

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

Gestures

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A person bent over with their hands and knees on the floor drawn on a clay slab. I draw people on clay slabs using wooden tools. I work with large slabs and alternate between cutting shapes and drawing on the surface. Sometimes I carve lines and model specific shapes quickly and other times slowly. When I make a sculpture, I try to concentrate on my body gestures and breathing. I stretch my arms, draw a line, take a slow breath, and separate the form. With all my strength at the tips of my fingers, I push the soft clay hard, relax and gently pull the clay with my palm, and other times leave gestures while scratching leather hard clay using sharp tools. The process of randomly cutting clay slabs using a variety of tools is similar to cutting into a picture with scissors like puzzle and jumbling the pieces without order. And in the process, the image of the person drawn is erased. They are stacked in three dimensions, creating inner and outer space, and the images carved into the pieces are mixed.



Fig.1

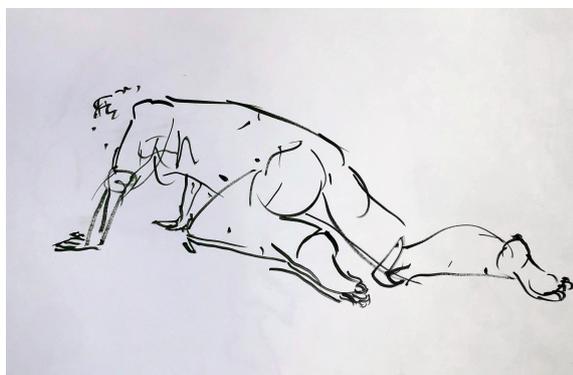


Fig.2

### **feeling of anxiety**

My work begins with the question, 'How can we escape from anxiety?' Anxiety is one of the universal feelings of human life, but to me it feels like homework to overcome. I feel anxiety even when I sleep. I was once completely dominated by the feeling. I have been depressed for a long time and have had difficulty making rational judgments. At present, I have achieved some success in separating daily life from anxiety, and anxiety has become a major

concern in my work. Nevertheless, I cannot explain why I feel anxious. I have not experienced war like my parents' generation, nor have I experienced hunger. Maybe I could find a reason for it from my mother who had been sick for a long time without any specific illness or the competitive social atmosphere that I experienced as a child? We cannot see things that are too close to us. We can see exactly what it is if we look from a distance. However, I still feel anxious, and I am too close to understand why.

### **Expressing emotions**

I look at myself, even in my thirties, who is not familiar with expressing emotions. I grew up in a culture where it is taboo to be frank about my feelings or emotion. The patriarchal Korean society has been too strict for Queer boys. To me, grieving or crying was an embarrassment and even being too excited or happy was considered negative. I was educated to be always calm, quiet and have ideal answers. Every question had a set answer, and even questions had to be correct morally. School taught all children to see and feel the same thing. But when boys my age were looking at girls playing tag in the playground, I looked at boys playing soccer. I quietly drew an apple in the classroom when my friends made a bet on who could pee the furthest.

### **Visualizing emotions**

When I first started working, I focused on visualizing anxiety. I thought that if I visualized it, I could let it go. I am afraid of the unknown. I used to feel scared because I did not know what anxious emotions were and felt my understanding was vague. I was delusional thinking if I could visualize anxiety in any way, I would get used to it and finally no longer experience that feeling.

I mixed images that came to my mind when I think of certain emotion. For instance, I expressed my anger with red thorns, or sorrow with flowing water. But the red thorns



Fig.3

reminded me of a cockscomb or a flame, and the flowing water reminded me of a stream.

It is hard to visualize a particular emotion. Because emotions have no shape. For example, even if we draw a crying child by the side of the road to convey sadness, it shows a crying child, not sadness. Emotion is the effect caused by a specific image. In other words, emotion is a side effect of image. That's why we can't visualize emotions.

I went to Basel, Switzerland to visit my friend in March 2013. One day I went to the Kunsthalle Basel Museum to see an exhibition, and there was a piano quartet performance called 'Songs for a Mad King.' Four pianos were in the middle of the exhibition hall. I sat far away from the piano and leaned back against the wall. People sat on the floor near the piano, and some were lying between the legs of the piano. At the end of the performance, the people sitting near the performer stood up and started playing the piano together, yet it was still considered a 'concert.' Anyway, it had a very contrasting epic structure, and as the dramatic performer filled the space of the art museum, I felt overwhelmed as if I were almost in the rapture. I wanted to visualize and record the performance happening in that moment. I drew lines furiously as if I were playing the piano, and in the muted melody I drew serenity in light colors. However, when I went back home and saw the sketch the melody was impossible to be imagined. But I found a short and dark, or sometimes long and cloudy line in that sketch. Some parts were soft as cotton, and some were sharp as they could hurt me. I was not able to

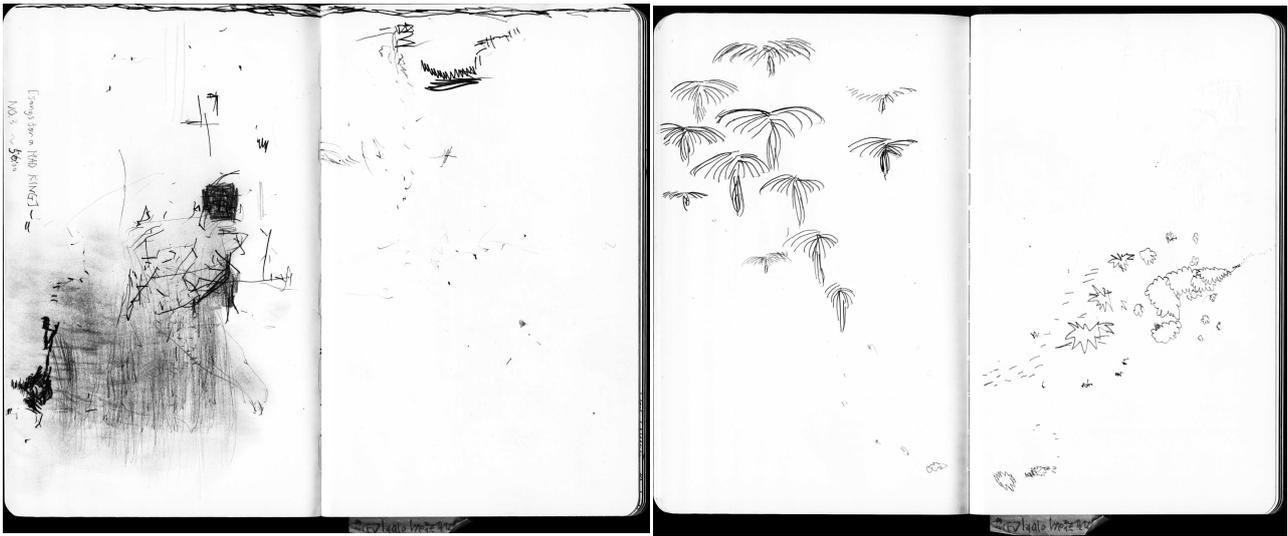


Fig.4

remember the musical notes of the concert through the sketch, but I was able to revisit my feelings at the time.

### **Visual formal language**

I am finding my own language to freely express my feelings. I aim to express feelings by leaving my gestures in a jumbled image. It makes my voice safe and frees it at the same time. I hide in a disassembled and reassembled image, but that doesn't mean just a safe place. It is a new language and a way to express my feelings.

### **Disassembling and reassembling**

Dismantling and assembling process makes me remind of puzzles or Lego pieces. My favorite toy was Lego. I have been receiving the series of them almost every year as a Christmas gift. It was usually a spaceship or pirate ship. I was initially satisfied by comparing the model I made with the picture on the box. After a month or so, I disassembled them again and made the building or animal with the remains. I broke the pirate ship and made the goat, broke

the spaceship and made seven puddings on dishes. I ask. What could I make by cutting a picture of an angry man with scissors?

## Clay

I am interested in exploring within the characteristics of the material I am dealing with. I am not interested in inventing new skills or magic. I study clay which allows me to freely express and research various methods in the process. The way I deal with clay can be divided into cutting, pasting, spreading, and bundling.



Fig.5

The reason why I think clay is suitable for my expression is that it has both flatness and three dimensionality at the same time. It is also plastic and flexible as a material. On the other hand The ceramic piece must be hollow inside. Shrinkage is a technical constraint, which means that the thickness of all parts must be consistent. Otherwise, the moisture will evaporate and distort or crack the shape due to the differences of shrinkage. I face shells and empty spaces in ceramic works made of these

characteristics. I see this surface as a curved plain, and the empty space as a three-dimensional space created by the two-dimensional space. I studied graphic design during undergraduate school and studied images on the two-dimensional surface for many years. I am familiar with flat images. But there is no shadow existing. Something without shadow is good to imagine, but not enough to fully experience.

## Structure of clay slabs

When the slab is added to create a three-dimensional structure, the slabs spatialize the work partially dividing into an interior and an exterior space. A slab may seem to act as a column supporting an architecture, or may appear to rise above, defying gravity. But the form is abstract and restrictive to think of something particular.

## Color

Decomposition of the image is continued in the glazing process. When I look at images, I recognize light and shadow, color and texture. The white color of Majolica distracts light and the black line does so with shadow. I intentionally provide a strategy to distract viewer's perspective through the process of endowing color with glaze. For example, there are many ways to convey certain information when making posters. A small, light-colored text is used alongside with large and colorful font, making viewers to read certain information first. Our gaze follows a red large dot rather than a dark gray background. The part where bright yellow and black alternate will be more powerful than the part with dark and blurred green. I use disassembling the image as a strategy to restrict how the viewer can read the shapes and images.

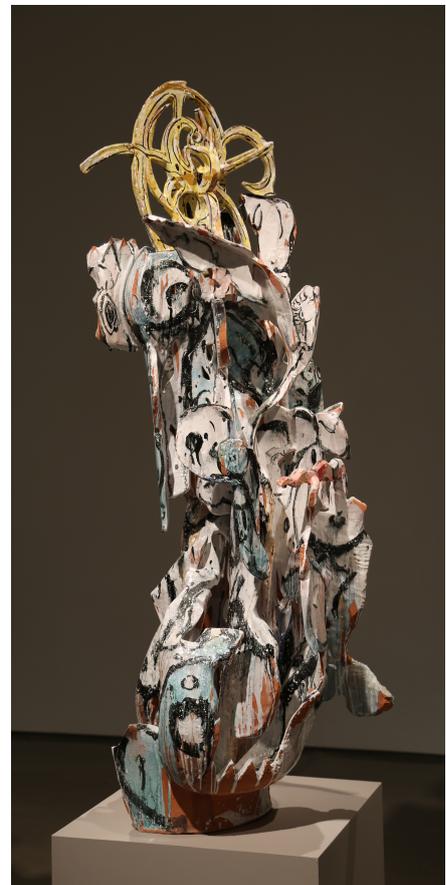


Fig.6

## Drawing

I draw on the structured form again and again. Unlike the first drawing on a slab, the drawing on the three dimensional form is to reveal impressions and emotions inspired from the initial image. Drawings describe certain body part, but they are not interrelated. These disconnected images avoid narrative aspect. Drawings appear to be on a small canvas where they cannot hold all the images gushing out from a broken projector. Unfiltered lines with varied thickness and a sense of rapid mark making suggest an ambiguous impression rather than a concrete shape. Image and color drawn on the surface is subordinate to shape and exists as an additional expression. Nevertheless, drawn image voices out expanding the viewer's perspective. It guides their perspective outside the line and let them imagine. This drawn figuration floats freely over the structure, and streams in and out through orifices. It floats, not being stagnant.



Fig.7



Fig.8

## Conclusion

I add fragmented bodily images as a decoration on the form built with architectural and structured slab, abstract cutting, line drawing, and color elements. Bodily slab drawing loses its voice while figurative drawing gets fragmented, assembled, and layered with a different image. Covered with glaze and spritzed with color, form emerges. Audience seek fragmented bodily image floating over abstract sculpture, and the relationship between its shapes. Pieces sit, lay down, and bend over. they may appear as something or someone very different. Eyes follow fragmented body parts. it is no longer public viewing, and it even gives a sense of voyeurism.

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## Technical Statement

### Clay & Glaze Recipes

#### JR Tile Clay - Cone 04

Red Art	15.5
Newman Red sub	32
Gold Art	12.5
Hawthorn 50	12.5
OM-4 Ball Clay	12.5
Talc	15
Fine Grog	12
Medium Grog	8
Barium Carb	1

#### Jaffe Majolica - Cone 04

Frit 3124	100
strontium carbonate	3
zircopax	24
Georgia Kaolin	15 (not EPK)

Majolica colors: paint on top of unfired glaze.

All recipes are by weight, not volume.

Copper carbonate--use with water alone for green.

Black: Black Stain 6600      1 part (by weight)

    Frit 3124                    2 parts

    Copper carb.                3 parts

Blue: Lavender stain        1 part

    Cobalt carb                1 part

    frit 3124                    2 parts

Other colors: Stain         2 parts

    Frit 3124                    3 parts

China paint - over glaze

    Josephine - Porcelain Paint

    Mix powder with regular mixing medium

    Fire to Cones 014 - 016

Ink / Paint / acrylic paint/ Varnish

    used after glazed on the surface

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- fig. 1 dancer 6, 2018, water color on the paper, 15 x 20 inches
- fig. 2 dancer 9, 2018, water color on the paper, 15 x 20 inches
- fig. 3 moon on the water, 2014, porcelain, glaze, china paint, cone 7, 12 X 16 X 8 inches
- fig. 4 drawing, piano quartet performance called 'Songs for a Mad King.'  
2013, ink on the paper, 11 x 8 inches
- fig. 5 Portrait 1, 2019, red clay, glaze, cone 04, 8 x 7 x 13 inches
- fig. 6 Yellow Head, 2019, red clay, glaze, cone 04, china paint, 27 x 26 x 67 inches
- fig. 7 Body Part 3, 2019, red clay, glaze, cone 04, china paint, 21 x 4 x 21 inches
- fig. 8 Body Part 2, 2019, red clay, glaze, cone 04, china paint, 28 x 8 x 23 inches