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Undone...

Matthew L. Grant
University of New Orleans

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Undone...

A thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in
Fine Arts

By Matthew L. Grant

BFA Loyola University New Orleans, 2008

May 2011

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the work I have completed during graduate study at UNO. My time has been spent investigating concepts of evaluation and the attribution of meaning. The main thrust and impetus of my art has been to explore the subjective way people interpret visual language and how that interpretation can be manipulated and undermined. By undoing these associations I hope to reveal the tentative nature of meaning.

Keywords: wax, medical documents, meaning, Socratic corruption, mormons, bees, unicorns, popcorn, shazbot, hipaa violation.

I was raised in a strict Mormon household. For my father, things were always black or white, right or wrong. He repeated this belief often, and tried to impress upon me at a young age the intractability of this opinion. Luckily, my Mother is a lesbian, and provided a critical counterpoint to this Mormon dogma. I was faced with two radically different world views, both fundamentally opposed to each other on moral grounds, and both passionately and honestly felt to be correct. The Mormon fundamentalism left no room for discussion, and denied the possibility of grey areas. According to accepted Mormon doctrine, being gay is a mortal sin and unacceptable under any circumstances. Even at such a young age, I saw the impossibility of asking me to agree with that sentiment. How could my mother be evil? She wasn't, so the religion I was forced into had to be wrong, right? Religion, however, can never admit it could be wrong as it would undermine the singular authority they claim.

The sheer number of conflicting interpretations seems to contradict the idea that any single view is correct. I began to see that the world is nothing BUT grey areas, and the interpretation of reality was anything but fixed. In an effort to go beyond my personal situation I looked at other belief systems, other religions, and the fundamental concept of truth. Interpretation is subject to personal, familial, cultural, religious, and even temporal considerations that are undeniably true for the people who believe in them. The desire to prove that truth is subjective (and religion flawed in its singularity) has driven me to investigate how meaning is attributed and create work that denies specific meaning while encouraging multiple readings.

The exploration of this idea has manifested itself in a series of works that seek to undo themselves in order to demonstrate malleability of meaning and flexibility of interpretation.

The resultant art finds itself walking a narrow line between knowable and familiar symbols, and ambiguous shapes that seem to hint at other meanings. Each viewer brings a different set of references to a work of art when they view it, and these personal identifications will change the way each of us responds to and understands a work. The following descriptions of my graduate work will explore this 'undoing' and the multiple meanings they evoke because of this, and also demonstrate the correctness of multiple interpretations. Everything is a grey area.

"History of the Present Illness" is 3x5 feet, and 8 inches deep. The surface is covered in ¼ inch wide vertically positioned strips of paper, with fragments of text and horizontal lines visible. The exact nature of the documents is unclear, but they are undeniably informational forms of some kind. The entirety of the strips are held in place by clear wax, creating a shallow but visible depth. Text appears and disappears as the wax layers get thicker and thicker, creating a haze that permeates the whole piece. The predominant color is white with black text, but highlighter yellow and pink show through in areas where the neon colors seem to aggregate in loose groups. In the top right corner is a mostly reconstructed white and red phone message that is largely unreadable, and in the bottom left is a patch of legal pad yellow paper strips. The most dominant feature of the piece is a double peaked shape that is composed of darker, denser text on white paper shreds that juts up from the bottom to the top of the piece.

This piece has a strong presence, owing much to the nature of its construction. At eight inches deep, my hope is that the thickness will be aggressive in a way that demands attention from the viewer. The fact that this work projects into the room from the wall without a true frame and the information wraps around the edges creates a heightened 'objectness' that takes

“History of The Present Illness” 3’x5’x6” found paper, wood, wax. 2009

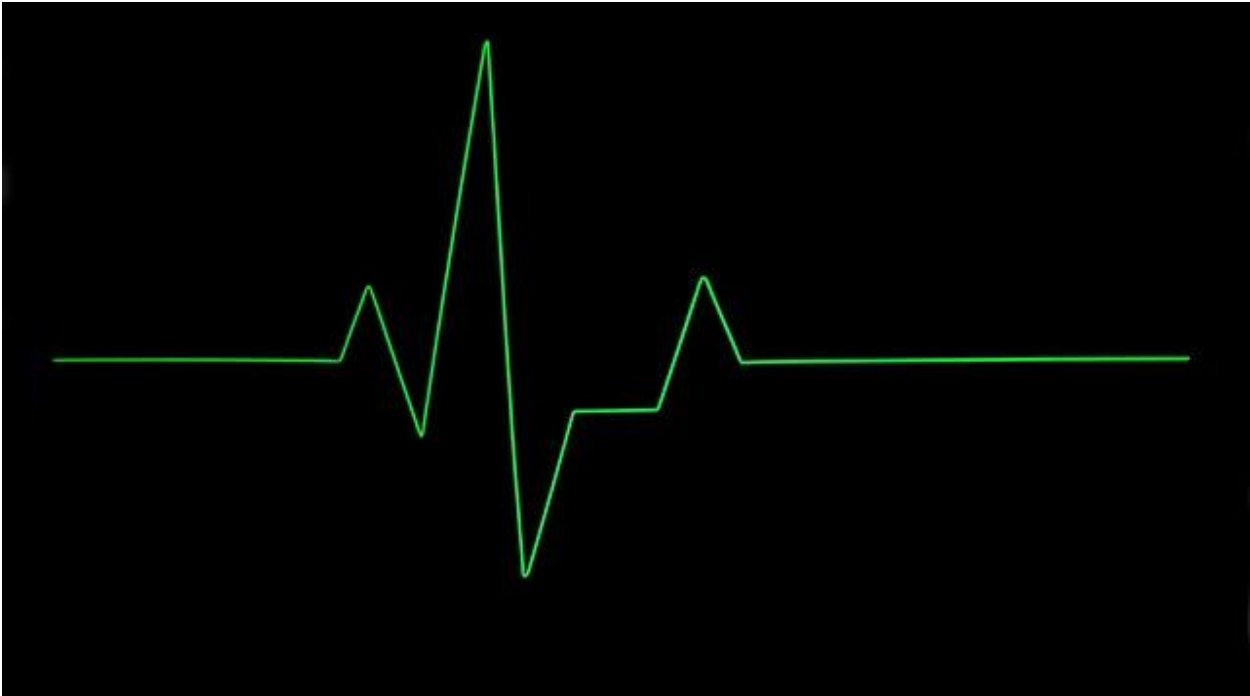


up some of that precious psychological real estate. This three dimensional aspect undoes the painting association the work might otherwise have, which is a recurrent theme in all my work.

These are shredded and discarded medical documents salvaged from Tulane hospital, and here their meaning has been recontextualized and reassembled in a new configuration. The idea of putting together shredded documents to discover the hidden meanings evokes spy operations, and more generally, revealing secrets that were sensitive enough to warrant destruction. This aspect of my material process is really exciting, and holds a lot of tantalizing possibilities. The tendency towards voyeurism that is so pervasive in people comes to the fore with the personal and private nature of the shredded records, and causes viewers to stop and take a closer look in an attempt to glean details and secret information. This physical pulling forward of the viewer can drastically change the perceptions of the audience, as the details within the text can only be fully appreciated up close. The height of the piece forces people back somewhat in order to take the whole of the piece in, where the text and minutia obliterate into subtle texture and pattern. The realization of the source material as something taboo and personal creates a curiosity and a pull inwards to discover the true nature of the surface. Standing so close fills the visual field with a riot of information, and in order to reestablish the work of art in its totality the viewer is forced back again. The push/pull is like dancing, and this rhythm is echoed in the rise and fall of the peaks in the piece.

The double peaked shape and obvious use of codified data, (in the shredded state the specific nature of the paper is unclear, but the general purpose of the information as data is still obvious,) implies a connection to science and medicine without being didactic and leaves other possibilities for meaning open to the viewer. While the EKG readout is my reference point, at

EKG (electrocardiograph) showing the electrical activity of the heart as a function of time.



times I also see steep mountain peaks and twinkling lights in the sky, or cresting waves crashing onto rocks and throwing spray into the air, or even cave formations. The unambiguous, scientific nature of these records has had their meanings subverted, and the opening up of possible interpretations works in direct opposition to the empirical information originally encoded.

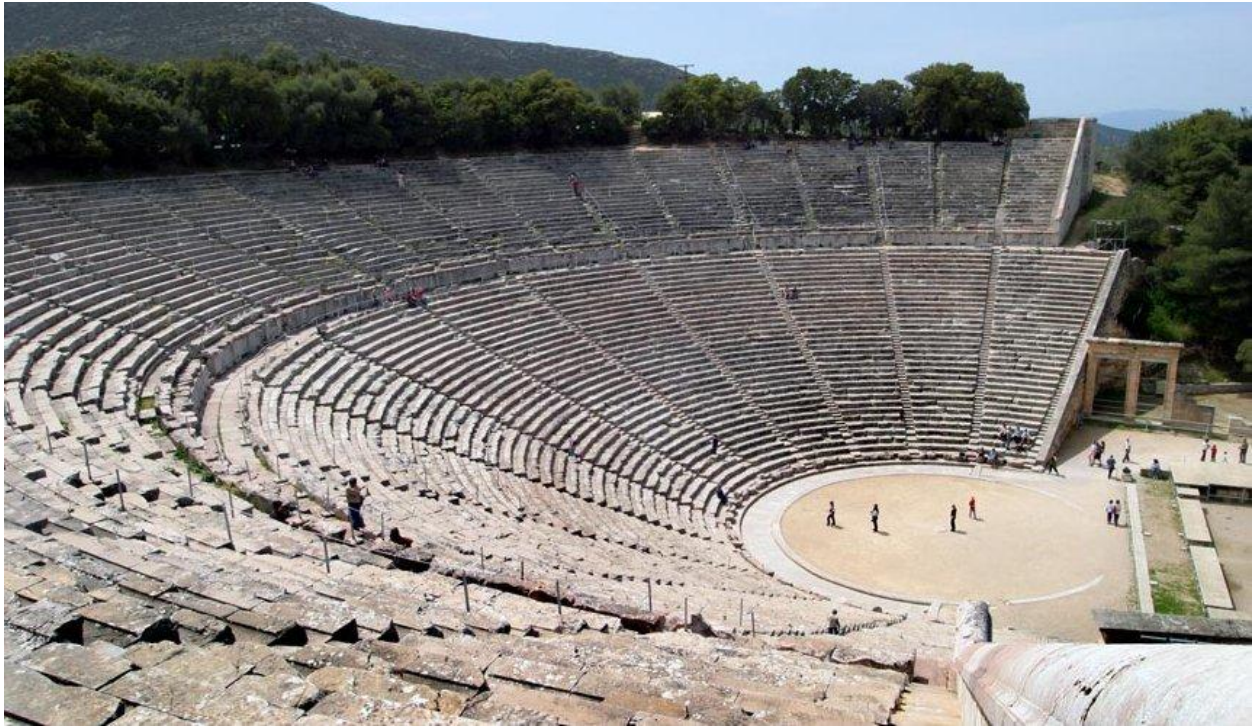
“Amplitude Modulation” is three feet square, and two inches deep. Again, ¼ inch wide strips of paper have been attached to the surface of the piece using clear wax. The paper is bright white with bold black text oriented in a radiating pattern from the middle left side. Besides the text, the strips also have a large proportion of graphic elements in fragments located mainly in the upper portion of the piece. There is a shape cut through the strips of a small rectangle on the left side of the object, increasingly larger and larger semi-circular ring segments radiate from it towards the right. The cut through pattern reveals the wooden form beneath, and the wood grain seems to vibrate between the ring segments and the paper shred orientation. The radiating concentric rings seem to originate from the rectangle like sound waves or vibrations, an implication of a progression through time and space. The way the paper shreds have a point of origin and everything seems to almost explode from that point can be seen to have a deeper esoteric meaning, like a genesis of sorts, or an origin.

Sound really does seem to emanate from the piece, but other available interpretations include an amphitheatre, with rising seats arranged in a semi circle around the central stage. One cannot but help be reminded of Greek amphitheatres^a In this way of understanding the work, the text becomes the literal emanations of dialogue that would be acoustically carried from the dais to the audience, radiating in all directions but directed outwards towards them.

"Amplitude Modulation" 3'x3'x2" Found paper, wax, wood. 2009



The Greek theatre in Epidaurus (4th century BC)



Taking this thought further, the odd graphics and unadorned text can be felt to convey hard data of some sort. Under closer examination, the graphic bits are fragments of chromosomes, and with this reference to medicine, images of the operating theater are conjured up.

The shape may also evoke the re-entry module from the Apollo space missions, and in this way of interpreting the image the paper and text become the force of the atmosphere during the intense process of coming back to earth.

This ambiguity of meaning is central to my interests conceptually. The original source for the symbol is purposefully vague, straddling a line between known iconography and mysterious symbols. The really interesting phenomenon happens when we see things that aren't immediately knowable from our cultural perspective, when we are compelled to try and interpret objects and images using the entirety of our memories and experiences. This subjective interpretation happens all the time, but by creating works that deny concrete understanding the viewer is forced to confront the unknown and create a framework with which to comprehend. This phenomenon serves to highlight the intangibility of meaning, and the ultimate fallacy of definitive interpretation.

"Trade Routes" is also three feet square, and three inches deep. Centered on the surface is a compound shape composed of two elements: a triangular 'sail' made of paper strips bearing marks that appear to be schematic diagrams (black on white paper held down with clear wax,) and beneath that a symmetrical 'hull' shape. The pointed ends of this 'hull' wrap around the actual sides of the piece, and the paper strips in this case are dyed black with still visible dense black text, and conform to the curvature of the shape itself. This 'hull' is

Operating theatre, London, Old St. Thomas Hospital, 1822



Charity Hospital, New Orleans



Apollo Re-entry Module



"Trade Routes" 3'x3'x3" Found paper, wax, wood, pigment. 2009



surrounded by a rich blue field of color that comes to the top of the black paper, but leaves an impossible gap where the sides slope up to confound the simple interpretation of sea/sky. The sky is further confounded by being left as exposed wood grain, and filled with enigmatic shapes depicted in white, translucent wax low reliefs that resemble curled band aids, cheese puffs, bacteria, or any number of things.

My interest in boats is in large part due to the historic use of boats to link disparate parts of the world together and transmit trade goods, ideas, armies, and even disease. When bubonic plague wiped out a quarter of Europe's population, the cities with the worst outbreaks were along the old trade routes. Ships transmitted technology that revolutionized societies, sometimes transforming cultures overnight. Boats also moved ideas, exporting religion and introducing strange gods (often at the end of a sword) and spreading the influence of theocrats and other nere-do-wells. Water craft are a perfect example of a device that facilitates shifts in perception and redefines what things mean.

"Pitch and Roll" is another reference to ships, but this piece is even more open ended than "Trade Routes." Here, the ship images have been pushed into the realm of graphics, and abstracted to wedge shapes depicted with magnetic cassette tape. To contrast the dark brown tape, similar shapes have been cut through the light brown paper to the wood below. The paper itself has been dyed using onion skins, and all of the materials are affixed to the wooden structure using clear wax.

Even though to me this piece is about boats and waterlines, the imagery is anything if not ambiguous. I am always pleased when someone approaches this work and sees something new in it. One of my favorite comments was that it was a depiction of birds on wires. To this

“Pitch and Roll” 2’x3’x4” onion dyed paper, magnetic cassette tape of breath sounds, 2010



person, it is only birds, and even after I explained my sources they could still see only birds¹.

This interaction is important to me as a prime example of differing opinions with no chance of reconciling the conflict. Each of us believes in one specific point of view, and there is little chance of convincing the other to change their mind. Is either more correct than the other? Am I any more right because I made the thing? Or is the art only finished when the viewer interprets the work with their own slanted view?

“Crop Rotation” is two feet by four feet, and shows four overlapping circles in line with each other, each made of a different type of paper both in terms of color and text. The far right circle is on top (fully visible), and the center of this circle is made of gold leaf. This central gold circle is visible underneath a thick, asymmetrical coat of clear wax and surrounded by another radiating pattern of bright white paper strips. The other partially visible circular shapes are of yellow phonebook pages cut to alternate directions of text to resemble a hounds tooth or feather pattern, Old Testament pages, and newsprint classified ads also manipulated to create an alternating orientation that looks like bird feathers. This is all floating on a slick black background of horizontal paper strips.

The sunburst pattern appears in my work at regular intervals. This theme stems from the early and frequent use of circles and sunburst designs seen through time in all civilizations at all periods of human existence. The circle is an almost overwhelming symbol, and this ray design is as compelling an image as I can come up with. The open-ended nature of this symbol has been used, re-used and re-interpreted by different cultures so many times that it can be said to have no meaning, or perhaps ALL meanings. Why is the circle so compelling? Why is it

¹ My wife and I have been arguing about this for a year!

“Crop Rotation” 2’x4’ paper (newspaper classifieds, Old Testament, yellow pages, blank found medical records,) wax, gold leaf. 2009



such a deeply spiritual focus? The circular, closed forms we associate with human existence, birth-death-rebirth, the sun, the earth, the moon, the path of celestial bodies, the soul, the body...

My interest in personal interpretation is summed up nicely by this theme of the sunburst. A design with a central origin (symbolizing genesis or creation), a universally understood shape, but with such diverse usage and implementation that definitive description of such a visual device is impossible. The earliest scratches human beings made on cave walls were circles. We worship the sun and the moon as both gods and brothers. Math cults of ancient Greece were obsessed with circle geometry, convinced that the symmetry and pure mathematical relationships they discovered were the secret language of gods.

“August Vault” is a more sculptural work, even though it still hangs on the wall. Even this most basic aspect of the work serves to undo the fundamental way of understanding it. Is it a painting or a sculpture? Defying easy classification, having aspects of dimensionality and hanging on the wall, this work spans the traditions of both sculpture and painting in a conscious effort to set up a more dynamic relationship with the audience’s means of categorizing and understanding.

Again, the primary material is strips of white office paper shredded to maintain confidentiality, affixed to the wooden superstructure with clear wax. The text is mostly unreadable, but the impression left is one of an accumulation of data, mostly due to the consistency of the text; clearly it all came from the same source. At the top is a multi-leveled series of sharp peaks in a symmetrical pattern that gives an impression of a crown, or alternately, a mountain. The text falls down the piece in the direction of the points, until it

“August Vault” 2’x3’x6” Encaustic and paper on wood. 2010



reaches a large central arch in opaque white wax that juts from the surface of the work. This arch in turn sits atop a white plinth and gives a strong feeling of architecture, either a building like a castle, or possibly a tunnel through a mountain. The notion of a tunnel is further emphasized by the burst pattern created using dark paper strips under the archway, giving a staggering sense of depth and dynamic forces emanating from deep within the object.

This piece uses an unexpected combination of referents in a surprising and unusual way that opens up the possible readings available to the viewer in an exciting way. Familiar yet alien, the push/pull of known and unknown sets the mind of the viewer searching for the familiar and has to content itself with an odd mix of clashing imagery in an attempt to classify the thing. This mental compromise is important to my thinking about how we come to conclusions about the meaning of things, and highlights the arbitrary features of meaning.

“Hat Trick” is another more three dimensional wall hanging piece, and measures approximately 2 feet by three feet, and six inches deep. The shape defies easy classification. It looks somewhat like a bowler hat with an oval cut into the surface of it, with two circles set into the oval, and a semi circle hanging beneath. The surface is divided into the exterior of the oval and the interior. The exterior is covered in vertical strip of white paper with heavy black text and numerous bits of color from highlighters and colored ink scattered throughout the clearly document-type paper. The interior is visible wood grain covered in clear wax along the line of the grain, creating a dimensional element in the shape of the wood grain.

The two areas are connected by a yellow ‘wave’ that starts with small peaks and builds in height as they repeat towards the right, continuing on the lower area after meeting the edge of the oval. The meandering yellow line alludes to a path of some sort, whether river, road, or

“Hat Trick” 2’x3’x6” Paper, wax, wood. 2010



sine wave. This reference to travelling gives context to the rest of the piece, and seems to imply movement through space. In this way, the lower semi-circle can become a wheel and conjures vehicles and transportation. Even the wood grain then reads as door paneling or side wall construction of trailers. This piece is visually dominated by the two 'eyes,' which confront the viewer directly. The easy reference is head+hat, but far from the only one. It also looks like a pig's snout, or a horse trailer, or a wall outlet... All these definitions are available, but again, easy classification is elusive.

Technical Manifesto

The actual creation of my work is supported by a foundation of sound building and craft to the highest level I am capable of. Even in the pieces where the superstructure is covered entirely, I take the time and energy to build with as much intensity and integrity as I can. I do this to charge the art with purpose, and it makes a difference in the final product. Regardless of whether the building is obvious, and often it is, the sense of purpose creates a directness that is hard to ignore. I try to carry this sense of craft throughout the work, and the methodical application of the paper strips in an intentional manner reinforces the focus on craft that I feel gives a sense of presence to my art.

I want these pieces to be impossible to ignore. People have developed an instinct of evaluation when we examine objects, and we attempt to identify the manner in which things are constructed to better determine their quality. This process finds solid ground in my work. The clean edges, careful, intentional placement of elements and attention to detail all convey

my interest in 'valuation' and make the work more interesting in a materialistic society that covets nice things. There is the seduction of my work! The viewer is drawn into an emotional relationship with the physicality of the pieces. There is no dogma for them to hold onto, only the physical experience of the work of art.

My use of wax arose from an interest in bees and the iconography associated with them. Beekeeping itself is an extremely old practice and bees, honey, and wax have been used since the dawn of time as far back as ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Wax has been used traditionally as everything from ship sealant, cosmetics, candles, sealing containers, and countless other products. The art traditions have also included wax, most famously encaustic techniques of suspended pigment in wax, and the ancients commonly used this to paint outdoor structures due to its durability and insolubility in water.

The use of bees as symbols has a rich tradition, appearing frequently in Egyptian culture representing death and rebirth. More recently, the Merovingians used the bee as a symbol of royalty, burying their dead with small golden bees. The use of bee symbolism held for French kings all the way through to Napoleon, who famously embroidered golden bees on his coats. The Mormons have used the bee as a symbol of industriousness and cooperative activity, and even gave Utah the designation as the "Beehive" state. Bees also appear in Masonic imagery frequently, as a symbol of systematized industry and as a link to the ancient mysteries of Egypt. This multiplicity of meaning appeals to me as a literal example of the precise premise I am trying to explore: the juxtaposition of different meanings with absolutely equal correctness.

This connection is important to my work philosophically, but the wax works formally in ways that have caused me to keep using it. I love the effect of the wax as it penetrates the

paper, and I have found I can control the look of this by carefully manipulating the temperature of the applied waxes. Colder wax, just above melting, goes on very thick and does not go all the way through the strips of paper, leaving only the color of the paper. Hotter wax will go right through the paper and creates a new color that includes the paper, the wood beneath it, and the color of the wax (if any.) The layering possible with wax is amazing, and the built up forms and translucency creates depth that enriches the surface. I am able to apply multiple layers and then carve back into the wax, creating low relief to further push the sense of depth.

This development of the surface works on the psyche of the viewer in the same way as the recognition of the high level of craft: It causes a shift in their opinion, manipulating their evaluation of the work. There is a sensuality and a physicality to the wax that causes a predictable reaction. Everyone wants to touch them, even though they know that typically you don't touch the art. I always catch people with an outstretched hand, hovering awkwardly in front of the pieces as if waiting for an invitation to continue. The great thing is that the wax is stable and touching it is fine. The interaction is sublime; the moment of the caress is a huge payoff personally, as it validates my ideas about how to make art that invites emotional entanglement without didacticism.

Another element central to my current work is the use of found, shredded office paper and medical records. These documents were originally generated to convey specific information with as little ambiguity as possible, and then the information was destroyed to prevent misuse of sensitive information. The mere fact that one piece of paper could be deemed important enough to both make and destroy is tantalizing. This duality of meaning and use is evocative of the multiple and often contradictory meanings built into my work.

My process has reassembled this annihilated data into a new configuration and a new meaning. The act of reassembling is a profound transformation that echoes strongly in the psyches of people. The juxtaposition of creation and destruction is a constant and recurring theme seen in the common mythologies of all peoples through time. These forms now imply something very different from their original intention, and this reversal of meaning echoes the feelings I have concerning the transitory nature of truth and interpretation.

There are several artists that I feel a connection with in regards to craft. American sculptor Martin Puryear, in an interview for the PBS series Art:21 stated succinctly: "There's a narrative in the fabrication of things, which to me is fascinating. Not as fascinating perhaps as the final form or the final object itself, but I think by working incrementally there's a built in story in the making of things which I think can be interesting."

The point he makes about working incrementally and the story built into the manner things are made is such a powerful and exciting prospect! The way things are made is important, and craft matters. The viewer experiences a work of art on many levels, and one of the primary reactions we have to objects is in the critical assessment of craft. This sentiment echoes precisely the methodical and intentional process I use to build my sculptures.

An excellent example of this in his practice is "Old Mole." The built-up narrative is literal in the layering of materials, and the depth of meaning he achieves is remarkable. Puryear manages to evoke a multiplicity of potential meanings with his ambiguous forms, and pins it all together with the masterful craftsmanship he employs. This underlying structure is critical to his work, and through the physicality of the sculptures the viewer is drawn in and the work

Martin Puryear, "Old Mole," 1985



becomes more accessible. As critic and professor Michael Brenson has stated, “Puryear has the ability to make sculpture that is known by the body before it is articulated by the mind.”

His use of unknown but suggestive shapes is exactly the type of juxtaposition I attempt to charge my work with. The form of the ‘mole’ is both non-specific and abstracted, yet still suggestive to an audience without being didactic. Here he even uses strips of material in a similar manner as I do.

As further inspiration from Puryear, I admire the piece titled “Ladder for Booker T. Washington.” This ladder is over 30 feet tall, with tapering, twisted side rails evoking the natural shape of the tree that the wood came from. The effect of this is to create the impression of a much greater height, and a precarious ascent. Rather than resting on the ground, the ladder is suspended from the ceiling and floats on nearly invisible wires. The whole piece is expertly joined and finished like all of Puryear’s work, with a solid foundation in craft.

Puryear manages to use the familiar imagery of the ladder and turn it around by his expert treatment and presentation. The possible meanings are further expanded, rather than limited, by his choice of title. Booker T. Washington was an African-American freed from slavery after the Civil War. He believed that the key to empowering people was an education that instilled a view of labor as not only practical, but beautiful and dignified. This connection to craft is important, as is the metaphor for upward mobility inherent in Washington’s politics concerning the rights and social status of African-Americans.

What is important for me here is Puryear’s ability to open up the possible meanings and deny anything too specific.

Puryear, Martin "Ladder for Booker T. Washington" 1996

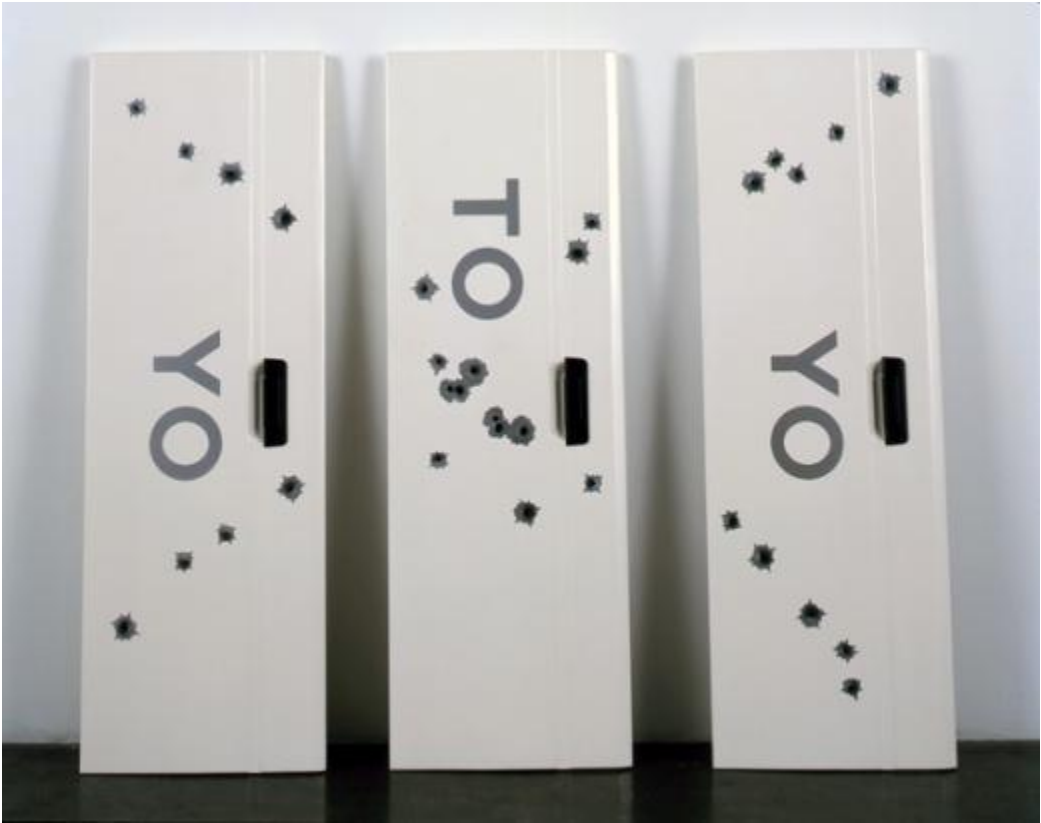


Kaz Oshiro is an artist that works with canvas and paint to create amazing life-like sculptures of everyday objects, from Toyota pickup tailgates to washers and dryers and microwaves. The intersection between Oshiro's work and my craft is not the illusion of reality, but rather the technical skill and craft that went into the making of them. A realistic sculpture of an appliance might be interesting, but one made of paint and canvas is fascinating in an altogether different way. In my way of thinking about it, it all comes down to craft and the mastery of materials. We place a high degree of value on being able to manipulate a process to such an extreme level, and once a viewer realizes what must have gone into making such an object there is a shift in the perception of the piece. Materials are important, and they strike a chord in each of us. We are a material culture.

While I wouldn't claim to be the master of materials, I have been trying over the last three years to achieve a level of proficiency that can convey a similar sense of materials to my audience. Hopefully this attention to detail and finishing finds a foothold in the mind of those who see my work and the effort required informs their opinion somewhat. I maintain that intention is important in the consideration of my work.

Indian artist Subodh Gupta is an important influence on my thinking about symbols and their interpretation. He is most well known for his use of stainless steel kitchen vessels commonly used on the Indian subcontinent. These bowls, cups, and utensils have a strong connection to domesticity and the most basic of needs within the cultural context of India, where these objects are commonplace and appear in every marketplace and kitchen in India. This seductive and even sensual notion of food brings viewers into the work with their

Oshiro, Kaz "Tailgates (YO TO YO)" 2006



Oshiro, Kaz- "Washer-Dryer #1-3" 2005



Gupta, Subdoh "Spill" 2007



familiarity, while at the same time challenging those notions by the overwhelming and startling mass of the objects. Gupta's work, however, is shown in Europe and other locales where the metal bowl is less of a known object. The interpretation of his work must change when seen by people without the cultural association between these stainless steel bowls and home cooking. The work, like all art, is subject to interpretation based on personal and cultural references, and there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to personal interpretation. Conflicting and even contradictory readings of the pieces are not only possible, but inevitable.

This inevitability puts all narratives on the same level, and can be thought of as both invalidating AND legitimizing each other. All possible meanings are equally wrong. While this ambiguity is where my interest began, the deeper into the theory I get I can see a problem at the end of the tunnel. It seems that the end of this argument is that everything is relative, and there is no truth. Religious fundamentalists use this line of reasoning to put their beliefs on an equal footing with scientific theories, as in both cases ultimately one has to believe: either in the data you have collected or the words of a preacher.

This epistemological skepticism is a corruption of Socratic reasoning², (which uses a dialectical argument to reveal contradictions in opposing views,) and is in many ways typical of postmodern relativism.³ The corruption comes from the notions of multi-culturalism and pluralism that have gained acceptance as people have come into more and closer contact with ideas different than their own. The notion of basic beliefs being unimpeachable because they are fundamental, and therefore unreachable by reason, leads down a dangerous path towards

² Plato's Republic

³ Norman, Andy "The Unmaking of Wisdom" Free Inquiry, Dec 2010, vol 13, no 1

unmaking ALL meaning. My purpose is not to propose a solution to this problem, only to examine the phenomenon through the creation of art.

Conclusion

My work is all about revealing the subjective nature of meaning. I do this by creating imagery that is based on familiar motifs, yet charged with alien and unexpected elements and juxtapositions. The viewer finds themselves confronted with referents they feel they should be able to neatly place, but these icons and symbols have been manipulated and presented in such a way as to undo those associations. The push/pull between knowing and not knowing is very important to me; it reveals the very uncertainty I am so interested in.

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Vita

Matthew Grant was born and raised in Oregon. He married Jessica Warner and they have a pile of cats together. His hobbies include kendo, robots, boring documentaries, strategy games, and manufacturing. His work can be seen at Fair Folks and a Goat in New Orleans.