



5 x 5: Conceptual and Technical Challenge

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Challenges in Craft

Replacing the authenticity of hand-made craft objects for cheap, quick production items, the Industrial Revolution along with urbanization, essentially eradicated individual works in favor of machine reproduction. The Arts and Crafts Movement acted as a form of protest to the urbanization of society. As the book *Makers* explains, early examples of arts and crafts were an act of rebellion against what they “despised in contemporary England: the profit motive, the factory system, social injustice“. In a way, modern artists can also protest mass-production by producing their work, and making a lot of it. Learning to increase speed when making work by hand can amplify personal identity and return personal satisfaction for the maker. Imperfections in the work are a reminder of humanity.



Outcomes

Most of my work addresses contrast, asymmetry, balance, and movement. Conceptual similarities include interest in people, relationships and identity politics. When given the prompt to make something for a person I would love to meet and talk to, I was instantly drawn towards social activists I admire, such as: Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. For the prompt to use ‘spite’ as a subject matter, I began brainstorming about those that have been spiteful towards me, and my relationship with the Catholic church came to mind. I’m influenced by the drive to be a good person— so I’m often thinking about social issues and how I’m personally affected by those around me. I also want to interact with others and learn from them to broaden my personal perspective; this engenders me in continuing this subject matter in future series.



Faculty Sponsor: Professor Lauren Selden

Goals for the Week to Week Project

As an undergraduate student pursuing a BFA, the apotheosis of my education is to find and develop the content for my art and convey it in the form of my capstone BFA exhibition. My creative research for this project consisted of building a finished work of art each week during a five-week time period. The intent of the project was to expedite concept development and increase my personal technical speed while focusing on craftsmanship and design. Having seven days to respond to a content prompt, I was challenged to focus on creating without overthinking design or the technical aspects of making. This allowed me to explore various techniques, as well as learn from my successes and failures. As Bayles and Orland describe in *Art & Fear* “you learn how to make your work by making your work”. The culmination of my project revealed a pattern and a core concept that is prevalent in the body of work I have produced and can help me design future series.



Technical Development

The cost of material and the challenges of attempting an unknown process had previously effected my working practice. The concern of wasting expensive material hindered my exploration of techniques, despite the desire to undertake them. However, utilizing paper models, limiting my material for each project, and with the time crunch, I was able to overcome the trepidation and go for it. Madeline Wynnes, a self-taught metalsmith, “dealt with jewelry as form and composition rather than as a set of laws imposed by tradition”. Unrestricted, and similar to my style, she could “invent and improvise”. Her position was: “craft is primarily an aesthetic enterprise, not a demonstration of skill”.



Process

Each week, for 5 weeks, I received a written prompt to inspire content or subject matter for my artwork. Throughout the duration of the week by weeks, I took personal notes documenting my process. My brainstorming began by writing my first impressions about the particular prompt. I listed objects or emotions that came to mind. To push my technical skills and to jolt a prospective design, I accessed materials and limited myself to an arbitrary amount, then returned to my sketchbook to draw abstract forms inspired by my material limitations and journal inspiration. When a design became especially interesting, I began making. To save materials and strategize technical issues, I usually started with paper models. I often referenced various jewelry books to take notes on techniques I was interested in as well as design. Each week I would submit the works to my professor. After completing the 5 projects, I received the works again and had a week to edit and finish each work. The conclusion of this endeavor, was a group critique including professors and two cohorts that also completed the same trial. Critiques are significant for artists in order to critically evaluate the previous works to plan for future works. Upon completion, I practiced professional photographic documentation techniques and reflected upon my body of work in order to find a pattern or core concept.



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