goal in utilizing a childish style was to make the imagery of body modification palatable for a wider audience. After testing out multiple frames in this style, I decided to move forward with it digitally to make animation more timely.

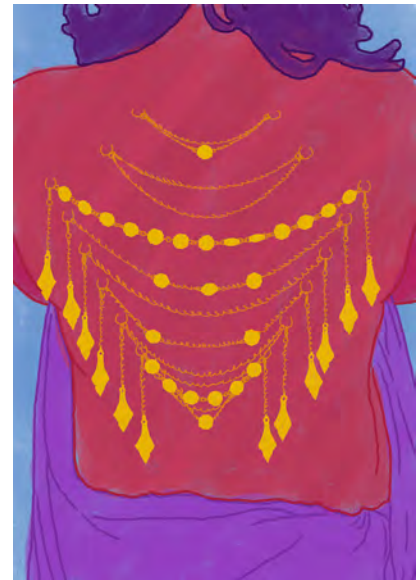


Minnow Mountain Style Tests

Examples:



Minnow Mountain is a production company responsible for one of my favorite rotoscoped documentaries, titled *Tower*. The style is marked by a use of mixed media, realism, and grayscale. In my attempts to recreate the style, I discovered that the detail work of play piercing was far too time consuming to animate in its entirety. I decided to set this style aside to keep my film production sensitive.



Original Photos Belong to @iliketpokeholes2.0 on Instagram

Hand-Drawn Style Tests

When making the initial style tests based off of Dusty Deen's work, I was not entirely satisfied with a digital recreation of the style. I wanted the texture of the markers or pens to be visible in the animation. I wanted it to be clear that each frame had been drawn by hand on paper. The issue I ran into during these style tests was time constraint. Each frame took significantly more time when drawn on physical materials as opposed to being drawn digitally. Unfortunately for the sake of completing my animation in a timely manner, I had to set this style aside.

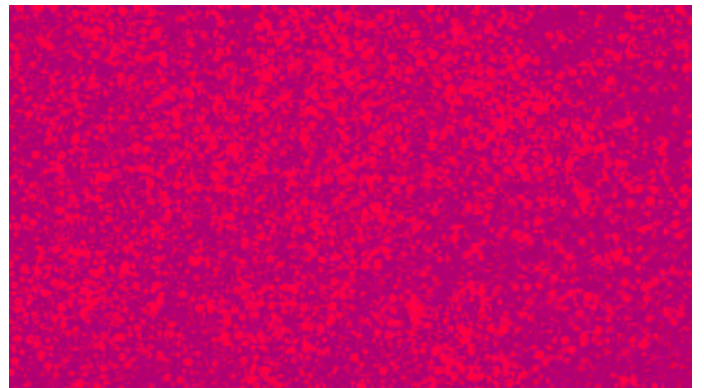
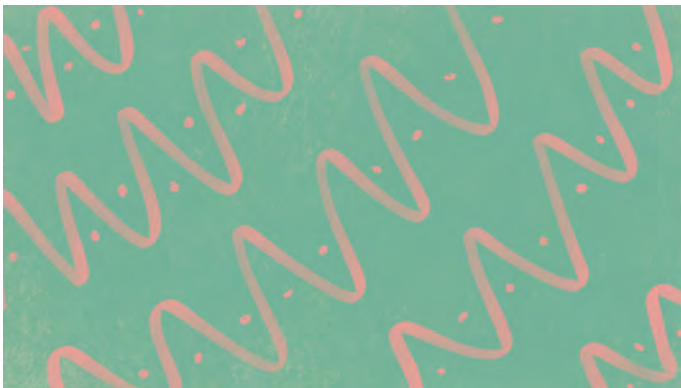
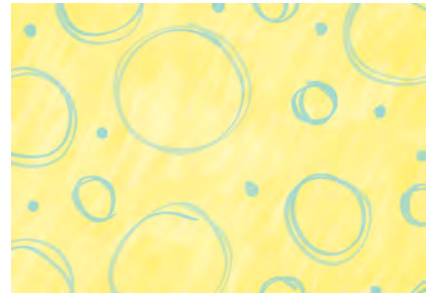
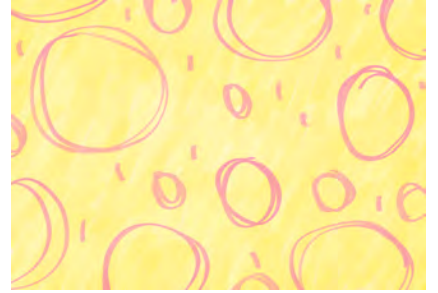


Original Photos Belong to Coral Meri



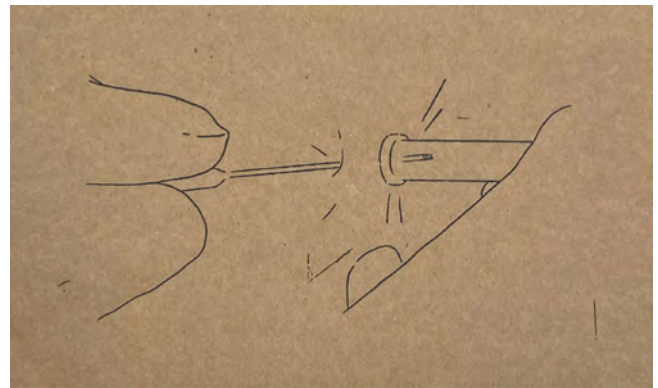
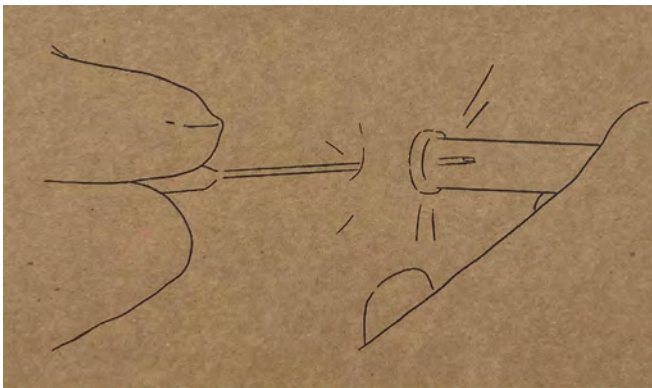
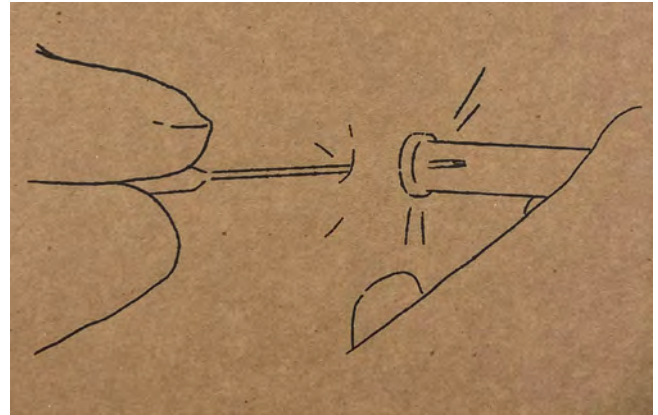
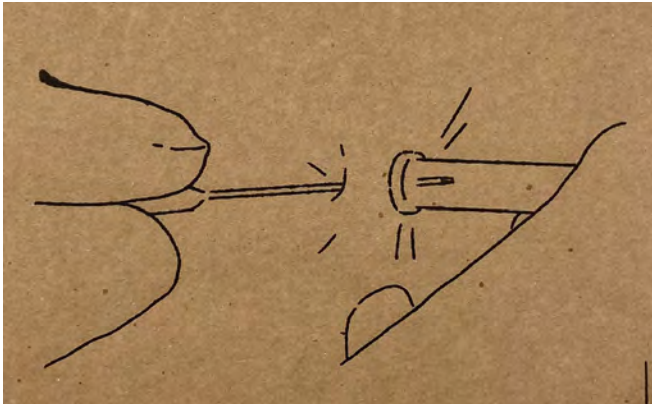
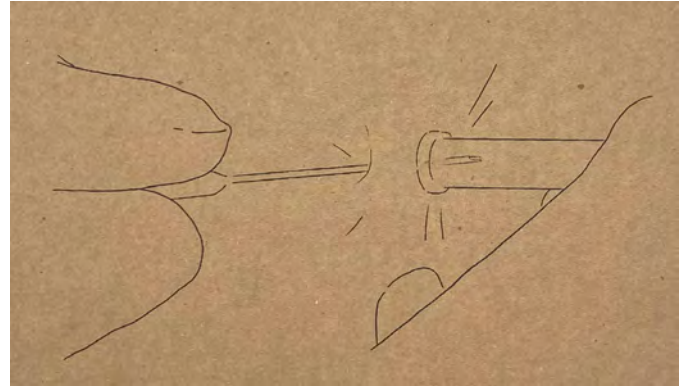
Background Ideation

When planning backgrounds, I already knew that I wanted all of the "still images" in the film to contain some amount of motion. The backgrounds needed to be simple, colorful, and contain some type of texture or design that could provide movement. I tested out several background types. Backgrounds that contained noise were too distracting from the subject matter, even moreso when they contained noise and a pattern. Sharp or wavy lines posed a similar problem. The best background designs either included circles or a marker texture with no added designs. The marker texture was used for the most of the backgrounds containing the act of piercing, to best showcase the animation, with room for occasional designs when time allowed.



Screenprint Tests

When ideating the possibility of including hand-drawn animation, one thing I tested out was the prospect of utilizing screenprinting for each frame of an animated scene. I started by printing out each animated frames and burning multiple frames into one screen at a time to maximize the use of each print. I started with only using black ink to save on time.



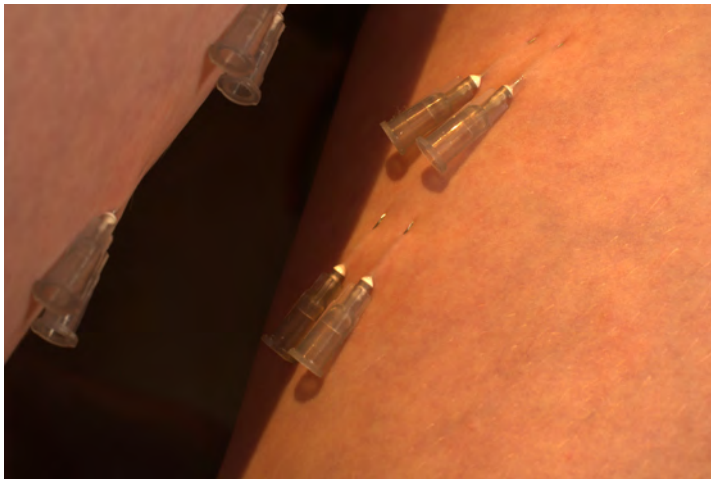
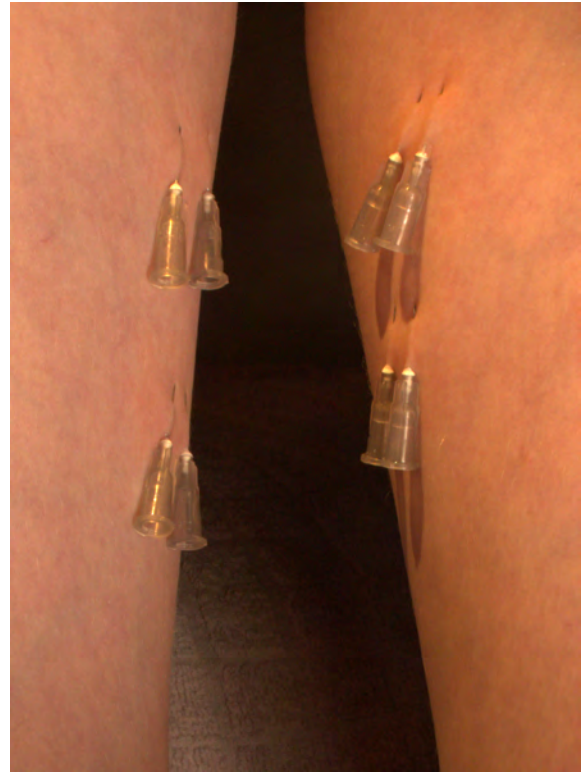
Screenprint Tests Continued

As I continued forward with my screenprint testing, I ran into several problems. The first problem I ran into was the use of multiple colors. Using more than one color of ink was time consuming and took up more space on the screen to execute. I eventually realized that if I was going to continue with screenprinting animation, I was only going to be able to use one color of ink. The next problems I ran into were cost of supplies as well as the time that would be required to complete each frame of animation. The time frames in which I was able to access the printmaking studio did not align well with my animation schedule, nor did they allow me to complete each scene quickly enough. As much as I enjoyed screenprinting animation and would love to revisit it, unfortunately I had to table the medium for this particular film.

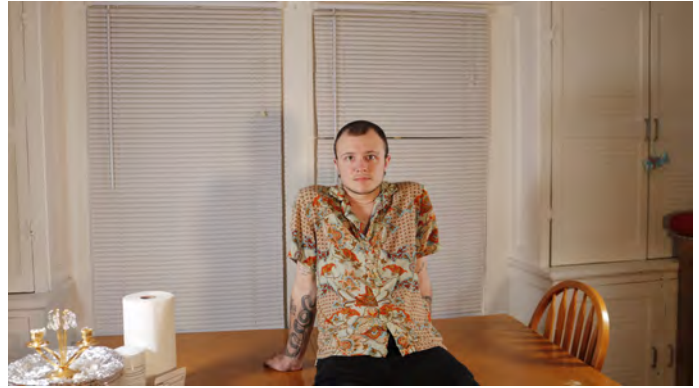


Lighting Tests - Peircing

Before filming, I had to make sure that I knew what lighting would best accommodate later animation. To figure this out, I ran two seperate lighting tests, each including a piercing session, that I would then try to sketch to find what kind of lighting was needed to animate. The test featured on this page was too dark and too warm to see all of the details. I intially assumed that heavy contrast would make things in the foreground easier to draw, but that hypothesis was quickly disproven. The lighting test featured on the next to pages was an experimentation of warm and cool lighting in which it became quickly apparent that I would need a happy medium of the two. The final lighting could not be too warm or too cool and would need to be as bright as possible so that all details of the piercing were completely visible.



Lighting Tests - Portrait



Lighting Tests - Peircing



Lighting Tests - Before Filming

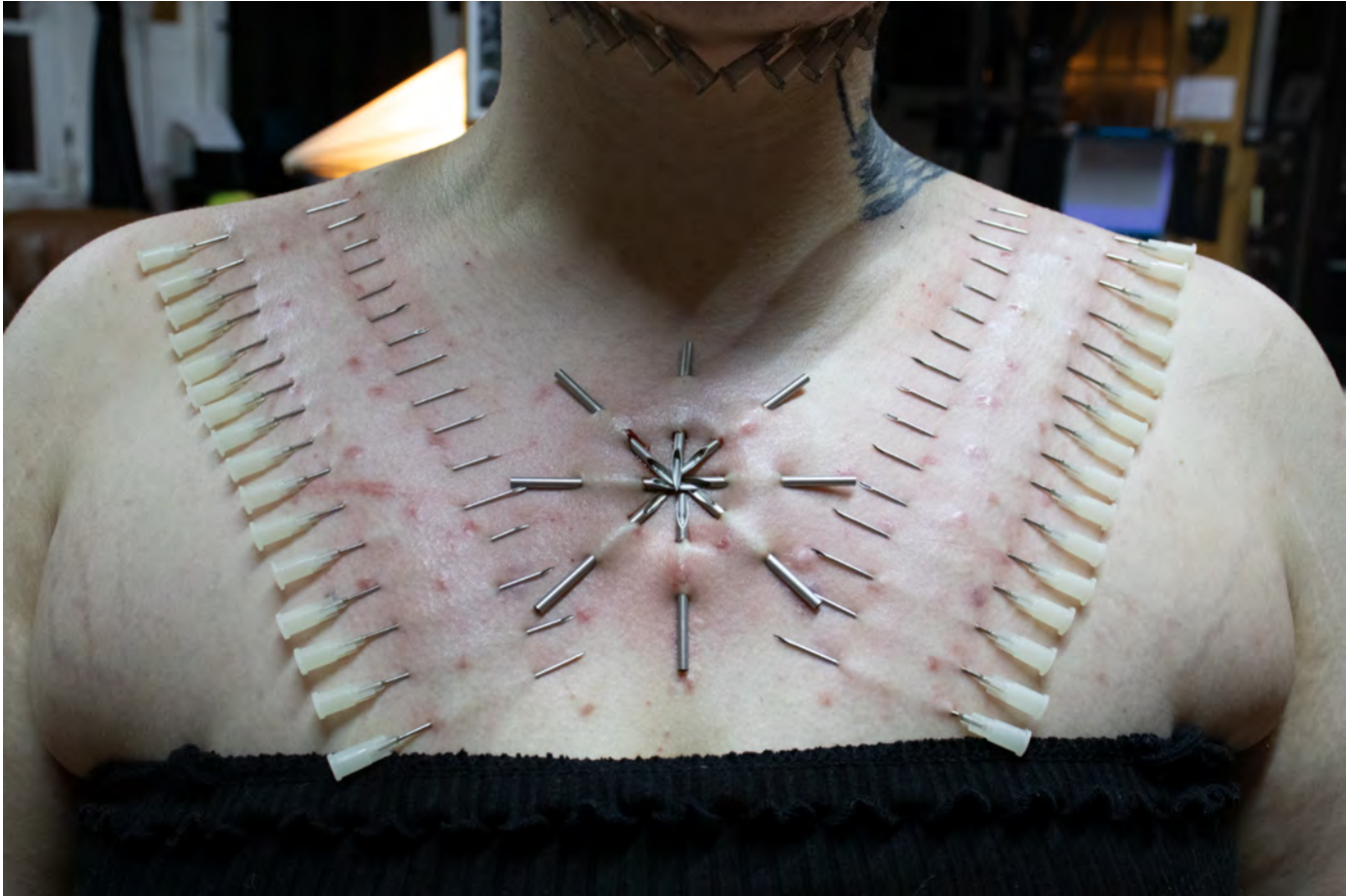
Before filming, I had to make sure the lighting in the piercing studio was adequate for later animation. I spent about 30 minutes, with the help of an assistant, adjusting the lighting in the studio to make sure everything would work properly.



Lighting Tests - Before Filming



Piercing Set - Final Product



Piercing Set - Final Product



Audio Editing

When editing the audio recordings from the interview process, I started by breaking down each soundbite that I had, color coding each one to the interview subject, and then deciding which pieces were useful and which could be left out. The goal of this process was to make the interview sound more like a monologue from the interview subjects as opposed to someone answering a question. After making a note of each soundbite, I organized them visually and finally edited them together into the first draft of my film.



Planning Color Palettes

Color palettes for my film were decided based on Vex's emotional state as the piercing bottom. After editing the reference footage, Vex and I had a meeting in which we went through the film scene by scene, discussed how they were feeling in that moment, and picked a color palette based on those emotions. There are certain scenes that did not involve Vex that were my decision to color, and for those scenes I picked what I thought would be the most visually interesting.

COLOR PALETTE FOR SCENES								
stencil on vex's face, measuring	stencil, vex intro, tagged *	color palette for account?	first needle in forehead	chin hypodermic 1	cheek hypodermic 1	chin hypodermic 2	1st chest 10g	chest 10g clip two
excited, curious, calm, confidence [swirling, green for excited and calm, grey and white for confidence, orange or yellow for curiosity]	trust, curious, calm, confidence, excited [ref previous color palette but use more grey and white]	pinks, teal-grey, magenta, green	sense of relief, initial apprehension, build up and release [use previous color palette, after needle is in wash over whole palette with more green, following movement of the needle]	ease, enjoyment, peaceful, happy, confident, relaxing, interconnection with partner, [green, whit, grey]	same as last	same as last two	mad, pissed off, frustrated, impatient, [deep red (initially), yellow, NO ORANGE]	not as angry, excited for the worst part to be done, disconnect, enjoying the high (wished it was over) [red is gone, less yellow (like a sting), neon colorful tv static]
*stencil cont	cheek removal clip	chest removal, first blood	10g removal, bloody chest	first forehead removal	no needles, blood drip	MAYBE (ask for Vex input): Final scene coral and vex joking and laughing		
same as previous stencil scenes	HIGH, lucid, nonverbal, focused [tv static, green for blood]	stimulating, sensory experience, knowing the worst is over, tired, pleasure [hefty on the tv static, still the green blood]	high getting more intense with more blood loss, endorphin high, [tv static]	felt tight, moving slowly, more sense of control, happy, [tv static is less arousing and more grounding, backing up from the static making it more grey with a noise filter potentially]	enjoying self, purest form of self [color palette based on reality]		towards the end of bleed high becomes more intense, feeling colder, feeling dehydrated,	

My Work as a Piercer

Over the course of making this film, I decided to indulge my own desires of participating in play piercing. After having followed several piercers of this type for multiple years and studied the techniques they used while researching, I started the process of piercing by using my own body to practice. I eventually was able to work my way up to piercing other people. I have created designs, used templates, and pierced various parts of the body ranging from my own face to other people's arms and legs. At the time of writing this book I have successfully completed almost 20 piercing sessions across seven people, including myself, over the course of five months. The largest amount of needles I have used in one session is 32. I find so much joy in the practice of piercing and love the sense of autonomy it gives me. I love designing specific sets for each person I pierce and learning a little bit more in each session. I plan to continue utilizing this practice and participating in this community after Pins & Needles is complete. And I cannot wait to see where it takes me.

