

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

It's Okay to Be Ugly Sometimes.

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Scattered Thoughts and Daily Meditations

What is the draw towards primitivism and expressionism. Is it the art of crisis, existential threats make artists regress to a primal state, violent creation, the need to get it out fast, now, boom done so one is prepared to deal with the next threat.

Line and gesture is immediate, sure and confident. Making is a trance, a trusting state. It is un-thinking, just responding. Fight or flight, it is instinctual.

Basquiat, Schiele, Herring

What creates and attracts me to this mark making,

It reminds me of serenity and joy in midst of inclement weather,
Singing in the rain. Just singing in the rain...

It is about the observer, the witness,
Constructing a sort of intellectual or cognitive distance from the personal
Introspection

Distance while at the same time lapping up and savoring all the feelings

Haunted by history through associative thought. Is that similar to the postmodern brash appropriation of all history. Their's seems to be just for the irony of it, just a deconstruction of order for the sake of saying it doesn't matter.

This does matter.

I am investigating a new while acknowledging the thought and expression that came before me,

I might be cynical but not skeptical

What do I rebel against, why make art?

What have I seen?

Contemporary survey

Plastic, Loud, Devoid of humanness. It is just an art object. A Luscious object. They are stilted by sexism, racism, colonialism, some social concept which gives them validity but only talks to their ism, their group but not the individuals and personal subjective narrative.

I am for the investigation of subjective perception, making which exalts the beauty and struggle of the human condition.

Sincerity In Materials



In thinking about my use of material, sincerity is a word which comes to mind. Not sincerity of “truth to materials” in a constructivist way, their rigid beliefs centered around fundamental analysis of materials and that materials should only be employed in accordance with their capacities, but in not hiding, that is exposing and appreciating, the materials which are being used. I do not use materials to create illusions, that has never been a goal in my work, and instead use them from a position of humility, as if to say they are what they are - no more and no less. Sincere materials bear the mark of the maker and the properties of the material are exposed and celebrated in the strengths and vulnerabilities. “It is just a medium,” and there is a love and appreciation that comes with that acknowledgement.

Paint is pigment suspended in a vehicle being pushed, dragged, and pulled over canes. Clay is mineral and water, plastic, sensual, and heavy - It is modeled, translates immediacy, able to pick up all witness marks from both maker and environment, all touches. Clay records the history of the forces acting upon it. Allowing the viewer to see how the work is made reveals a place of vulnerability, not concealing process. Sincerely working celebrates the material, the process, the roughness, and immediacy, mirroring the rawness of life, of peoples evidence of growth, of building, or becoming. We should not be afraid of the things that make us, our mistakes, missteps, and breaks are just as important to acknowledge and celebrate as our accomplishments. To let show the labors of our personal self-construction. It is my goal through materials to embody this type of humility.

Psychology

Free association is a psychological technique used as a means of gaining access to the subconscious. In psychology, free association is a process in which the patient was asked to express whatever comes to mind, to not censor or cull their thoughts, in order to gain insight into what they think or feel on a deeper or sub-



conscious level. This process provides a mechanism by which one can unbind themselves from their conscious or unconscious fears of self-exposure.

My work begins in a similar fashion, where associations can happen and access to internal psychological anxieties can reveal themselves without being clouded by insecurities and fears of self exposure. I compare this phenomenon of making to looking at the clouds and identifying shapes in them - a dragon, a dog, a dick, and to Rorschach testing where one is asked to state what they see in an ink blot. How one interprets the ink blot is then used to examine and analyze a person's personality characteristics and emotional facilities and help to identify one's state of being.

Sharing a desire to access the subconscious were the surrealists. Artists such as Joan Miro and Max Ernst were known to use self-imposed accidents in order to start and respond from a place of randomness. One example of the surrealist semi-automatic making can be found in Joan Miro's Birth of the World. In this painting Miro threw sponges saturated in ink and paint at a canvas and completed the painting by responding to those marks. Of this process of making Miro said, "Rather than setting out to paint something, I began painting, and as I paint

the picture begins to assert itself, or suggest itself under my brush.... The first stage is free, unconscious.” Another surrealist, Max Ernst, used the technique of frottage, a process of rubbing graphite over objects or textures and using the resulting transfer as the initial source material. In my own practice, gaining access to the subconscious is done in a couple different ways.

In clay, for example, it is done by laying out a piece of canvas and throwing, smashing, or pushing clay in an almost random, semi-automatic way. This is done with immediate response from the body that is random, violent, and automatic. A similar technique is used in my paintings and drawings, by starting with haphazard spills, random brush strokes, an expressive pushing and pulling of the paint, and no conscious plan or vision for what the work is going to be when it starts out. These marks are then analyzed, go through a process of association, and gradually I gain clarity, slowly seeing the figures, forms, and spaces that will later form a more concrete narrative of subconscious anxieties.

The Trickster



The trickster archetype appears in my work. The trickster character reveals essential truths that are often hard to hear or reconcile, but does so through a fool's enterprise, making these truths more palatable. An example of this type of fool in literature is found in Shakespeare's play, King Lear, in which the fool is the only one allowed to speak frankly and provide insight to the king without offense. Indeed, in this story, if any other member of the court would speak in such a way, it would cost them their lives.

In contemporary society, stand-up comedians are similar to the tricksters: they provide both comic relief and insight into our deepest insecurities and worst thoughts, giving us a chance to examine them without becoming immediately disgusted with ourselves or repressing our thoughts. I believe my work operates within a similar realm by providing a place of refuge, or a counterweight, for some sort of comedy loaded with the personal and emotional weight of the



themes I have chosen. One way my work occupies the trickster archetype, is the use of cartoon imagery. This imagery is taken from my childhood, drawn from Sunday morning cartoons, stop motion animation, and children's books. I use this imagery to disarm the audience by bringing up feelings of childhood nostalgia, innocence, and humor, and allow for them to process personal defects while not getting defensive over fear of self exposure.

Abstraction, Mutation, the Grotesque

In cartoons, emotions, feelings, and psychological states of being can be so powerful that they physically transform and distort both the figure and the environment around them. These are a physical manifestation of hyperbole. For example when a character is lustful this emotion or drive might be illustrated by the character's eyes popping out of their heads in the direction of an attractive figure, their jaw opening up and their tongues unravelling, or their heart pounding out of their chest: these are all hyperbole. Similarly, if a character is mad you will see their face physically transform, turning bright red with brows furrowing, they might physically enlarge as if their rage is filling them up, or they might transform into something a bit more dangerous, such as a monster displaying jagged teeth and claws. The same is done with the figures in my pieces.

Features, parts, limbs, expressions: these are all exaggerated in order to display their psychological or emotive state.

The grotesque is often present in my work as I do not feel that my figures should be perfect. Real bodies have scars, pockmarks, and other blemishes, they're not symmetrical, and they are not always what we want them to be. I want my work to be a celebration of this imperfection - a celebration of what it is to be human, to not be perfect, and to bear the marks which tell the stories of our lives. It's okay to be ugly sometimes, both physically and emotionally, and to not be ashamed of that ugliness. Our Society today is saturated by this facade of beauty about idealized personal presentation, one only need to look at the artificial glamor which propagates on social media platforms. The best selfie is sieved out through hundreds of photos just to get the best one, present to the world this perfect fallacy. Mimicked in the art world one just needs to go to any art fair. An overwhelming amount of the objects which occupy that space are polished, shiny, crisp. They are great objects to take a picture with, loud and glassy. But just like taking the perfect selfie they feel artificial and does not express the reality and abjectness of what human experience is. art to me needs to act as a mirror of our time and our existence. My work is a rejection to facade only. It's a celebration of the gross, the ugly, the unclean.



Why Monsters? Why Monsters?

Monsters have always been an embodiment of cultural anxieties, either one that must be understood, endured or empathize with or one that must be vanquished. If one looks at folkloric monsters it usually was manifestation of existential threats, their fear and lack of control over their environments which resulted in tales of farce animals or chimeric creatures. Monsters as cultural anxieties can also be seen in visual media, the monsters from 1950's cinema were inspired by fears over the cold war, the invading communists were translated to aliens, de-segregation and decolonization, the creatures in these movies usually orienting from a primitive region pursued helpless female characters and had to be vanquished by a white male protagonist. Androids and Cyborgs reflect the contemporary fear that technology will outgrow us and render us obsolete. It is fear of otherness destroying us.

The monster-like quality in my work is also used to express the anxiety of otherness. The otherness which my work explores is internal, both psychological and emotional, thoughts, feelings and weakness, defects of character which as a society we have deemed as shameful at best and dangerous at worst. Feelings of lust, melancholia, machismo, wanting to lie, cheat, or steal are thoughts which most are embarrassed to even admit they have. I have struggled with the shame of thinking these thoughts. I did not even want to acknowledge they were even apart of me. Through self exploration I eventually allowed myself to be comfortable with these thoughts and through this acknowledgement came room for growth instead of a place of denial, personal shame, and stagnation. To grasp what it means to be a whole person comes from the acceptance of our assets and defects. My goal is to create a space for empathetic monster hood. The monster in my work are in a position of vulnerability and accept they abject state, if people can empathize with my monster then as a result maybe they can empathize with their own.

*Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

*In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?*

*And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?*

*What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!*

*When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

*Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*

-William Blake (Songs of Experience, 1794)