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ON THE WAY / FAR AND AWAY

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts  
Ceramics

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by  
En Iwamura  
May 2016

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Accepted by:  
Valerie Zimany, Committee Chair  
Kathleen Thum  
Andrea Feeser

## ABSTRACT

My work investigates how I can influence and alter the experience of viewers who occupy space with my installation artworks. I have been working on semi-figurative large-scale coil built ceramic sculptures with layers of drawings. Inspirations of form, color, and subjects of drawings come from both American and Japanese historical and pop cultures, which surround my life.

To utilize my expression of ceramic sculpture effectively, I employ the method of narrative/storytelling approaches in my work. For my thesis, I feature walk-in installations of large-scale ceramic sculptures and drawings, which explore interrelated themes of an epic journey in the post apocalyptic world. This story came from my own experience as an international ceramic artist. In particular, the Fukushima disaster changed everything in my life. It raised my awareness that there are invisible nuclear issues and complicated politics.

To understand the space of my installation; I refer to traditional Japanese space creation. When I describe the space and scale in my works, I reference the Japanese philosophy of *Ma*. *Ma* implies meanings of distance, moment, space, relationship, and more.

My work is about how I can communicate with people and alter their experiences despite different cultural backgrounds, regions, or time lines. I believe that continuing ceramic art at the international level allows me to be able to communicate with someone new, by finding something important and going somewhere/ far and away

## DEDICATION

To my family who support my study in the foreign country.

To my important person who is waiting for me.

To the Fish Head people.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank all of my friends, family and people who have supported me. I would like to express my special gratitude to my committee members - Valerie Zimany, Kathleen Thum, and Andrea Feeser – for sharing with me your wisdom, support, and encouragement.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

My work investigates how I can influence and alter the experience of viewers who occupy space with my installation artworks. I have been working on semi-figurative large-scale coil built ceramic sculptures with layers of slip, under glaze and glaze drawings. Inspirations of form, color, and subjects of drawings come from both American and Japanese historical and pop cultures, which surround my life. Through my investigation, I try to understand and process the atmosphere of the world in which I exist, by using little flares of humorous expression. There is an overflow of democratic images and information delivered by media and Internet technologies. We are bombarded by these different values of information passively and automatically by the system of society. Our lives get accelerated, and there is no time to breathe. In that restless time flow, I find the process of ceramic art to be very meaningful because of its character. Ceramic artists have to spend time with clay's speed and firing. (The ceramic making process is defined by the time required for the material to dry and be fired; this time process inspires me.) Clay captures and solidifies all times and things that happen to clay as it becomes ceramic. Ceramics last longer than human life, and we will communicate with future people with ceramic art as an important information system.

To utilize my expression of ceramic sculpture effectively, I employ the method of narrative/storytelling approaches in my work. For my thesis, I feature walk-in installations of large-scale ceramic sculptures and drawings, which explore interrelated

themes of an epic journey. Layering elements of Japanese gardens and theater, as well as Manga and popular culture, combine to heighten the impression of a distant and vast unfamiliar world. To reinforce my idea of “epic journey” and “story”, my show is organized by three sections as three different episodes. Each episode has a different scale and theme, but all episodes indicate a general story line of a post-apocalyptic world. Through this apocalypse, I want to define an atmosphere of the world we are living in and start a conversation about our future; is the future hopeless, or is there hope for tomorrow. This story came from my own situation. I am living by myself far from my home country, family, friends, and culture. Even if I return home, there is a gap between my awkwardness and everyday life in my country. I feel I am living in half Japanese culture and half American culture, but I will never be fully engaged in one or the other exclusively again. This strange feeling of in-betweenness drives me to think I am on the road on a journey to go somewhere. In particular, the Fukushima disaster changed everything in my life. It raised my awareness that there are invisible nuclear issues and complicated politics.

To understand the space of my installation; I refer to traditional Japanese space creation, such as Japanese gardens, and theatrical stage setting. Both give visual extension to the illusional depth within a limited space. When I describe the space and scale in my works, I reference the Japanese philosophy of *Ma*. *Ma* implies meanings of distance, moment, space, relationship, and more. People constantly read and measure different *Ma* between themselves. Finding the proper or comfortable *Ma* between people or places can provide a specific relationship at a given moment. Through my work I am

using the philosophy of *Ma* to create an encounter of site-responsive installations, and provide through entering the space, an opportunity for viewers to recognize *Ma* themselves.

I also utilize cartoonish or abstract drawings on cutout wooden props as an important part of my installation alongside ceramic pieces to create a theatrical experience. I consider the coil building process in large scale as free drawing in three-dimensional space, which is output in response to my physical movement. Both drawings and coil built forms compete and push each other, making the scale of my installation larger and deeper. I explore the effective interconnection between two-dimensions and three-dimensions, and using both simultaneously creates an environment for the viewer.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GENERAL STORY LINE

This is the story of an epic journey, but the specific narrative remains ambiguous. Audiences wander in an unfamiliar, post-apocalyptic world populated by the Fish Head civilization. This story is organized into three episodes; Episode one: The Empty Room, Episode two: The Statue of Power, and Episode three: The Ark. Each episode focuses on different experiences of scale and the Japanese philosophy of *Ma*. Arata Isozaki describes *Ma* understanding in his essay

“In Japan, the concepts of space and time have been simultaneously understood by the single word of *ma*. *Ma* is literally defined as ‘the natural interval between two or more things existing in a continuity’ or ‘the gap between two things, an opening; the space encompassed by columns or folding screens,’ or ‘the natural pause or interval in which phenomena arise through time,’ by comparison the word *ma* does not differentiate between Western understanding of time and space. Rather, it describes both time and space through a notion of interval.” (Isozaki 2012, 345)

Under the *Ma* understanding, space and time are omnipresent and mutually responsive parts. The organization of my exhibition refers to a “wandering focal point” which is utilized in spatial relationships of Japanese gardens, architectural *fusuma* (sliding-door) paintings, of scroll paintings, and Manga. Moreover, the experimental installation space refers to Japanese Kabuki and Joruri stage settings, which create illusional depth by

layering elements and using flat drawings. For the understanding of this approach, I refer to differences of theatrical stage settings between Western and Japanese performances.

“In the construction of stages, a distinct difference between the West and Japan persists. For example, in a Western opera house, the stage is very deep to realize perspectival space... In contrast, the Kabuki stage in Japan is low and wide, corresponding to horizontally unfolding hand-scroll. The stage is extremely shallow and settings are two-dimensional. Whereas in opera stage design spatial depth is shown concretely through the techniques of perspective, Kabuki depth on the layering of two-dimensional stage “flats” to create the illusion of depth within a shallow space.” (Isozaki 2102, 347)

Through this approach, audiences can explore the world of my installation work as if they were a main character of the story. In the actual installation space, there is little direct indication of the storyline. Without the story, the colorful ceramic pieces are key items and the navigator of the story, and the drawings are important indicators of stage settings. Wandering in an unfamiliar world and confronted with small hints of objects and background drawings heightens the concept of an epic journey as a real experience for the audience.

#### Non-linear Narrative vs Linear Narrative Story Flow

For the implied general story line of my thesis show, I researched different styles of narrative processes. In particular I researched comics, with their potential of combining visual information with verbal information to create simulated experiences for

readers. Scott McCloud points difference between Western style comics and Japanese comics. In the Western story making style, most stories are structured by linear narrative. However, in Japanese narrative such as *Manga*, a comic's tendency of moving sequence is different. There is no one propensity and each cartoon artist uses his or her own strategy. It makes flow of story more complicated and poetic. McCloud speculates that the reason for this difference came from Eastern vs Western cultural mind settings. Traditionally, Western art and literature do not "wander" so much because of the structure of a goal-oriented culture. However, in the East, there is a tradition of cyclical and labyrinthine works of art. McCloud uses words to emphasize the 'being there' over 'getting there'. This difference exists in between structure of Japanese style gardens and Western style gardens, too. (McCloud 1993, 81) For me, creating an installation of narrative work in a theatrical stage setting was a new challenge. I utilized my own experiences as a professional gardener to articulate space in the gallery. Japanese gardens are also a non goal-oriented structure and let the audience wander by their own choices. This idea fits my concept of wandering in an unfamiliar world. Audiences can look around the installation by themselves, and decide the order of the exhibition flow.

### Similar Story Line Trope of an Epic Journey

The theme of an epic journey comes from my own position, memory, and mind setting. For my thesis, I researched different stories in different media: historical stories, contemporary road movies, and Japanese animation. As historical epic journey, I refer to the *Odyssey* by Homer. This is known as one of the oldest epics. In the story, the main

character, Ulysses, encountered many unknown things and traveled to different unknown countries. Each episode has a different focus and meaning in each different world. This type of trope, I also found in the movie *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2014) by Walter Salles. This story is based on nonfiction about the youthful days of Che Guevara (Ernest Rafael Guevara de la Serna). Through his road trip, he also encountered many unfamiliar things and discovered something important to him. Both stories are about growth and development influenced by unexpected encounters during their road trip. From Japanese animation, particularly I was influenced by *Future Boy Conan* (1978) by Hayao Miyazaki to develop my idea of a post apocalyptic world. This was my favorite animation when I was a child, and still is one of my favorites. The story is set in a post apocalyptic world, and the main character lives with his foster father. All other people have died, and the island where he lives is isolated. The reason for this isolation was caused by climate changes and a manmade Armageddon. The story is based on the American novel *The Incredible Tide* (1970) by Alexander Key. I admire the atmosphere of the post apocalyptic world and decayed lost societies as the background of an energetic storyline. Through this research and inspiration, I use the story of an epic journey as a convention to navigate my audience smoothly to an unfamiliar story setting.



## CHAPTER THREE

### EPISODE ONE “THE EMPTY ROOM”

*(Narrator) Now, you realize you have stepped in to an empty room. No one knows where here is, why you are here, where you came from, and how you reached here. This might be a journey, and you are on the way to go somewhere / far and away. You have not figured out yet if there is a particular goal or final destination. However, you have to keep moving forward, and cannot look back. There is no point to doubt the reason why you are here, in this room. The most important thing is you are here, in this empty room. Looking around the room, you can guess somehow this might be a dining room. There is a table, shelves, windows, also family portraits on the wall, and vessels. It seems like the owner of this room was the collector of ceramic and invited his guests to this room. However, in many ways, this dining room is strange and gives you an uneasy feeling. First, you are an uninvited guest, there has been no invitation to enter. Second, there is no owner and no sign of life in the room. Third, all artifacts are mutated, moved, melted and solidified in awkward appearances. These might not be static, but keep transforming in a slow speed that is not recognizable for to human being. If so, how long has this room been empty and abandoned? However, the room is clean and looks germless. It appears even bacteria seemed to leave the world. Nothing the picture portraits and drawings on the vessels, somehow all human faces looks like fish. Having no idea whether or not it's correct, just for convenience, you call them “the fish head people”.*

## Ceramic as an Information Technology

Ceramic has had an important role not only as functional pottery, but also as an information technology. For example, we can find many ceramic items in museums as important historical indicators such as ancient ceramic figures, objects, artifacts, Greek pots, Chinese ceramics and more. These have not only archeological values, but also value as art. Nowadays, many contemporary artists utilize this multi structural character of ceramics as content in their art practice. For example, British contemporary artist Grayson Perry uses this idea in his work. In his ceramic works, Perry's vases have classical forms and are decorated in bright colors, depicting subjects at odds with their attractive appearance. There is a strong autobiographical element in his work, in which images of Perry as "Claire", his female alter-ego, often appear,

“My work is something like poisoned treasure, Although it is treasure, it is also cursed. Excavating them which were carried from the bottom of unconsciousness is about archeology and psychology.” (Perry, 2006)

In his work, Perry uses the familiar convention of vessel forms to navigate audiences into his own civilization. In a similar way, I intentionally use multiple different styles of vessel forms and decorations to indicate the depth of the existence of history and culture of the fish head people. Also, I create the atmosphere of a dining room instead of a museum style display in order to make ceramic works familiar to the audience. In the staging of my world, the owner of this empty room was an art collector, and displayed historical ceramics to his guests. In Perry's work, he specially refers to the classical form

and alters the images into his own style. In contrast, I transform the silhouette of vessels, and use traditional patterns to reinforce the idea of civilization.



Figure 3.1 & 3.2 & 3.3:

Left: Greek *Oinochoe* (*Pitcher*) (640–625 B.C.)

Center: Grayson Perry *Saint Claire 37 wanks accross Northern Spain* (2003)

Right: *Black and White Pot* (2015)

#### The Image of an Apocalyptic World Driven by Post-Fukushima Disaster

There are many art works which focus on environmental issues. Particularly in Japan, there are many people who address nuclear issues as subjects in the pop-culture and art fields. For example, Eiji Tuburaya and Toho moviemakers made the Godzilla movie series. Also Osamu Tezuka addressed issues of failure of technologies and nuclear power in his Manga comics again and again. In the contemporary art, Kenji Yanobe is one example. In his *Atom suit project* (1995), he investigates his overall concept of how to survive in the apocalyptic future. He wore his original radioactivity protective suit

(Atom suit) and went to see the yellow sky wheel in Chernobyl, where a serious accident at the nuclear power plant occurred in 1986. One of the reasons behind this work is the nuclear bombs in 1945 at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is a close relationship between fear of nuclear power and people's lives. After the Fukushima disaster, many Japanese artists tried to figure out their role in the contemporary art field, and this topic is still very powerful.

Contemporary artist Mitsuhiro Okamoto created "Morechand" from inspiration of his visit to Fukushima after the earthquake. Okamoto saw many bags of pollution disposal and their sloppy management around the nuclear power plant. He developed the image as a Yuru-Chara (cute mascot) and named it "Morechand" from "Moreru: leaking". (There were many leaking bags.)



Figure 2.1 & 2.2:

Left: Yanobe, Kenji. *Atom Suit Project* (1995)

Right: Okamoto, Mitsuhiro. *Morechand* (2015)

## Setting of The World with Transformed/Mutated Items

To indicate the strange impression of an unprecedented catastrophe and failure of man made disaster, I refer to the image of mutated plants of Fukushima after the nuclear accident. Also, the mutating artifacts suggest the flow of the enormous amount of time, and a clean room suggests the disaster ruined the environment and even bacteria could not exist in this world. Also, I admire some contemporary ceramic artists as the reference of my idea of mutated vessels such as Livia Marin and Brendan Tang. Their deconstructed traditional vessel forms lose aspect of functionality, and heightens the aspect of beauty and aesthetics of the object itself. Especially Brendan Tang's ceramic works inspire me with their strong impressions of transformation. He particularly uses Chinese style vessel forms and patterns with cartoon like machine parts. This unique combination indicates his own roots and his contemporary influences. Well-crafted machine parts seem to come from inside of the vessels and are reborn as futuristic objects. In comparison to his meticulous transformation, I intended to create more grotesque and vibrant abnormal growth as the concept of mutation. I wanted to make future objects with more creature-like expressions as the reflection of mutated plants of Fukushim



Figure 3.4 & 3.5 & 3.6:

Left top: Mutant Daisy at Fukushima (2011)

Left down: Tang, Brendan. *MANGA ORMOLU VER.5.0-K* (2011)

Right: Blue and White pot (2015)

### Character of The Fish Head People in The Story

The Fish Head people are my original characters, who used to live in this world, and no longer exist. In them, I secretly projected the image of Japanese people's impression. The non-mature looking characters (mainly they have big head and short legs) refer to the theory of Super-flat. "Super flat" is the words that Takashi Murakami uses when he describes an shallow void structure of Japanese consumption culture with

an animation, a pop culture, fine arts, and a thing such as the character culture.) It is an art movement of Japan and is a phenomenon of art that had brand characteristics turned to Europe and America and is a success example of the niche market sale. Also Murakami features other artists such as Yoshitomo Nara, Aya Takano, and more. In Super-flat, there are works expressing a sense of fear of growth. Murakami suggests that came from the structure of the whole Japanese culture after the World War II defeat, economical and cultural growth under the law created by occupying American forces, and this situation concocted the basic desire of Otaku culture's immaturity. (Murakami 2005, 150)

Also, for reinforcement of the uncanny (cute but not cute) impression of my characters, I intentionally use a cute look on unreadable face, emotions with the flavor of Japanese Anime culture's "*Kawaii*" (they look cute, but not always cute or sweet with their personality and role. Sometimes, frightening or grotesque.). And behind "*Kawaii*", Kan Saito suggests there is a structure of Japanese strange Juvenile cultural background. For example, Saito mentions there are so many characters of fighting teenagers or younger girls in Japanese animation and comics, and it came from a particular mindset of Japanese people. There are no fighting girls in American/European comics, movies, or novels except only few minorities. The author hypothesized that it might be a kind of psychosis and research structure of its strange juvenile culture. He points to Henry Darger's "*Vivian Girls*" and its similar generative process with Japanese cartoon culture. In Saito's article, he mentions that both are generated in a closed world that is not

connected with other cultures, and concocted by its own desire and story. He argued this structure is one of the reasons behind Kawaii-culture. (Saito 2006, 123)

Based on his idea of isolation, I reflect my own experience of loneliness, which I felt in my cultural and language barrier to concoct my own story and characters. Moreover, fish can exist only in water, and this is also another layer of isolation. Layering elements of isolation, concocted strange juvenile/immature culture, and my own background configure the character of the Fish Head people.

#### Relationship of Scale and Audience

This episode, “Empty Room” is designed for human scale. Therefore, audiences can experiment and explore the story and space as their own physical experience. However, all sizes of furniture are slightly oversized in comparison with our scale. The intention of scaling suggests that the Fish Head people are a little bigger than us, and invites the audience into an unfamiliar world. The first time I came to the US from Japan, I felt everything was oversized to me, especially bathrooms, tables, and chairs. My memory links to this idea, and my audience could feel that they are like children, exploring someone’s house. To reinforce this idea of unfamiliar impression, I choose a line quality of drawing with same manner. The drawings are cartoonish and bolder than any other drawings in the exhibition. The reason for the bold lines is that I want make the audience be in a cartoon, or experience the world of cartoon as a real experience. Also, the line thickness is an indicator of relationship in between audience, space, distance and time. For example, in a larger scale world such as Episode Two and Three, I am



intentionally using thinner lines. Also, the image of an empty dining room provides the feeling of being an uninvited guest and makes the audience uneasy or uncomfortable. Describing space design with *Ma* theory, I wanted to create strange, unfamiliar, uncomfortable *Ma* in this episode with fragments between familiar but unfamiliar, cute but not cute, and vivid but grotesque objects.



Figure 3.7: *The Empty Room* (2016)

### Choice of Glazing

In my thesis show, I intended to use three different methods of glazing and firing surface treatments. In the first episode, I used combined images of grotesque, anti craft-ish glazing with drawings on the dry or settled surface treatments. The main ceramic pieces in this room, the mutated vessels, are organized by biomorphic forms and

traditional vessel forms. To create the tension of a post-apocalyptic world and the grotesqueness of mutation, on the biomorphic forms, I applied layers of colorful, thick and runny glazes, which wash the underglaze drawings away and render the images unclear. In contrast, on the vessel forms, I applied the under glaze drawings which reference and suggest different traditional patterns with depiction of the Fish Head people's lifestyle and civilizations. The juxtaposition of dry, shining and runny glazes suggests the appearance of organs or imaginary contents and break the form and outflow in long timespans.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EPISODE TWO “THE STATUE OF POWER”

*(Narrator) You are deep in thought. You Imagine and encounter the history of the Fish Head’s civilization. You watch it from a third person’s perspective, or bird’s eye view. There was a history of development and expansion, saturation and overdose, and overflow and explosion. It caused the collapse of their civilization, environmental pollution, and uncontrollable disasters. In the center of their world, there is a statue of power, which is an invisible incarnation of development/growth. At the end, the head of statue became too big and fell to the ground like the moon strikes the earth.*

#### Meaning of The Statue

The position of statues in this story is the indicator of growth of power and time flow. Also they have a metaphorical role of over developing technologies and collapse of the un-controllable forces. In the story, the human-figure is an image created by the audience, and it is invisible for the Fish Head people. The small statue is covered by drawings about the beginning of civilization such as hope for future, nonstop development, and the prizing of nuclear power. In contrast, the large statue is covered by images, which suggest the end of civilization, such as war, science, biomedical experiments, the peak of evolution, and apocalypse. Both contrasting drawings have similar choices of cartoonish line-quality, pop cultural influences, and colorful palette. The collapsing statue with it’s dropped head is metaphor of the end of society. As an actual occurrence, there are many historical pictures and videos of collapsing statues,

which used to stand in the center of plazas such as statue of Vladimir Lenin or Saddam Hussein.

### Using Different Scales in the Same Sized Room

Both small and large statues are located facing each other. The relation implies the dialogue between past and future. Even though the scales of the two statues are different, both rooms are the same size. In the second episode, I intend for the audience to examine the different relationship between space and the audiences themselves. Also, both rooms are surrounded by walls, and have narrow gates. The walls make the statues invisible from the outside, and the narrow gates provides an immersive encounter of panoramic displays. Scale is an important concept in the contemporary art field, and many contemporary artists such as Claes Oldenburg, Katharina Fritsch, and more are using scale in their art practice to create immersive encounter within their impression. In the ceramic world, Matt Wedel, Jun Kaneko, and John Balistreri also make works in large scale. Particularly, I admire the approach of Ron Mueck's figurative sculpture. His work is known for its high-craft and realistic expression, but also for its strange experiences for the audience due to his manipulation of scale. He creates both large and small scale human figures, and the audience encounters these super realistic figures in unfamiliar scales. In Mueck's installation, both large and small scale work provide different *Ma* for the space and audiences who exists in the exhibit space. Large-scale works occupy the space, put the pressure on the audience, and make the impression tight. In contrast, small-scale works give the space to the audience and makes the space

impression wider. Those different *Ma* changed physical and mental distance in between audience, space, sculpture and time. I try to do the same effect in episode two *The Statue of Power*



Figure 4.1: Mueck, Ron. *Standing Woman* (2008)

In addition, I use large-scale drawing behind the wall of the larger statue in order to create an impression of an astonished encounter. By layering drawings, I refer to the work of Jim Shaw and his theatrical approach, Cyclorama by utilizing a surrounding wall from Western influence. Also, Kabuki or Joruri, Japanese traditional stage settings, use flatness in drawings which are inspired by Japanese culture. I collected the different drawing style of “exploding” images, and layered them. All layers become one massive explosion and surround the audience. The audience cannot see all drawings without

entering the room. Similar to the Western Cyclorama concept, I also use Japanese architectural references in my drawing, too. My hometown is famous for hundreds of temples and shrines. In their practice rooms, they sometimes surround the room with *fusuma* (sliding door) paintings. All drawings are continuous, and there are no specific center focus points. Viewers can enjoy an entire wall as one drawing, and their focus point keeps changing. I used to visit temples frequently and I wanted others to experience this as well. Those *fusuma*-drawings make the room's space impression bigger and different. Also, their brush strokes relate to the painter's physical movements. Their black and white style, and expression are sometimes very cartoonish. Composition and flow allows eye movement to occur very naturally. I utilize these traditional techniques in my drawings.



Figure 4.2: *Pattern of Dragon* (unknown)

This episode, "The Statue of Power" is designed by opposite *Ma*; Loose and Oppression. In the *Ma* of loose, there is enough room for the audience, and they can exist in *Ma* easily. I utilize this impression of an open room to create the atmosphere of the early stages of civilization (There is nothing, but possibility, hope and positive images for the growth and future. Power was still under control.) In contrast, I intentionally create a tight impression using panoramic scale drawings in the other room. It has pressure and provides an uneasy *Ma* for the audiences. Both the beginning and end of civilization are the same room size, but have opposite impressions and scale of the work. The audience can examine and read different *Ma* by themselves. Ceramic artist Jun Kaneko, also uses *Ma* theory. When he describes his large-scale ceramic work, he mentions shaking air around the work with visual strength. In Japanese *Ma* understanding, Japanese people sometimes call *Ma* as *Kuuki* (= Air). Reading air stream, temperature, pressure, and flow also help in understanding comfortable *Ma*.



Figure 4.3: *The End of Power* (panorama shot) (2016)

### Choice of Glazing and Drawing Qualities

In the second episode, I used translucent glazes as the background for drawing images. The depth of layered colors push images forward, like a relationship of animation film and background paintings. This is the opposite purpose of using glazes from the first episode. With the glaze that was used, I wanted to give the audience the image of the statues/power was created by layers of all kinds of desires and dreams from different perspectives. The statue is made out of layers of all kinds noise, phenomenon, ego and justice. To create a strong composition and glaze to be used for this episode, I researched Michael Lucero's ceramic pieces. He also uses dry drawing surfaces combined with juicy vibrant glazes. Low temperature glaze is not familiar in Japan and new challenge for me. Since I began to be interested in utilize this technique in my practice, Lucero's work has been good example of strong color compositions with drawings tied to art historical ceramic reference



Figure 4.4: Lucero, Michael. *Nice Nester* (2007)



## CHAPTER FIVE

### EPISODE THREE “THE ARK”

*(Narrator) Now you know you are walking in a post-apocalyptic world. You leave the room, and there is only a vast empty world. On the center of the horizon, there is an uncompleted enormous artifact. It is too far to get closer. It seems like a huge King of Herrings, but it has many legs. So it was the Fish Heads' last hope, which was an ark. The Ark was built to save them, and escape from their mortal destiny. However, nobody was able to escape from their reality, and now, nobody knows where they have gone. In the shadow of the ark, there are many silhouettes, which can be seen as the ghosts of the Fish Head people.*

#### Meaning of The Ark

I used the form of an ark as a metaphor of inescapable reality and mortality. *The Ark* is intended to have a meaning of salvation. However, the Fish Head *Ark* is incomplete, and therefore it has the opposite meaning. Like a fish cannot leave water, a human cannot leave earth. When I traveled to China in 2015, I saw massive numbers of skyscraper apartment buildings. However, most of them were empty, and they appeared like old or haunted bee nests (instead of looking like people live there). I got my inspiration of a post-apocalyptic world from those buildings. I utilized this inspiration for the massive scale in my empty *Ark*. The fish *Ark* has twelve legs. The twelve legs represent hope for the possibility of escaping their world (potentially from water). *The Ark* consists of six body parts and hundreds of small pieces with metal armature. Body

parts have convex voids on their body, which suggests incompleteness or weathering. The face of the fish head is non-emotional, and eyes are empty and hollow. The hollowness of *the Ark* derives from the coil building process linked to the emptiness of this enormous artifact with no owner. *The Ark* wears a golden crown, which shows that this ark was made for selected upper class people. In other words, *the Ark* is a kind of pyramid. Another reason for the golden crown is I linked the silhouette of the long fish shape to a deep-sea fish, the Oarfish, also known as the King of Herrings. The Japanese name of this rare deep-sea fish is *Ryugu-no Tsukai (Messenger from Ryugu)*. *Ryugu* is the imaginary palace where the queen of the ocean lives. In Japanese folk tale, *Ryugu* locates the bottom of the ocean that is different from our world. The long fish shape is metaphor of transportation, which brings us to a different world such as train, space ship, UFO or other vehicle. Around the foot of *the Ark*, there are many ghosts of dead fish shapes. The image comes from the familiar picture of dead fish on the coast. The dead fish is one indicator of climate changes and water pollution. Especially after the Fukushima disaster, there has been much news of dead fish. I secretly overlapped the image of Japanese people and the atmosphere of Japan into the wooden drawings of the fish ghost.

### Relationship of Scale and Audience

In the last episode, I set the horizon line of the background lower than eye level. The intension of the lower horizon is to make the audience feel bigger than a real-life scale. The piece is to be viewed from a bird's-eye perspective. In this room, I used the biggest wall in the gallery as the large canvas of the background for the ceramic sculpture.

In the story, *the Ark* has to be extremely large to contain all of the selected fish people before their extinction. With a large-scale sculpture and background, I tried to explain the empty atmosphere of the story.



Figure 5.1: *The Ark* (2016)

### Choice of Glazing and Drawing Qualities

In contrast to the two former episodes, I chose a dry surface treatment, which describes the dry air of an empty world and an ark as a dead artifact. Also, the choice of a pale color is a suggestion of the far distance with the technique of an aerial perspective. In contrast, I imply a little bit of hope in the clouds of the background drawings. The clouds start as a dark heavy storm and end up with bright, high white clouds. The visual flow leads the audience from a dark past to a hopeful future. After one civilization collapsed, there is another possibility of life in the future.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION: AS A PROLOGUE OF MY WAY TO GO SOMEWHERE

I know where I came from, but I do not know where I will go yet.

There was a small painting studio at corner of my home. My oldest memory was the smell of oil paint, an in-progress canvas, and a white wall. In 1988, I was born in Kyoto, Japan. Both of my parents were young painters, and my siblings and I grew up in an artistic environment. I still remember that the white cube of an art gallery was my favorite playground. I was excited by how my father played in the white cube, and altered the atmosphere of space with his artwork. I really wanted to play like him. My curiosity and aspiration was directed towards the gallery space, and art works that change the atmosphere of the white cube. It was my first contact with the art world.

The Kanji character of my name means a far-off distance, by which my parents desired me to grow up and become a person who can seek something curious and travel to experience it physically as a real memory by my eyes and feet.

“You will never be completely at home again, because part of your heart always will be elsewhere. That is the price you pay for the richness of loving and knowing people in more than one place.” (Adeney, 2016)

This quote makes me reflect on my current situation. My early memories are now far away in the past, and everything has aged in the interim. My parents are no longer young painters, and I am no longer a small child. Even I when I return back to my childhood home; there is no small painting studio.

My work and I have changed along with my journey. Since I left my home and family at 18 years old, I have traveled to many different places and countries with ceramics. Sometimes ceramic was the only thing, which identifies me as En Iwamura and an artist. I consider ceramics to be an international language, particularly as ceramics have historically filled the role of a storyteller for different generations. I want to utilize both historical and cultural aspects of ceramics in order to deepen my work's content, and apply it with a sense of humor.

My work is about how I can communicate with people and alter their experiences despite different cultural backgrounds, regions, or time lines. I believe that continuing ceramic art at the international level allows me to be able to communicate with someone new, by finding something important and going somewhere/ far and away.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A

Clay Recipe

Voulkos Large Works Stoneware Clay – Cone 9

22.50%	Fire Clay (Hawthorn)
22.50%	Ball Clay (#75)
22.50%	Gold Art
13.50%	Fine Mesh Grog (20 mesh)
9.00%	Coarse Grog (10 mesh)
9.00%	Custer Feldspar (Potash)
1.00%	Bentonite

## Appendix B

### Glaze Recipes

#### Woody's Transparent Base – Cone 04

26.00%	Gerstley Borate
4.00%	Lithium Carbonate
3.00%	Frit 3124
2.00%	Nepheline Syenite
5.00%	Edger Plastic Kaolin
1.00%	Silica
5.00%	Calcined Edger Plastic Kaolin

Add:

For Rose      7% Crimson Stain 6004

For Orange    7% Orange Stain 6028

For Yellow    7% Canary Stain 6410

For Dark Green      .5% Cr Carb + 5% Cu Carb

For Ice Blue    3% Silica + 0.4% Cu Carb

For Dark Blue 1% Co Carb + 2% Cu Carb

For Purple      7% Pansy Purple Stain 6385

For Black      7% Black Mason Stain 660 + 2% Mn Diox



Hirsch Satin Matte Base – Cone 04

32.00%	Gerstley Borate
9.00%	Lithium Carbonate
17.00%	Whiting
4.00%	Nepheline Syenite
4.00%	Edger Plastic Kaolin
35.00%	Silica
2.00%	Bentonite

Add:

For Rose	5% Crimson Mason Stain 6004
For Orange	7% Orange Mason Stain 6028
For Yellow	7% Canary Mason Stain 6410
For Mint	1% Evergreen Stain 6200
For Green	1.5% Cu Carb + .5% Cr Carb
For Turquoise	1.5% Cu carb
For Purple	7% Pansy Purple Mason Stain 6385

Appendix C

Figure



Figure 6.1 and 6.2: *The Empty Room* (2016)



Figure 6.3: *The End of Power* (2016)



Figure 6.4: *The Begging of Power* (2016)



Figure 6.5: *The Ark* (2016)

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