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Controlled Substance

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Controlled Substance

Ron Hollingshead

Thesis submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
with
an emphasis in sculpture

Committee:
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Division of Art and Design

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Abstract

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Ron Hollingshead

My MFA thesis and supporting exhibition will highlight sculptural work I have created that deals directly or indirectly with circumstances surrounding personal health problems. A recent L4-5 micro-discectomy and the following complications have given much inspiration for my art making. I use this personal narrative as a jumping-off point to create object-based artwork that brings up larger, more universal themes, such as body, disability, pain, and pharmaceutical use. I will explain how the creation of artwork about the process of healing brought with it its own catharsis.

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Thank you to all of the graduate students I have had the pleasure to work with during my time at WVU, especially Emily Walley and Brett Kern. I am very grateful for their friendship and encouragement.

I would like to mention just a few of the medical professionals that helped me get through the past few years. Thank you to my surgeon, Dr. Bailes, and his team, as well as Joy and all the folks at the WVU Pain Clinic. Mark and Jeff, my pharmacists, thank you for not treating me like an addict. The continued effort of the aforementioned (and many others) is much appreciated.

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Mike Velickoff, Master Soap Maker.

Roxanne Singhisen, Master Tongue Installer.

Malissa Goff, Master Striper. (That’s just one P!)

Chris Brooks, Master Ambulance Driver.

Jodi Hollingshead and Chris Quattro, Company Masters.

Charlie Hollingshead, Caster Master.

My parents, Varena and Gary Hollingshead and Tom and Mary Ann Yoho, Master Makers.

And my wife and collaborator, Beth, you are my Master Muse. Ole, ole, ole!

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Introduction

Objects speak to me. I have always been drawn to the object. The collecting, hunting, and cataloguing of these objects is only a part of what interests me. I also use objects to speak for me.

Since the beginning of my art making, I have communicated through the manipulation of objects and the stories, connotations, and associations they convey. Some objects denote practical applications, while others refer to memories or have nostalgic implications. Some can suggest tactile impressions even without physically touching them. Some objects suggest words; they carry a title, name, or language relationship. I can also create brand new objects and attribute a meaning to them. All of these relationships can be used as-is or I can manipulate them to signify new things through the use of wordplay, metaphor, and/or semiotics.

I can change an object by adding an idea: "...take a black pebble: I can make it signify in several ways, it is a mere signifier; but if I weight it with a definite signified (a death sentence, for example, in an anonymous vote), it will become a sign."¹ I can also combine two objects in a third, such as my artwork, and create a new thing, a new sign. "What is new and which affects the idea of the work comes not necessarily from the internal recasting of each... but rather from their encounter in relation to an object which traditionally is the province of none of them."²

Though I have long enjoyed the use of objects, the way I relate to, and with, them has significantly changed over the years. A thread throughout my work has been my love of storytelling. I often use my personal narrative as a jumping-off point to create object-based artwork that brings up larger, more universal themes. This thesis and supporting exhibition demonstrate the current way I use objects to control substance.

¹ Roland Barthes and Annette Lavers, *Mythologies: Selected and transl. from the French by Annette Lavers* (New York: Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972), 117-74.

² Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, *Image, music, text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155-64.

Lyin'

After months of severe discomfort, numerous pills, many doctors, and a multitude of questions without answers, I was left wondering about the true origin of my pain. Two courses of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which is a medical test that uses a magnetic field to make pictures of structures inside a body,³ indicated no physical problem that necessitated immediate surgical intervention. My doctors found no explanation for the amount of pain I was in. No medical test would corroborate my problem, so I began to wonder if the problem was in my back or in my head. I started to question my mental faculties. Could I trust my own senses? If I had no physical reason for all the pain, was I a liar?

As much as those thoughts scare me, feelings like this intrigue me as an artist. As a sculptor, I had been searching for a three-dimensional way to represent a liar. While doing my normal process of sketchbook brainstorming, I came upon the idea that a liar is one who is lying, or “lyin’.” Therefore, I could play on the word “lyin’” and use an image of a “lion” as the physical representation of a liar.

As a final attempt to discover what was wrong, I was introduced to West Virginia University’s Ruby Memorial Hospital, Chairman of Neurosurgery, Dr. Julian E. Bailes Jr., MD. He ordered one more MRI to be done immediately, and he would read it personally. It showed a very significant impingement of the spinal cord at level L4-5 by a ruptured vertebral disc (fig. 1). Dr. Bailes felt this physical problem could possibly be improved through a surgery he was willing to perform himself. I was elated. I phrase it that way because these third MRI images became the proof that the pain was real, that I wasn’t “lyin’” to myself.

³ WebMD LLC., "Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)," *WebMD*, <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/magnetic-resonance-imaging-mri> (accessed 26 Mar. 2011).

With this sculpture, it is important that the interior is emphasized. It is only when technology allowed me to see past my skin that I knew what was wrong. Therefore, for the creation of *Lyin'* (2011) (fig.3), I chose to use a taxidermist's mannequin which is a version of a lion with no exterior façade to obscure its interior. This type of foam form fit my concept perfectly, and I took note of its use by other contemporary artists. For example, in *Hanging Carousel (George Skins a Fox)*(1988)(fig. 2, 2.1), Bruce Nauman (b. 1941) gives us,

a large carousel in which the form of four unidentifiable animals and a video monitor hang down, rotate around a room. on the screen, a man named george is seen skinning a fox with his bare hands. the polyurethane animals on the carousel speak of the real animal which is being skinned on screen.⁴

Where Nauman uses the bare form to emphasize the absent exterior, I chose this type of form to bring attention to the existing interior.

It is my "existing interior" that the MRI allows me to access. I displayed this existing interior by creating a video animation using the computer program Adobe After Effects. When presented in a series, the 17 individual MRI "slices" blend together and give an idea what the interior three-dimensional parts of my spine look like. I projected the animation into the lion's mouth by way of a small video projector conspicuously mounted to the bottom of the artwork (fig 3.1). By removing the lower jaw and displaying the work high on the wall, the ordinarily interior space of the mouth becomes accessible, making it easy to see the video proof of my pain. I make the truth come from the mouth of the "lyin'."

⁴ designboom, "bruce nauman: topological gardens at the venice art biennale 09," *designboom*, <http://www.designboom.com/weblog/cat/10/view/6680/bruce-nauman-topological-gardens-at-the-venice-art-biennale-09.html> (accessed 27 Mar. 2011).

Rupture

The MRI images in *Lyin'* were a two-dimensional representation of the problems in my spine. I wanted to create a three-dimensional model of the area that would explain the problem further. I looked to expert descriptions so I would get it right;

Over time, because of injury or degeneration, discs start to change shape. Many terms describe this change in shape including bulging, protruding, herniated, prolapsed, slipped. They generally describe a disc that is displaced beyond the limits of the intervertebral disc space.

The earliest change in shape many times is in the form of a disc bulge—a wide based extension of the disc... As the degenerative process progresses, the central, nucleus pulposus portion of the disc can extend through a tear in the outer annular wall of the disc, resulting in a focal protrusion or herniation of the disc. Disc protrusions can cause symptoms of pain, numbness, or weakness from nerve root pinching... A disc extrusion is a severe version of a disc protrusion in which a large portion of the nucleus pulposus is displaced through the wall of the disc.⁵

In my case, the extrusion happened at the rear causing the nucleus to compress the spinal cord (fig. 4). My neurosurgeon, Dr. Bailes, said that when he cut into my spinal column, a “gumball sized piece of my disc popped out” under tremendous pressure. These explanations inspired many conceptual and formal choices for the piece *Rupture* (2010) (fig. 5).

I began this piece by seeking to find a substitute for the bone vertebra. I needed to be able to have many of them, and they needed to imply the original concepts of the spine. Manufactured industrial forms were a great prospect because contemporary machinery parts echo many intentions of actual anatomy. Many of these apparatuses even share names with their anatomical analogues, such as ball and socket or hinged joints. Also, like medical models, these mechanistic apparatuses are tough and built to be used together to create a larger whole. I found a metal bracket that would have worked well, but its cold, industrial feel was one I did not wish to play upon. I decided to make a rubber mold of the bracket, so I could change its material to plastic.

⁵ American Pain and Wellness, "Back and Neck Pain Causes," *American Pain and Wellness*, http://www.painandwellness.com/back_and_neck_pain_causes.html (accessed 31 Mar. 2011).

Plastic can be cast quickly in multiples, has an inherent bone-like color, its texture and light weight made it a terrific material to stand in for the vertebra (fig. 5.1). I made twenty-four of these plastic castings because an adult human has seven cervical, twelve thoracic, and five lumbar vertebra.

To complete *Rupture*'s central "spine," I placed a cast foam disc between each of the plastic brackets I had attached to a hospital I.V. stand (fig. 5.2). Again, the material choice for the disc was of paramount importance. I had not used expanding foam before, but a recent research opportunity allowed me to experiment with this new material. I liked foam's firm but spongy texture. It has a thin, smooth outer skin and a softer, resilient interior that perfectly represented its human counterpart.

Dr. Bailes' "gumball" description revealed a perfect symbol for a ruptured disc. The blowing, pressure, and popping that bubble gum suggests fit perfect with the concepts involved with a damaged disc. I created a fairly simple video of a bubble gum bubble being blown up till it popped. The grotesque beauty of the wet lips and tongue in my video (fig. 5.2) is reminiscent of Mona Hatoum's (b. 1952) video installation, *Corps Estranger* (1994)(fig. 6). Hatoum's work elicits similar questions to those brought up in mine. There are personal/ impersonal implications to using your own body in an artwork. Since I start working from a very personal narrative, I have to be wary of limiting my work with the specifics of my own story.

To combat these limitations, I use my body only as a jumping-off point. I edited personal facts, like my face from the video. This made the work anonymous and therefore able to represent anyone, including the viewers themselves. I placed the screen low on the sculpture with the intention to guide my viewers into a situation where, both conceptually and physically, they are more aware of their own body than mine. They may bend down to see the screen more

clearly and feel a tug in their back that reminds them that they are looking at a very familiar model.

The use of video allowed me to employ action verbs like “rupture” and “pop” where a static object could only imply them. To reference the idea that this isn’t the first time I have had this type of injury, and the odds are it won’t be the last, I looped the video. The seemingly endless cycle played out on an iPod Touch video screen. I pressure fit the screen, as a disc is compressed, without any glue or fasteners, between two of the “vertebra.” The screen, and therefore the artwork, is dependent on outside resources -just as I have become- to function. This physical tie to a larger system is made obvious with a long black cord plugged into an available electrical outlet (fig. 5).

It is a scientific and specialist methodology to research and create using materials like plastic, foam, and rubber. There is a bit of alchemy to using these materials, but lately there is also a lot of pure chemistry. “This compels the artist to question their means of depiction and materials, and to use new materials and methods adopted from industrial technology, science or medicine, as well as integrating commercial processes and ideas into their working methods.”⁶ The accessibility of new processes and techniques has made the difference between artistic creation and scientific model uncertain.

Perhaps the most notable contemporary artistic representation of a bodily system is *Cloaca* (2000) (fig. 7), the room-sized digestive tract by Belgian artist Wim Delvoye (b. 1965). Delvoye allows us to question which is more “correct”: a scientific model of a digestive tract in a doctor’s office or his shit-making sculpture? Both are representations of a real system that cannot be recreated. In an essay included in the catalogue for the *Diagnosis [Art] - Contemporary Art*

⁶ Burkhard Leismann and Ralf U. Scherer, *Diagnose (Kunst): die Medizin im Spiegel der Zeitgenössischen Kunst = Diagnosis (Art): Contemporary Art Reflecting Medicine* (Köln: Wienand, 2006), 11.

*Reflecting Medicine*⁷ exhibition, Susanne Witzgall points out that “...Scientific models are constructs, that scientific recordings cannot represent the object of investigation without some distortion, that scientific knowledge is fabricated to a certain degree.”⁸

Some medical models make changes in scale, color, texture, or material to draw attention to something tangible. I employ many of the same choices to bring attention to concepts that are more ephemeral. All contrived objects, be they for artistic or medical purposes, are only facsimiles. Therefore, I posit that my work, *Rupture*, can be seen as an equal, analogous scientific model, no different than any traditional reproduction pointed to by a doctor’s finger.

⁷ Translated from the original German: *Diagnose[Kunst]- Die Medizin im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Kunst*.

⁸ Leismann 2006, 141

Regimen

The creation of the artwork *Regimen* (2011) (fig. 8) shows the methodological changes to my art making that started post-surgery. In this work, I have charted out my daily medication regime for the month of December, 2009. I chose this month since this is when I had my second micro-discectomy surgery. During this single month I was prescribed and swallowed 576 pills. At the onset of back and leg pain, a little over four years ago, I resisted drug treatment. I am a non-drinker, non-smoker; I have never puffed a cigarette or tasted an alcoholic drink. My grandparents died from addiction related diseases before I ever got to meet them, so I have a fear of the possibility of a genetic predisposition toward becoming an addict. I resisted starting to take prescription drugs because I hated the possibility of becoming dependent upon anything. I first did physical therapy because it was something I felt I had control of, but soon my doctors insisted I start a drug regimen to allow me to feel well enough to do more than just light physical therapy.

The prescriptions started with an anti-inflammatory and a mild muscle relaxer. As the pain increased so did the strength and number of the medicines prescribed. Every day came with its regular intervals of medicine. The days were divided up into doses. I counted time through a prescribed regimen of pharmaceuticals. Morning, noon, evening, and bedtime came with capsules and tablets placed upon my tongue. I decided to illustrate the sheer multitude through a sort of calendar. Each time I stuck my tongue out and received a pill would be memorialized upon the wall with its own mini-monument.

When the doctor ordered me to an endless program of light duty, I had to reexamine the way I physically made artwork. I had to think of inventive ways to keep creating. Finesse and

smart thinking had to start winning out over muscle. Casting objects in lighter materials was one way to literally lighten my load. An amazing side-effect of this method is I am able to use found-objects (each carrying their own associations) and manipulate their meanings through a sort of material transubstantiation. As my physical abilities declined, I decided to try to create very large works out of small modules made with lighter materials. Modern casting methods have allowed me to take almost any object in almost any material and transform it into lighter, more manageable materials such as plastic, resin, foam, or rubber.

Mold making and casting aren't always the fastest or cheapest way for an individual to create objects. For *Regimen*, I could have easily purchased the 576 tongues from a manufacturer that is already set up for mass production. I found the tongue I would use as a pattern⁹ on a taxidermy website.¹⁰ I chose it based on its overall size and shape. It was smaller and longer than the average human tongue. I chose to use this particular one because I wanted the pills I would later place on them to have a larger presence than normal. I also wanted the length of the tongue to imply movement down as if it was stretching out to take the pill. The price of these fake tongues made it reasonable, even more cost efficient to purchase the lot. However, for this work I had two important reasons for deciding to cast the tongue myself.

One reason was that its original material, rubber, was not the ideal material to use in this work. By re-creating the tongue in plastic I made a way to integrate a small nail in the back. This made mounting and handling much easier. Plastic is also a cheaper material and it is much faster to work with, which brings up the second reason to use plastic. I wanted to emphasize the changes I had made in my day to day life and in my art practices, because more and more often these two things have been tied to one another.

⁹ The original template used to create a mold.

¹⁰ www.vandykestaxidermy.com

It is a new experience for me not to be able to fight all of my own battles. Even with all of the medications I take, I have lost stamina and must spread my work out in small increments or the pain would render me unable to get out of bed the next day. Until recently, I have always been physically strong and self-reliant. I should be at the peak of my capabilities, but back injuries and the subsequent surgeries have left me unable to do many things that most people take for granted. As I slowly recover, I can work for longer periods of time. I was used to marathon days and nights in the studio, but to avoid further injury I now must work in shorter bursts taking many breaks. To get the same amount of work done I have to do much more planning. I will have multiple steps on multiple projects going at the same time. This way if I get tired of standing and welding, I can move to another project where I am sitting, painting small parts. I can trick my body into thinking I am taking a break while still getting the most that I can do, a little at a time. Because of these changes, I took it upon myself to create the cast multiples. I engineered an experience in creating the work that would illustrate the current physical limitations in my art making process while still generating the highest quality of artwork.

These new changes in ritual are like small doses. Casting brings with it a timeline reminiscent of a prescription medication schedule; wake up, take my meds, pour the molds, eat breakfast, empty the molds, go to work, take my meds, pour the molds, lunch, molds, meds, molds, bed, repeat. I use the making of artwork as a kind of treatment as well. It becomes another part of my daily regimen, just like taking my meds.

You are prescribed a drug and also prescribed its ritual. “Take this medication two times a day, morning and night.” It becomes part of your routine. Just as each Sunday some take that pilgrimage to the front of the sanctuary to receive Eucharist, you have a scheduled time that you

open the medicine cabinet and take a pharmaceutical. These ceremonies are a search “for ultimate spiritual sustenance; as if the tablet becomes the Eucharistic host.”¹¹ For me the prescription routine is what made me able to get out of bed or go into the studio to make artwork. This was due, partly, to the effects of the medicines’ chemical reactions but, also because this ritual, just like prayer or Communion, is a link to the possibility of a better life. This link makes me mentally able to muster up the strength to take on the day.

The prescribed routine starts to feel never-ending. An unremitting string of capsules seem to march across my tongue and into my body. Like a regimen of pill shaped soldiers, my daily regimen of prescription drugs mount up, as if little insects entering into battle to fight against pain/anxiety/infection/sleeplessness/inflammation.

Growing up, I was amazed by what we colloquially called “pill bugs.” They are also known by the names potato-bug and wood-lice but they are known by scientists as *Armadillidium vulgare* (fig.9). They are not even insects as the name seems to imply. They are a type of terrestrial Isopod that belongs to the class Crustacea, like crabs.¹² What engaged me as a child was that when you would touch them they would roll up into a ball, endless entertainment for a young boy. What interests me now is the capsule like shape and name “*pill* bug.” I imagine each pill I take like marching individuals filing into the ranks with the others already within.

I decided to take this metaphor even further after I did some more research into the life of pill bugs. They are litter eaters. While they are not a community organism, they each take the bad parts of the garden ground cover, eat them, and as a group, leave behind better soil. The great

¹¹ Leismann 2006, 39

¹² Jonathan Wright, "Pillbugs," *Northern State University: Aberdeen, SD.*, <http://www3.northern.edu/natsource/INVERT1/Pillbu1.htm> (accessed March 22, 2011).

thing about these organisms is they have little-to-no adverse side-effects on the surrounding favored systems.¹³

Taking medications has similar consequence. You take these individual pills, each with their singular, uncommon interest. As they each go about their specific business they start to work together to effect positive change to the larger system, all while hoping that their negative side-effects are negligible.

Keeping in mind the parallels I found, I employed wordplay and visual pun to imply that pills and pill bugs may become one idea. I removed details from each and made a physical representation of a half-pill, half-bug combine, a pill/bug (fig. 9). I then created a mold of several of these stylized pill/bugs and cast 576 of them, one for each pill I took that month. I had Lowe's Home Improvement store specially mix paint to exactly match the candy-like colors of each of my prescriptions. I hand painted each pill/bug, one at a time, a few each day, in a regimented fashion, making them representative of my prescribed medications. It was important to me that I matched the colors perfectly to represent the pills of my prescription regimen for that month. I felt I needed to be exacting in this manner so as to ensure that future viewers understood that this was not medical hyperbole, it is a medical history. Therefore, it could be read as a general, ambiguous record and have the same impact as if it is read as specifically mine.

To make this method a bit easier on myself, I created a system to keep on track. I mapped out each dose on a spreadsheet (fig. 10). Every medication for every day of the month is described: each color, shape, and amount used. This made it much simpler to see how many castings I needed to make or what colors I still needed to apply. I cast all 576, then painted them one type at a time, then moved to the next type, and then the next. This allowed me to work in small doses, making stamina less of an issue. I could make one type of pill then rest or take a day

¹³ Ibid

off and return to working without losing track of what I needed to do. Without this regimented system, the piece *Regimen* would have been impossible. Finally, I faithfully added the 576 pill/bugs to the 576 tongues, placing one on each, as if it was ready to be swallowed.

The decision to put the pill/bugs on tongues like doses in columns on the wall comes from a direct link to a calendar. During the height of my pharmaceutical intake, the use of a seven day, four times a day, dosage organizer made me feel prematurely aged. Contemporary artwork like Mauro Perucchetti's (b. 1949) *By Prescription Only* (2008) (fig. 11) uses the idea of the dose organizer but it is the gridded installation of his *Luxury Therapy* (2008) (fig. 12) that really influenced my presentation. The grid could show the beauty of the objects while still eliciting the concern of the invasive magnitude of prescription drug use. Sculptor Damien Hirst's (b. 1965) words and his artwork like *Pharmacy* (1992) (fig. 13) informed many of my decisions as well. Hirst has commented:

I've always seen medicine cabinets as bodies, but also like a cityscape or civilization, with some sort of hierarchy within it. It's also like a contemporary museum of the Middle Ages. In a hundred years' time this will look like an old apothecary. A museum of something that's around today."¹⁴

Like a museum display, *Regimen*'s gridded tongues are memorials to each dose.

It is through my art making, as well my medicine cabinet that I search for therapy. I have a connection to the larger community of patients patiently waiting for their own cure-all; however, this contemporary search for a wonder drug, a panacea, both intrigues and upsets me. Perucchetti and Hirst bring with them these more universal narratives, but I believe using my own narrative as a point of departure makes my work personal for the viewer as well.

¹⁴ Adrian Dannatt, "Life's Like This Then It Stops," *FlashartOnline no.169* (1993), par. 3, <http://www.flashartonline.com> (accessed December 29, 2010).

May Cause Side Effects

The photographs in *May Cause Blurred Vision* (2010) (fig. 14) and *May Cause Dizziness* (2010) are of the many pill bottles from my own medicine cabinet. The shape and height of the monitors that play the animations were chosen to represent the collective medicine cabinet even though the images shown are absolutely personal in origin.

After surgery, I started to reduce the number of pills I was taking. The doctors worked with me to start a program weaning me off of many of my medications. This was not an easy feat. My body had become dependent upon many of the drugs. As I reduced my intake, the original effects that the drugs were supposed to have begun to fade. The side effects of all the drugs were what really started to impact me. Each of the bottles, as they emptied, became symbols for the hundreds of pills I had taken and their effects on my body.

I took photographs of each of the bottles I had collected over the past few years. I photographed only the warning labels on each bottle. The front, the label containing the prescription information, wasn't important to me anymore. The name of the drug didn't matter. The reason I took it and the intended effects were no longer significant. Now, it was all of the yellow and orange labels the pharmacist added to the side of the bottle that held the most relevant information. MAY CAUSE DIZZINESS. MAY CAUSE BLURRED VISSION. MAY CAUSE NAUSEA. These side-effects are what impacted my life most now. As an artist, I wanted to communicate that idea.

I used the aforementioned photographs to create two animations. In one, *May Cause Blurred Vision*, I slowly faded from one photo to the next, never leaving a single image showing at any point. This causes a continuously changing loop that is never perfectly clear. The speed

and fuzziness causes the viewer to question what they are seeing. In the other work, *May Cause Dizziness*, I again looped all of the images in sequence. This time, however, I did so without transition and at an extremely fast rate. The rapidly flashing images cause some viewers to experience a sensation of vertigo.

My initial resistance to taking medications was confirmed by my body's reaction. I began to realize the enormous gravity of taking these small pills. Prescription medication is such a significant part of our contemporary culture that these works carry with them an immediate zeitgeist. Commercial pharmaceutical companies and, it seems, our individual doctors, do all they can to add to the normality of taking these foreign substances into our bodies. In the end, though, one capsule at a time, one choice at a time, the accountability lies on each of us as we make decisions about what to put into our bodies.

I had started creating these works by trying to communicate the effects of medicines on my body, but just as the name on the bottle and the intended purpose of its contents didn't matter anymore, my own connections to and motives behind the works also lost their importance. What matters now is the effect that the piece has upon the viewer. It is the meaning they take from their experience with my artwork that has lasting consequence.

Exhausted

When my physical strength started to deteriorate, I began adding practical wheels and casters to my heavier artwork (fig. 5.2). The addition of these wheels transformed objects into vehicles and implies mobility, which I was slowly losing. This made cumbersome artwork more manageable to work on and transport. Furthermore, since the bulk of my current work has to do with my physical well-being, it is easy for me to defend their inclusion on a conceptual level. Since they weren't only practical, I began to add them to lighter works as well.

For the piece *Still. Moving.* (2009)(fig. 15) I cast a set of casters in solid plastic. Not only did I create a play on words by casting a caster, but by putting these new casters with no moving parts on each foot of a quad-cane (an object that is designed to enhance one's mobility) I draw attention to the fact I have removed its usefulness entirely. This removal of utility became a thread in my work. *Exhausted* (2011) (fig. 16) sits atop air filled tires. I lowered the pressure in these tires allowing the weight of the work to press down flattening the tires, making them "tired tires (fig. 16.2)."

This once again illustrates the importance of language and wordplay in my artwork. In fact, this work, like many, started with just a clever title. However, I don't allow the title to limit the final work. This work began with the simple idea that even though I lay in bed for weeks after surgery, I still felt tired; I still was exhausted. I immediately wanted to use a hospital bed, one with wheels, and add an exhaust system to it (fig 16.2), making it "exhausted." The bed already was a vehicle, so it seemed plausible for me to put mufflers and pipes under it. In the drawing phase, which was prolonged due to my reduced physical capability, this work took on many arrangements. I made almost every decision after the title with the form of the final sculpture in mind, but it continued to gain interesting conceptual notions.

I didn't want to put an actual body in the bed because beds inherently carry the idea of the body. Also, without a body there, it was implied that the patient might have gotten up and taken steps away from convalescence. The addition of racing stripes, originally selected to supplement the notion of a vehicle, seemed to also indicate a movement toward health. In fact, I made the bed lean slightly forward, even further implying movement.

As I fabricated *Exhausted*, I would work until my body couldn't any longer. I would then rest and come back to do more later. With each session, I would become completely fatigued. With the next session, I was able to work slightly longer. It was similar to the physical therapy I was prescribed post-surgery. Again, as with *Regimen*, my working procedure mimicked my course of therapy. I could use what I had gotten done on any given day as an objective measure of my rehabilitation. *Exhausted* became a vehicle for my own rehabilitation. The creation of a work about catharsis brought with it its own process of healing.

Conclusion

Akin to taking medicine, creating artwork allows me to hold out hope for my future wellbeing. Damien Hirst once said, "I like the way art works, the way it brightens people's lives up, but I was having difficulty convincing the people around me that it was worth believing in. And then I noticed that they were believing in medicine exactly the same way that I wanted them to believe in art."¹⁵ Hirst adds, "Art is like medicine--it can heal. Yet I've always been amazed at how many people believe in medicine but don't believe in art, without questioning either."¹⁶ I happen to believe in both, and I take them as a sort of combined therapy. I don't know that one would work without the other.

Each of these rituals brings with it benefits and side-effects. In creating the artwork for the *Controlled Substance* exhibition, my health has become a large part of the art making ritual, both conceptually and literally. I have found a way to prescribe a therapeutic experience through my art making, for it seems when I make art about my health, I sometimes affect it. Art influenced by life has become art influencing the quality of life.

¹⁵ Tate | Online project, "Damien Hirst: Pharmacy," *Tate: British and international modern and contemporary art*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/pharmacy> (accessed March 22, 2011).

¹⁶ Damien Hirst, Céline Bastian, and Heiner Bastian. *Damien Hirst: Void* (München: Schirmer/Mosel, 2007).

Illustrations

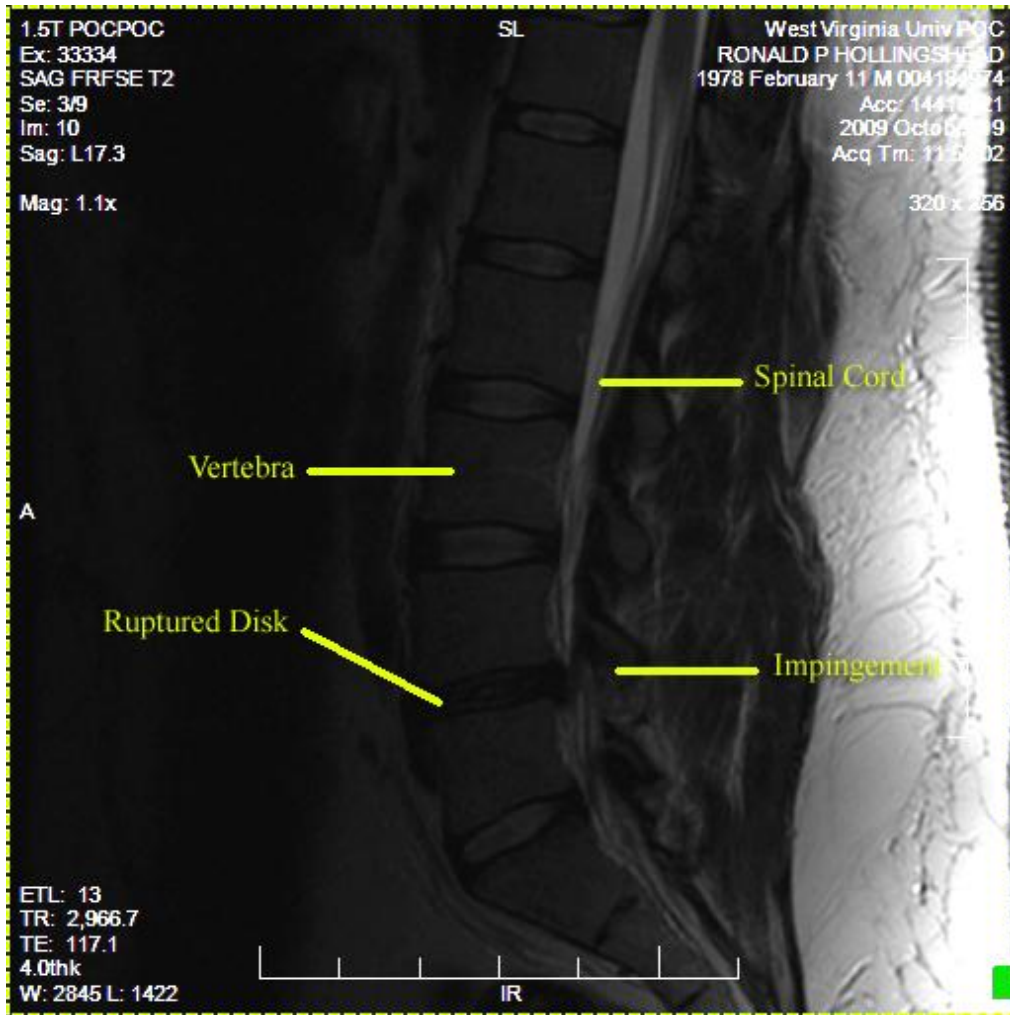


Fig. 1. Image from Lumbar MRI, Oct. 2009.



Fig. 2. Bruce Nauman, *Hanging Carousel (George Skins a Fox)*, 1988. Color video monitor installation (with sound), video player, motor, steel and polyurethane foam. Reproduced from www.designboom.com (accessed on March 23, 2011).



Fig. 2.1. Bruce Nauman, *Hanging Carousel (George Skins a Fox)*, 1988. Detail. Reproduced from www.designboom.com (accessed on March 23, 2011).



Fig. 3. Ron Hollingshead, *Lyn'*, 2011. 1ft. 6in. x 3ft. 3in. x 2ft. 4in. X-rary viewer, lion, video projector, stainless steel.



Fig. 3.1. Ron Hollingshead, *Lyn'* (video/mouth detail), 2011. 1ft. 6in. x 3ft. 3in. x 2ft. 4in. X-rary viewer, lion, video projector, stainless steel.

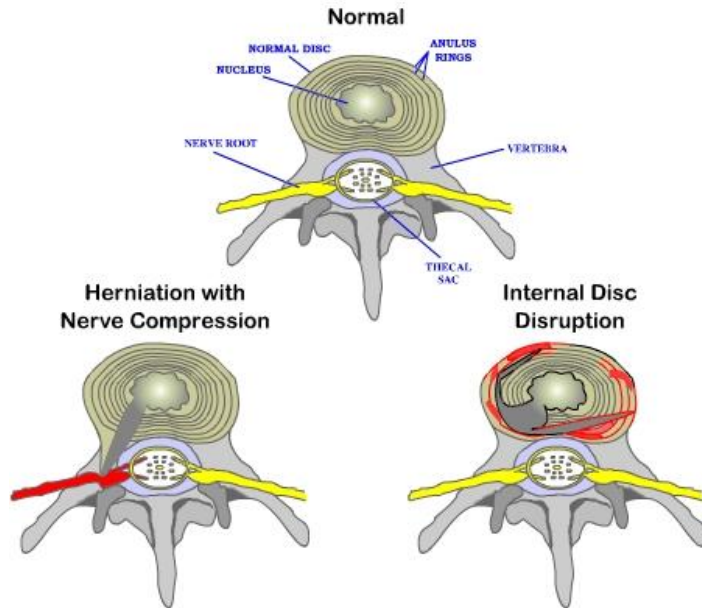


Fig. 4. Normal and Damaged Disc. Reproduced from <http://www.bayareapainmedical.com> (Accessed March 31, 2011).



Fig. 5.1. Rupture's "vertebra" and "disc" elements.



Fig. 5.2. Ron Hollingshead, *Rupture* (detail), 2010. Steel, plastic, foam, rubber, and an iPod touch, 6ft.7in. x 1ft.6in. x 1ft.6in.

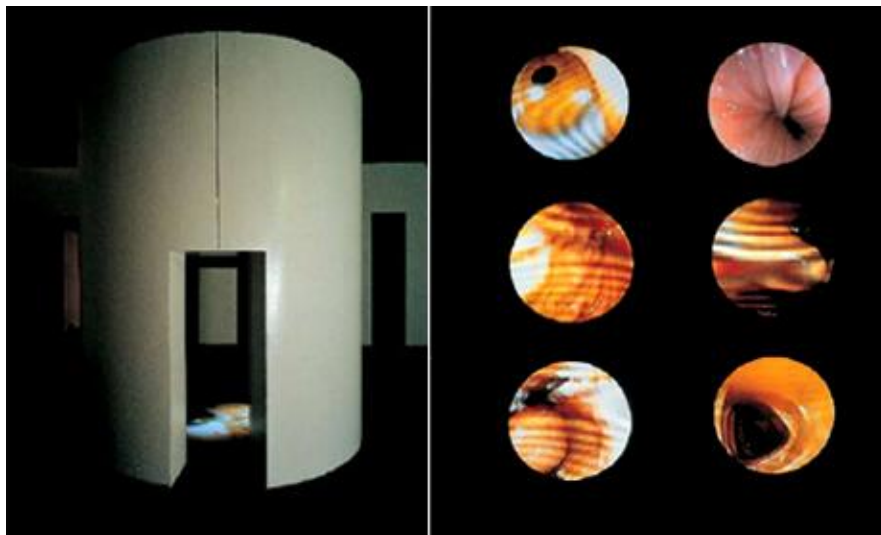


Fig. 6. Mona Hatoum, *Corps Estranger* (video stills), 1994. video installation with cylindrical wooden structure, video projector, amplifier, speakers. 350cm x 300cm diameter. Reproduced from www.daratalfunun.org (accessed March 31, 2011).

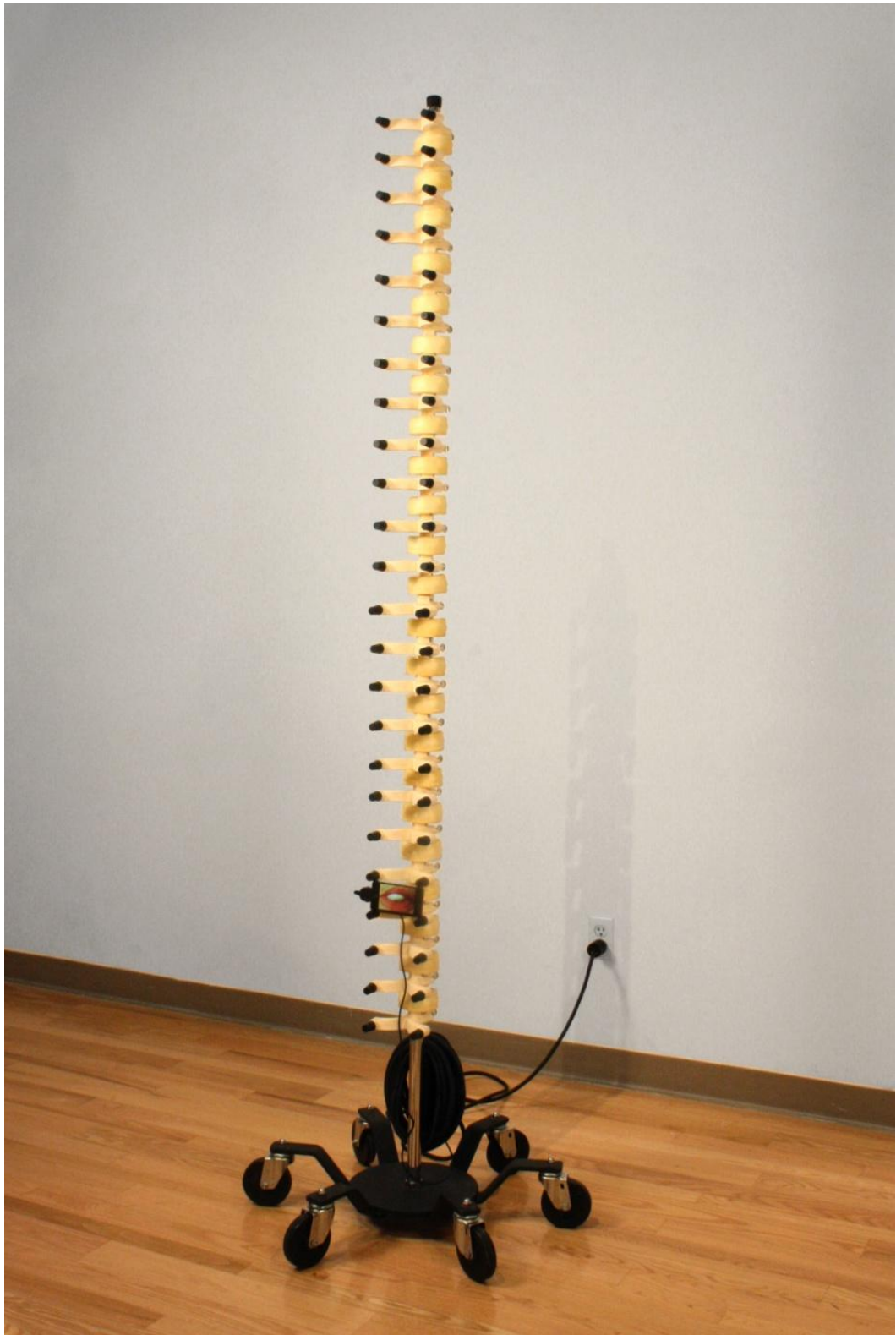


Fig. 5. Ron Hollingshead, *Rupture*, 2010. Steel, plastic, foam, rubber, and an iPod touch. 6ft. 7in. x ft. 6in. x 1ft. 6in.



Fig. 7. Wim Delvoye, *Cloaca Original* (2000). Mixed Media. 1160cm x 170cm x 270cm. Reproduced from <http://www.wimdelvoye.be> (accessed March 31, 2011).

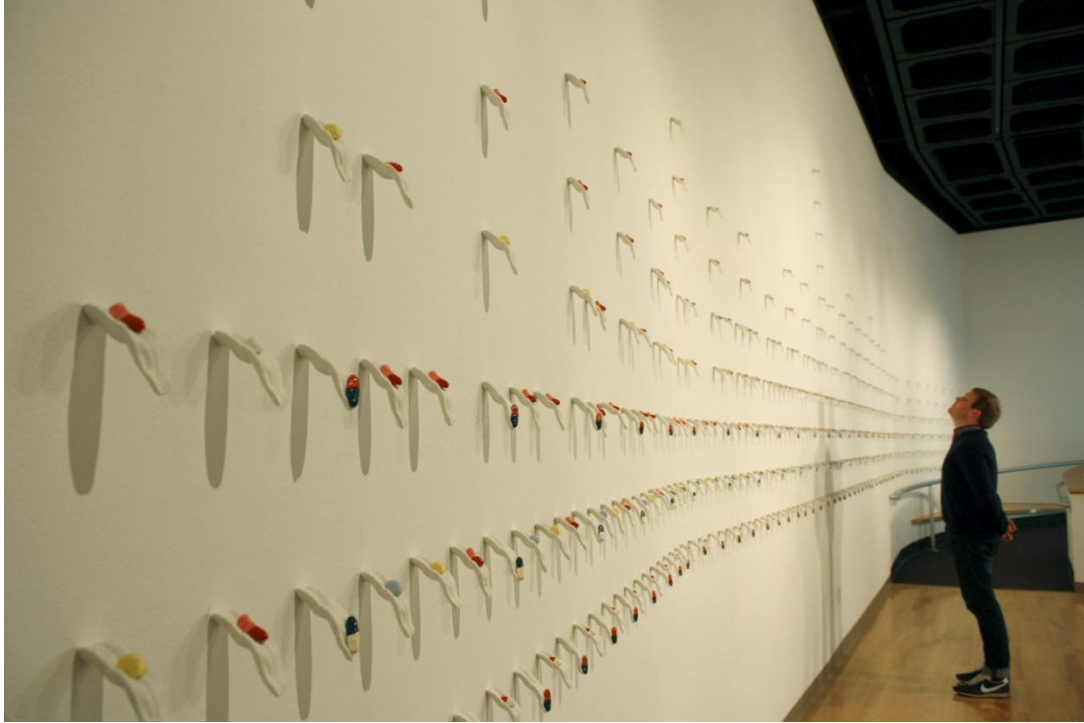


Fig. 8. Ron Hollingshead, *Regimen*, 2011. Plastic, 49ft. x 7ft. 4in. x 2in.

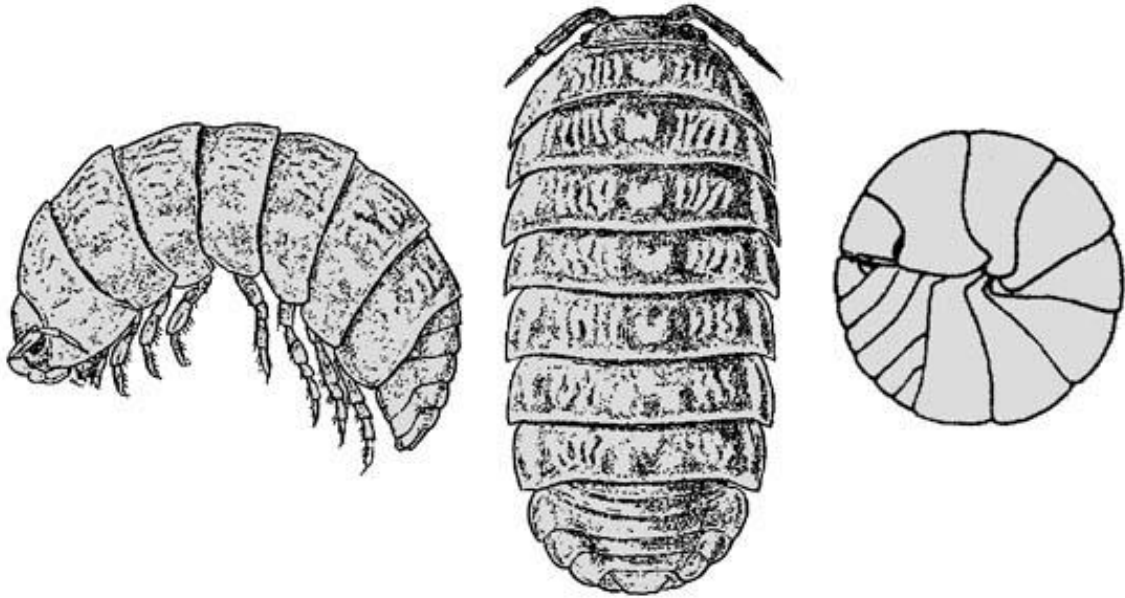


Fig. 9. Pillbug, *Armadillidium vulgare*. Reproduced from www.jacobsmigel.com (accessed March 20, 2011).



Fig. 9. Image comparing original medicine's capsule with the combine pill/bug and its placement on the tongue.

		LYRICA	CYMBALTA	FLEXORIL	MELOXICAM	CHEPHELEXIN	AMBIEN	PROPANOL	MAXALT	OXYCODONE	TONGUES
Bug		Short	Long	Long	Ball	Short	Ball	up1	Ball		
Color		Red	D.Blue	D.Orange	L.Yellow	D.Green	L. Blue	Pink	Blue	D.Orange	
		White	White	Blue		L.Green		Red		L.Orange	
M1	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
T2	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
W3	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
R4	MORN	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	7
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
F5	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
S6	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
S7	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
M8	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
T9	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1	6
	NOON			1				1		1	3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1			1	1		1	4
W10	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
R11	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
F12	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
S13	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	8
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
S14	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1	1	1	5
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
M15	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
T16	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
W17	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
R18	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5
F19	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	7
	NOON			1		1		1		1	4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1	4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1	5

S20	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		7
	NOON			1		1		1		1		4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		5
S21	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		7
	NOON			1		1		1		1		4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		5
M22	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		7
	NOON			1		1		1		1		4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		5
T23	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		7
	NOON			1		1		1		1		4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		5
W24	MORN	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		7
	NOON			1		1		1		1		4
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		5
R25	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1		6
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
F26	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1		6
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
S27	MORN	1	1	1	1			1	1	1		7
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
S28	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1		6
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
M29	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1		6
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
T30	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1		6
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
W31	MORN	1	1	1	1			1		1		6
	NOON			1				1		1		3
	NIGHT	1			1			1		1		4
	BED			1		1	1	1		1		4
		62	31	93	62	45	31	124	4	124		576
Bug Type		Short	Long	Long	Ball	Short	Ball	up1	Ball	Short		
		LYRICA	CYMBALTA	FLEXORIL	MELOXICAM	CHEPHALEXIN	AMBIEN	PROPANOL	MAXALT	OXYCODONE		
Color		Red	D.Blue	D.Orange	L.Yellow	D.Green	L. Blue	Pink	Blue	D.Orange		
		White	White	Blue		L.Green		Red		L.Orange		
Color Code #	4 and 5	3 and 4	6 and 3	8	9 and 10	11	12 and 5	4	1 and 2			

Fig. 10. Spreadsheet for *Regimen* describing color/size/quantity of parts.



Fig. 11. Mauro Perucchetti, *By Prescription Only*, 2008. Pigmented urethane resin, glass, Swarovski crystals and polished stainless steel on granite base, 9 ¼ in. x 34in. x 6 ¼ in. Reproduced from www.mauroperucchetti.com (accessed March 20, 2011).

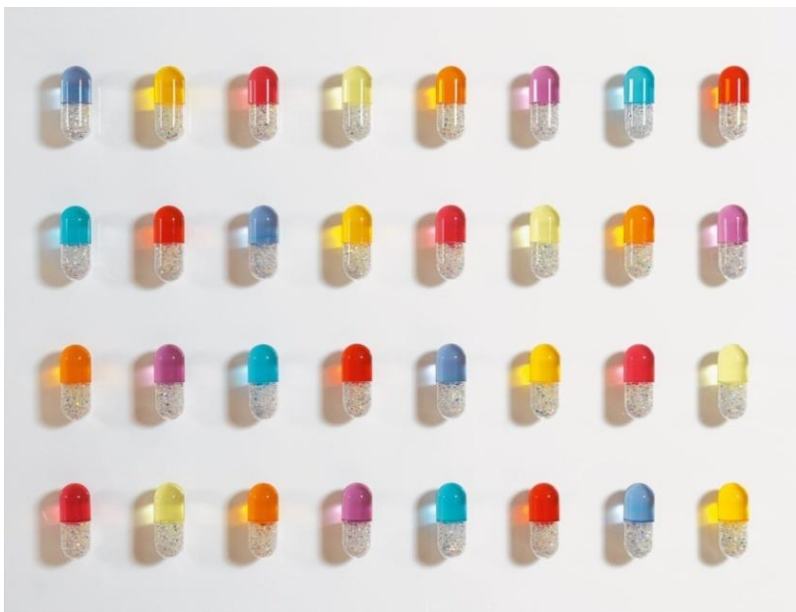


Fig. 12. Mauro Perucchetti, *Luxury Therapy*, 2008. Pigmented urethane resin, glass, Swarovski crystals and chrome metal on acrylic panel, 120cm x 200cm x 15cm. Reproduced from www.mauroperucchetti.com (accessed March 20, 2011).



Fig. 13. Damien Hirst, *The Pharmacy*, 1992. Mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Reproduced from www.marthagarzon.com (accessed March 20, 2011).



Fig. 14. Ron Hollingshead, *May Cause Blurred Vision* and *May Cause Dizziness* (Installation view), 2010.
Computer monitors, laptops.



Fig. 15. Ron Hollingshead, *Still. Moving.*, 2009. Plastic, aluminum, rubber, 1ft. 6in. x 2ft.7in. x 11in.



Fig. 16. Ron Hollingshead, *Exhausted*, 2011. Hospital bed, exhaust system. Twin.



Fig. 16.1 Ron Hollingshead, *Exhausted* (detail), 2011. Hospital bed, exhaust system. Twin.

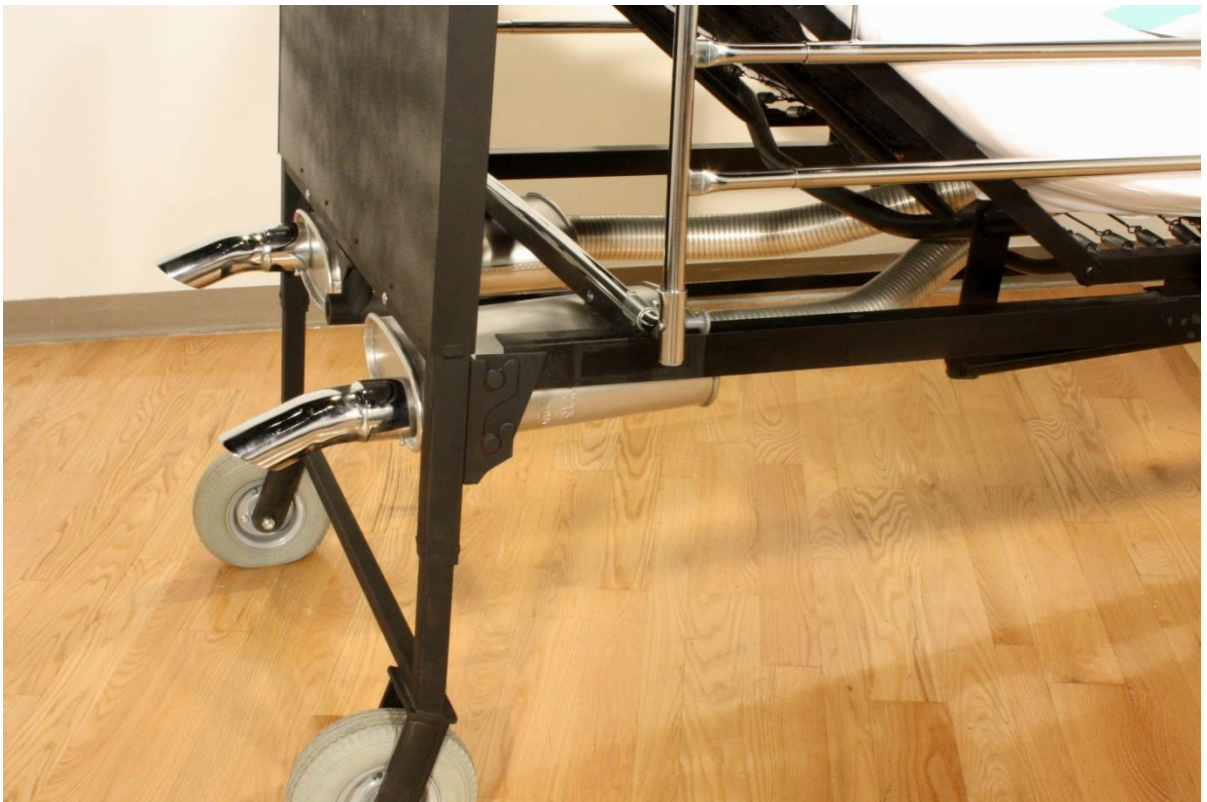


Fig. 16.2 Ron Hollingshead, *Exhausted* (detail), 2011. Hospital bed, exhaust system. Twin.

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Ron Hollingshead

EDUCATION:

- Currently **Graduate Sculptor, West Virginia University**
In final semester of a studio sculpture MFA program, cumulative 4.0 GPA.
- 2000 **Bachelor of Fine Arts**
Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Graduated Cum Laude.

EXPERIENCE:

- 2010 **Curator, *Works Cited***- Daywood Gallery, Alderson-Broadus College, Philippi, WV
- Coordinated, collected, advertised, and hung exhibit of influential artists' work.
 - Gave visiting curator's lecture.
- Coordinator, *Inside the Box***- Mesaros Galleries, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- Coordinated, collected, advertised, and hung exhibit of MFA candidates' artwork.
- Artist Assistant, Jason Lee**- Foundations Coordinator, WVU College of Creative Arts
- Assisted in the research and development of mold making and casting techniques.
 - Designed and created multiple-part silicone molds.
- 2008-2010 **Graduate Teaching Assistant, West Virginia University**- Morgantown, WV
- Instructor of record for sculpture students in fundamental 3-D design techniques.
 - Instructor of record for a course in the study of advanced drawing.
 - Leading the growth of 3-D skills, group critique sessions, and evaluating student work.
 - Assisting with courses of study for Advanced Sculpture students in higher three-dimensional design techniques and concepts.
- 2009 **Artist Assistant, Alison Helm**- Interim Chair, WVU College of Creative Arts, Div. of Art
- Assisted in creation of an artwork for exhibit at *FestivALL*, Charleson, WV.
 - Created mold and slip for slip casting porcelain. Glazed and fired the work.
 - Coordinated installation and removal of Helm's artwork from exhibition.
- Artist Assistant, Dylan Collins**- Sculpture Chair, WVU College of Creative Arts, Div. of Art
- Assisted in creation of an artwork for exhibit at *FestivALL*, Charleson, WV.
 - Aided in creating pattern and mold for casting Bronze.
 - Participated in foundry, assembly, and patina work.
- 2007-2008 **Adjunct Faculty, Shepherd University**- Shepherdstown, WV
- Formed course of study for sculpture II students.
 - Created syllabus and assignments, led group critique sessions, evaluated student work.
- 2002-2006 **Visiting Artist, Shepherd University**- Shepherdstown, WV
- Formed course of study for Sculpture I students.
 - Created syllabus and assignments, led group critique sessions, evaluated student work.
 - Returned and taught for Professor Dow Benedict on five occasions.
- 2002 **Gallery Assistant, Whisperwood Gallery**- Shepherdstown, WV
- Assisted in all gallery functions: openings, sales, customer relations.
 - Helped hang the exhibitions under the direction of Mary Richards.
- 2001 **Gallery Assistant, The Gallery at Studio 105**- Shepherdstown, WV
- Assisted in all gallery functions: openings, sales, customer relations.
 - Helped hang the exhibitions under the direction of Mary Richards.
- 2000 **Teaching Assistant, Shepherd University**- Shepherdstown, WV
- Assisted in the teaching of Sculpture I and Foundations of Design courses.
 - Aided in group critique sessions, and evaluating student work.
- 1997-2008 **Furniture Restoration, Robert Braun Antiques**- Inwood, WV
- Aided in all aspects of antique wood furniture restoration.
 - Assessed furniture, implemented repair as necessary.
 - Designed and fabricated patches, veneers, and/or entire portions of furniture.

Selected Solo and Invitational Exhibitions:

- **Controlled Substance**- Laura Mesaros Gallery, Morgantown, West Virginia. Robert Bridges, Gallery Director
- **Liar**- Solo by Invitation- Frank Art's Center Gallery, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Curator: Michael Mendez, Gallery Director
- **Art and other Contests**- Solo by invitation, Gallery 62 West, Grafton, West Virginia. Curator: Carmello Tabone and Blaine Porter, Gallery Directors
- **Shepherd University Faculty Show**- Ruth Scarborough Library, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Curator: Michael Mendez, Gallery Director
- **Shepherd University Faculty Show**- Frank Art's Center Gallery, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Curator: Michael Mendez, Gallery Director
- **Box Show**- The Artist's Gallery, Frederick, Maryland. Curator: Christine Hahn, Gallery Director by artist collective
- **Alumni Solo by Invitation**- Frank Art's Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Curator: Mike Mendez, Gallery Director, Shepherd University
- **Apology as an Afterthought**- Solo, Knutti Hall, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Curator: Sonja Evanisko, Gallery Director, Shepherd University
- **Reliquaries**- solo by invitation, Whisperwood Art Gallery, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Curator: Pat Barnes, Gallery Owner

Selected Group Exhibitions:

- **Inside the Box**- Paul Mesaros Gallery, Morgantown, West Virginia
- **ARThood**- Featured Artist- www.arthood.com Home page
- **You're a Cheese Sandwich**- fast fwd Gallery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Curator: Brett Kern
- **Morgantown Arts Walk**- Pathfinder, Morgantown, West Virginia. Curator: John Janus
- **Everyone's Exhibition**- Stifel Fine Arts Center, Wheeling, West Virginia.
- **RE: Premier**- Creative Arts Center, Morgantown, West Virginia. Curator: Andrea Anderson
- **Cast Offs**- 123 Pleasant St., Morgantown, West Virginia. Curator: Dylan Collins, Chair of West Virginia University Sculpture Department
- **Art Student Exhibition**- ISE Cultural Foundation, New York City, New York. Jurors: Jeremy Adams: Executive Director, Cue Art Foundation, Jonathan Goodman: Art Critic, Brett Littman: Executive Director, The Drawing Center, David McFadden: Chief Curator, Museum of Arts and Design, Lee Tribe: Artist
- **West Virginia University Slip Cast Sculpture Exhibition**- Creative Arts Center, Morgantown, West Virginia. Curator: Boomer Moore, Faculty
- **Mailbox Show**- The Blue Elephant, Frederick, Maryland. Curator: Chris Bransome, Gallery Director
- **Unfiltered**- The Blue Elephant, Frederick, Maryland. Curator: Mike Mendez, Gallery Director
- **Teaghlach**- Inishowen Heritage Center, Buncrana, Ireland. Curator: Patrick Daugherty, Museum Director
- **Power Pop**- The Art House, Leesburg, Virginia. Curator: Jamie Donaldson, Owner
- **Emerging Artist's Exhibit**- Boarman Arts Center, Martinsburg, West Virginia. Curator: Dow Benedict, Chairman, Arts and Humanities Dept., Shepherd University
- **Baker's Dozen**- International Museum for Collage, Assemblage, and Construction, Mexico City, Mexico. Curator: Dale Copeland, Artist, New Zealand
- **Governor's School for the Arts Exhibit**- West Virginia State Governor's Mansion, Charleston, West Virginia. Curator: Lynn Boggess, Professor, Fairmont State University

Selected Permanent Collections:

- The International Museum for Collage, Assemblage, and Construction, Mexico.
- Mr. Roger Morris, Kaponga, New Zealand.
- The Art House Gallery, Leesburg, Virginia.
- Ms. Kathleen Daywalt, Shepherdstown, West Virginia.
- Mr. and Mrs. Peter Pennington, England.