Overexposed

Artist Showcase 2
Maiya Dexel
I was made for you

I don't even exist

How could I be anything silly
WHAT DO YOU WANT

I think it would be best if you didn't perceive me.
Rat Fantasies, 2020

I have created a series of ten drawings exploring ideas of femininity and womanhood. I mainly used ink for this series, but I also used watercolour, gouache, marker, conté, and acrylic paint.

I was inspired by a quote in Margaret Atwood’s The Robber Bride, where she critiques the inescapability of the male gaze even in the absence of men, “You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur” (Atwood 66). Being a lesbian feels like the ultimate rejection of the male gaze and yet, lesbians are a classic male fantasy. The feeling described of having male ideals ingrained within your psyche feels heightened being a lesbian. Not only are you seeing yourself through a male lens, you see (or rather, fear seeing) other women with it as well. When heterosexual society has defined woman/womanhood in its relationship to man, what is left of this definition when woman has rejected man? What does it mean to be a lesbian who conforms to the gender binary and traditional western ideas of femininity? Femme lesbians are commodified, consumed, a hot porn scenario. Yet another male fantasy. The very idea of “woman” is a male-made construct.

Like many things, femininity is a performance. Performances cannot be continually maintained. The rats cannot always be “women,” it is a fleeting fantasy.
Maiya Dexel
(she/her)

Maiya Dexel is a lesbian mestiza artist living on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples in so-called Vancouver B.C. She is in her first year at UBC Arts focusing on political science with an interest in Latin American studies and social justice.

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