Hey y'all! My name is RaiNE (@mermaidinthemountains). I use they/them pronouns. I was raised in the Appalachia's in West Virginia and currently reside in the mossy covered Pacific Northwest in Oregon.

I create in a plethora of mediums but I am most drawn to performance, photography, video art, and sculpture. This week I want to explore how selfies can be an act of resistance. That may sound kind of wild to some! So I’d love to get more into that. I really enjoy interacting with people and creating a dialogue. So feel free to share what comes up for you this week!

I am also one of the artists selected for the digital exhibition @gender_euphoria_art that was curated by @just___becca.
Welcome to a brand new day. I'm glad that you are here. Today I'm going to share about my art practice. I view myself as both the art and the artist. I am particularly interested in the bodies we inhabit and our relationships to them.

As a very young person I was well aware of the presence of my body in a space. People would comment on my fatness, question my gender, assault my hair, and my skin was always a hot topic. There was constant conversation about my body and I really hated it. I hated my body and I hated me. I used to think that there was something seriously wrong with me and that I was disgusting. At some point a few years ago I decided to create a space for me to explore and expand upon my relationship with myself thus @mermaidinthemountains project was born. I use this platform to share my self portraits. Art can be so powerful. I thought I was making all of this for me. I never thought that it would have the impact that it does on others!

There is so much shame that I address in my work. I've known that I was queer from a very young age. I've never felt like I belonged. A lot of my work is about this tension. How we somehow persist through the constant policing of our minds and bodies. Somehow I'm still here and my work is often times celebrating that. My life matters. BLACK LIVES MATTER. BLACK TRANS LIVES MATTER.

The first photo is a nude self portrait in my bedroom (what I refer to as “my nest”) the second is a self portrait in the sand on the Oregon coast. Both of these places feel like home/comfort/safety.
July 22, 2020

Happy Wednesday! For today's activity I am asking for you to try taking a self portrait. Remember to put the light source behind whatever is taking your image. You can use a phone, a camera, a laptop, or any other picture taking device you have with a timer. Wear as much or as little clothing as you want. Remember to be intentional about your process and show yourself some care. Take some time to set up. Maybe you like cooking and want to take yours in the kitchen? Or maybe you enjoy gardening so you take it in the garden? If you want to post it for us to share in your glory please tag @fiveoaksmuseum and me at @mermaidinthemountains. You can also just take one for yourself. This is a celebration of your existence. You are so worth it.

The first slide is a photo of me in front of a grape (vine) looking sassy in my green jumpsuit. The second slide is a video of me describing how to set up the timer and talking about how I spend a lot of time laying in my backyard so the space is important to me. I am in front of the same grape vine that I took the photo with. I also talk about how I like it as a backdrop.

Link to watch video here: https://www.instagram.com/p/CC9lDruhguc/
July 23, 2020

I love doing research! For me that can look like having conversations with people. My work is largely derived from personal experiences. Storytelling is very important to me as a way to connect us and share histories otherwise untold. My mom had a camcorder when I was younger that she would let me use. Well, she had that and a Polaroid that I adored. We don't have much of a relationship anymore but when I told her that I got a degree in art she shared a reflection with me. She said she always felt like I was an artist. She remembers me documenting the world through my eyes. She said “THIS IS ART!”. Some years ago I found some mini DV's that I had recorded. I was able to salvage a very small amount of it and I wanted to share that with you all today. My close friend and a fellow queer artist tells me that it belongs in the Sundance film fest. That always gives me a chuckle while also reassuring me that I was meant for this. I really wish that I’d have known I didn't need to go to art school to be an artist. That’s why I always try to encourage other artists to believe in themselves. I believe in you! Keep creating if that is what you feel called to. Because we need you!-RaiNE

link to watch video here:https://www.instagram.com/p/CC_m0KWhNu-/
Today I want to talk about my process. When I go to set up a space for my self portraits I like to start by lighting a candle. I really want to connect to my senses. So I will typically do a check in to see where I'm at in the present moment. Accepting whatever arises. I will then put on music to dance to. I usually listen to slow, sad, sensual music. It’s cathartic for me to feel my skin and cry cry cry.

I set up for a shoot today with lots of fabrics. When I did a check in this morning I was feeling a bit disconnected. Right now it is so difficult for me to have distance in all of my interpersonal relationships. How do I express this visually? I disrobe in an empty room. I bring the plants in for support and comfort. I feel exposed so I cover some of myself. I can’t feel my skin through the latex. There are many barriers here. This photo is an ode to this current moment. Personally and in the world at large.
July 25, 2020
RaiNE Brabender □ Q&A

It has been a pleasure to do the takeover this week. You can keep up with me at @mermaidinthemountains ♀

watch video here: https://www.instagram.com/p/CDE5znCh71a/