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Purge

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May, 2017

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are submitting a thesis written by Amanda Foshag entitled *Purge*. We recommend acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.



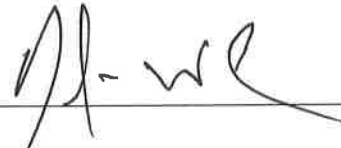
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PURGE

A Thesis Statement

Presented to the Faculty

Of the

College of Visual and Performing Arts

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of

Master of Fine Art

Winthrop University

May, 2017

By

Amanda Foshag

Abstract

This thesis statement describes the eight hanging veil-like structures and sculptures that constitute my thesis exhibition work; it further comments on the movements, philosophy, and personal sensibility that most influenced the art making: Process Art, Taoism, and my own empathetic experiences. The movement of Process Art is discussed in reference to materiality and the physicality that goes into making these pieces. The influence of the Taoist philosophy is discussed in light of the unity and balance found in the combination of dualistic materials, and their relationship to one another, in these sculptural forms. Lastly, this statement expresses how the emotional states brought about from my own empathetic experiences and interpersonal relationships have had an effect on the way I manipulate the materials and on my construction process.

My intention is to invite the viewer to follow a journey through the process of making these objects. This is meant to engage the viewer to investigate the multiple fragmented constructions that are unified into one form. As this exploration occurs, tensions created from the dualistic nature of the materials used and the emotional tension that is “recorded” from the action upon those materials elicits in the viewer their own emotional response. It is through intrigue that I stimulate the viewers' contemplation of their own emotional states.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Acknowledgements..... | ii |
| List of Images..... | iv |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Taoism and Empathetic Experience..... | 4 |
| Process Art and Artistic Influences..... | 6 |
| Thesis Exhibition..... | 13 |
| Conclusion..... | 22 |
| Images | |
| of thesis work..... | 24 |
| that influenced my work..... | 28 |
| Bibliography..... | 32 |

List of Images

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Wanderlust</i> | 24 |
| <i>Reminiscence</i> | 24 |
| <i>Casualty</i> | 25 |
| <i>Remnant</i> | 25 |
| <i>Transcendence</i> | 26 |
| <i>Entangled</i> | 26 |
| <i>Purge</i> | 27 |
| <i>Untitled</i> | 28 |
| <i>Untitled #720 (Eguchi's Ghost)</i> ,..... | 28 |
| <i>Dangerous Fragility</i> | 29 |
| <i>Because of the Wind</i> | 29 |
| <i>Is and Is Not</i> | 30 |
| <i>Untitled</i> | 30 |
| <i>More of the Day</i> | 31 |
| <i>Emmet</i> | 31 |

Introduction

My/This? thesis exhibition presents a collection of seven hanging veil-like structures and sculptures that culminate from my artistic practice, experiences, and observations. It also stems from research into philosophical theories and art history, not only Process Art but also a number of fiber artists and sculptors from the 20th and 21st centuries. The sculptures and structures use a diversity of materials, ranging from fiber to steel, glass, and ceramics. I create armatures using weaving, crocheting, and knotting processes combined with steel; these act as the “skeleton” to which the crafted elements are attached. The individual elements are constructed as independent pieces of work and then incorporated into their respective supportive structures. This combinative technique is one of the core components of my art-making process for this exhibition.

My grandmother was instrumental in teaching me many of the skills that have allowed me to make this collection: crocheting, natural fiber weaving with reeds and vines, and sewing. They are the basis for the construction of most of the work, combined with glass casting, ceramics, loom weaving, and welding and forging steel. The numerous materials and their handling, and the diverse range of fabricating techniques allow me to shape the materials I use dualistically, whether in a tightly crocheted section or a loosely knotted passage. The handling of the materials involves varying degrees of physical touch and energy; the hardness or softness of my touch while making the sculptural forms

echo my emotional state during their construction, leaving the viewer with a visual record of it.

Assembling also plays a significant role in my art. Assembling the materials into the structures evokes the image of gathering together smaller pieces to form a whole. Small, individual fragments are worked together into a unified assemblage. The viewer is invited to navigate the fragments in the sculptural forms and follow a journey as one fragment shifts to the next fragment and eventually becomes a unified structure. This is a metaphor for how the moments we experience are processed. The material and color choices in these fragments are metaphors for the effect those experiences have on us.

My work centers around an examination of the human experience, either drawn from present events or memory, of life's highs and lows, of our response to these moments, and of how they shape the way we relate to others. I enact the polarized experience I had growing up, which greatly affected my ability to interact with people. Recent life changing events have brought about a reawakening of this ambivalent experience, and my current body of work follows my inner process of coping with, reflecting on, and accepting these events. The sculptural forms become physical echoes that embody an inner journey to rediscovering the self through fragments of memory as well as current thoughts and emotions.

The works are largely informed by Eastern philosophy, to which I have been drawn throughout much of my adult life, in particular Taoism. Taoism is a Chinese religious or philosophical tradition that gives priority to living in accordance with the Tao or, as it is commonly referred to, the Way. The Way is the all-encompassing energy that

gave rise to the duality in the universe. From these complementary forces all natural phenomena are understood in terms of this duality (Little 14). The Tao Te Ching is the text of Taoist teachings compiled by its founder, Lao Tzu. Taoism draws on the notion that we are all part of a system of “apparent duality and paradoxical unity” (Dyer 9) or as stated here, “The Daode Jing is paradoxical because it ... stresses that there is a limit to human life and our knowledge, and at the same time it shows that, as part of an endless universe, human life and consciousness are limitless” (Little 35). In accepting this reality, we can access something greater than the Self, a sense of wholeness or oneness, a “union with the Way” (Little, 35). The Tao Te Ching has been instrumental in my growth, both artistically and personally.

Connected to Taoism is the notion of empathetic experience, in which emotion is experienced both through the individual Self and through others, in a shared emotional experience. Empathy, defined as the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within the other being's frame of reference (Bellet), is present in this exhibition work, which draws from emotional information collected through my own experiences and through empathy with those around me.

My intention is that the viewer will sense the emotional sensibilities expressed through the handling of materials, the construction, and the physicality of assemblage and that these will evoke in them recollections and perceptions from their own personal experiences.

Taoism and Empathetic Experience

The tenets of Taoism are of great significance to the subjects that I explore in this exhibition. Most influential is the Taoist principle of the unified life through awareness of duality and combining perceived opposites into one (Dyer 10). As seen here in the second verse of the *Tao Te Ching*:

Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty,
only because there is ugliness.
All can know good as good only because there is evil.
Being and nonbeing produce each other.
...
So the sage lives openly with apparent duality and paradoxical unity.
(qtd. in Dyer 9)

As an artist, this concept of a coalescence of dichotomy is central to me. This is illustrated by the surface qualities or weight of the materials I choose, and the choice of black, white, and neutral tones as the starting point for my constructions. The techniques I use in processing the materials all have a dual nature. These elements of my process employ opposite relationships in material, color choice, and construction techniques. An example of this can be seen in the two opposing sides of the piece titled *Wanderlust* (Fig. 1). On one side the piece is constructed of harder materials such as wire, while on the opposite mostly soft threads and yarn are used. While they are in opposition to one another, in the final piece they are brought together into a unified art form.

The more fundamental concepts that permeate the verses of *Tao Te Ching* speak to living in the present moment and being in tune with both the physical and the metaphysical aspects of existence. In my practice, this has put me in touch with the intuitive awareness that dominates the way I make my work. Present awareness and intuition have been vital to my art-making. The works in this thesis exhibition are no different, as they were constructed with no preconceived ideas of what they would turn out to be. When I create, I simply am, in that given moment, and I allow what I am feeling or what sense of knowing I have at that point to guide my choice of material, the manner in which I manipulate it, and how the constructed fragments will be unified. There are no plans or judgments; there is only creating. In these past months, it became very clear what an important part of my process this is. Over the past two years, I have been constantly making and collecting fragments, some that became larger pieces and some that remained as they were, stored away for later use. As I began to work on the current body of work, I found that all of these fragments have a purpose, and bits and pieces of them are part of the work in this exhibition.

The importance of empathy was imprinted in me from early life experiences. As I grew up, I had stability, balance, and happiness on one hand, and insecurity, imbalance, melancholy, and dysfunction on the other. I was raised in two different environments that greatly affected my skills of interaction and communication. On my part, much effort was made to learn how to adequately function with others; I did so by observing those around me, and my observational awareness of their emotional states increased. Translated into my creative process, this provides me with the gift of an extensive emotional content to

draw from. As the forms take shape, grow and accumulate, personal and shared memories and emotions surface and creep into my conscious awareness, adding yet another layer to the "paradoxical unity" (Dyer 9) they contain and to the very constructions that amass on the surfaces of the sculptural forms.

Process Art and Artistic Influences

My work shares many characteristics of Process Art, which can be defined as:

The common refrain, "it's the journey, not the destination," could make a perfect catchphrase for process art. A movement that arose in the 1960's and 70's and has since expanded in definition to describe a general philosophical approach to making art, Process Art places emphasis on the process and act of artistic creation rather than the actual finished work that comes out of it... it became a way to marry the conceptual with the physical, bodily realities of working in the studio, and pull back the curtain on the process itself. ("Artspace")

The works in this exhibition lead the viewer on a visual journey of action upon the materials, including my process of accumulation. I leave the mark and the trace of each stage open for the viewer to see. Like Nick Cave (Fig. 8), I find materials that evoke a response in me even if, in that moment, there is no specific thought of what they will become. For Cave,

What triggers or inspires a new idea is being open to this sort of search - this hunt for an object that provides multiple readings. I'm always looking - I'm not sure what I'm looking for, but when it's there, it has a different sort of pulse. The vibration, the intensity of it, is very present, so I sort of know. I may not know

how I'm going to use it right away, but I know it has the proper ingredients to be transformed into something. ... You know, I've had things for years and then all of a sudden, Parts B and C appear in the world. Then I bring them here, and it all just comes together like magic. So it's an ongoing process of recognition and response. (Dixon)

All the materials used in this thesis exhibition were chosen in the manner that Cave speaks of above. These materials or objects have an intuitive pull that speak to me as an artist.

The intuitive process in which materials are handled and constructed is another aspect that my works share with Process Art. In my thesis work, there are no preconceived notions of what each piece will become, no models or sketches. The materials are manipulated in a reactive manner. The constructed fragments in each work are the result of my response to the action previously taken on a given material.

According to Sussman, Eva Hesse followed a similar path:

Yet at the same time, Hesse had the ability to step back from a preconceived plan and “allow” abandon to take over it. Her work emerged from a liminal space between control and freedom, between what she knew and what she couldn't have known in advance, between coherence and fragmentation. The materials' qualities are evident, but Hesse exerted control over the moment of their manufacture, and in these moments found her non-art. (17-18)

The intuitive approach is also present in how constructed fragments are brought together in the final sculptural forms as layers upon layers. The viewer is left with the opportunity for investigation and contemplation of the forms beyond the surface. The

surface is only there to tempt the viewers, to invite them to see what is beneath it.

Contemporary artist Petha Coyne makes a similar comment on her work (Fig. 9):

There are many different levels where people can approach my work. They can look at it just at its first layer, where I try to make it seductive. A lot of people take it just at that layer. And that's fine, but there are also all these other, different layers, layers of things that are buried in it. Most people never even get that far, but you can go as far as you want within it" (41).

Layering and accumulation, so strongly emphasized in my work, also share a reference with the work of contemporary artist Cathy du Monchaux, whose sculpture surfaces break away from the minimalist approach. This is a new trend in Process Art, different from the 60s and 70s; it is about creating work that is overblown and full. As noted here (Fig.10),

The imagery is rich, thick, and overblown, such an engagement with multiple layering of fullness runs pretty much against the contemporary grain. Such an intensely apparent level of ambition, also, replaces a common off-hand singularity for instead of paring down to apparent aesthetic simplicity, the artist places faith in a far reaching, over the top presentation (Craddock 19).

This process of accumulation in my own work is the product of emotional states resulting from recalling experiences. The effects of these experiences are recorded in the way the materials are handled and formed, as is evident mostly in the clay forms; they reference bodily structures, not so much in representation, but through suggestive surfaces, colors, and semblance. I use the clay forms as if they were a

skin. The material is rolled out into long slabs, folded and wrapped on itself, and the surface is modeled by hand. The work of artist Arlene Shechet (Fig. 11 and 12) has influenced the way I handle the clay, treat its fired surface with glaze or paint, respond to the physical action of manipulating the material, and make allusion to bodily forms. Shechet realizes the physicality and her sculptures

“realize a power of materiality. She is aware of how her body impacts the body of her work. The physicality of creating with clay is key to her creative process: ‘Clay is so malleable, and the body can work on it with no tools, so it is very much a body-to-body experience.’” (Rapaport 35).

This aspect of clay is one of the main reasons I am drawn to it. It allows for actions to be “recorded,” leaving the visual traces of the artist, not only of the physical manipulation but also of the emotional state the artist was in at the time he or she was working. As with Shechet:

... clay is the material that allows for the most unmediated experience with art; it’s a living material, one capable of recording and externalizing thoughts and feelings. Internal thoughts are not always kind, and sometimes the object is unkind in return. To paraphrase the artist, clay demands an appetite for ugly. You have to possess a tolerance, a fearlessness, for months-perhaps ever. This is the leap of faith that an artist makes in the studio, ... ‘When I am in the studio,’ Shechet has said, ‘I bring all the everyday information of a life, from art, from the street, and everything in between. For me, it’s a monumental way of thinking about living.’ (Porter 31)

Because each piece has at least some fragment of its construction that is determined by the gravity effect, the manner in which my works are supported during the

construction process is important. I hang or pull the structures as they are being made and then fix them in their positions with paper mâché techniques, and/or the use of sturdier materials such as an armature wire, steel, or ceramic to act as a supportive structure. There are usually some fragments that maintain an allusion to changeability or malleability. As in *Reminiscence* (Fig. 2), the paper materials appear to be flowing, cascading, and pliable forms. But the paper mâché techniques I use retain this malleable appearance while simultaneously fixing them into form. Most of the materials are pliable and the conjunction with other materials gives them some rigidity. Another example of this is the use of latex-coated nylon in the piece *Casualty* (Fig. 3). This is another concept that I share, in part, with Process Art and in particular Hesse (Fig. 13), as noted here:

Inherent in this untitled piece is the irony that once Magasis and Hesse dipped the rope, they froze the meandering lines into near-final form... A quote from Hesse in the magazine reveals her awareness of the impossible nature of her utopian ideals for the artwork, that formlessness and the dynamics of change had their limits: "This piece is very ordered. Maybe I will make it more structured, maybe I will leave it changeable. When it's completed its order could be chaos. Chaos can be structured as non-chaos. That we know from Jackson Pollock."...Latex over the rope imposed limits; latex's apparent flexibility and malleability was itself "changeable" and it would harden the supple ropes wherever it touched them. (Sussman 36)

Process art and the artists that comprised the movement in the 60's and 70's were directly concerned with materiality and physicality in the making process. There is little reference to emotional content in the work. However, the echoes of the materiality in an

object or its handling can suggest emotion. As seen here in this statement from art historian Lucy Lippard about Hesse, "Her art was material based, informed by emotional tension and direct touch" (Roberts 57). My thesis exhibition shares a commonality with this, and expands the role that thought can play in the making of an object. Here there is influence from contemporary artist Karla Black, who uses the verbs, the action words associated in her work, but then uses the adjectival to expand the conceptual ideas inherent in an object created so dominantly through process. This aspect of Karla Black's work (Fig. 14) is noted here:

The adjectival is that which qualifies the noun of an object, assigning it qualities after the fact of the actions - the verbs - that made it. Those actions took place on the plane of the literal, the physical, and the performative, and the verbs that designate those actions are thus attached to the same plane: ...the qualitative function of adjectives, on the other hand, is predicated on thought after the fact of action, about the effects on the objects in question, once constituted, in an effort to characterize the experience that arises from them. And so the domain of adjectives is necessarily less literal and more metaphorical than that of verbs, less active, less present-tense, less to do with the physical than with the contemplative and the thoughtful. And once one begins to think about effects, experience, and their qualities, one not only begins to mediate those effects by language - how else to think about them? - but also to associate them with a larger field of cultural resonance. And as soon as that happens, Karla Black's work begins to depart rather dramatically from the minimalism of the minimalist object and the simple verbs of production (Armstrong 115).

The adjectival parallels contemplation, a concept that the works in this exhibition reference. The intuitive process and emphasis on the present moment in the production of

these pieces is evident, but I want the viewer to be aware of the metaphor that is present as well. For these sculptural forms, it is the bodily suggestion, the emotional implications of the way the materials used are processed and/or juxtaposed, and the memories that are triggered during their making that spawn this contemplation. Artists such as Lynda Benglis and Petha Coyne also show evidence of emotional suggestion and contemplation, as noted in this evaluation of Lynda Benglis's work (Fig. 15):

Benglis seeks to freeze the intensity of the moment. Beauty and abject horror merge in these spectacular frozen gestures - stilled for permanent contemplation... The idea or feeling becomes the object. Her imagination is rendered visible as she exercises convexity, configuration, and proprioception, - she acts from the centre outwards, from the mind to form" (Hancock 155).

Petha Coyne also realizes this, not just in terms of materials but color as well:

"Blackness is but a *partial darkness*; and therefore it derives some of its power from being mixed and surrounded with coloured bodies. In its own nature, it cannot be considered a colour,' Coyne says. Dark, therefore, is a feeling verging on emotion, while black is but one vehicle toward this state of being (Markonish 12)."

Contemporary process artists such as Arlene Shechet, Cathy du Monchaux, Lynda Benglis, and Petha Coyne held true to the original tenets of Process Art but broadened what it can present to the viewer.

Thesis Exhibition

The seven works in this exhibition draw heavily from Process Art in their materiality and construction as well as Taoism, human experience, and empathetic awareness. The latter two concepts have been suggested by some of the more contemporary Process artists. The connections to Taoism that this thesis work draws on have been more of a personal reference that has impacted the choices I make in terms of balance and unity I look for in the materials and elements of the sculptural forms. This unity is achieved, not through preconceptions of the pieces, but through sensitivity and awareness to the material choices and techniques used in the making process. This creative process is a give and take response that occurs within myself and with the materials. The resulting forms are meant to present the viewer with an active structure, passages of movement and energy, and spaces of stillness, which coalesce in a unity through this paradox.

The reference to bodily forms previously mentioned is achieved through materials, both in fabric and ceramic, and color choices. Shades of peach, red, purple, and pinks are used to evoke reference to wounds or internal aspects of the body. Greens, yellows, blues, grays, and black suggest bruising and violation. These colors are used sparingly, and the majority of the structures are dominated by creams, whites, khakis, and grays with trails of color fibers that draw the eye into the massively colorful forms. This allows for the viewer to have a more intimate experience in the color passages, guiding them into them, holding their focus, allowing for contemplation, and moving them to the

next passage. An example of this is in the transition passages between some of the neutral-colored crocheted sections and the sections that shift to areas of color. The viewer can follow small trails of color that grow into full colored sections as seen in the piece *Reminiscence* (Fig. 2)

There is a diverse range of soft and hard materials used in these works. Soft materials, such as fibers and fabrics, are juxtaposed to the harder materials, like steel and ceramics. The steel forms both counter and support the soft forms, setting up a dichotomy within the pieces, both materially and structurally. Transparent materials, like plastics, vinyl, and glass are places for the viewer to pause, creating a sensation of lightness and weightlessness, a sense of transcendence. These materials are placed in the ascending structures that meet the ceiling to reinforce this sense.

The techniques used to manipulate the materials include knotting, crocheting, weaving, binding, bunching, and gathering. The structures created from materials processed with these techniques include armatures, structures for suspension, vessel-like forms, and skin-like surfaces. The materials record an emotive experience in the making of these objects, resulting in the implication of memory. The viewer can follow a tightly knotted passage and its shift to a loosely crocheted form. There is a flow, as the materials shift between these opposing actions, a dichotomy.

The pieces in this exhibition share this concept of dichotomy as paradox, as does the manner in which they are installed in the gallery space. The sculptural forms are installed as though they were in opposition to one another, but at the same time rely on their placement to create unity among the objects within that space. All the pieces are

oriented in a radial pattern. *Wanderlust* and *Reminiscence* are set up opposite one another, while *Casualty and Remnant* is set opposite *Transcendence* within this radial layout. Inside the space framed by these works, *Entangled* and *Purge* are connected through vein-like structures constructed from fibers, fabrics, wire, and monofilament. While they oppose each other in their placement, the connections reinforce unity, indicating that while they represent different experiences, they draw from one another. The sculptures that frame the space, *Wanderlust*, *Reminiscence*, *Casualty and Remnant* and *Transcendence*, inside which *Entangled* and *Purge* reside follow the same layout concept.

Wanderlust (Fig. 1) is 84 inches high and 72 inches wide. It is suspended from the ceiling as a veil-like structure meant to be viewed in the round. It is constructed from plastic-coated aluminum wire and color-coated aluminum wire. The veil-like construction uses a macramé framework, rather than knitting, crocheting, or weaving. This knotted framework is constructed from teal colored-plastic coated aluminum wire and the various colors of aluminum color-coated wire, ribbon, and tinsel wire are woven in and out of the knots. These materials bind some portions of the framework. The thread bound tubular forms are connected together and attached to the wire framework. This structure is then bound into the knotted plastic-coated aluminum structure, where one finds bright teals, blues, fuchsia, pinks, reds, yellows, and peaches. The aluminum color-coated wire consists of the same hues as well as copper, silver, and gold. This structure, unlike the others in this thesis exhibition, has a simplicity to it in reference to the color palette and

the way in which the materials are incorporated into the teal plastic coated aluminum wire frame.

Reminiscence (Fig. 2) is 96 inches high, 72 inches wide, and approximately 18 inches deep. Like *Wanderlust*, it is suspended from the ceiling and meant to be viewed in the round. Materially, this sculpture is composed of natural fibers, such as jute and sisal twine, canvas and burlap, and yarn and cotton thread. The two sides of *Reminiscence* confront the viewer with two conflicting views of the same form. On one side, there is a collection of the ceramic and cast glass forms as well as the fragments that are knotted, crocheted, and woven, both with reeds and fibers. The opposite side is composed of cast paper forms made from mulberry and rice paper, portions made from canvas and burlap fabrics, and tarpaper. In viewing this side of the piece, the viewer is reminded of a 'skin.' The cast fiber forms that make up the 'skin' are cast in large flat sections of varying thicknesses. The paper fibers and fabrics are torn and ripped creating, non-uniform edges that are unraveled and/or tattered. These fragments are then pasted together using a methyl cellulose-based product. These torn and irregular fragments are affixed in such a manner that the viewer is allowed glimpses of forms that cover the opposite side of the structure through gaps and crevasses. As the viewer shifts their position to the other side of the piece, they are confronted with a chaotic massing of knots, crochet, and dangling tattered fabrics that wind around and bind up three separate ceramic and cast glass forms. The knotted, woven, and crocheted structures that directly support the ceramic and glass forms shift from the black, white, and beige color scheme that dominates the entire structure to colors that relate to the body, with intimations of wounds and bruising.

Reminiscence presents a two-sided form that, on the one hand, conceals its truths through the use of a fiber “skin” and, on the other, delivers the honesty of what lies beneath the chaotic and frenetic mass of fibers. These fibers are interwoven and entwined and the materials shift in textures and weight. This shift suggests dissonance from one side to the other. It is a metaphor for how we conceal our true thoughts, feelings, and memories and the weight we carry in our attempts at this concealment.

While constructed separately, the sculptural forms *Casualty* and *Remnant* are installed as one entity. *Casualty* (Fig. 3) is a sprawling mass that hovers just above the floor of the exhibition space. It is 72 inches long, approximately 36 inches wide, and 36 inches high. Its ‘skeleton’ is created from a reclaimed, somewhat elongated, spherical shaped mass of galvanized steel rod. The tangled turns and folds of the steel rod create spaces for orifices, voids, and cavities, which are filled with vessel-like forms. These forms are shaped out of materials ranging from ceramic, to cast glass, fabrics, and latex-coated forms. The ‘skeleton’ is black in color and the vessel-like forms that occupy the sunken spaces therein utilize darker shades of colors like black, grays, purples, and reds. The colors chosen for these forms are meant to evoke notions of the visceral aspects of the body. A ‘skin’ made from black fabrics, fibers, dyed latex and rubber, connects the forms, which reside in the cavities. This ‘skin’ takes on the appearance of an amorphous form that meanders over and around these vessels, seeming to overtake them, spill out of them, and/or bind them. *Remnant* descends from the ceiling and hovers above *Casualty*, dangling bits of natural reeds, fabric, crocheted and knotted fibers, and wire.

Remnant (Fig. 4) measures 60 inches in length, approximately 60 inches in height, and approximately 36 inches in width. It is constructed out of natural fibers such as jute, hemp, coconut fibers, sea grass, and sisal rope. Like *Casualty*, it has a sprawling form that inversely creeps downward from the ceiling. *Remnant's* sprawling, hovering mass makes use of the fibrous heavily textured natural materials it is constructed from, while its point of genesis from the ceiling begins in the translucent and transparent materials of plastic and vinyl. As the sculpture descends, the materials undergo a transformation from lightweight plastics to heavy natural fiber materials, from transparent to solid, unified through knotting, crocheting, binding, and gathering techniques. The choice of color for the hovering mass in *Remnant* is neutral beiges: unbleached whites, yellow toned whites, and shades of browns. These hues result from using the jute and other fibers in their raw state. Coiling wire provides touches of metalized surfaces. These materials are in juxtaposition to the transparent and translucent plastic and vinyl materials. The overall effect of the color is that of lightness juxtaposed with the heavy texture and manipulation of the materials, creating a paradox. Like *Casualty*, *Remnant's* orifices contain colored forms. In juxtaposition to the hard, heavy forms in *Casualty*, *Remnant's* forms are made from hand-dyed and commercially-dyed fabrics, satins, velvets, tulle, organza, ribbons, felts, and canvas embroidered in abstract patterns. These fabrics are sewn together intuitively to create an irregular drooping form that dangles from the cavities. Colors such as purples, peaches, reds, pinks, and grays suggest a reference to the body. *Remnant* is both the antithesis and the counterpart to *Casualty*. Relating back to one of the main tenets of Taoism, the yin and the yang (Little, 14), these two forms exist in a duality,

embodying the dark and the light in our experiences, while in the same moment, occupying the space as one entity, each dependent on the other's existence to convey to the viewer this sense of unity through paradox (Dyer, 9).

Transcendence (Fig. 5) is approximately 120 inches in height and occupies a radial space of approximately 36 inches. It is constructed of a diverse range of materials, including multiple types of plastics, paper, aluminum wire mesh, forged welded steel, ceramics, cast glass, and natural materials such as bamboo. The form interacts with the gallery space from the ground to the ceiling. The more solid, dense materials like steel and ceramic occupy the visual space closest to the floor. The more transparent, lightweight materials such as the plastics, paper and wire mesh span from the middle of the visual space to the ceiling. Cast glass fragments litter the central region of the form, encroaching on both the upper and lower portions of the sculpture. The central region is also where color is utilized at this coalescence of the hard and the soft, the opaque and the translucent, and the dark and the light. A skeleton-type form that is constructed from dyed black and white bamboo is the supportive structure for the color and glass materials. The steel form that rises from the floor is constructed to suggest movement and motion in a radial pattern. There is a transition of materials that occurs here, from the steel and ceramic to the paper, the wire, and the plastics as they continue their ascent to the ceiling in the same radial pattern. This is important to the concept of transformation and transience that this piece presents to the viewer. This piece also uses transitions from hard to soft, and from opaque to transparent materials as a metaphor for the human experience of transcending dark moments in life.

Entangled (Fig. 6), standing approximately 60 inches by approximately 24 inches wide and deep, is a freestanding sculptural form constructed of multiple ring forms in various sizes, bound together through crocheting and binding. Hemp cord, jute cord, and sisal twine, cotton thread and yarn, ribbon, diverse gauges of aluminum wire, aluminum tape, coiling cord, and bamboo are wrapped around each ring that makes up the bound sections of multiple rings. The armatures for the rings themselves are made from plastic and aluminum. There are multiple rings grouped together and then attached to other groups of rings. This portion of the sculpture is then attached to an armature made from a series of steel rings. The materials transition from soft, such as the ribbon, thread, yarn and twines to the more rigid aluminum wire and tape. The larger rings are placed on the base portion of the sculpture and decrease in diameter as they reach the top portion. The manner in which the ring forms are placed together from top to bottom creates a void space in the middle portion of the construction. The group of rings that surround this void have a cascade of unbound, loose material; the latter corresponds to the material that that specific ring is bound in. As in the previous works there is an overall use of neutrals such as creams, beiges, and khakis, as well as white, grey, and black. The aluminum wired and taped sections are the raw metalized surface. Reds, oranges, peaches, pinks, purples, blues, greens, and yellows are introduced on the cascading materials that flow down through the void in the center. The hanging forms in the middle also integrate tinted latex covered forms. This sculpture evokes both order and chaos through the use of the bound ordered construction of the rings and the disorder in the cascading materials. The color choice is meant to echo this evocation by suggesting a monotone 'outer shell' in the

bound ring forms, meaning order and calm. The copious color choices of the hanging materials that drape down through the void represent the more chaotic effects of an experience. The use of color here is also meant to have a bodily reference through the use of flesh tones.

Purge (Fig. 7) is approximately 60 inches in height, approximately 24 inches wide, and 24 inches in depth. This piece presents to the viewer forms that suggest expulsion, or purging, and the title makes clear. It is a freestanding sculpture constructed of two forms, one in soft materials like crocheted and knotted coiling cord, paper mâché fibers, and mulberry papers. Other materials include nylon fabrics and cold forged steel forms with woven metal wire sheets. Cold forging is a process in which steel is formed into shape by hammering it without applying heat to the surface. The steel form in this sculpture acts as the main armature to the construction made of soft materials. A soft material form armature is created from the shaped coiling cord and a ‘skin’ of the paper mâché fibers and nylon is placed over and woven through it. Fibers and papers used in the paper mâché portions are utilized with their raw, untreated surface and also as a painted surface. The painting on the surface consists of muted reds, pinks, and grays, creating a bruising and skin-like quality. White and cream colors dominate the soft materials in this section, with one long crocheted chain that extends from its center, which is painted in metallic red. This form winds through the steel structure and has the appearance of being expelled from it. This appearance is achieved by transitioning the crocheted form to a solid constructed form that shares the same skin-like surface. There are woven areas of steel wire that act as the ‘skin’ on the steel form and extend from its

top to the floor. The woven wire sheets were woven by hand on a handmade loom structure with different gauges of aluminum and stainless steel wire. These woven forms are meant to add softness to the steel form and to balance out its weight, bulkiness, and form.

Conclusion

In the works in this thesis exhibition, it is the aforementioned philosophy of Taoism and the idea of human and empathetic experience that join process and intuition and create the basic tenets of my art. In *Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women 1947-2016*, Wagner writes:

In most cases, the physical labor of making sculpture is distinctly active, even performative, ... Yet the outcome of that labor, the object itself, demonstrates that connection more directly than any one image can convey. This is not to suggest that the work is - or is only - the labor that made it. Everything that goes into a sculpture not only governs how it relates to other material objects, but also shapes its poetics: the terms in which any sculpture tries to extend and transform the world of things (85).

My own personal history has deeply influenced the techniques by which the forms in this thesis exhibition are created. In my life, and over the past two years in particular, I have had life changing experiences that have affected not only myself, but also my art-making process. Up until that point I struggled with how I wanted to express my artistic

self. It was coming to terms with the extremes in those personal experiences, both in the good and the bad moments, trying to find a balance, that I found this relationship between Process Art, Taoism, my own empathetic experience, and its function in the work I make. I found myself relating to the materials I was using in terms of the actions with which I manipulate them. The content that surfaces throughout the work, through the act of making and processing materials, reflects and draws from the empathetic experiences and interpersonal relationships in my own life.

As I move forward from my experience at Winthrop University, I hope to continue making work that draws from the concepts in this thesis exhibition and find new processes and materials for that exploration. In the work I have completed in my time here, I have expanded my knowledge of a diverse range of materials. Glass, ceramic, and steel are a few of those that I have gained experience working with and hope to continue to explore in future work. My hope is that this thesis exhibition presents the viewer with sculptural forms that exemplify the power that the handling and processing of a material can imbue it with.

Images of thesis work

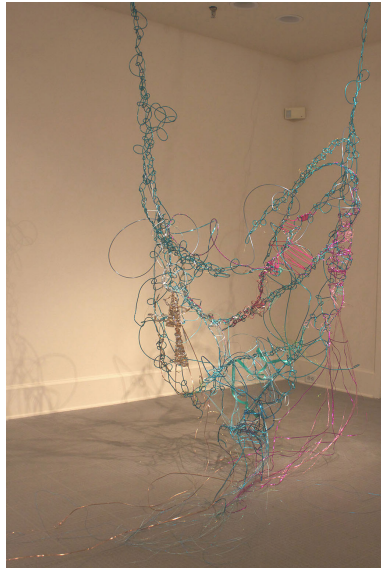


Fig. 1- *Wanderlust*, Colored plastic coated aluminum wire, aluminum color coated wire, ribbon, tinsel wire, thread, yarn, felt, plastic jewelry cord, and beads, 84" 72", 2017.



Fig. 2- *Reminiscence*, Jute and sisal twine, canvas, burlap, yarn, cotton thread, nylon cord, mulberry and rice papers, tar paper, natural reeds, coiling core, upholstery piping cord, monofilament, ceramic and cast glass forms, and acrylic paint, tarpaper, and water based inks, 96" x 72" x 18", 2017.

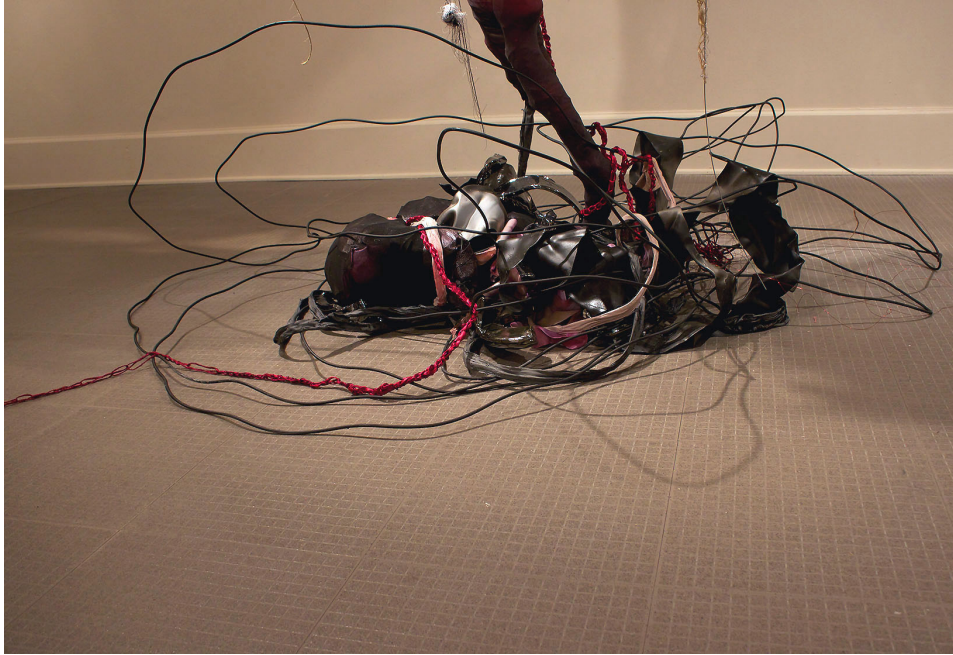


Fig. 3- *Casualty*, Galvanized steel rod, ceramic, cast glass, fabrics, tarpaper, and latex coated forms 72" x 36" x 36", 2017.



Fig. 4- *Remnant*, Jute cord, hemp cord, coconut fibers, sea grass, sisal rope, plastics, vinyl, steel, aluminum wire, steel cable, 60" x 60" x 36", 2017.



Fig. 5- *Transcendence*, multiple types of plastics, paper, aluminum wire mesh, forged welded steel, ceramics, cast glass, 120" x 36", 2017.



Fig. 6- *Entangled*, Hemp cord, jute cord, and sisal twine, cotton thread and yarn, ribbon, diverse gauges of aluminum wire, aluminum tape, coiling cord, plastic and aluminum rings, and bamboo, 60" x 24" x 24", 20



Fig. 7- *Purge*, coiling cord, paper mâché fibers, mulberry papers, cold and hot forged steel, nylon fabrics, woven metal wire sheets, acrylic paints, and water-based printing inks, 60" x 24" x 24", 2017.

Images that influenced my work



Fig. 8- Nick Cave, *Untitled*, Bas relief, mixed media including, ceramic birds, metal flowers and crystals, 2013.



Fig. 9- Petha Coyne, *Untitled #720 (Eguchi's Ghost)*, 1992/2007



Fig. 10- Cathy de Monchaux, *Dangerous Fragility*, steel, enamel, brass, muslin and ribbon, 77 x 4cm, 1994.



Fig. 11- Arlene Shechet, *Because of the Wind*, Glazed ceramic, steel, and glazed kiln bricks, 60.75" x 14" x 14", 2010.



Fig. 12- Arlene Shechet, *Is and Is Not*, Glazed ceramic and kiln brick, 42" x 14" x 12", 2011.



Fig. 13- Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, Latex and filler over rope and string with metal hooks, Dimensions variable, 1970.



Fig. 14- Karla Black, *More of the Day*, Polythene, plaster powder, thread, 2011.



Fig. 15- Lynda Benglis, *Emmett*, Sand-cast glass, bronze wire, and copper, 50'8 x 43,2 x 40,6 cm, 1993.

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