Recent Works

Andrew Boatright

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ABSTRACT

Recent Works chronicles and fleshes out the processes, formations, iterations, and manifestations that resulted in the creation of the thesis exhibition of the same name. This thesis is an examination of the underlying scaffolding that structures my current art process. The defense I give examines the work and its relationship to the body. Through focusing on the body of the viewer, my work aims at approaching the body directly by functioning aesthetically. By functioning this way the body becomes the site for meaning making. The individual works in Recent Works evoke associations with bodily forms and fluids; the substance of which we exist in the world. These forms are abstractions of the body and constructed from unorthodox materials, existing in various states of completion. This provisional nature of the work is a comment on the contingency of our finite existence in the world. The gallery is also discusses as a vehicle for a heightened experience of the work in which I describe as religious in nature.

INDEX WORDS: Embodiment, Affect, Body, Skin, Abstraction, Thing, Failure, Material, Process, Liturgy
RECENT WORKS

by

ANDREW BOATRIGHT

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RECENT WORKS

by

RECENT WORKS

Committee Chair: Joseph Peragine

Committee: Anthony Craig Drennen
Craig Dongoski

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

To my lovely wife.
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I would like to thank everyone that has invested time and energy into challenging me and pushing my work. I would also like to give a very special thank you to my thesis committee: Joe Peragine, Craig Dongoski, and Craig Drennen. Your insight and support have been invaluable.
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1 INTRODUCTION

Recent Works presents a body of work consisting of drawing, painting, sculpture, and installation. The exhibition which this thesis outlines has been the culmination of my three years of art production and research in the Drawing and Painting MFA program of the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design. Throughout the course of my development my work has taken on various forms and explorations. My work began as an exploration of bodily themes which was primarily pictorial. The work consisted mainly of drawings which attempted to depict bodily sensations and movements (Fig. 1.1). From these drawings I explored similar themes in various other media; employing non-traditional materials as a way of bringing the drawings into the realm of sculpture and installation. This movement from pictorial space into actual space provided a rich expansion of the drawings, allowing a more direct means to both reference the body as well as entail the body of the viewer in actual space. This movement also engendered a larger body of sculptural objects that were direct responses to various materials lying around my studio. This important shift was to begin a whole new way of approaching my work, which allowed me to engage physically with materials, allowing me to express different attitudes and forms which consist of the body of work which make up Recent Works.

The body has been the constant theme recurring in my work. I feel that the body is the means by which all experience becomes meaningful; both by referencing it formally and by acting upon it directly. Because of this I will provide an examination of how my work becomes meaningful on a basic sensory level. I will also give an examination of the actual forms of the work in the exhibition and how they make up a commentary of bodily experience. I will explore various works included in the show, presenting supplementary references to elaborate my formal choices. I will also give an account of the curatorial decisions for the show. To do this I will explore the gallery’s significance in constituting a work of art. I will also provide an examination of the liturgical nature of the exhibition space. By doing this I will
reveal the work as constituting the artifacts of a ritual experience in which the works of art take on a sacramental character much in the same way as artifacts of religious nature.

My work is an attempt for me to make sense of the world and my place within it. Much of the choices are backed by outside references, but, first and foremost, my work is a personal exploration of themes of bodily dissolution (death, decay, finitude) and trying to reconcile these with themes of hopeful suffering and the possibility of redemption. My work is an outgrowth of these sentiments and ways by which I experience the vulnerability any mystery of being human.

2 ON EMBODIMENT

“...all meaning emerges in the flesh, blood, and bone of our embodied experience.” – Mark Johnson

In order to make sense of my work it is necessary to lay down some ground layers that scaffold the way that I view my work and the way that it functions as art. My work relies heavily on my understanding of the body’s role in making meaning. In this section, I will rely heavily upon the work of Mark Johnson, a philosopher specializing in embodied philosophy and cognitive science, specifically his book, *The Meaning of The Body: The Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. I will also rely on James K. A. Smith’s work on the body’s role in shaping the imagination through its participation in various liturgical practices in the world (Smith’s understanding of “liturgies” is not limited to religious ceremonies, but refers to the totality of practices that take part in the world which mold and shape human affections). In showing how the body is involved in the meaning making process, as well as how our bodies are co-opted via liturgical practices that shape our world and imaginations through our bodies, I hope to show the primacy

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that aesthetic meaning has because of its relationship to our bodies and to our affections, which are activated via bodily interactions with the world. I will then focus these conclusions on the work exhibited in my thesis show, Recent Works, in order to show why I made certain choices in my work.

2.1 Aesthetics of Meaning/Affections

In The Meaning of the Body: The Aesthetics of Human Understanding, Mark Johnson’s goal is to re-examine and re-evaluate the way that “meaning” works. His re-examination focuses on the body as the site that meaning is made. His project is to reverse the Cartesian mind body separation which he argues is the reason that aesthetic experience (the primary way humans “mean” things) has been placed on the backburner of philosophical inquiry and import. He begins his task by focusing on the “bodily origins of meaning in sensorimotor processes and in feelings,” which describes the ways that our meaning-making capacities are tied to our bodily movement in our environment as well as the emotional construal of our environment which we develop in response. He states: “Movement is one of the conditions for our sense of what our world is like and who we are. A great deal of our perceptual knowledge comes from movement, both our bodily motions and our interactions with moving objects.” Johnson describes how the experience of being a human is characterized by movement. We are constantly moving in, about and around our environment. Through both our bodily movements through space and around things as well as our observation of other moving things in our environment, we develop “recurring structures and patterns” which he calls image schemas: “source-path-goal, up-down (verticality), into-out of, toward-away from, and straight-curved.” These image schemas are later discussed as patterns.

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3 Johnson, Meaning of Body, 208-218.
4 Ibid., xii.
5 Ibid., 19.
6 Ibid., 21.
of movement that enable symbolic thought, revealing the origins of abstract thinking and cognition in these schemas we internalize through our bodily movement.\(^7\)

Johnson also states that movements are also described by the “distinctive quality” of the movement: “dynamic qualities...for example, explosive, graceful, halting, weak, or jerky.”\(^8\) These qualitative words arise out of our experiences of movement felt and experienced by us in our environments. Johnson goes on to state that: “For example, tension has a meaning grounded in bodily exertion and felt muscular tension. Linearity derives its meaning from the spatial, directional qualities of bodily motion. Amplitude is meaningful to us first and foremost as a bodily phenomenon of expansion and contraction in the range of motion. Projection is learned first as a vectoral quality of certain forceful bodily actions.”\(^9\) He sums up his argument in this statement: “The nonconscious interactive processes make possible and are continuous with our conscious grasp of meaning. At some point, these meanings-in-the-making (“proto-meanings” or “immanent meanings,” if you will) can be consciously appropriated, and it is only then that we typically think of something as ‘meaningful’ to us.”\(^10\) But notice how these meanings cannot just pop into existence (arise in our consciousness) out of nothing and from nowhere. Instead, they must be grounded in our bodily connections with things, and they must be continuously “in the making” via our sensorimotor engagements. There is a continuity of process between these immanent meanings and our reflective understanding and employment of them.” Knowledge and cognition originates from becoming consciously aware of our unconscious bodily experience and interaction with our ever changing environment. Johnson’s argument is that our ability to think things originates in our bodily engagement with the world and the various qualities of these experiences.

\(^7\)Ibid., 135-144. Image Schemas, according to Johnson are not entirely mental or bodily. He evokes the American pragmatist philosopher, John Dewey’s, term “body-mind” to describe this phenomenon, Ibid., 139.
\(^8\) Ibid., 21.
\(^9\) Ibid., 25.
\(^10\) Ibid., 25.
These qualities of experience are important subjects of my work. By creating a physical work of art, I see myself as embodying experience through manipulating the form of an object. The object’s surface qualities, the intensity of color, sharp edges, etc., relay a quality of feeling or experience which is manifest in the materials I employ. I therefore see my work as a sort of embodied thought, which becomes meaningful as the viewer moves around in the space with the work.

Because of the primacy of bodily experience in creating meaning, Johnson places a significant importance on our emotional responses to our environment. Again, Johnson’s whole project (as well as mine in this section of the paper) is to dig down into the primary ways that meaning is made in order to forefront the affective and aesthetic modes of meaning as primary and irreducible to propositional logic; therefore, he goes on to describe the crucial role that emotions play in the process of meaning. He states, “…feeling an emotion is our principle way of becoming aware of changes in our body state, as our bodies respond to changes in their situation (both their internal and external situation).” 11 The emotions that we feel at a certain place or time are products of our changing perceptions, assessments, and internal monitoring systems. 12 Therefore, emotional responses are ways that our body is aware of our presence in the world which lead to various affective states which are triggered in our bodies from changes in our interior and/or exterior situations. These emotions entail qualities in the same way that our bodily movements become qualitative. “We know intuitively what it means to ‘be up’ and happy, just as we know what it means to ‘feel low’ when we are depressed.” 13 Johnson explains that these movements of feeling can be seen in our emotional response to music: “Music jumps, skips, hops, drags, speeds up, slows, flows, swells, and falls – just like the patterns of all our experiences, bodily and intellectual

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11 Ibid., 66.
12 Ibid., 66.
13 Ibid., 45.
alike.”14 He later applies this to other experience: This is true of all types of our experience, whether in music, painting, sculpture, dance, lovemaking, having a conversation, or taking a walk.15

It is clear from the above statement how Johnson seeks to privilege aesthetic experience as the most meaningful and primary way in which we understand the world. In Chapter 10 of *Meaning of the Body*, entitled “Art as Exemplar of Meaning Making,” he defends aesthetics against its endemic devaluations beginning in the Enlightenment.16 “By focusing primarily on faculties of the mind that give rise to judgments about beauty – especially the faculties known as imagination and feeling – these [Enlightenment] philosophers ceased to regard art as a way of worldmaking. Even worse, their faculty psychology relegated feelings and emotions to the secondary status of noncognitive and merely subjective bodily states, unfitted to ground genuine understanding and knowledge.”17 Johnson sees an erroneous, pandemic mistake made by the Enlightenment’s relegation of the aesthetic to secondary subjective feelings that do not belong to knowledge proper. He believes that this is precisely because of its irreducibility to propositional logic and semiotic subjugation. In other words, aesthetic experience as a form of knowledge does not play by the rules of the logician; but, rather, “Aesthetics concerns all of the things that go into meaning – form, expression, communication, qualities, emotion, feeling, value, purpose, and more.”18 Johnson’s emphasis on the importance, and primacy, of aesthetic experience as the grounds of meaning results in his privileging the realm of art as the “culmination” of aesthetic meaning. He co-opts a quote from philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer to reiterate this idea: “Thus at the end of our conceptual analysis of experience we can see what affinity there exists between the structure of experience as such and the mode of being of the aesthetic. The aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others, but represents the essence of experience itself...In the experience of art there is present

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14 Ibid., 45.
15 Ibid., 45.
16 Ibid., 45.
17 Ibid., 210
18 Ibid., 212.
a fullness of meaning which belongs not only to this particular content or object but rather stands for
the meaningful whole of life... The work of art is understood as the perfecting of the symbolic represen-
tation of life, towards which every experience tends.” Art is tied to the way we experience the world
because of its existence in the world. It acts on our bodies in a way that is felt by our senses, which are
the ground and beginning of our meaningful experiences as bodies. It acts aesthetically by revealing
qualities of experience back to the viewer as he or she moves his or her body through the space and
around the object at varying degrees of distance. Art is meaningful because it is experienced in a con-
crete way; even literary prose and poetic meter are experienced through the form rhythm they convey,
which coincides with our felt, lived experience. Art presents back to us experience as it acts upon our
already lived involvement with the world; evoking memories of being through its form and creating new
experiences which we absorb through our senses. Johnson concludes: “...meaning making in art is the
exemplary or even paradigmatic case of all human meaning-making. Since much of art makes meaning
without words or linguistic symbols, art reminds us that meaning is not the exclusive purview of lan-
guage. Indeed, linguistic meaning is parasitic on the primordial structures and processes of embodied
interaction, quality and feeling.”

In presenting Johnson’s work, my intent is to present a critical frame through which the discus-
sion of my work below can be seen. By emphasizing how meaning is made through bodily movement
through space and the concomitant qualitative affects which arise through sensory assessment, I have
provided the reader with an expectation that my artwork is to be understood as being meaningful in the
ways spoken about above. The works themselves are meant to be encountered in space and their ma-
terial and form provide the information that is being conveyed. My work is meant to speak without
words through forms and objects. I do not suggest that there is no value in speaking about my work; I

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21 Ibid., 218.
only wish to situate this speaking-about-my-work as a secondary feature that is not the primary way that my work is meant to “work.” By walking through the installation space, one encounters my work as physical objects which have bodies and forms which one relates to his or her own body. The various materials and forms created function by “incarnating a material gesture, concept or form. What I am trying to convey to a viewer is irreducible to the form itself. The work of art itself, as a material object, is the source of meaning, which is fundamentally aesthetic, and therefore irreducible to propositions and explanation (although it is ironic that I have profusely relied on these secondary methods to show why they are secondary).22

2.2 Erotic Comprehension

In a lecture series that he gives at the University of New South Wales,23 James K. A. Smith critiques the modern intellectualist model that has been adopted by modernity which views man as a primarily thinking thing (which he calls: “thinking thing-ism”) that began with Descartes. His critique of the intellectualist model is replaced by his call for a reconsideration and re-evaluation of the importance (and perhaps primacy) of the imagination as a “quasi-faculty that we have by which we construe the world that we inhabit on a pre-cognitive level, i.e. we make sense of our world on a register that is fundamentally aesthetic and because of that, intimately linked to our embodiment.”24

By stating that “we make sense of our world on a register that is fundamentally aesthetic,” Smith is drawing upon previous work of his where he has laid down a framework, in light of Saint Augus-

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22 I do not wish to say that there is no use in writing or speaking about my art. That view would be naïve and would miss the importance of reflection and critical thinking. I hope only to elevate the aesthetic as the fundamental way that we perceive our world, and, in turn show that all language and abstract though arise from this irreducible bodily base. My claim is that words are not useless or an unnecessary part of constructing meaning, but that they arise from our bodily engagement with the world. Words, since they are secondary will inevitably fail to fully capture something experienced on a bodily basis (emotions, sensations, aesthetic experience).
24 Ibid.
tine, where he states that human action is not determined primarily by what we think, but primarily by what we love, i.e. we are primarily driven by our desires which are embodied. Smith states, “As embodied creatures our orientation towards the world begins from and lives off of the fuel of our bodies, including the images of the world that are absorbed through our bodies.” Our bodies, according to Smith, are the sites through which we obtain a sort of “visceral logic”.

Smith uses the work of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in order to give structure to this focus on the body. He highlights Merleau-Ponty’s use of the term “praktagnosia” to designate a sort of “bodily-know how” that is pre-cognitive and perhaps even primary. This examination of Merleau-Ponty brings to light the way in which meaning is something more than propositional understanding. Smith gives a quote by Merleau-Ponty: “At this stage one begins to suspect a mode of perception, a kind of significance distinct from intellectual significance; not pure awareness of something. Erotic perception is not a cogitation aimed at a cogitatum. Through, one body, it aims at another body and takes place in the world not in a consciousness.” Smith highlights this idea of an “erotic comprehension” which takes place on a register that is outside propositional reasoning and intellectual understanding and functions, rather, on a bodily level of desire and love that are actually more visceral and, to Smith, more primary than cognitive thought.

Smith’s definition of an “erotic comprehension” plays into my work in a very rudimentary way. As mentioned above my work relies on its form (embodiment) as the source of its understanding. They are to be taken in on a visceral level, apart from a “higher” intellectual center. They impact the viewer in space, in the gallery installation, and therefore can be understood firstly as an experience based one’s bodily encounter with the objects. I see my work requiring this kind of “erotic comprehension” because they present the body of the viewer with their own body in space thus entailing a necessary interaction by which the body of the viewer is acted upon by the work, evoking a response and a “reading” through

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
its perception by the senses alone. In the installation of my work I have purposely refused labels and titles in order to enable this purely physical read by the viewer. I have refused any verbal supplements to the work in order to encourage a more active engagement with the work on the basis of its formal and material existence alone. By calling for an erotic comprehension, I do not mean a reading based on sexual desire, but that my work should be understood using the body and its senses (one could say a sensual reading). One can only understand my work through being in contact with it; by feeling its presence.

3 ON FORM

In order to begin to speak concretely about my work it has been necessary to give an account of the assumptions I take for granted while thinking about and making my work. These explications of meaning have been crucial guideposts for me in thinking about my work and how it is to be understood by me as well as by the viewing public. Therefore, my attempt has been to unearth the felt assumptions I have had making work so that my intentions are clarified and my work is unchained from a reductionist, propositional understanding that would result in my work becoming a mere illustration of a concept or concise statement to be understood in linguistic explication. It has been an invaluable investigation that has helped think about how art, especially my own, engages and “speaks” on its own terms. It has helped me re-evaluate my expectations on what art is and can do and how it does what it does and how it doesn’t do what it is asked to do at times.

I have only spoken about my work above briefly and abstractly above. I have reserved formal explication of specific works for the section below. Here I will begin to discuss concrete examples of my work, materials, and process.
3.1 Bodily evocations

“Every work of visual art is a representation of the body.” – James Elkins

3.1.1. sensations/secretions/sympathies

Above I have discussed how my work is meant to be understood through the viewer’s bodily encounter with the objects presented through evoking sensations and feeling. Here I wish to discuss other ways that I involve the body more intentionally in my work. In *Untitled (Triptych)* (Fig.3.1) I have a grouping of three distinct works. On the upper left hand there is a small wood panel covered in spackle. I have applied the spackle so that the texture is rough and spikey. From the bottom of the panel, a large rotund, pink bulb is hanging from the middle of the panel. It is covered in bright pink that stands in stark contrast to the white spackle. The contrast is not only chromatic, but also textural. The pink globule is a smooth shiny form that hangs from a matte chalky ground. To the right of this object is another work of similar scale. A slab of drywall is mounted to a wooden frame with a slanted void made at the bottom as if the drywall were misaligned before mounting. From this void, a large nail protrudes from an offset black square painted crudely on the wall. The nail (spike) is inserted into the wall at a perpendicular angle. Behind the drywall, coming down to touch the nail slightly is a small scrap of plywood shaped to look like a cartoonish drip of some sort. There is a play between surfaces between with the painted rectangle on the wall and the square frame partially covered with the drywall slab. Beneath these works in a central positioning between them rests a small shelf made out of mdf. From the surface of this shelf two diagonal structures rise and meet to form an equilateral triangle. The triangle supports have been covered in a grey-green adhesive material. The adhesive is applied from above and drips and congeals downward. Some of the adhesive has stayed on the supports while some rests below on the mdf shelf.

There is a sense of gravity created as the adhesive has dried in mid motion. Drips have become solid and waves of movement have ceased yet one still can recreate the motion.

I grouped these three works together because of the various ways in which they evoke bodily sensation through their formal elements. Each work has a vertical dimension: the hanging pink growth, the dripping black paint on the wall echoed by the artificial plywood drip shape, and the dripping adhesive sagging in suspended motion. There is a continued sense of being pulled down toward the ground. This sense of gravity is seen enacted in the works themselves, thus, creating the sensation in the body of the viewer. There is also a more explicit referencing of bodily forms in the shapes and materials. The pink bulbous form is reminiscent of intestines or tumorous growths, which is heightened by the bright pink color, and, its emergence out of the spackle references a hernia or evisceration. These references are meant to evoke sensations in the viewer which in turn call for an affective response. The adhesive below drips and congeals in the way that bodily matter or fluids might. The tops of the triangle stretch and mold like a skin while the drips below can evoke associations with spit, blood, semen, or shit. The panel with the nail, seen in close proximity to these bodily forms can also add to the visceral read. The nail enters a void enacting a penetrating action while the plywood drip, although static and rigid, still mimics a dripping down from behind a surface (or skin). Seen together (or even separately) these works create a scene in which bodily associations are inevitable. The viewer is invited to take part in these sensations through apprehending forms and creating base associations. The qualities of each action relate to the viewer’s body. In the way mentioned above in my discussion of Johnson, the viewer’s bodies are the site through which the meaning is created. Through this direct engagement with the body through formal features my work engages in the primary meaningful way a work of art can: through bodily sensation and implication.

James Elkins’ book, *Pictures of The Body: Pain and Metamorphosis* provides a helpful analysis of how people read works of art that forefront bodily sensation. The book is largely on how the body is
represented in art—“the ways bodies have been given pictorial form, and their varying relations to viewers.” Elkins starts off with a description of what he calls “second seeing.” This form of looking is, according to Elkins, a sort of restless seeing that is associated with the search for relatable bodies in one’s environment. When this looking fails to rest on a recognizable body, Elkins claims that we begin to see bodies into things. “In the absence of bodies, I think we embark on a search for body metaphors—for bodily lengths, weights, colors, textures, shapes, and movements.” By using bodily metaphors in my work, I see the viewer as taking part in this associative act; this restless need to see bodies into forms which do not explicitly represent them.

Elkins uses “pain” as a term that does not denote agony or unpleasant feeling, but rather uses “pain” in this book to refer to the experience of sensation itself “as opposed to the cognized memory or analysis or name of sensation.” Again, there is a focus on the somatic experience pitted against cognizant awareness and thought. Through this restless “second seeing,” which is responsible for seeing bodies into things, the viewer is compelled to empathize with the work and “feel into” it. Elkins implicates empathy with his broad definition of pain because pain for him is a way that we feel into a work of art.

“...emphatic reaction can also echo forms and events in the outside world: the “swelling” elicited by the hall is felt inside my body, not as a force on my body.” This interior sensation created by the body’s reaction to outside objects (most pertinently art here) is a way that I intend my work to elicit meaning. In the case of Untitled Triptych no action is taking place, but through empathetic engagement one feels (on the interior) movements created by the objects’ form. One is petitioned by the work to take part in

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28 Ibid., ix.
29 Ibid., 6.
30 Ibid., 6.
31 Ibid., 22.
32 Ibid., 24. Elkins states that because empathy is an automatic response “…empathy can help us understand how our bodies are partly our own, and partly owned by objects.” Ibid.,24.
33 Ibid., 24.
the gestures frozen in matter, or to relate to the pink paint dangling in space to an interior organ burst forth.

3.1.2 Discursive Abstraction

Though bodily associations abound there is no explicit representation of the body in my work. My work arrives at bodily metaphors through abstraction and oblique referencing. In this way I see much of my work taking part in what I call “discursive abstraction.” By this I am intending that my work not exist as a pure play of abstraction, but by consciously avoiding particular, easily identifiable representations, the work is open to multiple expansive “readings” which can go in multiple ways at once. By playing with abstract forms, materials, and gestures which are easily translated into bodily appendages and substances, my work aims at stimulating the viewer through making them try to find metaphors which correlate with the abstract elements presented in my work. But because the work is abstracted and not representational, the associations are fluid and can move freely as the viewer constructs the meaning through his or her engagement with the work. Elkins speaks about this phenomenon in response to Jackson Pollock’s painting Greyed Rainbow (Fig.3.2):

With no way to be certain whether a drip mark is an outline bounding a figure or a thin figure with its own outline, it would not be possible to be sure of the vocabulary of figural metaphors. But the body has many voices, and it can express itself through motions and ambiguous contours as well as disambiguated forms. There is no need to roughen the experience of the painting by trying to set out the bodily metaphors in any detail; it is enough to note that there are many kinds of gestures and associated emotions in the painting and that the body is the vehicle for their meaning. If we do not think of the body – no matter how faintly or quickly – the gestural language remains inaudible. [Emphasis mine]34

Thus, even when there is no image of the body, our “secondary seeing” restlessly associates the gestures, colors, and forms as bodily metaphors. The qualities of these formal elements also direct the affective response. In the case of Untitled (Triptych) there is a quality of gravity consistent with the work

34 Ibid., 15.
as well as particular qualities manifest in each separate piece, which, when empathized with by the viewer, causes a similar feeling of being pulled down or being bound to the forces of gravity. One of the most typical responses to my work is: “It looks like...” There are many different associations people make, but the associations they make are always somatic (even if not always human).

3.1.3. Analogic Skin

Elkins states that, “Abstraction, and abstract moments in all visual art, also involves the body when they exhibit the shapes, colors, and feel of the skin.” In the case of Pollock, his paintings all took place on the skin of the canvas, and also involved the skin of the paint. Elkins points out how the whole project of oil painting uses different skins as its primary medium. Seeing human qualities into both paint and the material support of painting coincides with an aspect of “second seeing” called “analogic seeing.” Analogic seeing is Elkins’ way of describing how non-figural elements are “read” as “analogies of the depicted human form.” Thus, in the absence of figural elements, an abstract painting is searched over for aspects that are analogous to the body, of which; the pliable canvas and the viscous paint are rich metaphors.

*Untitled (flaps)* (Fig. 3.3) takes advantage of this analogic mode of seeing. It consists of a rectangular support with two slender flaps which are cut from the surface of the support and extend out in space in slow upward curves. The whole surface and sides of the support are covered in thick adhesive applied in a chunky “painterly” manner, including the extended flaps. There are, here, no representations of a body or body parts, yet there are references to cutting and skin; and also the adhesive applied roughly to the surface gives the surface the continuity that we expect from a skin covering. There is also a rough, agitated texture reminiscent of a gelatinous interior or an abused exterior. Seen in the light of

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35 Ibid., 15.
36 Ibid., 15.
37 Ibid., 205.
analogic seeing it is obvious how the construal of bodily associations is inevitable. The scale also works to this advantage. The work is not much wider than an average human torso, and takes up about the same space more or less. This scaling enables bodily association by its close relationship to the human torso.

In *Untitled (Lurk)* (Fig. 3.4) there is a composite form of various limb-like extensions. There are rounded forms as well as narrow forms which emerge from the central vertical form. Each part seems like it could exist on its own as part of a different creature, but they are all included as parts which spring out of the same form. In order to unify the formal components of the sculpture, I have covered the surface in tape and adhesive. Both of these materials provide the sculpture with a sort of skin, a unifying skin which encompasses the disparate forms of the sculpture. The tape can be seen as a membrane, a sticky membrane which encloses and holds together separate parts. In the same way, the adhesive adheres to the surface of the sculpture, holding together and uniting the under parts. Both the adhesive and the tape have a similar olive brown color, which also is unitive. I use this skin as a way to cover the object which in turn fuses it and creates a body, covered in skin. Once the sculpture is read as a body having a skin, the forms which extend from the sculpture take on gestural characteristics. The bulbous protrusion can carry analogies to a sagging gut, or a breast. The extended limb with downward hanging protuberances can be seen as a mutated arm with vestigial outgrowths. The urge to anthropomorphize is irresistible in our search for figural analogues, which is continually frustrated by their refusal to take form because of their abstraction.

Elkins discusses what happens when one’s attempt to find analogues fails: “...I turn to the subject that affords the best approach to the mechanism of analogic seeing: the question of what happens when the eye is baffled and needs to go in search of analogies in order to understand what it sees. The result of that search, I think, is the history of monsters.”\(^{38}\) Elkins discusses how monsters are composed

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 212.
of composite parts; unicorns, mermaids, satyrs, minotaurs, etc.\textsuperscript{39} These monstrous creations are composed of different known parts which make up an assemblage of parts. This is a product of analogic seeing where, when faced with an incongruity, the mind fills the gap with known pieces. This is made harder when one is confronted with a monster or thing that is not easily dissected into analogous parts of recognizable objects. Elkins brings to mind the creatures that inhabit John Carpenter’s cult horror film \textit{The Thing} (Fig. 3.5) that morph and congeal into hybrid creatures whose forms are less recognizable and “gooey.”\textsuperscript{40} This confusion of form is enabled by the abundance of skin which enwraps the bodies unifying the monstrous shapes into one inseparable whole. I see this unification of mutant parts in \textit{Untitled (lurk)}. In the same way as Carpenter’s creatures are indecipherable because of their continuous flesh, \textit{Untitled (lurk)} becomes a similar united monstrosity by virtue of its continuous skin which makes the parts seem united and inseparable. Elkins calls this inability to find analogies “visual desperation.”\textsuperscript{41}

“'Visual desperation’ is a name for a peculiarly strained and anxious seeing that casts about, trying to construct analogies and retrieve an unknown form into the fold of vision. When it succeeds, we complacently classify what we’ve seen as human, animal, plant or fabulous beast. When it fails, we become blind – we see only chaos or trackless monstrosity.”\textsuperscript{42}

3.1.4 On Thingness

The idea of something being a “thing” or the state of being called “thingness” is an interesting idea that can be applied to my work. In his seminal essay “Thing Theory,” Bill Brown, states that, “Things are what we encounter, ideas are what we project.”\textsuperscript{43} He goes on to describe the precarious relationship between objects and things. Objects are what we think. They correspond to a mental idea of something.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 218.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 220.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 220.
For example, one might think about a table or chair. There is an idea of table or chair that exists and can be applied to various things which may or may not meet the minimal requirements to “be” a table or chair. One is reminded of the Platonic heavenly realm of the Ideal, which contain the immaterial, perfect forms from which earthly things can only err. Brown states, “We look through objects because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts.” The “discourse of objectivity” is a discourse of given facts. Objects are taken as given “objectivities” through which we are able to construe material things as something. We see through an alarm clock, a drill, a phone, a hammer. Things, on the other hand, are what the world is made up of. They are the actual stuff which surrounds us. We are reminded, according to Brown, that we are dealing with things when an object presents its own material contingency: “you cut your finger on a sheet of paper, you trip over some toy, you get bopped on the head by a falling nut. These are occasions outside the scene of phenomenological attention that nonetheless teaches you that you’re ‘caught up in things’ and that the ‘body is a thing among things.’”

A thing, Brown claims, carries with it a certain two-ness. First, a thing is not quite something: “the thing baldly encountered.” This carries with it a feeling of something which is “not quite apprehended.” This is experienced as a latency; something not yet formed. The second characteristic is an excess: “…what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects – their force as a sensuous presence, or as a metaphysical presence.” Here, Brown paints a picture of “things” as entailing both a lack (something that has yet to become an intelligible object), and an excessive quality which lies out of the bounds of objecthood; both an imminence

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44 Ibid., 4.
46 Ibid., 5.
and a transcendence. “...the thing seems to name the object just as it is even as it names some thing else.”

*Untitled* (fishclub) (Fig. 3.6) presents the viewer with this *thingness* by the way in which I have used abstracted forms to both reference certain objects while strategically short-circuiting interpretations by combining two forms together. The sculpture consists of a large bulbous “club-like” protrusion which extends from a curved croissant shaped semicircle. The resulting form is one that is incoherent and awkward. The sculpture is baseless and has no proper “bottom,” which enables it to be turned and situated in infinite ways in space. Part of the work is the way I encourage viewers to pick it up and handle it. There is no comfortable or satisfying way to grasp the sculpture causing the handler to turn and position the work in various positions in relation to his or her body. In this way the sculpture becomes “interpreted” not only by its appearance but by its relationship to the body. This is similar to the *Adaptives* by the late Viennese artist Franz West (fig. 3.7).

In showing the work to friends and colleagues, I have received many attempts to name the form. What results is invariably combining known objects in order to give account for the sculpture’s form and function, which is why the parenthetical title is “fishclub,” because of its uncanny resemblance to a club head attached to a fish tail. The difficulty in ascribing a name to the form is symptomatic of its *thingness*. It at once fails to present an identifiable object while at the same time exceeds any attempt at finalizing a satisfying interpretation.

I have also covered the surface with a thick skin of adhesive in the same way as *Untitled* (flaps) and *Untitled (lurk)* mentioned above. By coating many of my sculptures with this material, I am attempting to conceal what lies beneath, much in the same way as the DC comics character, Swamp Thing, (Fig. 3.8) is covered in green swamp goo, roots (which double as pulsing veins), and moss. This character was a fascination of mine as a child and still continues to be today. I am interested in what happens when

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47 Ibid., 5.
the human form (or any form) is covered by substances that obscure what lies beneath. In the case of Swamp Thing, his form is humanoid, but because his figure is obscured, he merits the title Swamp “Thing.” There is a distinct connection between his inherited thingness and his obscure covering. The covering obscures the clear distinctions of his bodily forms, preventing his comfortable identification by virtue of his excess; by which one might ask: Is he is not quite human or more than human? He is a thing.

The exhibition poster for Recent Works is notable as another example of the body taking on a certain grotesque excessiveness (Fig. 3.9). The poster consists of an engraving done by Hendrik Goltzius, a Dutch artist from the late 16th century entitled The Great Hercules (Fig. 3.10). The large, nude, male figure, which takes up most of the composition, possesses an extremely exaggerated musculature, so much so, that it seems that his whole physique takes on separate bulbous shapes. Every texture is embellished in a similar way, creating an extremely sensuous amalgam of surface elements which seem to become abstract and broken down. The body seems to be uncontainable by the feeble skin which houses each swollen form. The depicted figure thus attains a thingness through its exceeding the boundaries of typical human form. I chose this image because of this quality. As an announcement for my show, it felt a fitting lens through which my work to be viewed because of the reference to the body (a theme discussed in depth above) and also the grotesque nature of the print which coincides which the idea of discernible objects becoming abstracted and thing-ed.

3.1.5. Poetic Aberrations

In Untitled (philosopher) (Fig. 3.11), an underlying structure is covered in thick layers of subfloor adhesive. The layers of adhesive have dripped down from the top of the structure coagulating in masses at the top middle and bottom. The drips are suspended in between, creating stalactites which hang over the voids. There is a chaos of forms which one is obliged to find an order or analogous form (according
to Elkins’ “analogic seeing”). The parenthetical title for this sculpture is “philosopher.” This derives from a friend’s interpretation of the form as a head at the top, torso with folded hands in the middle, ending with a puddle of adhesive forming the gathered drapery of the figures “garb.” This superficial interpretation allies with what Jurgis Baltrusaitis termed “depraved perspectives.” In his book *Aberrations*, Baltrusaitis describes depraved perspectives as a state of mind in which one’s vision is “dominated by the desire, the passion, to see things in a preconceived manner...constructing a framework of adequate structures according to a precise and immutable viewpoint.”

*Aberrations* consists of a collection of fictions which developed around interpretations of appearances: the study of animal traits in humans based on physiognomy, the genesis of creation as revealed in images within stone, comparison of Gothic cathedrals to trees. The sculpture’s interpretation as the figure of a philosopher is due to this desire to interpret the surface appearances of things, which is the subject of Baltrusaitis’ research.

These aberrant fictions are the substance of legends which develop around the truth of appearances. The legends that develop are, according to Baltrusaitis, the combination of valid, speculative concepts combined with the raw appearances of things. In the case of *Untitled* (philosopher), the appearance of the surface is met with a need to interpret and create knowledge much in the same way as one might see in a piece of toast a miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary. These “aberrations” (a product of one’s depraved perspective) are a way in which one sees into base forms reflections of reality. This fictional interpretation takes on a more poetic truth than scientific fact. Baltrusaitis states, “It is at that point that the absolute power of fiction becomes clear.” Thus, empirical knowledge is trumped by the truth of fiction found in legend. It is this aspect of fictional (poetic) truth which functions in my work. Inert material objects can have no bearing on life unless by analogy they are made viable through mythologizing: an ineluctable part of all attempts to attain knowledge. Aberrations respond to the appear-

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ances of things, which may or may not reveal empirical “truth,” but the fiction created is no less important to knowledge.

3.2 On Materials and Process

Much of my work derives from and relies on the types of materials I employ in the construction of my work. Primarily, Recent Works, is a collection of sculptural objects, both wall bound and free standing, which are made from everyday materials. By everyday materials, I mean media which is not purchased at fine arts and crafts stores; not material that was meant to make “art.” I have intentionally veered away from such materials because of their prescribed methods of employment, which, for me, hinders innovation and experimentation.

This decision has been in part necessity and part happenstance. Through various experiences at construction jobs and everyday contact with trash, I have come into contact with a wide variety of materials which have been ready at hand (i.e. free). The availability of these materials (plywood, adhesive, house paint, duct tape, cardboard, caulk) played a crucial role. By being ready-at-hand they allow me to make work in response to the stuff given me at a particular moment. I respond to the present material through an active process. I begin each work with little plan in mind. Each action taken builds upon and informs the next. In this way the studio becomes a vital space where various materials are strewn about, creating a dynamic range of formal and material possibilities (Fig. 3.12)

My working method can be understood in light of the way that our bodies construct meaning by their movement through space, as well as our contact with moving or moveable objects described by Johnson above. Johnson’s model of meaning making coincides with the way I make manipulate materials in my studio. Much of the process of making for me includes moving back and forth between objects; comparing and contrasting different shapes and materials to find the moment when something “makes
sense.” This is why Johnson’s work on the aesthetic basis for meaning is valuable for understanding why my process yields meaningful forms without beginning with (or even ending with) a concise, clear-cut concept which can be fully explained. The work is made from the gut, and should be experienced by the gut on an aesthetic and irreducible register of experience. What I am trying to say is that through working and responding implicitly to the materials I gather in my studio, my work is understood by me during the process of making. By the end of the process, when I have pronounced a finished work, it reveals my manipulations of the materials which is both the process and meaning of the final work.

*Untitled (pink sock)*, is an example where my working method led me to the final product. The work consists of a thin wooden dowel rod extending about a foot from the wall. It is bent downward by the weight of the object attached to the end: a sea sponge with two finger-like tubes hanging downward soaked in pink house paint (fig. 3.13). This work began long before its execution on the beach when I spotted the sponge; I collected the sponge and brought it into my studio where it sat for two months before I had the thought to dip it in a can of pink paint. I stuck a stick in the base so it could hang to dry. The paint stuck to the end of the stick leaving the two pieces bonded together. I began to see what would be possible with the sponge and stick. As I held the stick at the end the sponge bent the stick downward. I liked the sense of gravity that was at play so I stuck the dowel in a hole I saw in the wall of my studio and the work was complete.

Another example is *Untitled (hummingbird)* (Fig. 3.14). This began as a cutout of pink foam. I then spray-painted the foam with gold paint which gave it a shiny, cavernous surface. This work was lying on my floor one day as I was using some adhesive for another project. The adhesive tube kept discharging after I laid it down on the floor and excreted a line of brown glue onto the surface of the gold plated foam. The adhesive also fell also onto a small scrap of ceiling panel which happened to form a perfectly balanced base for the work. I had a gold wire from a champagne bottle lying next to the united pair which I stuck into the foam to give it a section of lightness to counter the weighty line of adhesive.
This method of working is present in many more works. I have found that this method is a way in which I think through the materials. By this I mean that the materials give me a sort of base matter which reacts to various treatments and actions. I act up on the material, which causes an effect that informs the next action. I am not only “thinking” by acting upon the materials, but I am thinking along with the materials. The materials create a dialogue that I can enter into with an open ended telos. This produces unanticipated results where various actions and decisions lead to a final work which presents itself as a “formal concept”; an idea which is, above all, present in the material.

This idea of a formal concept is reminiscent of the mid-century artist Lucio Fontana. Fontana entitled almost all of his works Concetto Spaziale, which is Italian for “Spatial Concept.” Through the titles, Fontana revealed the close relationship between material manipulation and an idea. For example, Concetto Spaziale, Attesa from 1965 (Fig. 3.15) presents a typical example of Fontana’s favorite motif, the sliced canvas. The modest sized canvas is painted red and then cut down the center with a razor blade. The slit folds in, revealing the space behind the canvas. Fontana uses the canvas and slice as a way of thinking about space. He creates the hole as the content; in the act of slicing the surface of the canvas the work is given meaning; a meaning which is bound up with the work’s form as content. I see this same tendency in my own work where there is an accumulation of actions which is creates the content and concept. Again, my work is irreducibly bound up in stuff as an instance of the immanent thought.

3.3 On Provisionality (creaturely affirmation)

One of the main themes that pulses through is a feeling of things being contingent and unfinished. There is a sense of futility in the refined polished work of art that pervades my process. This feeling is echoed by much contemporary discourse. In “Notes on Metamodernism,” Timotheus Vermeulen
and Robin van den Akker present the present moment as one “oscillating between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, metamodernism.” They describe this “emerging structure of feeling” as “Inspired by a modern naiveté yet informed by postmodern skepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility.”

There is a conscious acknowledgment that whatever is done will always be incomplete.

This sensibility is also reminiscent of what Raphael Rubenstein has observed in “Provisional Painting.” Rubenstein’s article is an attempt to come to terms with a style of painting that presents what seem to be slapdash and unfinished paintings as finished products. He notes in the artists’ work he presents as possessing a feeling of impossibility by mentioning beginnings, erasures, mistakes, accidents, false starts, stutters, and failures. There exists in these paintings a sense of refusal and rejection of the idea of a finished work, but, rather, favors a presentation of the work in process.

In his follow up to this seminal writing, “Provisional Painting 2: To Rest Lightly on Earth,” Rubenstein discusses a similar instance with Alberto Giacometti’s frustration with finishing a painting. He retells an account in which Giacometti continually painted a model over and over, cancelling out the previous progress each time. In the end he tells of Giacometti’s deep dissatisfaction with painting; that it was an impossible feat. Giacometti’s paintings were never finished, only abandoned.

In both the “metamodern” moment and the work described as “provisional,” there is a noticeable resignation to finitude. I see this as a profound sentiment that is present in my own work through

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50 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
the materials I use as well as the levels of finish I carry out. In *Untitled* (pink grin) (Fig. 3.16), I have
carved a thin sheet of roughly cut insulation foam with a utility knife. The holes in the foam are jagged
and reveal the small crevices made by each knife cut. There is an abstract group of negative shapes
which seem to be in the process of revealing something which is not quite brought forth. Small inden-
tions from rough handling litter the impressionable surface. The work is finished, yet many of its quali-
ties remain in a relatively “unfinished” state. In another work *Untitled* (flight) (Fig. 3.17), a thin section of
plywood rises into the air from a wooden base. The base is covered in adhesive as the stick is glued and
wrapped in duct tape where it meets the base. The raw construction is revealed as the finished work,
and the process of making is fore fronted through the exposure of raw materials. Other sculptures in-
clude exposed tape, clamps for bases, and raw wooden pedestals (Fig. 3.18).

These formal elements speak of the provisional nature of the works, in which it has been im-
portant to me to leave them at this state. They relay a sense that these are materials which exist in the
world in a raw state and are subject to the passing of time much in the same way as we are. They give
up any attempts to be grand or slick finished objects; they intentionally fail because they are unrealized;
unfinished.

Ralph Rugoff in “Just Pathetic” discusses what counts for art which is self-consciously “pathetic.”
He discusses pathetic art in terms of both its humor and its materials and craftsmanship; “ones usually
treated as discardable trash and excluded from the discourse of ‘winning’.”

These works of art are con-
sciously “unheroic” and “often appear unfinished, as if they were merely the remnants of failed at-
ttempts to make art.”

There is much in common with my work and what Rugoff describes as “pathetic
art.” My use of trash and slapdash constructions intentionally present works that might entail such a
read. *Untitled* (Pleurants) (Fig. 3.19) is such an example. It consists of three discrete paper bags which
have been filled with yellow sprayfoam. The objects are grouped together on the floor where a spotlight

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55 Ibid., 3.
encircles them from above. The title entails a group of mourners gathered together to weep; from which, one may draw allusions between the spewing foam and cathartic purging. Although the work is pathetic in the sense that its materials are non-heroic or traditionally trash and utilitarian (materials not easily sublimated), I would posit that there is a way in which these works can be seen as possessing a sincerity that would align more with the “metamodern” oscillation between irony and hopeful creation; a work that is self-consciously aware of its pathetic nature yet still aims at presenting itself as serious.

I find Vermulen and van den Akker’s “oscillation” theory in line with the phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of painting in his essay “Eye and Mind.” In this essay, he explores painting as form of seeing. Extending the idea of Heidegger’s conception of human reality as Being-in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty points out that not only do we see things which are in the world, but by this act of perception, we see ourselves.56 Painting, then, is contingent upon the vision of the painter, who is bound up in his or her particular situation. This contingency leads Merleau-Ponty to pronounce the act of painting, by nature, incomplete: “The idea of universal painting, of a totalization of painting, of painting’s being fully and definitively accomplished is an idea bereft of sense. For painters, if any remain, the world will always be yet to be painted; even if its lasts millions of years...It will all end without having been completed.”57 This incompleteness is, to Merleau-Ponty, an inevitable state of Being because of the nature of our embodiment; our always contingent nature by virtue of our finitude: “…in the end, we are never in a position to take stock of everything objectively or to think of progress in itself; and that the whole of human history is, in a certain sense, stationary...Is this not the highest point of reason, to realize that the soil beneath our feet is shifting, to pompously call ‘interrogation’ what is only a persistent state of stupor, to call ‘research’ or ‘quest’ what is only trudging in a circle, to call ‘Being’ that which never fully is?” This challenge to objectivity and progress issued here is not an occasion for nihilism or

57 Ibid., 148.
apathy; but, rather a call for the acceptance of the “unfinished” nature of, not only painting, but life in general. He states, “But this disappointment issues from that spurious fantasy which claims for itself a positivity capable of making up for its own emptiness. It is the regret of not being everything, and a rather groundless regret at that...If no painting completes painting, if no work is itself ever absolutely completed, still, each creation changes, alters, clarifies, deepens, confirms, exalts, re-creates, or creates by anticipation all the others.”

This rejection of progress does not reject action. Here the Metamodern feeling of immanent failure yet hopeful drive is echoed, as well as Rubenstein’s “provisional” painters and their unfinished, finished labors. Rugoff’s pathetic art is also a case where work seems to take on a purposefully failed attitude in response to the grand final gesture. Each instance acknowledges the inevitability of failure. My work also entails this embrace of the finite with its unfinished surfaces and base material. In Untitled (miss) (Fig. 3.20) two linear forms rise from a small slab of plywood. One of the extended forms rises and ends in a loop. The other extends to penetrate the void created by the other form. Both are modeled roughly out of white epoxy clay which is left bare and bumpy. There is a large gap between the slender point of the penetrating form and the sides of the loop form. Although there is a penetration, there is no contact with the other. Penetration entails a physical contact between two separate objects, but here there is no contact; the objects fail to touch. Not only do the surfaces of the sculpture remain “unfinished” but the action taking place seems to be frozen in a state of incomplete consummation. Here there is a feeling of striving to achieve something impossible. It is impossible for the two objects to touch because of the size of the void and the slenderness of the point. The act is impossible and is always already incomplete yet there is still an attempt.

The drawings also entail a provisional character through their presentation on the boards on which they were executed. Untitled (heap) (Fig. 3.21) consists of a small, graphite drawing of inter-

58 Ibid., 149. One is reminded of Yves Alan Bois’ statement that painting is the task of mourning.
twined rounded forms. Some of the tendril shapes toward the central agglomeration are only partially rendered. The work is presented on a shelf taped onto the plywood backboard. By presenting the tape and board with the drawing I have revealed the process of making. Through this one can imagine the drawing being taken down, reworked and re-positioned again, never to reach its final state.

3.3.1 Trauma of the Holy

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” – Isaiah 6:5\textsuperscript{59}

In\textsuperscript{60} The Idea of the Holy, Rudolf Otto contends for an appreciation of the irrational experience in religious practice. The “numinous” (the term he coins for the experience), for Otto, refers to a sense or a state of awareness of the presence of the completely Other or the “Holy”. The experience of the numinous is characterized by a moment or feeling which is outside of all rational or moral experience, which for Otto is the root and source of religious activity. The numinous is described by Otto as a feeling of \textit{mysterium tremendum}; of an irrational, mysterious and awe-ful dread. This dread (completely outside our rational experiences of fear and terror) creates an awareness, a “creature-feeling” or “creature consciousness,” in which something, completely outside of the self, submerges and overwhelms a person in an acute awareness of his or her own nothingness. One’s finiteness stands in contrast to “that which is supreme above all creatures.”\textsuperscript{60} This, Otto claims, is the experience of the presence of the Holy (i.e. God).

The \textit{mysterium tremendum} (mysterious tremor) is thus that in which the supra-rational, numinous moment arouses the feeling of complete “impotence and general nothingness as against overpow-

\textsuperscript{59} Isaiah 6:5 KJV

ering might, dust and ashes as against ‘majesty’.\textsuperscript{61} One is laid bare in the exposure of mere flesh to the overwhelming presence of the “Wholly Other,” and concomitantly feels a sense of absolute “profaneness.” This sense of one’s own profaneness in the presence of the numinous is not a mere acknowledgement of sin or transgression, but, it goes deeper into one’s experience of complete dependence and self-deprecation as a creature, who feels, with deep acuteness, his or her own impotence before “that which is supreme above all creatures.”\textsuperscript{62}

The experience of one’s profaneness, according to Otto, is a kind of appreciation where the creature acknowledges: “\textit{Tu solus sanctus}.”\textsuperscript{63} Thus, the declaration of profaneness takes on the form of praise in acknowledging one’s humility and finitude when faced with the Infinite. There is a kind of joy that one achieves in the declaration of finitude and complete helplessness; a release from strife and a dependence upon the \textit{Wholly Other}.

This joy is, though, is still accompanied by the “trauma” of the Holy in which one is made aware of his or her own mortality and the threat of being undone. The rational mind is faced with the supra-rational which threatens all \textit{knowns} with a “cloud of unknowing.”\textsuperscript{64} This is one of the themes which manifests itself manifest in my work. There is a religious nature in my work which is aimed at contemplating the nature of our being in the world, which entails our finite bodies and their traumatic encounter with the divine.

I see much of my work resonating with Otto’s description of numinous experience of the Holy in their profane forms and materials. This profane nature of my work aims at acknowledging and accepting the frailty of our bodily condition. It also presents works which may be seen as enacting inner states of

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 51. “For Thou alone are Holy.”
\textsuperscript{64} The term “cloud of unknowing” is the title of a Medieval work of literature by an unknown author which proposes the contemplative method of the \textit{via negativa}, which one devests his or her mind of all concepts and images which leads to the “mysterious and unfathomable face of God Himself.”

http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/clunintr.htm
experience of the profaneness of one’s finite nature in contrast to that which is Infinite and “supremely above all.” For this reason, many of my works are poorly constructed and left in a contingent state. Also, the gestures in my works are often weak gestures, ones succumbing to gravity and failing to stand straight. The surfaces are often violated, as in Untitled (nod) (Fig. 3.22). The work consists of a thing rectangular block of Styrofoam which is mounted atop a thin metal wire. The wire curves down from the block and winds into a circular shape which forms the base of the sculpture. The Styrofoam has been eaten away in sections by gold spray-paint which forms cavernous pits in the pristine geometric shape. The block leans forward perched on the end of the wire base, taking on a “nod-like” gesture. The gold paint makes analogies with holy icons and gold leaf used to denote a sacred space. The gold paint lines the interior pits which it created. There is a sense of trauma created by the process of the application of the gold (sacred) paint. This presents a form which can be experienced, in a way, as a form which is constructed out of profane materials and has undergone a sort of traumatic contact with an outside force. I see this as relating to the “creaturely consciousness” which is created in the numinous experience, in which one experiences a trauma in the contact with the Holy; one seen in the sculpture as bodily dissolution. This bodily dissolution can be allied with the dissolution of the rational and ethical mind in the experience of the mysterium tremendum.

Untitled (dross) (Fig. 3.23) features a similar action. This work consists of a carved foam sheet which has been painted white. There are two thin extensions of foam which extend downwards past the uncarved sections of the work. Again, gold spray-paint covers the roughly carved surfaces of the extensions and the interior adjacent surfaces. This work is installed next to a reproduction of Goya’s The Agony in the Garden (Fig. 3.24). The reproduction contains the painting in which Christ is leaning forward on his knees as an angel appears from the upper left of the frame presenting Christ with a golden goblet. Behind the angel rods of golden light emanate downward in the direction of Christ. This is a scene of Christ’s traumatic experience before his crucifixion; it is characterized with a golden light. Formally the
rays of light in the reproduction correspond to the golden extensions in the foam carving. The white
ground of the sculpture is echoed by the white robe of Christ. The extensions of the sculpture seem to
be in the act of being structurally dissolved and dripping downward which corresponds to Christ’s pos-
ture in the reproduction. There is here a corresponding theme of the trauma experienced by the sculp-
ture, undoing the form and dissolving structure, and the golden rays of light and Christ's bent posture in
response to the Angel’s presentation of the cup of suffering. The sculpture presents a kind of echoing of
the scene of the reproduction. The grouping presents two formally different, yet analogous moments of
experience with the divine; both present an instance of trauma in response to a numinous experience of
the Holy.

4 ON INSTALLATION (CURATORIAL CHOICES)

I have so far discussed works from Recent Works individually. Now I turn to the actual exhibition itself
and the decisions I made concerning the works included as well as their placement and installation. In
order to do this, I am going to examine the gallery space itself, and then the works included and how the
gallery allows them to function in the way I have intended.

4.1 The Gallery as Liturgical Space

“Art is liturgy.” – Paul Thek

“I want to make a sacred space.” – Robert Gober

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65 Harald Szeemann, “Interview with Paul Thek: Duisburg, December 12, 1973,” in Harald Falckenberg and
The gallery or museum has become the vehicle through which objects receive their status as “art.” What we call art today gains its “artful” status by its separation from other objects in the world through the walls of the exhibition space. Before, in the West, objects achieved this elevated status through religious institutions and later through the state. The objects served as constitutive elements of religious ceremonies and dogma, as well as markers of political ideology. The modern art museum and art gallery sought to deny the religious or political aura of objects of the past by placing them within a context-less, archival space; existing “purely” as art, without the archaic trappings. This move was intentionally iconoclastic, aimed at securing the autonomy of the work of art in and of itself (outside of the images proliferated by the previous institutions). The development of the modern art gallery as a neutral space with blank white walls was an attempt to forefront the art object as the autonomous work for contemplation of itself. But, although the “white cube” has eschewed any particular (meta)narrative claims, it remains subservient to the ritualistic nature of the previous institutions it allegedly undermined.

Carol Duncan’s essay, “The Art Museum as Ritual,” speaks about the space created by an art museum as being one of a “ritualistic” character. Duncan also notes how the architecture of many museums borrows from monumental ceremonial constructions from antiquity, but not only do many museums merely look like ceremonial structures; they also are a space where rituals take place. He speaks on the museum as a space that is marked off and set apart for a specific purpose and a special quality of attention that is apart from the everyday experience of life.67 The museum thus provides a ritualistic frame which creates in viewers an expectant mood through which they are made more receptive to experiencing the work inside. Duncan speaks of “liminality” (a term strongly tied to ritual) as a condition of the museum experience. The environment creates an experience that is “betwixt and between” the eve-

ryday, normative experience of social life and commerce which opens the viewer’s reception to aesthetic experience.\textsuperscript{68}

Duncan also explicates the importance of performing the ritual in the space. Thus, the viewer’s movements through the space are similar to that of a religious ritual: “In art museums, it is the visitors who enact the ritual. The museum’s sequenced spaces and arrangements of objects, its lighting and architectural details provide both the stage set and the script...The situation resembles in some respects certain medieval cathedrals where pilgrims followed a structured narrative route through the interior, stopping at prescribed points for prayer and contemplation.”\textsuperscript{69}

The art museum or gallery thus creates a certain narrative around the objects inside, which sets them apart from other objects and structures a new way of engagement with the works through our performance of the ritual. James K.A. Smith describes this intersection of the body and narrative as the nature of liturgy. In a liturgy our bodies are directed through a system of actions which relate to a specific embodied narrative of the world. The liturgy, then, is an instance where a narrative takes hold on our bodies in a way that is formative. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s term \textit{habitus} to describe “the complex of inclinations and dispositions that make us lean into the world with a habituated momentum in in certain directions,”\textsuperscript{70} Smith claims that this inclination to the world is what is formed by various liturgical practices both secular and religious. Seen in relation to Duncan’s description of the museum as a space where viewers engage in a liturgical act, the liminality produced by the museum enables a (re)formation of the viewer’s orientation to the world by the enactment of an intentional liturgical performance.

In \textit{God in the Gallery}, Daniel Siedell discusses the relationship between various contemporary art practices and their relationship to religious practice. He calls attention to Duchamp’s explanation of his readymades as “magic.” The object becomes art (magically) by its relationship to a certain context

\begin{footnotes}
\item[68] Ibid., 119.
\item[69] Ibid., 120.
\end{footnotes}
and, therefore its meaning becomes contingent upon a certain milieu of connections to other objects, practices, and environments. Siedell compares this contingency of the readymade with icons, relics, and other religious accoutrements which are made meaningful by their relationship to a whole context of belief and religious practice which takes place in a holy setting. This discussion entails an examination of various contemporary artists who rely on the gallery as a place in which objects, practices and environments are employed to create a sacred space. He speaks about contemporary art practices which not only care about the actual objects which are exhibited, but he way in which they are constitutive of a whole environment, “thus seeking to create personal aesthetic environments, in which discrete parts of their work, such as sculpture, photographs, drawings, and paintings, fit together in relationship with one another, providing a comprehensive environment in which an overarching idea is embodied throughout.”

Siedell’s discussion of contemporary art which seeks to provide a “religious” environment calls to attention the work of Robert Gober, specifically the installation at Matthew Marks Gallery in 2005 (Fig. 4.1). The installation features an entire room filled with various objects alighted in aisles on both sides of the gallery space. The aisles are introduced by a trash can with a priest’s collar resting on top with a newspaper clipping. The aisles are made up of various objects, fruit, diapers, an egg crate, which are placed atop bronze castings of Styrofoam blocks. At the end of the procession of objects is a headless crucifix about two-thirds the size of a human body with two streams of water flowing out of either breast. Gober, here, is not only taking advantage of the religious nature of the gallery setting, he is making it explicit by his arrangement of objects in aisles, and also by the use of religious symbols. The other objects are not only seen as set apart for a special experience, but they are also cast in a religious frame through the use of Christian iconography.

72 Ibid., 101.
Gober’s installation can be understood as creating a liturgical space through which viewers are encouraged to contemplate on the appropriated objects and altered traditional imagery. The space is the vehicle for the transformation of the works inside. They are sacralized by the gallery; made “holy.” Another notable precursor to Gober is the artist Paul Thek. Thek created massive and immersive installations from construction materials and found objects. One example is the installation Pyramid (Fig. 4.2). This immersive installation consisted of a ramshackle walkway which rose over a dirt filled gallery floor littered with lit candles. The walkway led up to a pyramidal structure made from chicken wire and cladded with newspaper, from which small leafless trees rose out of gaps in the structure. One could enter into the dilapidated structure, and, as the title suggests, could contemplate existential questions on the preservation of life, death, and the possibility of resurrection. There is a processional quality to the installation, much in the same way as Catholic processional ceremonies which consist of walking down the nave of a cathedral to receive the Eucharist. Thek was an embattled Catholic who at times seemed to flutter between belief and apostasy. Much of his work contains religious themes which seem to be able to be taken in multiple ways, but his installations always kept a door open for the miraculous instant where matter could reveal something beyond its profane existence; what C.S. Lewis called “amphibious experience,” where the relationship between the material and the spiritual becomes seamless.73

Thek and Gober both saw the potential of the gallery as a vehicle for creating a sacred environment which aimed at presenting a particular unified vision of the world within. This vision of the religious implications of the gallery (or museum) is particularly relevant to the discussion of my exhibition, Recent Works. The show consists of various groupings of objects which hang from the wall, protrude from the wall, rest on shelves and a low table, lean to the wall, and stand freely on the ground (Fig. 4.3). The works are arranged sporadically in stations which are integrated into a whole installation via the gallery space conceived as a whole. In this way each of the works are seen as existing as parts of a whole.

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73 Ibid., 91.
unified vision. The gallery is a space where the objects I have placed into it take on an enchanted aura because of the ritualistic nature of the gallery setting described above. Thus as the viewer moves through the space he or she interacts with the works much in the way that the pilgrim interacted with various religious artifacts in the sacred space of the cathedral described by Duncan. The works within the installation create a liturgy of sorts, wherein, one’s bodily movement through space is affected by the objects’ physicality as well as the spatial arrangement of each station. As one walks around the low table the objects speak at different volumes depending on the body’s proximity to the work (Fig. 4.4). Different positions in the gallery reveal different views of the work which create new combinations of objects and new associations (Fig. 4.5). The more one moves around the space the more the objects merge together to create a unified **habitus** through which to see the objects as well as the world outside, echoing the installations of both Gober and Thek. I also use reproductions of religious works of art to, like Gober, make the connection between religious iconography and the works presented in the space.

That *Recent Works* is seen as an installation is important to the way I intend my work to function. In “Art and Money” Boris Groys examines the way in which an art installation transforms the space of the gallery from an individual experience to a communal experience. The installation makes the space itself the medium through which the works are experienced as part of the communal space of the gallery, where visitors become aware of their body in relationship to the other bodies in the space as well as anything placed within the space. Through the installation, I present the gallery as the “holistic, totalizing space of the artwork” which reveals the materiality of the works placed within, as well as the materiality of our bodies. By demonstrating the materiality of the art objects, the installation is able to proclaim the things which exist within “beyond their exchange value.”

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tion where the individual works of art become integrated into the gallery space, the experience of the totality of the space is highlighted and engulfs the work into a non-commodifiable experience. This strategy is consciously employed in *Recent Works* where the arrangements of the objects as a whole presents them, not as commodities to be consumed individually, but as constitutive of an environment, taking place in real space.

The installation, for Groys, exists as a way of rethinking Walter Benjamin’s loss of aura, which relates to an object’s “sacral” nature created by its inscription to a particular place and setting. By the exhibiting (and reproduction) of various objects in various spaces, an object loses its particular “aura.” But, by creating an installation, objects are inscribed into a “topologically defined here and now.” The installation re-creates the objects’ aura by fixing them into the space of the exhibition, which according to Groys, does “something mysterious, quasi-religious.” The space of the gallery is the actual medium “just as it is in churches and temples.”

4.2 Reproductions

“Every exhibition tells a story, by directing the viewer through the exhibition in a particular order; the exhibition space is always a narrative space.” – Boris Groys

I have provided above an account of the gallery as a space in which there is a religiosity attached to both the space itself and the objects which are placed inside. The gallery takes the form of a ritual

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*agree that works of art which function aesthetically necessarily engender commodification, but rather commodification is a product of the art market not the aesthetic nature of works of art.*


76 Ibid., 165.

77 Ibid., 166.

through which the installation provides the substance of the liturgy to be enacted. In this section I will
describe the groupings of the objects of the installation which comprises Recent Works and the nature
of the liturgy revealed.

One of the most significant choices that I have made in the installation is the inclusion of repro-
duced images, some of which have already been discussed above. The reproductions are spread out
among the groupings work in the show, comprising crucial components of the form and content. I have
mentioned above how Smith has emphasized the way narrative structure becomes a crucial component
of liturgy. The reproductions are thus attempts to cast a conceptual net around the objects in the show,
thus co-opting the narratives entailed by the reproductions as lenses through which the objects can be
interpreted, and the specific liturgical embodiment of the show can be referenced. Also, by including
images of pictorial art from the past, I am aiming at establishing a connection between the present
works and the works represented, thus encouraging a reading of the objects as continuing in the same
discourse.

*Untitled* (Fig. 4.6) consists of a single punctuation of gold spray paint and a pink linear pro-
jection coming off of the wall. The gold paint is over sprayed and drips down the face of the wall. From
the center of the gold paint a thin, slightly rutted line of bright pink extends out into space gently curv-
ing downward as if succumbing to gravity. Above the work is a torn out reproduction of a painting which
contains a mother and three children, one of whom is breast feeding. I do not know who painted this or
what scene it is exactly. I found the image and tore it out of a book I cannot find. What is important,
however, is the subject matter and the formal elements.

Both the colors found in the reproduction and the colors found in the image are parallel. The
gold spray-paint is echoed in the gold tone of the image, created by the color of the woman’s shawl, the
golden hair of the children, and the overall warmth of the light. The woman is painted in a pale flesh
tone echoing the white wall with the pink gown, cheeks, noses and lips connecting the image with the
bright pink spurt extending out from the wall. This established formal link allows a link to be drawn between subject matter and content. The image seems to be of a mother, possibly the Holy mother, Mary, nursing three young male children; one of which, possibly the Christ child, is suckling at the woman’s breast. Seen in concert with the pink spout and gold drip, the materials take on a metaphorical relationship to bodily fluids, notably milk and blood. The pink color of the arced form resembles blood rather than breast milk, but the blood metaphor is related to the act of nourishment through its proximity to the image and the formal links already mentioned. Due to the religious nature of the image and the association of the subject matter with Mary and the Christ, this act of metaphorical blood shooting from the wall can be seen as somehow depicting a flowing wound of Christ, which is also a source of nourishment in Christian religion.

The parallel between the body of Christ as a source of nourishment and a breastfeeding mother is highlighted by Caroline Walker Bynum. In “The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,” Bynum highlights various examples where the wound of Christ becomes a metaphorical breast issuing forth its sanguine lactation. In one such example (Fig. 4.7), Christ sits on a throne and is clothed in an ornate vestment reaching down with the host to administer communion to a nun, while the other hand of Christ reached across his body up to his right breast, where his hand opens a slit in the vestment, revealing Christ’s wound in the place of a breast. Bynum argues that the body of Christ, during the middle ages, came to be understood as possessing both male and female characteristics, most notably the ability to feed believers through the lactating wound in the same way as a female breast gives forth milk. This analogy between the life giving milk of a mother and the life-giving blood of Christ’s death is seen in Untitled (font). By pairing the work with the image of a mother feeding, I evoke a comparison and dialogue.

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80 Ibid., 430-434.
between life and sacrifice, and the generative qualities of the body, even through the process of death; which for the Christian is not without the hope of Resurrection.

In the far left corner of the exhibition space, there is a large collection of found wood planks, cardboard tubes, and shiny insulation foam, all of which are leaned against the corner of the space on top of a pile of sawdust created during the construction of the table for the sculptures (Fig. 4.8). A long rope is strewn across the pile which ends on the floor tied to a group of broken ceiling tiles. To the left of the pile is a wrinkled reproduction of Rembrandt’s etching *The Descent from the Cross* (Fig.4.9), and directly below the reproduction rests an open bucket of bright pink paint. The scene created by the pile of boards, rope, and sawdust is echoed in the formal aspects of the reproduction of Christ’s descent. The two features of this group, the material grouping and the reproduction, activate each other by proximity and formal similarity; recalling Baltrusaitis’ “depraved perspectives.”

The pile of refuse in the corner takes becomes associated with the scene in the image. The feeble body of Christ in contrast to the rigid cross is echoed by the winding rope on top of the stiff boards, ending in the bound and broken ceiling tiles resting on the floor. Here the reproduction introduces the narrative of the crucifixion onto the reading of the profane objects. The past event is brought into the here and now by the actual presence of the objects in the corner of the gallery, thus the installation re-auratizes the reproduction, which in turn auratizes the inert objects.

The image of Christ’s descent is positioned directly over the open pink paint bucket, suggesting the body of Christ will end up finding its resting place amidst the contents of the bucket. The theological significance of the Crucifixion is that Christ became accursed on behalf of humanity. The Holy Christ became profane on the cross, bearing the sins of the world. Therefore the profane mass of objects and the open paint bucket can be seen as symbolic of the event taking place in the image. The pink paint also evokes flaccid flesh and failure, and also waste. The paint in the bucket is house paint, a utilitarian

substance, which has been left open to cure in the air, wasting its usefulness. In the same way the sacri-
ifice of the paint can be seen as corresponding to the sacrifice of Christ.

Each of the reproductions in the show present images which are religious in nature, and also
images which are images of bodies. These images explicitly present bodies where my work leaves them
abstract, or only obliquely referenced. These pictured bodies function to comment on the subject mat-
ter which my work entails: the finite body. Not only do the representations serve to present pictures of
bodies, but they present the body as a site in which one experiences the divine. Through the incarna-
tion, God and man were joined together; the Holy inhabiting the profane form thus perfecting the flesh.
In this light, I hope to imbue the profane objects of the exhibition as a form of incarnation, where the
materiality of the body (both the “body” of the works and the body of the viewer), although finite, is a
space of divine revelation. This sacramental view of the material world (bodies included) is decisively
Catholic. I have mentioned how both Thek and Gober maintained a sort of Catholic imagination in their
work by using material object to create a sacred space. I have also described how my work is an attempt
to imbue religious meaning into matter. This affirmation of the body is also relevant to my discussion
above on the bodily basis of meaning by Johnson. Johnson’s emphasis on the body as the way in which
we know things is complementary to this Catholic view. In this way I see my work as entailing a latent
Catholicism which sees matter as an occasion for spiritual materialization. I thus reject the Protestant
denial of the body and its pleasures, and embrace the sensuality manifest in the Catholic imagination.

4.3 Groupings

Many of the works in the exhibition are arranged in close proximity to other works, comprising
specific groups of objects. This strategy is employed as a means by which the separate works, when in
close proximity to others, begin to “cross pollinate” the works around them. Figure 4.10 shows a group-
ing of five different objects and a photographic reproduction. There is a small shelf which houses two objects, a small section of a paper bag on the right and a section of foam covered in adhesive mounted on a pencil with a clamp as the base on the left. To the upper right is a section of cardboard covered lightly with adhesive mounted to a circular section of plywood. *Untitled (pink sock)* is directly above the shelf protruding from the wall above the rest of the objects. To the left of the shelf is a reproduction of Goya’s *The Agony in the Garden* with *Untitled (dross)* to the left hung on the same level. By grouping objects together on the wall I create a sort of pictorial space in which the objects, seen as a group, can be seen as existing as somewhat of a still life image. The proximity of the objects unites them in space allowing one’s gaze to cycle through the works creating loose connections between the objects. There is an oblique narrative which emerges amidst the objects. *Untitled (pink sock)* can be seen as foreshadowing a later event of Christ’s hanging from the cross or it can be seen as a present representation of the state of agony. I do not wish to lock down any interpretation of the objects which is why the works are arranged in such a way that entails a circular looking from object to object, where one work is constantly forming and re-forming the narrative of the others.

To the right of this grouping of objects is another group of works resting on and above a long slender shelf (Fig. 4.11). There are two groups of work on either side of the shelf with a large negative space in between. On the left is a pair of drawings mounted on wooden boards leaning against the wall. Directly above the drawing on the right is a thin wooden box with slats creating the face of the box. From behind the slats emerges bright orange spray foam that has forced its way through the thin slats. The shapes created by the foam are echoed in the soft, visceral shapes rendered in the drawings, revealing similar forms in both pictorial space and real space at the same time. The frozen action in the foam inhabits the drawings, enabling the viewer to imagine the drawings coming to life.

On the left side of the shelf there is a grouping of three smaller objects: a potato chip bag turned inside out, a large nail standing on its head, and a small adhesive covered sculpture. These ob-
jects, again, create a sort still life which allows the objects to create associations between their forms. The bag can be seen as a shroud of sorts, maybe a death shroud placed over the head. The erect, rigid nail contrasts the frailness of the thin bag while also possibly referencing crucifixion. The sculpture extends out at the top to form a broad appendage which, seen in light of the other objects, takes on the semblance of an axe head. Above the shelf is a white cocoon like form coming out of the wall. The white sculpture references the whiteness of the wall and is attached in such a way that the work seems to be an actual extension of the wall itself. Formally the bulbous shape resembles an enlarged form from the drawings. The flaccid extension overhangs the shelf as a part of the set, adding to the possible references which create the group of objects. The space around it isolates it from the rest of the objects, creating allusions to a lone appendage succumbing to gravity in lifeless submission. Each object becomes a structuring part of the interpretation of the other objects. The works are separate, but their proximity encourages altered readings in response to the whole group as the contextual structure.

I have, throughout the exhibit, seamlessly incorporated forms into the wall (Figs. 4.12 and 4.13). By incorporating the actual walls of the space, the works explicitly integrate the walls of the space into the body of work presented in Recent Works. This is one strategy I have employed which allows the whole space to become united as an installation. The works, therefore, do not only exist in the space, but become part of the space. The walls also take on an enchanted nature, where objects are seen as emerging out from behind. There is a partial emergence, revealing something which was repressed behind the walls; an instance of the “uncanny.” The things are in the process of becoming, much in the way that the sculptures can be seen as bodies in a state of metamorphosis.

I have also avoided labels in the show in order to present the physicality of the works apart from any verbal directives. By doing this, the viewer is met directly with the forms and the act of interpretation of the works becomes a sort of free association based of the arrangement of the work. I employ this method in order to cut down on the intrusion of language to make sense of the works. By presenting a
title, the interpretation of the work takes a prescribed path, which does not interest me. What does interest me is the way that the aesthetic nature of an object speaks on a level that is apart from linguistic reduction. This goes back to the description given above by Johnson, where meaning is most direct when tied to aesthetic experience, which acts on the body, not the rational capabilities engendered by language.\(^{81}\)

I also wish to encourage contemplation on the works in the show. By not giving the viewer a caption, he or she is forced to reflect on the object’s aesthetic nature. This entails a work of reflection in a space not littered by verbal directives. I see the space taking on the a form of contemplative nature, where the “silence” forces the viewer to rely on his or her own experience as the interpretive frame. I see this as being an occasion for my work to become part of a personal, internal experience of contemplation of the themes presented in the work, which activates the viewer’s own subjectivity.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have sought to give an account of the conceptual underpinnings that frame the exhibition, Recent Works. By focusing on the way the body creates meaning, I showed how aesthetic experience is a primal way in which all works of art are experienced as meaningful on a basic level, before the intervention of rational thought. By reading my work through this lens, I have provided a way in which one may read my work as functioning on this bodily, basic level of aesthetic meaning, which is powerful because of its ties to our embodiment, the site of all experience and knowledge. I have also provided a thorough investigation of the form my work has taken. The forms not only function on the body of the viewer, but they also are evocative of bodily forms and fluids; the substance of which we are

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\(^{81}\) I do not mean to make the blanket statement, here, that all titles undermine the aesthetic appreciation of works of art. I am only giving an account for my own refusal of providing titles and captions, and why this is an important strategy for my work.
made. These forms have been abstracted and fashioned out of cast off materials, left in various states of completion. The provisional nature of the works in the exhibition has been a means by which I comment on the contingency of our finite existence in the world; our fumbles, failures, and fractured lives.

I have also implicated the religious nature of my works. This aspect of my work situates my intentions in a narrative of the search for meaning; which is found not only in the rich traditions of Christian faith of which I am a part, but in the history of humanity in general. The narratives of the hope for redemption have been a means by which I allow my work to transcend its profane existence, much in the same way in which our finite bodies can become places of divine revelation.

Works of art have always been instances of meaningful reflection on the nature of life, therefore, their exhibition have always taken on the nature of religious ritual, even when “religion” proper is absent or obscured. *Recent Works* is an attempt to revitalize these latent tendencies and ask questions about the significance of the religious nature of works of art, especially in current contemporary dialogue.\(^8^2\)

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\(^8^2\) For more on this, see *Re-Enchantment*, edited by James Elkins and David Morgan, (New York: Routledge, 2009).
Bibliography


Figure 1.1 *Untitled*, 2013, graphite on paper, 20” x 20”.
Figure 3.1 *Untitled (Triptych)*, 2012, wood, adhesive, drywall, spackle, house paint, mdf
Figure 3.2  Jackson Pollock. *Greyed Rainbow*, 1953. Oil on Canvas. Chicago, Art Institute.
Figure 3.3 *Untitled (flaps)*, 2013, Construction adhesive on cardboard.
Figure 3.4 Untitled (lurk), 2013, metal, cardboard, trash, tape, construction adhesive.
Figure 3.5 Monster from John Carpenter's *The Thing*, 1982, Universal Pictures.
Figure 3.6 *Untitled (fishclub)*, 2013, metal, tape, construction adhesive.
Figure 3.8 Swamp Thing, DC comics, 1972 series #9.
Figure 3.9 Exhibition Poster from Recent Works
Figure 3.10 Hendrik Goltzius, *The Great Hercules*, 1589, engraving, 22 x 15 3/4 in. (56.1 x 40.2 cm).
Figure 3.11  *Untitled* (philosopher), 2013, construction adhesive, mdf, caster wheels, 21” x 12” x 12”.
Figure 3.12  Studio Shot
Figure 3.13  *Untitled* (pink sock), 2013, sponge, paint, wooden dowel, 2.5” x 5” x 11”.

Figure 3.14 *Untitled* (hummingbird), 2013, foam, spray-paint, ceiling tile, adhesive, wire, 10” x 7” x 5”.
Figure 3.15 Lucio Fontana, Concetto Spaziale, Attesa, 1964, synthetic paint on canvas, 39 1/2 x 31 5/8" (100.3 x 80.3 cm)
Figure 3.16  *Untitled (pink grin)*, 2013, foam, 10” x 13”.
Figure 3.17  Untitled (flight), 2012, plywood, adhesive, duct-tape, 5” x 5” x 26”
Figure 3.18 Installation view of *Recent Works*.
Figure 3.19 *Untitled (pleurants)*, 2010, spray-foam and paper bags.
Figure 3.20  *Untitled* (miss), 2013, plywood and epoxy clay, 12” x 5” x 15”. 
Figure 3.21  *Untitled* (heap), 2013, graphite on paper, masking tape, plywood, 13 ⅜” x 11”. 
Figure 3.22 *Untitled* (nod), 2012, styrofoam, spray-paint and steel rod, 6” x 6” x 24”.
Figure 3.23 Left: *Untitled (dross)*, 2013, foam, house paint, and spray-paint, 10” x 15 ½”.

Figure 3.24  Francisco de Goya, *The Agony in the Garden*, 1819, Escuelas Pías de San Antón, Madrid.
Figure 4.1 Robert Gober, Installation View, 2005, Matthew Marks Gallery.

Figure 4.2 Paul Thek, Pyramid, installation view "Ark, Pyramid, Easter - a visiting group show", Museum of Art Lucerne, 1973.
Figure 4.3 Installation view of *Recent Works*. 
Figure 4.4 Installation view of *Recent Works*.
Figure 4.5 Installation view of *Recent Works*. 
Figure 4.6 *Untitled* (font), 2013, photographic reproduction, gold spray-paint, epoxy clay and paint.
Figure 4.7 Quirizio da Murano, *The Savior*, 1460–1478, Accademia, Venice.
Figure 4.8  Installation view of *Recent Works*. 
Figure 4.9 Photographic Reproduction of: Rembrandt, *The Decent from the Cross*, 1633, etching,
Figure 4.10 Installation view of *Recent Works*. 
Figure 4.11  Installation view of Recent Works.
Figure 4.12  Installation view of *Recent Works.*
Figure 4.13  *Untitled* (stilts), 2013, latex caulk and wood on wall.