Exhale Identity Series, hosted by the Gender & Sexuality Center, is a three part program inviting our campus community to share their experiences, stories, art, and voices around a specific theme related to identity. This year’s theme focuses on Self-Discovery.

THE GOAL

Exhale Identity Series aims to utilize storytelling as a means for building connection on our campus. By tying personal narratives back to one shared theme, Exhale brings into focus commonalities across a variety of lived experiences. This program is also poised to center accounts which are often denied, dismissed, and/or entirely excluded. The goal is to provide a platform in which vulnerability, self-authorship, and validation draw Carls to share out and discuss important topics relevant to the community.

Exhale
A BIT ABOUT THE SUBMISSIONS

The following pages showcase pieces submitted to exhale by Carls. Many of our participants wanted to remain anonymous. You will see this indicated near the title of their piece. Also in that section, we wanted to provide content warning (CW) as assigned by the author.

Content Warnings in this issue:

dysphoria
Dysphoria

A cold shiver runs its way along my spine
An uneasy feeling wells up in the depths of my soul
Why do I feel like this?
My body doesn’t fit quite right
Too big here, not big enough there, and don’t even get me started on that
Why does my heart cry out in pain when I see my reflection some days,
Why does it rejoice other days
I’m split in two, back and forth unendingly
This is Dysphoria

Euphoria

A warm blanket drapes over my body
A lightness is added into the bounce of my step
Why do I feel like this?
I am radiating brightly
Just right, I say to myself, you look amazing, you are working it
I feel so overwhelmed with joy that my heart is ripped open in ecstasy
But I know this feeling will go away
How I cherish this fleeting joy
This is Euphoria
"This piece shows the duality of how my gender and the way I am expressing clash or join at any given time..."
THE SIGHT OF HER

Poems such as "The Sight of Her" attempt to capture objects and perhaps beings behind their very eyes. The poems may be divided into sections. Among them, there is a clear demarcation between objects as entities that exist independently of humans and are written in a lyric form. However, the poems avoid anthropomorphization. By using bright, saturated colors, the poet demonstrates the existence of a central idea, or in this case, the existence of a human that is not natural but constructed. It is a struggle to name, name is not natural, but a constructed one for the patient. It is "homemade" in a physical sense. The poet's work is filled with the sound of the sea, the sun, and perpetual blurring. Heavy, slow, and strange...
"I think self-discovery is dynamic; rather than point to a single moment to it, I see countless instances in my writing where I learn something about myself. Writing has always been my primary vehicle for reflection and self-discovery; however, as a writer I feel like my work is constantly a source of public consumption, which dramatically inhibits my ability to be vulnerable in that medium. I feel like in taking a lot of my lines/stanzas that deal with moments of self-discovery out of the context of their larger works, I can create a fragmented piece that has visceral feelings of introspection and vulnerability..."
Welcome Elle

Mi Palma morenita meets my cheek - se conocen; it runs to the other, repeats, and cuddles mi frente, mi nopalito. A yearning to be more left by you.

Pero
Ama, it itches.

you, who felt manly womanly is neither

the window starts to leak;
the rain floods in: green, white, and red.

The chimes whistle comfort:
joto, man, it, wetback.

The texture and audio begin to dance.

the prideful paint on the walls around the window melt; it first hugs the rain but soon it wrestles, strangles, and suffocates it.

Inside the toil, they whimper te conozco, y tu, mi amor eres ninguno.
And for once, I exhale:
elle.
"I wrote this poem on finding myself to be trans at Carleton, and how it could have only happened at Carleton due to conversations on being non-binary. It's also about how hard it has been to navigate that coming-to-self due my Latine upbringing where if queer is rarely uttered, trans is almost unspeakable..."
The heart-tree was a dead tree that had a hole in it in the shape of a heart. (Such creative naming, I know) I'd walk past it on the way to school and, if nobody was around, I'd now to it and say the phrase "I pay homage to you, Heart-tree." It's a bit hard to articulate what it symbolized seeing as I never articulated it before now. It had... an open-ended meaning. It symbolized... crushes and romance I suppose. It's a bit odd, therefore, that it got cut down only a little while after I became form in my belief that such things did not apply to me. It was, indeed, rich in symbolism, especially now. It always felt oddly how when I paid homage to it and my heart panged which I attributed to being a similar feeling to crushing on someone, but in hindsight... it was because I didn't actually have the feelings I thought I was "paying homage to", and indeed, it is fitting that the symbol I chose was a hollow, dead tree. I felt sad when it was cut down, but in an accepting, nostalgic sort of way. I saw the odd parallel between my giving up the facade in my mind and the symbol connected to it going away forever. If I was in a book, it would be an immutable fact that the game was up, and I would never find love, however this is real life, so I just took it as a sign that that period of delusion in my life was up and I could completely move on from my childish pretending to be allo. This all sounds sad, but really... I'm happier and more able to be myself now that I'm not convincing myself that wanting to be friends with someone is the same thing as a crush and therefore I can't go talk to them. Take this as more "oh the follies of youth" and "haha I can extrapolate so much symbolism from this" than "woe is me I'm aromantic".
"This piece is a retrospective on one of my journeys of self discovery from the perspective of a piece of personal mythology..."
LOVE WINS

CW: n/a
anonymous
NOW...

...EXHALE
HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The GSC is STILL ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS!
Visit carleton.edu/gsc to submit a piece of your own!

You can also opt in to have your piece, (or your piece and yourself), at our Spring term Exhale Showcase!

There, you can engage with the authors, their work, and anonymous pieces. More information about this event to come!

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THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who submitted something to the first publication of *Exhale*!

Information about next year's theme will be available Spring 2020 and featured on our Queer Corner Weekly! Subscribe to our email list to stay in the loop about this and other GSC events!

If you have other questions please reach out to gsc@carleton.edu or stop by the house!
Moments of self-discovery are sometimes prompted, but more often random. Consider the questions below as a way to identify moments you've perhaps overlooked or those yet to come!

**TIP:** focus on one question for a full week to allow for thoughtful reflection!

1. what are my values
2. what should i make time for
3. to what traits am i drawn
4. in what ways am i hindering others
5. in what ways am i getting in my own way
6. who am i to others
7. do i feel a sense of purpose
8. what gives me pause
9. what brings me joy
10. who am i to myself