



Artist Statement

Claire Dean

November 13, 2013

My work is eclectic. In terms of aesthetics it is informed by pattern and ornamentation combined with grotesque cartoon-like imagery of creatures and fabricated beings. In terms of concept, I like the idea of anthropomorphism and combining elements of the body, nature, and even (at times) the non-natural or inanimate forms. For me, there has always been a strange fascination with the bizarre and uncanny. It is continuity between realms that, conceptually, are imagined as separate; the uncanny that is both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. Sometimes my drawings take form as mystical individuals. Lately, however, I have taken an interest in exploring these characters through a microscope. Perhaps seeing the anatomic yet highly unrealistic parts these individuals are comprised of. Some may be creatures themselves, others may be an organ – real or imaginary - with a specific function.

Drawing inspiration from Barry McGee, who finds an attraction to the homeless people he encounters in San Francisco, I find I too am interested in the outlandish characters I create. He also incorporates pattern and ornamentation with his characters that is a combination I also tend to explore. Similar to McGee I also have a deep connection with John Casey's work. Casey constructs beings amalgamating the human form with the natural, the non-natural, and a combination of the three. He says his beings find peace with

their mutations and I'd like to think the same for my own, as they are a part of me and serve as a portion of my consciousness, I see them as living beings I have grown to know. I have created a visual language that consists of creatures, characters, and things that all serve as a desire to continue to dive deeper: to continue to explore what and who these beings are.

I began investigating these ideas on scratchboard when I did a series of works dealing with the concept of the first carnivals/circuses. It attempted to juxtapose comedy with tragedy by depicting various circus freaks in a desolate and dark environment. The characters had various physical disabilities that displayed their reasons for being in my made-up circus: mutilated bodies, bearded ladies, giants, Siamese twins, etc. This made an effort to display a historical approach to how the circus began, by putting physical disability on exhibit. The piece tested the audience's ability to recognize the injustices of such an act, while finding slight humor in my animated forms. The scratchboard became a useful tool in displaying a slight physicality to my flat, two-dimensional drawings. It was also an unforgiving material, which forced me to be direct in my mark making. Lastly, the black scratchboard lent itself to my theme. With a dark background that turned white as it was scratched away, it challenged the viewer to see the concurrence (juxtaposition) of both elements. This project serves as an important marker in my work, as it forced me to acknowledge my interests in the uncanny and trying to relate to the unfamiliar.

Scratchboard became a material I immediately enjoyed using because it allowed for me to create meticulous detail in my rendering. This is another element that has always been a part of my work. This sense of ornament comes not only from a need to

express detail, but also my interest found in patterns in day of the dead and traditional Mexican art. The combination of skulls and decoration, and the lottery card shrine offerings that combine a visible graphic with ornament intrigue me. Perhaps this stems from my childhood when I spent time visiting my family in Santa Fe, seeing all the cultural connotations of Native American and Mexican art. My family members there, as many are also artists, have taken on many of the traditions and artistic methods of these cultures. Perhaps it is a combination of my love for these art forms and my need to incorporate a process-based, detail-oriented approach that create the ornate elements of many of my pieces.

Another component that I adopted in my work was the use of physical materials on which to render my characters. This began with the scratchboard, but lead to wood. When I found a way to prep the surface for drawing, I became obsessed. I liked the thick surface, but I also enjoyed the texture the grain added to my ornamentation and the natural element that was brought in by the use of it. Along with the wood came my fascination with gouache. I liked the flat, opaque color it added to the wood and that, with the use of paint markers, I could create a very two-dimensional graphic image.

It was at this same time that I began to explore the idea of anthropomorphism and the combination of many separate parts creating a whole. This produced an entirely new set of figures. My drawings were no longer caricatures based entirely on the human form, they were an amalgamation of parts: human, animal, natural, and unnatural. They still were human-like as they had a head, legs, arms, torso, etc. but these components were replaced with abnormal parts to make them less recognizable as such. This was a pivotal

place in my work as it still echoed my previous pieces, the misunderstood and bizarre, but it became my own creation of these elements.

My most recent works incorporate these components. The wood, gouache, and oil-based paint markers have become my materials of choice. With my newest pieces, however, I have begun to explore my creatures on a microscopic level. By viewing these drawings from a more ambiguous approach, I have begun to see them in an entirely new light. It started in an attempt to challenge the viewer's perception of these beings by distorting them to the point of being indistinguishable. Once I explored this tactic, I began to see these new drawings as my previous creatures anatomically. Some took on the appearance as a creature while others seemed to be parts that imitated the larger form, yet were suggestive of an organ or system within them.

This refers to my piece "Ambiguous Anatomies" where I embodied this concept. This was an installation combined of multi-sized and multi-layered wooden squares and rectangles. It was highly inspired by Barry McGee's use of frames covering the entirety of a corner or wall space and his use of various sizes fitting together like a puzzle, allowing for little to no negative space in between each piece. McGee inspires much of my work in the sense that I attempt to achieve a similar flat, colorful, graphic aesthetic. Past works have also imitated these characteristics, including one I did a few years ago with caricature portraits called "Loaded Portraiture" where I combined the framing of various portraits with a large wall painting.

Most recently my work has become more textural. I have used a laser cutter to cut out these wooden ambiguous shapes to suggest what the viewer is seeing are the actual creatures or things previously being depicted in a square frame. This is very new to my work, but I see it developing in ways I never imagined, creating drawings that are becoming more and more physical before my eyes. It is as if they are taking on a mind of their own and becoming livelier. I hope to continue on this path, picking my brain to retrieve more of these creatures that may be residing beneath the layers of my previous work.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Media</u>	<u>Original Format</u>
Figure 1: Negative Shape Installation	paper cutout/ drawing	sharpie on cutout paper; dimensions variable
Figure 2: Negative Shape Installation	paper cutout/ drawing	sharpie on cutout paper; dimensions variable
Figure 3: Deep Sea Ambiguity	paper cutout/ drawing	sharpie on cutout paper; 5ft. X 4ft.
Figure 4: Deep Sea Ambiguity	paper cutout/ drawing	sharpie on cutout paper; dimensions variable
Figure 5: Woodland Beings	painting, drawing	gouache, paint marker on wood; 18in.x30in.
Figure 6: Woodland Beings	painting, drawing	gouache, paint marker on wood; 18in.x30in.
Figure 7: Woodland Beings	painting, drawing	gouache, paint marker on wood; 18in.x30in.
Figure 8: Woodland Beings	painting, drawing	gouache, paint marker on wood; 18in.x30in.
Figure 9: Woodland Beings	painting, drawing	gouache, paint marker on wood; 18in.x30in.
Figure 10: Caricatures	mural, painting, drawing	acrylic, paint marker on wall and paper; dimensions vary
Figure 11: Adorned Masks	panel paintings, drawings	gouache on wooden panel; dimensions vary
Figure 12: Female Shamans	painting, drawing	gouache and paint marker on wood; 24in.x18in.
Figure 13: Sketch 1	drawing	marker and ink on paper; 9inx12in.
Figure 14: Sketch 2	drawing	ink on paper; 9in.x12in.
Figure 15: Sketch 3	drawing	ink and marker on paper; 8in.x10in.
Figure 16: Judith	drawing	scratchboard; dimensions vary
Figure 17: Harry	drawing	scratchboard; dimensions vary
Figure 18: Avery	drawing	scratchboard; dimensions vary
Figure 19: Ambiguous Anatomies	drawing, painting	acrylic, gouache and paint marker on wood; dimensions vary
Figure 20: Ambiguous Anatomies (detail)	drawing, painting	acrylic, gouache and paint marker on wood; dimensions vary
Figure 21: Sketch 4	drawing	ink pen on paper; 9in.x12in.
Figure 22: Ambiguous Anatomies 2	drawing, painting	gouache, paint marker on cutout wood; dimensions vary
Figure 23: Ambiguous Anatomies 2 (detail)	drawing, painting	gouache, paint marker on cutout wood; dimensions vary
Figure 24: Ambiguous Anatomies 2	drawing, painting	gouache, paint marker on cutout wood; dimensions vary
Figure 25: Ambiguous Anatomies 2	drawing, painting	gouache, paint marker on cutout wood; dimensions vary
Figure 26: Ambiguous Anatomies 2	drawing, painting	gouache, paint marker on cutout wood; dimensions vary



Figure 1: Negative Shape Installation.



Figure 2: Negative Shape Installation.



Figure 3: Deep Sea Ambiguity.

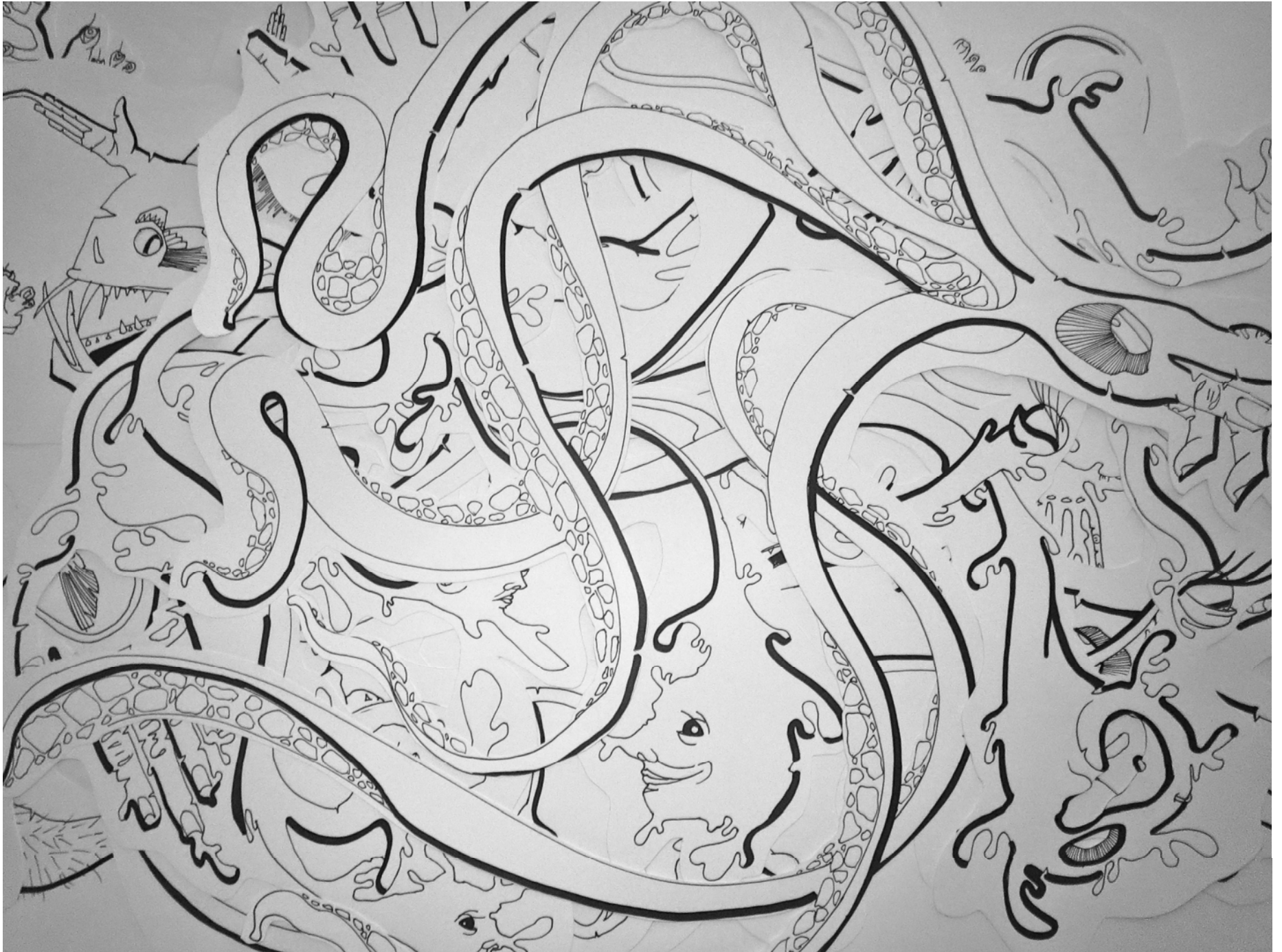


Figure 4: Deep Sea Ambiguity.



Figure 5: Woodland Beings.



Figure 6: Woodland Beings.



Figure 7: Woodland Beings.



Figure 8: Woodland Beings.



Figure 9: Woodland Beings.



Figure 10: Caricatures.



Figure 11: Adorned Masks.

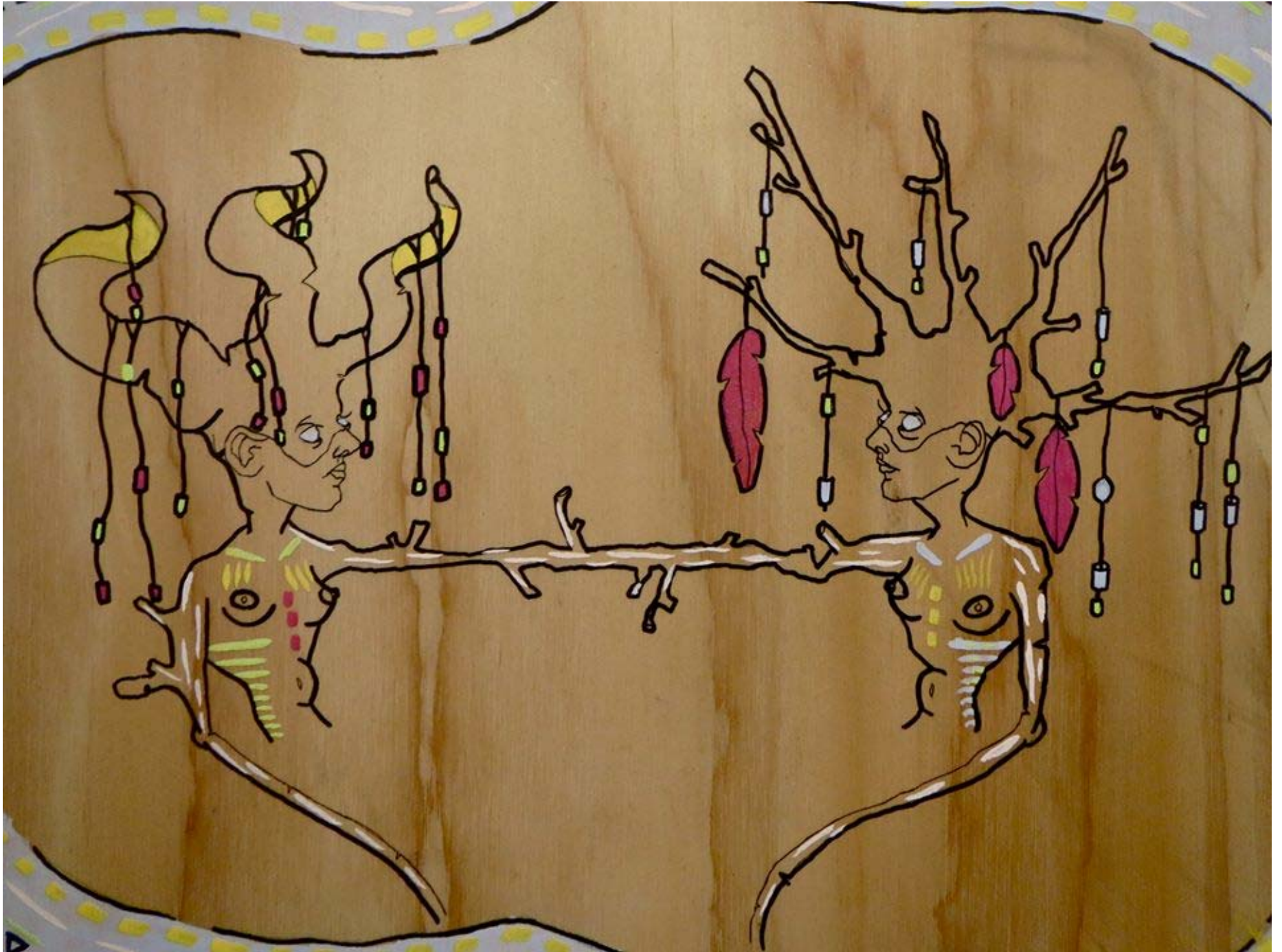


Figure 12: Female Shamans.

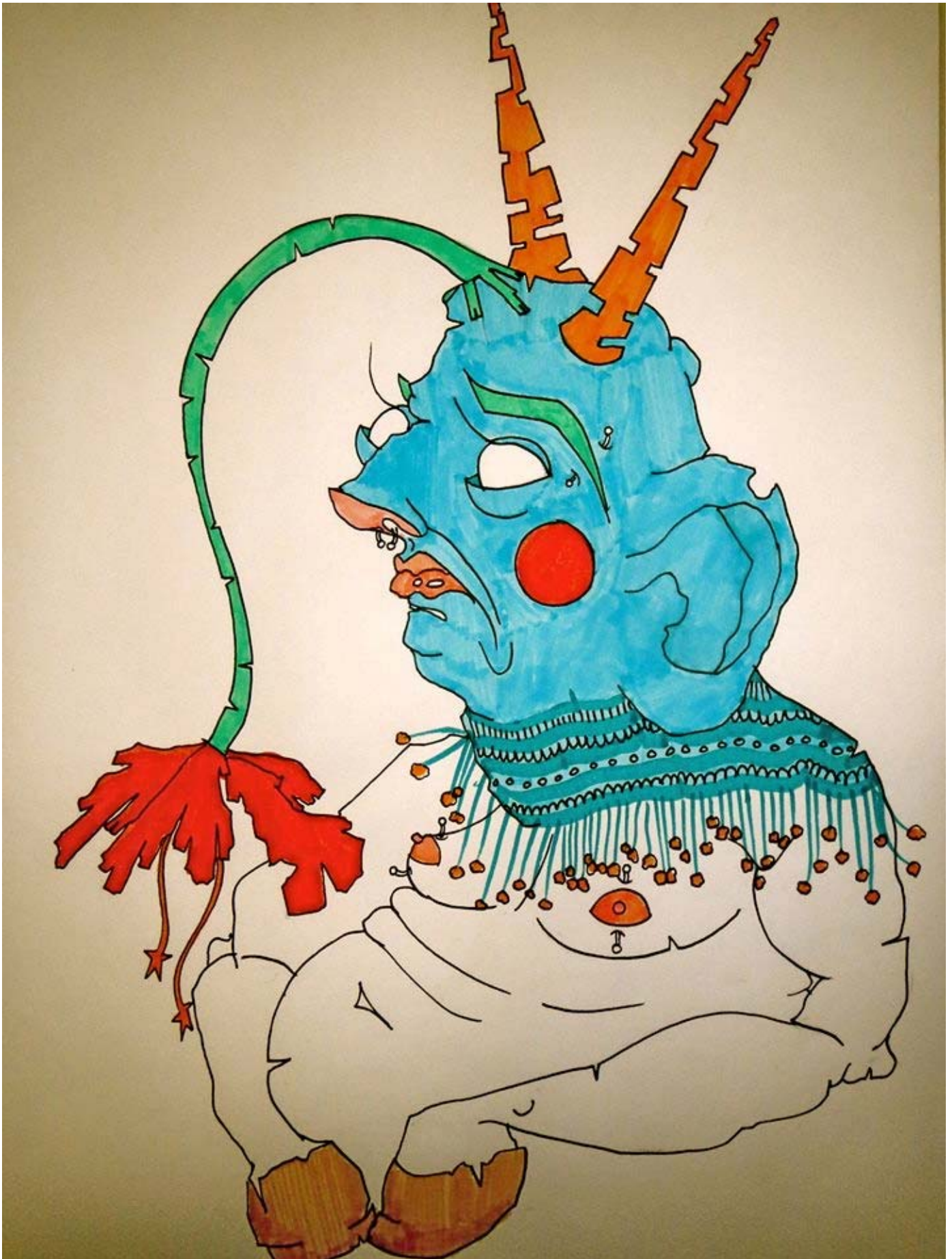


Figure 13: Sketch 1.



Figure 14: Sketch 2.



Figure 15: Sketch 3.



Figure 16: Judith.



Figure 17: Harry.



Figure 18: Avery.



Figure 19: Ambiguous Anatomies.



Figure 20: Ambiguous Anatomies (detail).

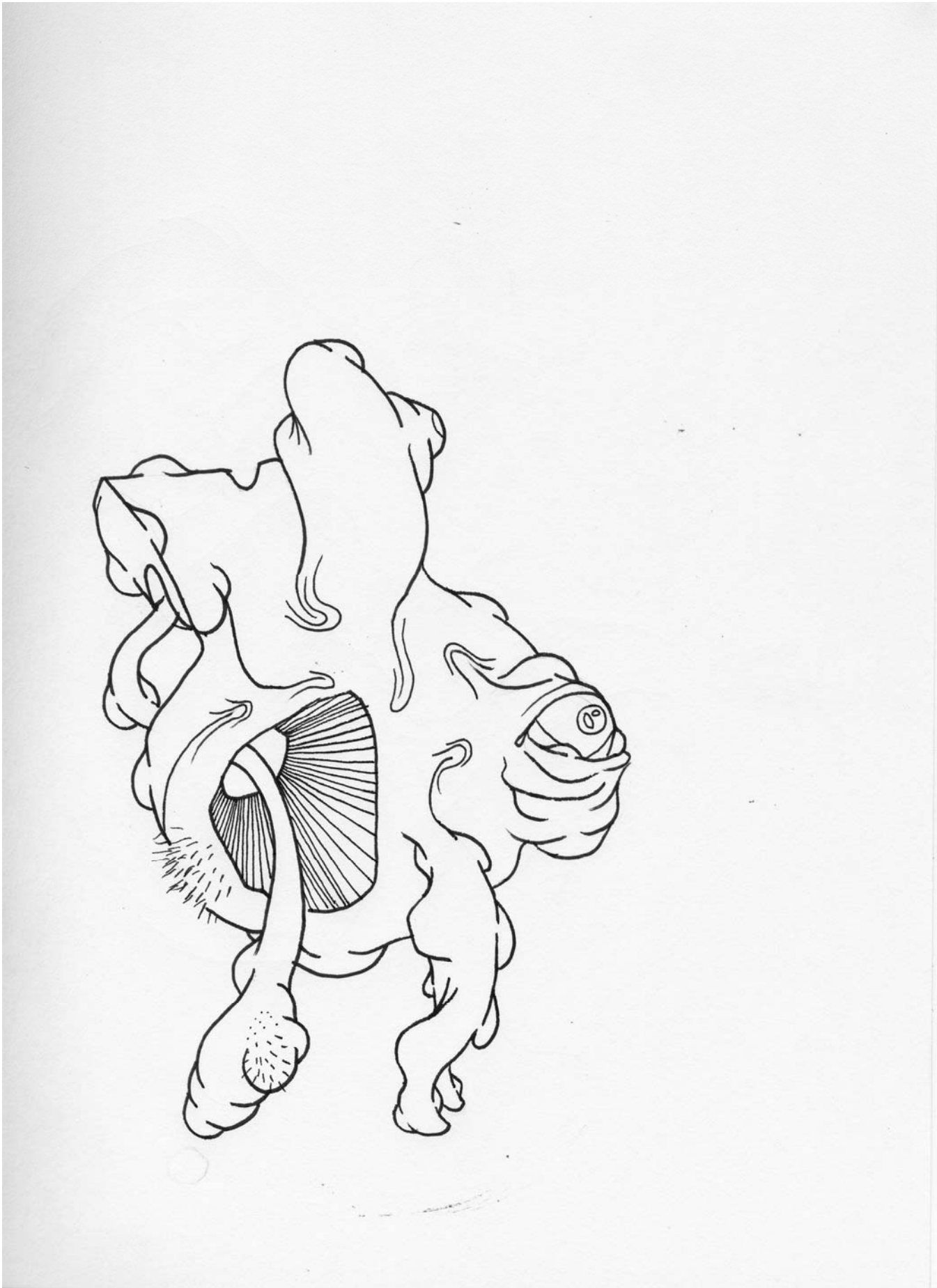


Figure 21: Sketch 4.



Figure 22: Ambiguous Anatomies 2.

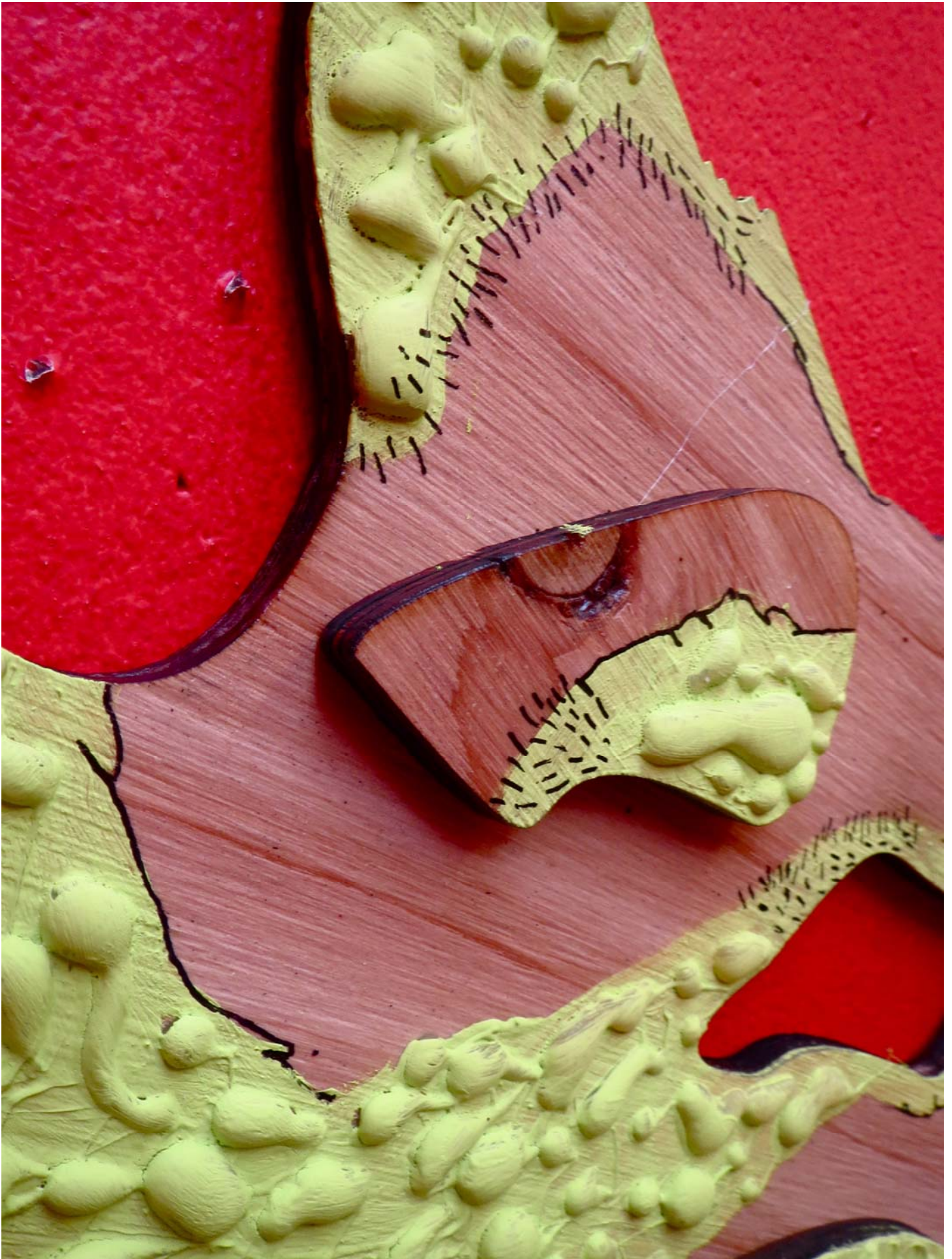


Figure 23: Ambiguous Anatomies 2 (detail).



Figure 24: Ambiguous Anatomies 2.



Figure 25: Ambiguous Anatomies 2.



Figure 26: Ambiguous Anatomies 2.