



A QUEER PSYCHEDELIC EXPLORATION OF LIFE, LOVE, FASHION, AND FUNGI
BY MERCURY BAXLEY
THESIS DOCUMENTATION

THESIS ABSTRACT

THE QUEER MAGIC MUSHROOM EXPERIENCE IS AN EXPLORATION OF QUEER LIFE, LOVE, FASHION, AND FUNGI. THIS PROJECT WAS CREATED TO EXPLORE THE QUEER PSYCHEDELIC MUSHROOM EXPERIENCES OF MY OWN AND OTHER QUEER FOLKS THROUGH THE USE OF FLORAL AND FUNGAL IMAGERY, BRIGHT WARPING LINES AND COLORS, CELESTIAL AND SYMBOLIC IMAGERY, AND QUEER THEMES IN ORDER TO INSPIRE OTHER QUEERS TO EXPLORE THEIR OWN LIFE AND IDENTITY THROUGH MAGIC MUSHROOMS.

THE GOAL OF THIS PROJECT WAS TO CREATE WEARABLE AND FUNCTIONAL ARTWORKS INCLUDING BANDANAS, TWO SKIRTS, A QUILT, AND TWO PILLOWS THAT CAN BE UTILIZED AS PROUD SYMBOLS OF QUEERNESS, BOTH HUMAN AND FUNGAL. I WANTED TO CREATE WORK THAT IS AS COLORFUL, PLAYFUL, JOYFUL, AND UNIQUE AS THE QUEER FOLKS I'M TRYING TO INSPIRE. I CHOSE BANDANAS AND QUILTS BECAUSE OF THEIR CULTURAL HISTORY WITHIN THE QUEER COMMUNITY (INCLUDING BANDANA FLAGGING AND AIDS MEMORIAL QUILTS). A QUILTING TECHNIQUE WAS CHOSEN TO VISUALLY SHOW HOW THE QUEER COMMUNITY STITCHES ITSELF TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, AS WELL AS BY CREATING CHOSEN FAMILIES WHERE WE'RE ACCEPTED AS WHO WE ARE, NOT WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE. MAGIC MUSHROOMS WERE CHOSEN BECAUSE THEY SHARE MANY QUALITIES WITH QUEER FOLKS; THEY HAVE BEEN DEMONIZED, MADE ILLEGAL, AND TOSSED TO THE SIDE.

THESIS PROPOSAL

CLICK TO VIEW!!



SPEECH

For my thesis, I wanted to explore the queer psychedelic mushroom experiences of my own and other queer folks through the use of floral and fungal imagery, bright warping line and colors, celestial and symbolic imagery, and queer themes in order to inspire other queers to explore their own life and identity through magic mushrooms. I created a series of seven individual screen printed bandana designs which were then quilted together to be used as fabric for a prototype collection of genderless fashionwear and comforting items including a quilt and pillows.

THESE BANDANAS WILL BE WORN AS PROUD SYMBOLS OF QUEERNESS, BOTH HUMAN AND FUNGAL.

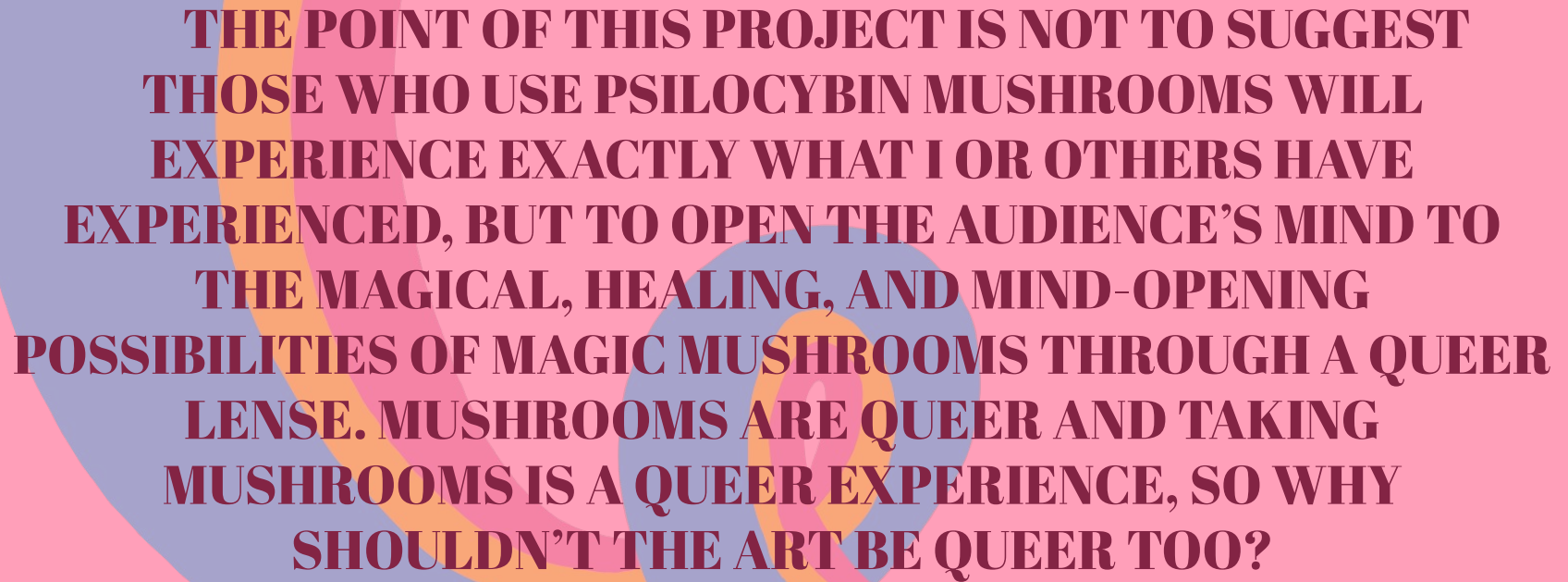
I have been fascinated with fungi, especially mushrooms, for the last two years. I believe fungi are some of the most complex and necessary organisms for life. They connect all living, nonliving, and dead things together and cycle energy and nutrients back into the environment.

As a queer artist, I am also drawn to fungi because of their nonbinary nature. They are neither plants or animals, but they exhibit qualities of both and neither. They also entirely break the traditionally accepted binary 'nature' of gender as they may reproduce asexually or with as many as 23,000 different mating types.

This summer, I was able to experience psilocybin mushrooms for the first time. When I took a large dose, I experienced not having gender dysphoria. I truly felt that my physical body and how I see myself in my head were the same for the first time in my life. Although after the mushrooms wore off, the gender dysphoria came back, it made me realize that almost all of the dysphoria I experience is based on how other people perceive me rather than how my body actually looks. Taking magic mushrooms has also made me feel more connected to my partner and friends that I have taken them with, and even people I didn't take them with. Some of my anxieties are less intense than they were before and I feel less lost about my place in the world. These experiences have made me want to encourage other queers (or anyone else that will listen) to explore their life and identity using magic mushrooms in a safe environment.

In Recent Years, different species of mushrooms have begun to become more widely appreciated for their many beneficial uses in physical health, mental health, regenerative agriculture, environmental remediation, and more. Now that more states are decriminalizing or legalizing the use of psilocybin mushrooms and the FDA has approved magic mushrooms for therapeutic use, many more studies are popping up showing there is strong evidence that psilocybin mushrooms can be used to treat depression, anxiety, PTSD, and many other mental disorders, as well as help folks feel more connected to the world and people around them. This natural medicine has been demonized for so long due to the American 'war on drugs' mentality and white western morality. Because of this, I want to encourage others to consider using psilocybin mushrooms for therapeutic and recreational purposes.

Currently in psilocybin therapy research, very few of the participants involved are queer and are disproportionately white, despite the increased potential benefits of using mushrooms for these groups. I want other queer folks to be able to have the experience of getting to understand who they are and why, as well as potentially help manage anxiety and depression, through the use of magic mushrooms.

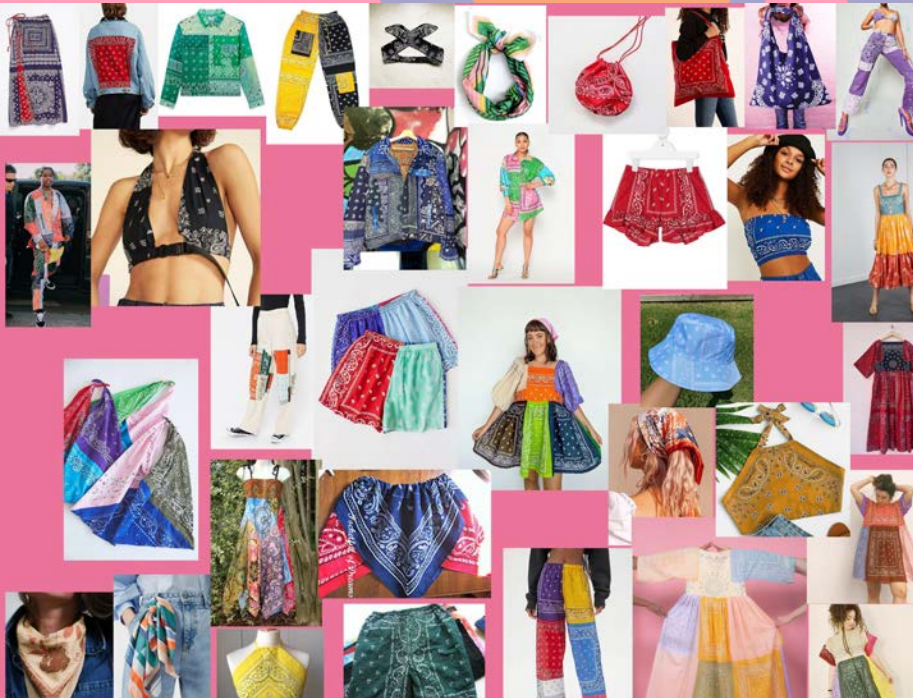


**THE POINT OF THIS PROJECT IS NOT TO SUGGEST
THOSE WHO USE PSILOCYBIN MUSHROOMS WILL
EXPERIENCE EXACTLY WHAT I OR OTHERS HAVE
EXPERIENCED, BUT TO OPEN THE AUDIENCE'S MIND TO
THE MAGICAL, HEALING, AND MIND-OPENING
POSSIBILITIES OF MAGIC MUSHROOMS THROUGH A QUEER
LENS. MUSHROOMS ARE QUEER AND TAKING
MUSHROOMS IS A QUEER EXPERIENCE, SO WHY
SHOULDN'T THE ART BE QUEER TOO?**

I wanted to use my thesis to encourage queers who see my art to connect to their own identities, bodies and the people and world around them through the use of magic mushrooms. I did this by incorporating fungal and floral imagery such as mushrooms, mycelium, leaves, and ferns with queer characters/couples as well as symbolic imagery such as stars, suns, moons, and waving/warping lines into my bandana designs. Many of the bandana designs also include mycelium connecting different elements in the design together, just like mycelium does in nature. The hearts, stars, suns, waving/warping lines, and moons are used to symbolize the magical, cosmic qualities and altered visuals involved in the magic mushroom experience. I incorporated queer couples or groups of queer friends embracing each other to show how mushrooms can make you feel closer to the people around you. The variability in color and opacity in the tie dyed bandanas mirrors the queer ephemerality and mystical qualities of fungi and mushrooms.



MOODBOARDS AND INSPIRATION



One of my main visual influences is 60s and 70s psychedelic art, especially colorful music posters and groovy floral patterns. A lot of art from this period relies heavily on the traditional sexual dichotomy of male and female. In contrast, I want my art to show queer bodies in my psychedelic art and reimagine what psychedelic art can be without the cisheteropatriarchy.

Another influence is Queercore, a subgenre of punk that focuses on queer life, fashion, politics, and culture.

I was also inspired by Bandanas as a Gay Cultural Artifact. Bandanas are an important symbol in gay communities and culture, especially among older generations for finding suitable partners in public places discreetly and safely. My bandana designs are a contemporary continuation on this tradition with less of a focus on being discreet and more of an open celebration of queer life and how it relates or can relate to magic mushrooms.

I was also influenced by the History of Quilting in the Gay/Queer community, especially after the start of the AIDS crisis when friends of those who died of AIDS would create a panel to memorialize their life which would be patched together and displayed in large open spaces due to the sheer size of the quilt. The point of the patchwork quilt was to visually show the impact of AIDS on the community. From 1985 to 2020 it has grown to include nearly 50,000 panels. The purpose of my quilt is to continue the legacy of the AIDS memorial quilt by creating a joyful, colorful, and queer piece that celebrates queer life, love, and connection and how magic mushrooms can facilitate that connection.

Another influence was DIY upcycled fashion that uses scraps, leftovers, or found fabrics to create new clothes, especially those that reuse bandanas as fabric for clothes.

BIKKEN MUSHROOM
MYCELIUM
PEOPLES LIVES
ALSO GET
ENTANGLED TOGETHER

My art process started by creating thumbnails in my sketchbook for each of the bandana designs, after narrowing it down to seven, I began rough sketches digitally in photoshop. I then created the final designs for each design digitally using a series of halftone brushes. Once the designs were complete, I converted the images to halftone. Halftone is a technique that simulates continuous-tone imagery through the use of dots, varying either in size or spacing, which creates a gradient-like effect. I then printed the designs on Pictorico paper and exposed them on screens to print. To prep the bandanas for printing, I folded, tied and twisted each bandana and soaked them in soda ash before dyeing each. I used a variety of techniques to tie them including spirals, shibori folds, and knots. Once they were all rinsed, dried, and ironed flat, I was able to begin printing. Because the background tie dye patterns of the bandanas were so vibrant, I chose to make the ink colors for the designs dark, saturated blue, purple, red, and green for better contrast. Once the designs were printed on the bandanas, I began quilting them together to create the fabric for the sewn pieces.

SKETCHING THESIS JOURNAL



SKETCHING



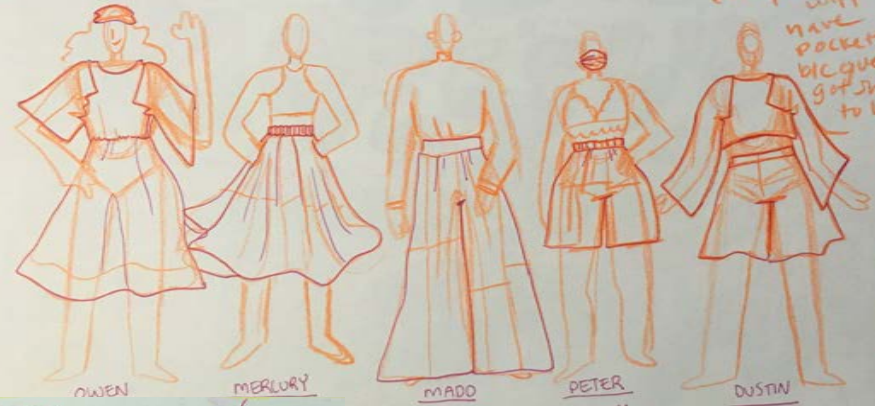


↳ round neck
↳ in back pocket
(2 bandana square)
TOP

OWEN
+ BANDANA
DRESS

PISTIC
OF BOONE
+ BANDANA BAG
of someone

ISKIRT - ME



everything will
have
pockets
big queues
got shit
to hold



BANDANA
BAG

SUPPLIES
+ PRINTING 6 INK
+ NEW LARGER
+ RAYON YARD
+ TIE DYE (MAYO)
+ WOODSQUEEZE
+ THREAD
+ PATTERN DR
PAPER

MADDO
BANDANA
SHORTS

PETER
BANDANA
SHORTS + MASK

DUSTIN
BANDANA + SHIRT
SHORT

SKETCHING



+ find doodles
in recent sk
that align
thesis topic

ROUGH SKETCHES FOR DESIGNS



FINAL DESIGNS





TIE DYING PROCESS



SCREEN PRINTING PROCESS

WWW.QUEENBIRD.COM // QUEENBIRD

PRINTED BANDANAS

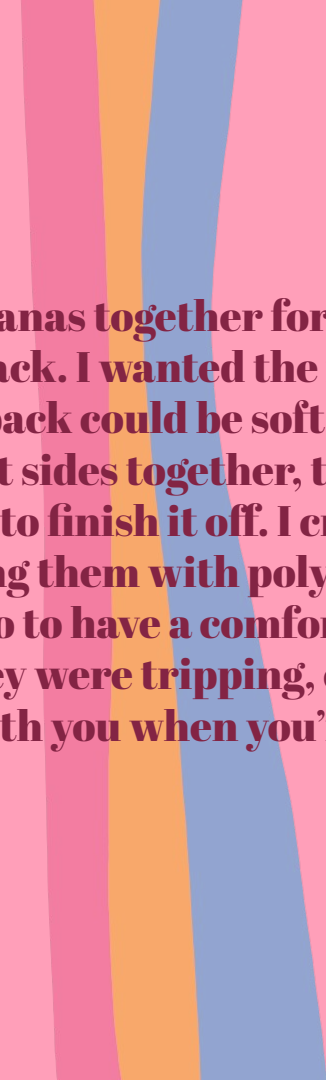












I created the quilt by sewing 12 bandanas together for the front and bought two fuzzy blankets second hand for the back. I wanted the front to show the bright, playful designs I made, while the back could be soft and comforting. I sewed the front and back of the quilt right sides together, then turned it right side out and blanket stitched around the edge to finish it off. I created each pillow by sewing two bandanas together and stuffing them with polyfill. I created the quilt and pillows to be colorful and fun, but also to have a comforting quality that could be used to help ground someone while they were tripping, especially because it can be nice to have a comforting object with you when you're experiencing something new to you.

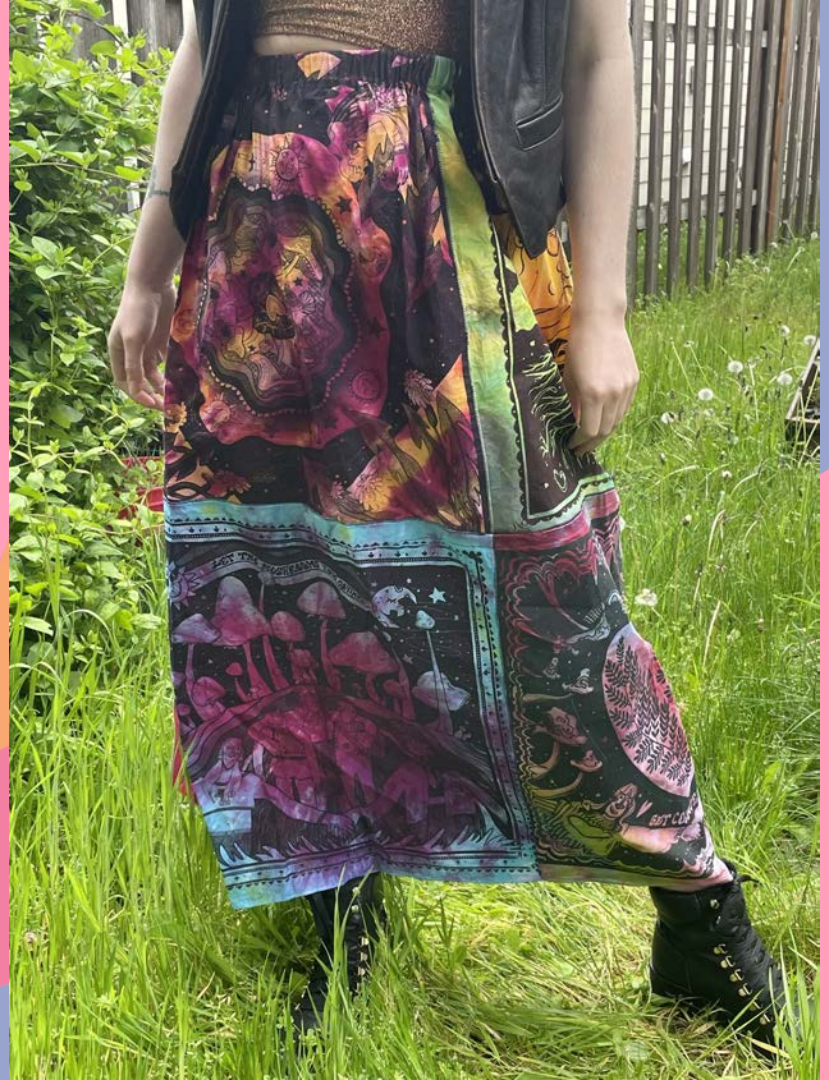
QUILTING PROCESS





QUILTING PROCESS

I created two skirts with different silhouettes, one for myself and one for my partner, Owen. One with a straight rectangular shape with a slit on the side and one with a tight yoke on the waist that flares out with lots of volume. I chose to make two skirts because while the skirt has been traditionally considered a ‘women’s’ clothing item, both my partner and I are nonbinary and have very queer experiences with skirts. For a large part of my life when I was younger, I alternated between hating skirts and not wanting to wear them and wanting to wear them, but feeling like if I did, people would misgender me or perceive me in a feminine way. I now wear skirts, even though sometimes it is more difficult than others, because I want myself and other trans masc people to feel valid in wearing what they want. For my partner, Owen, skirts and dresses were something they weren’t really allowed to wear for a long time, but now are a huge part of their genderqueer identity. Regardless of where you are on the trans spectrum, I want to encourage people to wear what makes them feel good or look good without feeling like it invalidates their gender identity in any way. These bandanas and clothes will be worn as proud symbols of queerness, both human and fungal.













THESIS INSTALLATION



ARTS
FESTIVAL







**TAKE ONE!!
TAKE ONE!!
TAKE ONE!!**



PROCESS



I had some difficulties and issues while working on this project. I had difficulty sourcing the quantity of bandanas I needed at first, so I ended up ordering from two different places. This resulted in some of the bandanas shrinking at different rates than others. This made it a little more difficult to register the designs while printing and sew the bandanas together because of the size variation.

I had purchased a new screen for this project, but after beginning the printing process, I realized I still needed a Larger Screen for the Designs to print well because I wasn't getting even tension on the screen, resulting in an uneven thickness of ink when the design was pulled. The printing went much smoother after I got a larger screen.

Once printing began, I also found that the screen ink was drying too quickly on the screen, so I had to procure a screen ink retarder that slowed the drying time.

I then found that washing out the screen each time between colors on the same design added a lot of waiting time while the screen dried between wash outs, so I developed a process of printing one color, removing all the ink I could from the screen, then adding the next color on the screen without washing it out between colors. This decreased the printing time of each design from 4-5 hours to about 2.5 hours.

I planned on sewing the quilt backing onto the front of the quilt using my sewing machine but then discovered the backing was too thick to fit under the sewing foot, so I ended up having to sew it by hand.

I originally planned to also have a zine to show the process and final pieces of the collection by focus weeks, however I decided to finalize and publish this zine after Focus Week in order to not feel rushed in the design process. I also plan to have some dosing information for psilocybin mushrooms as well as some links to further reading on the subject, so that whoever reads it will be able to make an informed decision on whether they would like to try psilocybin mushrooms.

FUTURE OF PROJECT

The plan for this project after focus week is that I will be selling the individual bandanas after focus week on my Etsy shop. I will also be reaching out to local shops that sell artist products to sell some of the bandanas and begin selling them at local artist markets in the area. My first market will be on May 14th. Once the zine is complete, I will also list this on my Etsy with the option to buy the zine and a bandana together or separate.

I would love to make another edition of these bandanas in the future. Having printed the designs on pictorico, I can reuse the designs to re-expose the screens later. I will also be able to design more bandanas in the future using the experience I had while printing these designs.

In a time where more and more art and media are available digitally, I wanted to create a very tangible, physical project. The physicality of this project reflects my theme of connection: mycellium connecting everything underground and queer folks connecting with each other, nature, and mushrooms. Bandanas have many uses. They can be a fashion statement, used for flagging, used to wrap things up, gifted, hung as decor, etc. These bandanas were designed for queer folks to show a visual world full of joyful queer friends and partners who are connected to each other and nature through magic mushrooms because there is a (lack) of diverse queer representations in media. If there is a queer person in media, it's usually someone who looks how the straight cisgender audience expects a queer person to look/act like in order to fit into society. (think ellen). The queer folks in my art are characterized in a way that makes their identity appear as queer/alternative, but in What way they are queer is more ambiguous. Are they gay? Are they Bi? Are they trans? Are they a man, woman, other? The point is no one should be assuming someone's identity. Even if you think you know someone's pronouns based on how they look/ask, you should ask anyway.



I created this project to create wearable and functional artworks that can be utilized as proud symbols of queerness, both human and fungal. I wanted to create work that is as colorful, playful, joyful, and unique as the queer folks I'm trying to inspire. I chose bandanas and quilts because of their cultural history within the queer community (including bandana flagging and aids memorial quilts). I chose a quilting technique that patches each bandana together because I wanted to visually show how the queer community stitches itself together as a community as a whole, as well as by creating chosen families where we're accepted as who we are, not what we were supposed to be. I chose magic mushrooms because they share many qualities with queer folks: they have been demonized, made illegal, and tossed to the side. Now as LGBTQ folks continue to gain more rights in society and magic mushrooms continue to become decriminalized or legalized, it is important to utilize mushrooms in the community to make new connections within ourselves, with others, and the world around us. I hope these bandanas and the quilted pieces I show you today, encourage you to further research magic mushrooms and hopefully, try them yourselves in a safe environment.

CREATIVE BRIEF

PROJECT VISION: MY THESIS WILL BE A QUEER PSYCHEDELIC EXPLORATION OF LIFE, LOVE, FASHION, AND FUNGI THROUGH THE CREATION OF A GENDER NEUTRAL CLOTHING AND COMFORTABLE ITEMS. THIS COLLECTION WILL BE CREATED BY SEWING A SERIES OF BANDANAS I DESIGN TOGETHER. I WILL EXPLORE THE QUEER PSYCHEDELIC MUSHROOM EXPERIENCES OF MY OWN AND OTHER QUEER FOLKS THROUGH THE USE OF FLORAL AND FUNGAL IMAGERY, BRIGHT WARPING LINES AND COLORS, CELESTIAL AND SYMBOLIC IMAGERY, AND QUEER THEMES TO INSPIRE OTHER QUEERS TO EXPLORE THEIR OWN LIFE AND IDENTITY THROUGH MAGIC MUSHROOMS.

AUDIENCE: THE AUDIENCE FOR THE QUEER MAGIC MUSHROOM EXPERIENCE IS MAINLY OTHER QUEERS WHO ARE OR MAY BE INTERESTED IN MAGIC MUSHROOMS FOR THERAPEUTIC AND RECREATIONAL USE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD, THEIR OWN IDENTITY, OR TO HEAL THEIR MINDS AND BODIES.

METHODS AND MATERIALS: THE BANDANAS HAVE BEEN TIE DYED. THE VARIABILITY IN COLOR AND OPACITY MIRRORS THE QUEER EPHEMERALITY AND MYSTICAL QUALITIES OF FUNGI AND MUSHROOMS. THE SILHOUETTES OF THE WEARABLE PIECES WILL BE FLOWY AND LOOSE TO CREATE A COMFORTABLE AND COLORFUL GENDER NEUTRAL COLLECTION. THE BACKSIDE OF THE QUILT WILL HAVE A SOFT AND COZY FABRIC. THE GOAL IS TO CREATE COMFORTABLE BUT FASHIONABLE PIECES THAT COULD ENHANCE OR CONTRIBUTE TO A GOOD TRIP.

COMPARATIVE MEDIA: SIMILAR MEDIA INCLUDES MYCELIUM WASSONII BY BRIAN BLOMERTH WHICH INCLUDES COLORFUL PSYCHEDELIC MUSHROOM INSPIRED ILLUSTRATIONS.

MARKETPLACE APPLICATION: THE CLOTHES, QUILT, AND PILLOWS WILL BE ONE OF A KIND AND NOT MARKETED. THE INDIVIDUAL BANDANAS WILL BE SOLD ON MY ETSY SHOP, AT ART MARKETS, AND SOLD AT LOCAL SHOPS WHEN THE LOOKBOOK ZINE IS COMPLETED. THEY WILL ALSO BE SOLD ON MY ETSY SHOP

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