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A CRACK IN EVERYTHING

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
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ABSTRACT

Contained herein is a close examination of self-awareness and self-portraiture as it applies to the works of artist Jeffrey Hoffman. Water, frozen into various forms and combined with natural elements of wood, slowly melt over an indeterminable amount of time, each droplet documented as the process transforms the elements. Through this process, we see change. We see time. We see truth. This documentation of change and time through natural elements is where the artwork comes full circle. Working with new media to explore man's interconnectivity to life, energy, and the cosmos, he produces time based installations, photographs, videos, and sculptures that serve as both existential metaphors and Tantric symbols.

With the use of digital cameras and video, a record is created by which the disintegration which occurs from the unseen forces of gravity, heat and time upon sculptures made from natural elements and ice is examined. In its sculptural form, his work can be categorized as Installation art and Performance art due to its evolving nature. Each piece is intended to either change over time or to have that change halted by another temporal force like that of flowing electricity. The possibility of allowing varying levels of self-awareness to emerge through self portraiture is also examined. The existential, as well as the metaphysical, can be present in a physical form when the form is imbued with evidence of an evolutionary process. In many ways, the work serves as a self portrait. It is a means for Hoffman to examine his own existentialism as a student of the modern western world and life.

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INTRODUCTION

From beneath our feet a line extends out that follows the curvature of the earth to eventually come back again. This line continually moves with each passing step, yet it connects us with everything else. Whether contemplating the metaphysical or the purely physical, this line systematically links all matter through intimate integrated relationships of energy transfer or exchange (Caddy 20). Furthermore, these lines have neither a beginning nor an end. Similarly, as everything in nature occurs in cycles, these lines only exist as cyclical transformations.

The first principle of ecology, according to the ecosystem concept, is that each living organism has an ongoing and continual relationship with every other element that makes up its environment. In other words, everything is connected. Above all, life on Earth is relational – no life exists in isolation. This perspective is not in violation of the classical laws of thermodynamics. Simply put, the first law states that there is a conservation of energy that can change form, but it cannot be created nor destroyed. Thus, applying thermodynamic principles, a complete accounting of energy flow can be traced through an ecosystem (Kormondy 96).

Water, frozen into various forms and combined with natural elements of wood, slowly melts over an indeterminable amount of time, each droplet documented as the process transforms the elements. Through this process, we see change. We see time. We see truth. This documentation of change and time through natural elements is where my work comes full circle. I work with new media to explore man's interconnectivity to life, energy, and the cosmos. I produce time based installations, photographs, videos, and sculptures that serve as both existential metaphors and Tantric symbols. With the use of digital cameras and video, I record

the disintegration which occurs from the unseen forces of gravity, heat and time upon sculptures made from natural elements and ice (figure 1).



Figure 1 – Jeff Hoffman, *Entropic Mind*, 2012

My work and my methods of production fall into the genre of New Media in two separate modes. The first relates to the method by which I produce the sculpture. In addition to chain saws, chisels, and other tools used for carving, I also utilize freezers, welders and forges to facilitate the bonding or amalgamation of the various elements used. Quite often, these appliances and tools are incorporated into the design and become a quintessential part of the final artwork. The second way my work coincides with the New Media category is by the method in which I document the temporality of my sculptures. With the use of high-resolution digital

cameras and high-definition (HD) video, I am able to create a visual record of the disintegration that occurs from the unseen, yet ever present forces of gravity, heat and time. This work does not have a long lineage, but it descends from environmental art, minimalism, and modernism of the 1960's.

INFLUENCES

In nature, nothing truly exists in isolation; nothing exists without being influenced by some other force. Acquiescing to this rule of nature, there have been several artists whose work has impacted my process. As Audur Olafsdottir explains, in 1960 [Johann] Eyfells began to produce abstract sculptures based on his experiments in chemistry and physics and utilizing the various transformational properties of metals, in particular aluminum, iron, and copper. His name for these works, “Receptual Cubes,” is based on his concept of Receptualism, a theory he has developed to explain the essence of his work (figure 2). Receptualism intertwines the scientific, philosophical, and the mystical systems into one. “For Eyfells there are no boundaries separating the three” (Sawin and Scudder 50).

In their diversity of surface appearance, these works resemble nature itself, especially lava formations of various kinds, and Eyfells has remarked that he has no objections to his own sculptures being mistaken for nature’s craftsmanship. In fact, his production technique closely mimics the natural process, and thus effectively creates art based on the principle forces of nature. Eyfells has pioneered a technique that involves adding diverse natural materials to molten metal that he liquefied under various conditions and thus affecting the outcome. In the molten state the metals are then poured into casts that have been dug into the ground, often using large earthmoving equipment. The interaction of soil, metal, other materials, temperature, gravity and the like determine the final result. This represents a kind of compromise between the artist’s energy and that of nature itself, the co-creator of the works. Eyfell’s artworks may be described as the product of systematic coincidences (Eyfells).

Once the metal amalgam has solidified and cooled, the works are overturned revealing the shape of the excavation in which they have been cast. These “overturnings,” as he calls them, deal in particular with the interaction of material properties, visibility, and time. The latter concept – documentation of the creative act within time – is a fundamental aspect of his work (Eyfells).

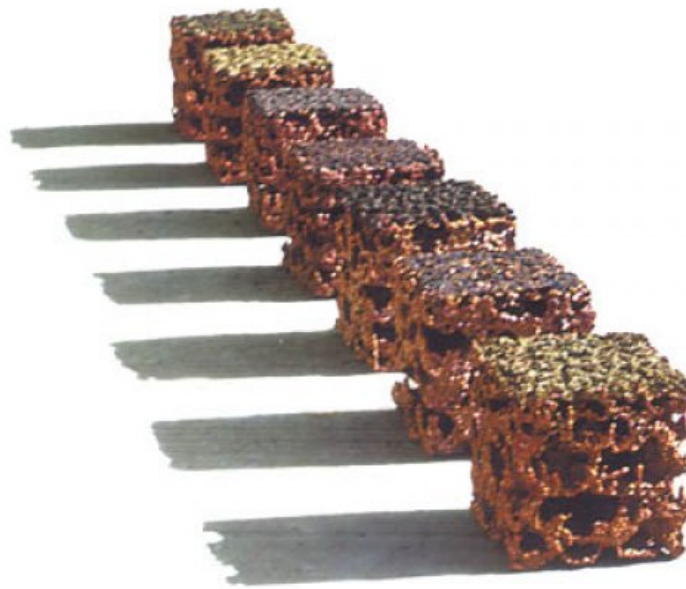


Figure 2 – Johann Eyfells, *Receptual Cubes* from Megan Bardoe, “M.B. Art Projects,”

MBArtProjects.Weebly.com, Web, 15 March 2012.

The work of Johann Eyfells and Robert Smithson’s earth art are “a kind of rebellion against the modernist idea of sculpture as construction. Smithson also thought that the sculptor set in motion a primordial process that he could not control- a process that used time and the elements as its method” (Kuspit 37). Much like Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (figure 3), I harness the forces of natural processes to transform elements present in nature, in their purest forms, in an attempt to achieve an aesthetic beauty. Water, which is the quintessential compound that is found

in and connects all life, is the primary subject. In its various physical states, it is juxtaposed to elements such as wood found in its naturally occurring textures. I search for pieces of wood exhibiting interesting and varied surfaces that have been created solely from naturally occurring events including decay and the growth of lichen.



Figure 3 – Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970,

From the Foundation for Landscape Studies, ARTStor.com, Web, 15 March 2012.

By allowing the elements to remain in their natural states, their inherent beauty is maximized. Parallels can be made to the work of Eyfells in that his process of letting molten metal harden is similar to my forming solid ice from water. Meticulous selection of materials is a significant aspect of my working methods. Often, enormous amounts of wood are cast off until I settle on specimens of the appropriate size and shape for the eventual and final form I am attempting. The cut edge of the wood emulates the forms used to mold the ice. Crisp edges and angles lend to the highly structured form's appearance and allow the viewer a distinct historical point upon which a transformation occurs. Artist Johann Eyfells states:

When I imply that something is historical, I am talking about something that occurs as an effect of a cross-section of time, but cannot itself endure. It is historical in the sense that it cannot last, it is not unending and immutable, but exists as an interval of time. I have often contemplated this temporality as it affects human beings. I feel that man is a temporal phenomenon, but historical in this sense that he shares some of history with the earth. It is important to realize that the earth is inherently historical because it is the result of something that happened before it became earth and that it is a participant in something that will occur after it has disappeared. (Karla and Halldur 30)

As my sculpture melts, the clean geometric shapes and our cognitive ability to discern them as such, also begin to fade (figures 4 and 5). Time passes and this morphing continues until all sense of deliberate structure is lost. The order of the fallen pieces of wood and the path of a wandering puddle formed from melted ice are both left to chance. From this point, all that remains is memory of the object and the event, documented through still photography and video. The use of time-lapse video allows us to witness this transformation of over twenty hours in just a few minutes. Using this format allows us to experience the violent transition of the water as it moves through all the physical states: liquid, solid, gas.

In its sculptural form, my work can be categorized as “Installation Art” and/or “Performance Art” due to its evolving nature. Each piece is intended to either change over time or to have that change halted by another temporal force like that of flowing electricity. “Ephemeral art lies in sharp contrast to most earthworks. The sensitive use of materials means that many of their works leave only soft impressions on the land. There is clear interest in human engagement with the environment and, overall, these artists are more in tune with developing an intimate relationship with nature. This category is exemplified by Andy Goldsworthy” (Caddy).



Figure 4 – Jeff Hoffman, Screen Shot from *Piñata*, 2011



Figure 5 – Jeff Hoffman, Screen Shot from *Piñata*, 2011

Goldsworthy can be described as “a brilliant British artist who collaborates with nature to make his creations. He regards all his creations as transient, or ephemeral. He photographs each

piece once right after he makes it.” It is understood that “his goal is to understand nature by directly participating in it as intimately as he can. He generally works with whatever comes to hand: twigs, leaves, stones, snow and ice, reeds and thorns,” and “establishes a camaraderie with the natural world.” Goldsworthy clearly “respects the processes of life and death reflected in nature. As the sun illuminates the finished sculpture, he notes, ‘the very thing that brought it to life, will bring about its death.’” Caddy continues:

Having isolated pieces of a new environment and formed them into an unexpected artifact, then watched it dissipate back to its component parts in the larger setting, Goldsworthy says, “...you feel as if you’ve touched the heart of the place. That’s a way of understanding. Seeing something that you never saw before, that was always there but you were blind to it.” As the tide carries his driftwood igloo out to sea, spinning it slowly and dismantling its structural unity, he remarks: “It feels as if it’s been taken off into another plane, another world. . . . It doesn’t feel at all like destruction.” [Goldsworthy forms pieces which] interact with the rising or setting of the sun, ocean tides, the wind, or the dynamic properties of water flowing in a stream [and] ...are temporary and engage with natural unpredictability: a breeze blows leaves away; the midday sun melts a work crafted from shards of ice. (Caddy)

In this respect, Goldsworthy has been a clear influence upon my work, as I strive to create pieces which interact with natural processes, such as heat and time along with the effects of the sun and other processes. Similar to Goldsworthy’s work (figure 6), I document the elements of each piece of my work disintegrating back into their natural forms within the environment.



Figure 6 – Andy Goldsworthy, *Tree Soul*, 1997, from Galerie Lelong, NY; SprialZoom.com, Web, 16 March 2012.

Goldsworthy explains, "...movement, change, light, growth and decay are the lifeblood of nature, the energies that I try to tap through my work. I need the shock of touch, the resistance of place, materials and weather, the earth as my source. Nature is in a state of change and that change is the key to understanding. I want my art to be sensitive and alert to changes in material, season and weather. Each work grows, stays, decays. Process and decay are implicit. Transience in my work reflects what I find in nature" (64). However, my work differs from Goldsworthy's, as I place my emphasis on creating parallels to human existence and the human condition, whereas Goldsworthy places the focus primarily on nature.

METHODOLOGY

I use natural elements because of their inherent permanence. They are subject to natural processes that affect their states of permanence in natural ways. These processes consist of heat, pressure, and time. Water in various states combined with elements of wood comprises the majority of the materials in my work. At times I also utilize naturally woven fibers such as rope to suggest both tension and a contradiction of time. I will explain briefly the significance of the naturally woven fibers as they relate to this tension and contradiction of time. In Buddhism, time is thought of as something that is flowing (Dogen 81). This is exemplified in my work by the natural fibers in both the rope and the wood as well. Through a stripping away of non-essential materials, I am better able to draw a connection between our ephemeral existence and the physical worlds we live in. Existentialism as a physical manifestation of life is the essential, natural fiber that is woven into all living organisms. Importance lies not only in the scientific threads of DNA and molecular bonds, but also in the realm of the metaphysical manifestations of self and the actualization of identity which takes place in life.

As time passes, we human beings consequently age and grow. Our bodies carry on the timeless cycle of life. We literally and figuratively consume the resources from the natural world, process them, and pass them on to future life. During this period of time, an even greater process occurs. As we stand looking down from the highest mountain into the deepest valley we are faced with not only the question of why, but why not. It is easy enough to say that each of us is a link between the first one and the last one of us to exist. Likewise, it is easy to ask the question,

“why?” As we begin to learn and to understand language, this question becomes our foremost concern. It is not until we have endured a great many experiences that we are able to conjure answers to that question and begin to ask “why not.” “Why not” presupposes the question of why and calls into question every lesson that we have learned. By asking the question “why not?” we enter a higher level of consciousness and begin to look further outward beyond the world we physically live in and actualize the cosmos. Success is measured against failure and growth is aligned with non-growth in an attempt to gain awareness. It is through this striving for understanding and meaningfulness that we hope to climb above sentience and become fully self-actualized.

Self Actualization Through Self Portraiture

Much like the evolutionary nature of the environmental and natural elements within my work, the self can also be seen as an evolutionary being, each person on an individual journey towards discovery. It can be said that all artifacts created by individual artists are considered self-portraiture. The act of consciously producing what we consider a representational self portrait can be extremely daunting. In having to examine oneself with extreme scrutiny, one is confronted with all the physical attributes that are present in an individual’s physical form.

The slight lack of symmetry within the face or entire body, an overbite, subtle scars left from a childhood trauma, or signs of aging are all made apparent. Andy Warhol’s *Screen Tests*, which are documentations of various models or subjects (such as Salvador Dali) over a period of several minutes, was intended to show the stripping away of physical ego and (Dali’s) projected

self-characterization. These works “were made according to clear formal and physical constraints. Against a plain background in the corner of the Factory, the subject was centered in front of a static camera and told not to blink” (Dillon). Similarly, in producing a self portrait, the initial pose or emotion eventually fades. Muscles and bones relax. Expressions become faint and eventually contrived. During this process, one reaches a higher level of self-awareness. In addition, one is confronted with the scope of his or her own technical prowess. When efforts of depiction are tested, one must come to terms with his or her ability. An assessment of these efforts is inevitable. Strengths are compared to weaknesses and a course for their homogenization must be mapped.

It is possible to allow varying levels of self-awareness to emerge through self portraiture. The existential, as well as the metaphysical, can be present in a physical form when the form is imbued with evidence of an evolutionary process. In many ways, my work serves as a self portrait. It is a means for me to examine my own existentialism as a student of the modern western world and life. I place focus on what I believe to be some of the truths and understandings of the human condition, such as the fact that our existence is temporal. We are born, live life, and then die. Within that process we learn, suffer, and build memories knowing that they are all just lifelong. By examining this temporality, anyone with the ability and urge to question their own existence is able to relate and identify with these notions.



Figure 7 – Jeff Hoffman, *Self Portrait*, 2011

Within my work, my processes and methodologies are a strong aspect of the subject and idea. What I do is as important as what is undone. What exists physically is as important as what eventually disintegrates. What I begin with is as important as what remains. My central goal is to combine beautifully formed elements together in masterful compositions that are rich in meaning. These elements exist in nature and are coaxed into existence by my efforts.

In attempting to discuss the connection with self-actualization and what comes next I pose the question, “Why are we here?” Like all living things, human beings are part of an

ecological cycle. We are born from the elements of earth and eventually return back to them. Through a sustained examination of controlled and chance occurrences, I attempt to explore our own ephemeral existence and the interconnectivity we share with our planet and one of its primary compounds: water. This multi-faceted process transcends metaphor and creates parallels to human existence and the human condition.

In much of my work, ice is combined with wood in a freezer. Here, like cells in any living organism, water molecules act as a bonding agent. When it is frozen, it becomes the bond from which the structural integrity of the sculpture exists. Simply said, it holds everything together. When I construct these composite sculptures, I create legs and a seemingly anatomical structure (figure 8). I play with the analogy of erect Homo sapien entities through their parallels to living creatures, thus adding to the conceptual nature of the form. They are no longer seen merely as ice forms but rather something much more. Or perhaps it is just another layer.



Figure 8 – Jeff Hoffman, *Receptual Spider*, 2012

In the sculpture *Sentience*, I deal with the thermodynamic relationships and cycles occurring within the various states of water in a more concise manner (figure 9). This differs from the videos and photos of the composite sculptures in the fact that they do not exist in nature and are not part of the much larger and infinite cycle of events. No longer do they succumb to all of what the natural world has to offer, but rather a set of more isolated circumstances. Those of which are man-made. Suspended from a metal armature is a Buddha head made from ice. As it melts, the water is funneled down into a small freezer that contains a Buddha head mold. So, as the ice head melts, it is at the same time being recreated. Similar to the looping effect within the videos of the composite sculptures which undergo deterioration and then rebuilding, or coming and going into being, there is an eternal cycle.

With the sculpture *Mass Storage*, which entails a freezer full of Buddha heads that are illuminated from underneath, the emphasis is placed not on the ice, but rather the light that passes through them, as can be seen in figures 10 through 12. Here, my aim is for the viewer to draw a connection between transcendence and the energy that is required to maintain it. The Buddha heads exist so long as the freezer remains plugged in. Energy comes from in the wall through a cord and then through the bulb and becomes light that passes through the Buddha heads. This light then enters into the eye of the viewer and, by doing so, incorporates their existence as well.



Figure 9 – Jeff Hoffman, *Sentience*, 2012



Figure 10 – Jeff Hoffman, *Mass Storage*, 2012



Figure 11 – Jeff Hoffman, *Mass Storage*, 2012



Figure 12 – Jeff Hoffman, *Mass Storage*, 2012

In the work *Piñata*, the vapor, which moves across the ice and shimmers with light, emulates how we breathe (figures 4 and 5). As it blows in one direction we inhale, and then as it pauses, we do the same and eventually exhale when it finally changes direction and starts to

move again. These subconscious clues help us transition into a more open, accepting state. The refracting and the reflected light pull our eyes along a z-axis from foreground to background. Eventually rhythms occur that we could almost tap our foot to.



Figure 13 – Jeff Hoffman, *A Cross Section of Time*, 2012

My aim is for my work to offer a viewer an object to reflect upon and consider. Without sacrifice of the aesthetic, I want others to delve deeper into the possibilities of meaning within the work as I do. This is not to say I seek to be lost in complexity, but rather, I want to remove any presuppositions which might exist to allow our eyes to be the first corridor to our hearts and souls.

The rhythm of water dripping as the ice melts combined with its subtle sound is intended to create a mesmerizing effect on the viewer. This allows for the constructs of time within their

own world to seemingly pause for a moment and allows for the opportunity for contemplation to exist more purely.



Figure 14 – Jeff Hoffman, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, 2010

The goal of my artwork is both reflective of my own personal path to enlightenment as well as a metaphor for the struggle and achievement of my many steps along the way. I want others to characterize this work as a non-representational form of self-portraiture which links to all of us. My portrayal of self occurs with the utmost attempt to be honest and pure in my intentions of respecting the materials I use.

Without grounding the work to an ordinarily perceived existing reality, the viewer can become lost and withdraw, seeking specific narratives or meanings in the piece. Just as it is important to have someplace for the eye to focus on and rest in a viable design composition, it is equally as important to have a place for the mind to rest when conceptually dealing with complex

ideas. I have realized that including logical, recognizable elements in my work can serve as metaphorical anchors. They are most successful, and by that I mean less diluting in nature, when ideas can be easily understood in just one or two words. For instance, gravity or heat can suggest a great many relationships concisely, for so much of life depends upon them. It is through these two forces that we not only see deterioration and change occurring in the world around us, but also within our own physical bodies.

The video work I produce can be regarded as a trans-meditative device of sorts. To further elaborate, I consider a successful sculpture to be like 10,000 successful drawings, and a video is a sculpture that moves within a two-dimensional plane. The elements and principles of design are successfully used from every angle and every conceivable point of view. A successful sculpture pulls the viewer toward and around the sculpture. It becomes an experience that engages all the senses. There is not just one static view but rather many from which alternating ideas can be expressed simultaneously. While there is a multitude of ideas present, our ability to discern lies entirely on our own reasoning. Extended into video, these ideas are placed more so into the context of both time and being. When water is examined both in multiple states as well as transforming from one to another, critical notions of ephemeral existence are called into question. In examining these ideas and concepts we can hope to learn more about ourselves.

We can infer parallels from not only the evolving nature of the work but also from the stress within. As constant pressure continually applies its force upon the elements of ice and wood, cracks occur. These cracks are exploited or rather emphasized in the artwork. An example can be seen in the sculpture *A Crack in Everything* (figure 15). This cracking aids further in

emphasizing the fact that in time change occurs. Whether formed from water evaporating, as in the wood, or expanding as it becomes ice, in which case air – another sightless element necessary for life – is forced under pressure until striations occur.



Figure 15 – Jeff Hoffman, *A Crack in Everything*, 2010

I am striving to both understand and utilize the knowledge and wisdom embodied in this quotation by Robert Philen who is a professor of Anthropology: "Great art always has two

qualities with relation to temporality. It is of its moment – any art cannot help but be shaped by the realities of the era, but great art also reflects and shapes its moment, and does so in a different manner than equally great art of an earlier era. It is timely. Simultaneously, great art transcends its moment, it communicates powerfully well after its creation. It is timeless.” While building on these timeless qualities mentioned by Philen, I believe my work is further transcended by including not only contemporary practices but also modern materials. In developing this perspective I draw on the vision of Johann Eyfells who stated, “One ought rather to view the work as kind of mutation, a new emergence, a new birth, gaining its unique qualities through coming into being without a model” (Kuspit 37).

Process and Abstraction

I begin by freezing water, the most common of compounds, into abstract shapes. These semi-frozen forms are then assembled together with wood and other found elements to form a solid composite form which is then left to slowly melt. It undergoes a transformation, by which this sculpture of combined material is subject to the unseen forces of gravity and heat in the context of time. My emphasis is often placed on the transformation of water moving through the physical states of solid, liquid, and gas. This results in the evolution of incredibly beautiful organic images and forms. As this takes place, these imbued water sculptures revert back to an inert, deconstructed form that emulates our ephemeral existence. Then through the use of photography and video, I am able to capture memory by recording the momentary glimpses of this process that serve to document a human identity.

This notion of human identity relates to the interconnectivity of the universe. As Okumura observes in his commentary of Dogen's writings, *Realizing Genjokoan*, "...we don't practice individually to improve ourselves; rather, we settle down peacefully within the network of interdependent origination and allow the universal life force to practice through us for all beings...The self is not separate from all beings, the myriad dharma. The self is a part of all beings. Each of us is living together with all things within the network of interdependent origination, and there is no separate self that exists outside this network" (70-1). Dogen speaks directly to the intention of my work, as I believe that once I move out of the way, the sculpture continues to evolve and illustrates our interconnectivity.

It is in the process of developing technique and proficiency that one discovers the limitations not only of the medium and tools, but also within us the constraints of human identity. I choose elements that not only capture natural beauty, but also allow me to work through an idea at a pace in which careful considerations can occur without the burden of forcing a preconceived image of form and its meaning.



Figure 16 – Jeff Hoffman, *Noble Truth*, 2012

I strive for my work to be inherently poetic in that there is no beginning, middle, or end. Likewise, there is no fixed story or text to associate it with. I merely assemble a set of circumstances and leave the outcome to chance. Details are not revealed just from further investigation but rather from further reflection. This is enhanced within the composition by drawing the viewer's eye around the piece to gain more information (figure 16).

My work tends to follow minimalist ideals. Only what is necessary to convey ideas or questions raised is presented. By stripping away or editing out what is not necessary, I am able to imply emphasis on pure elements and thus am able to provide an unclouded personal and universal dialog of an idea (figure 17). For example, I wish to raise questions for a viewer to consider and reflect upon. The scope of my knowledge is not what is important. Only the

fundamental truths of the physical world I aim to provide are what need to be considered. That is, in time, and under the effects of gravity, everything changes.



Figure 17 – Jeff Hoffman, *Salient Nothing*, 2012

The idea or emotion that I wish to convey is of primary importance to me; mastery of technique is of lesser importance. However, it is essential to me that the standards of skill should be raised enough to allow the idea to be transmitted without hindrance. This means that if the craftsmanship is flawed, it will become distracting to what I am attempting to communicate.

The simplification of an idea is where I wish to take a viewer, as this is often a source of fascination. Over-embellishment would hinder meaning, which is why simplification is important. I want others to appreciate the ideas I raise and reflect upon my questions rather than being mystified by the technical aspects of my work. To use an analogy, it would be like hanging a painting crooked. It would not be un-viewable, but it would be distracting to its meaning.

Essentially, I want others to subtly notice the technical skill without those issues being in the forefront.

There is an existing heritage/history in any media. For instance, why is the shape of painted canvases almost always some variation of the square? It is not my goal to adhere to any set of principles that would dictate how I am to use certain materials and the relationships that are inherent or implied within them. My influences and inspirations are just that: influences and inspirations, not guidelines for me to mimic or imitate. I wish to take what I learn from or like about other artists and their work and make it into something completely my own.

“I make sculptures from ice” is a broad and general statement. However, my work does not fit the stereotype with which people associate ice sculptures. My work is conceptual by nature and calls into question existentialism and transcendence. Hopefully, others are immediately confronted by this intention. Trite notions of sculpture that entail dolphins riding on waves or swans perched on bouquets quickly dissolve as a viewer is faced with a deeper potential of meaning.

Light, as well as elements that could not exist without it, typically comprise the background of my images. In the foreground is water (figure 18). This water is symbolic of the natural state of being. That is, a state in which no other exterior forces are at work but gravity. Water is water. This is our normal association when it is in its liquid state. The conditions of this state coincide with the requirements for human life. Similar to water, we are able to exist only in temperatures that are above freezing but below boiling. Within my work water represents a state of being that has not yet reached its potential. As it spreads beneath the sculpture and into the

foreground, the water reflects crucial ideas about the foreground and background. Through its reflection, reality is questioned. Time, too, is questioned. For water can be regarded as the present and ice as the past. Evaporation takes place in the future, when actualization occurs. The reflections exist in the present (water) and reveal the world from a contrasting perspective.

The artwork that I am currently creating is complementary to cycles found in natural phenomena. It is intended to inspire further self actualization by provoking questions of human existence. It is a metaphor for the collapsing rigidity of the sound universe. For we occupy only a small sliver of existence that is at best just a fleeting whisper of time and its correlation to space, within the confines of gravity.



Figure 18 – Jeff Hoffman, *Slow Burn*, 2011

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