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PAPER, PULP, AND PLACE: INVESTIGATING CONNECTIONS THROUGH
PROCESS ART

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Studio Art)

The Honors College

University of Maine

May 2020

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ABSTRACT

A small papermaking studio was assembled for making archival quality handmade papers and pulps appropriate for printmaking, book arts, and paper cast to demonstrate the connections between artist practice, materials, and medium through process art. In the home studio a variety of machine-made cotton and abaca linters from an artist supplier were torn by hand and beaten by individual fiber types with a standard kitchen blender. Common papermaking additives were mixed into the pulp in controlled measurements to improve quality and colors. Application of the wet sheets and pulps for papercast and dried 3-dimensional paper sheets demonstrated that the blender method for pulping was effective for small studio work. With the formation of papercasts and sheets the artist interpreted and represented the narrative subjects of trauma and connected experience with the narrative of labor and formation inherent in the process art. This suggests that by working with an art substance through many steps of production, an artist has more control and connection to the medium itself creating a deeper dialog between process art and material applications.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hold deep gratitude for the change that has led me here and for the people who have helped me along the way.

Funding by way of the Center for Undergraduate Research and the Slavin Research Fund made materials accessible and grew this thesis beyond what I had originally planned.

I want to thank my thesis advisor, Ed Nadeau for encouraging me to “speak” in my own visual language and for his endless support and enthusiasm for process art. I would also like to thank the committee, Michael Grillo, Susan Groce, Melissa Ladenheim, and Justin Wolff for their input and time throughout this endeavor and through my years at UMaine. I would like to thank Andy Mauery for her feedback and for setting me up with some initial materials, and to extend a thank you to Walter Tisdale for the copy of *European Hand Papermaking* he dropped at the printshop, just for me. My partner and artist cohort, Nathaniel Rawson, spent countless hours listening to every idea I had leading up to and through this thesis, and I want to thank him for his patience and for always understanding my connections.

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INTRODUCTION

When deciding what I wanted to delve into for my creative thesis I considered the whole of my experiences through college, what studying the arts has meant, and how I have navigated mediums and subjects in my time as an undergraduate. I first began my studies at the University of Maine at Machias, seeking a small liberal college environment that I could reasonably afford, and there I was introduced to the papermaking process and book arts and design. As students we were encouraged to utilize all the potential mediums of expression around us and in my courses, I experimented with papermaking alongside the course material. I chose to immerse myself in any papermaking that took place in the year I attended UMM, though – I never actually took the course Papermaking I – as I knew by that point that I would be transferring to UMaine and I wanted to take with me any unique skills I could acquire. At UMaine I was introduced to printing and printmaking beyond the printing done for book arts and design purposes. While I have pursued my BFA with a concentration in Printmaking, I have always considered these mediums that interest me so as things to flow in and out of each other, as each is a unique medium and each can be completely intertwined, as paper is needed to print on, and printed paper is often what we find in or on books. As I feel printmaking and sculpture have a very similar mindset and process, I have also been drawn into sculpture, with fiber as my medium. With these many mediums drawing my interest and all influencing the way that I have learned to work with my interests in the studio space, I wanted to develop a body of work that would tell a part of this story, the story of where I am and what I have come from and what I have

learned or what I still have yet to learn. I thought about the body, a fibrous mass of connections, creating a single whole, containing a soul or consciousness all surrounded by electrified red mush. I wanted to articulate what making oneself feels like as a person, what good materials in bad conditions might be transformed into, and to connect that to the feeling of having been in process.

DISCUSSION

My attitude in college has always included parts of this mindset, that it is important to collect skills and aesthetic attitudes that honor life outside of the institution and that can be replicated without them. These ideas of replicability and DIY hold importance to me as I feel we move into a time where resources are limited, distribution is changing, and the only certainty about my generation's future is the inherent uncertainty of it. By adapting highly technical methods to more low-tech scenarios, art skills can be strengthened through adverse conditions and the process portion of the work can be better understood. Just as learning how to make many simple foods from scratch allows the home cook to improvise and improve more complicated dishes, likewise, adapting skills and technical processes outside the institutional studio makes a stronger artist.

Moving outside the institution can also increase accessibility of artistic processes for the artist. All through my college career I have "adapted" my artwork to make it more accessible for myself, adapting to physical, mental, and logistical needs within a program that demands an able body and an open schedule. Even in our instructional and academic spaces, especially studios, access is a struggle. This is something that I have thought about a lot as I have observed students reduce their creativity into something small to fit within an institutional system that resists adaptation on the behalf of students. In my considerations I have thought about the symbolic and literal importance of the physical studio, and how this importance connects to our relationship to ourselves as artists and how it affects perceptions of art vs. craft when we move more within our individual or collective spaces. The studio for many is like the "room of one's own" as written by

Woolf: it is a place of solace from critical eyes, an open place for expression that declares itself the domain of the *real artist*. Practically, space is needed for material-based arts, and making space is a necessity as well as tool for status. Any professional artist is supposed to be grateful for space to work, even if within this space they are performing underpaid or unpaid labor. The size and the equipment within the studio, as well as the aesthetic quality of the studio, is fetishized with “the dream” being that we all have our own spacious white boxes in which to “make”. Outside of these spaces creating and adapting different techniques in art can be seen as less serious, and in adapted and individual spaces art often includes process near its center which often goes ignored. When we value the process, we can visualize how people adapt and capture resiliency in their art making.

Process art can illuminate the connections between labor, artist, mediums, and materials through repetition of action and detailed craft, revealing the hidden work and the furthering notions of connectivity in the digital age. Process art can vary somewhat in definition, but for myself I define process art as a practice which engages directly (through formation, fabrication, and appropriation) with material and which utilizes a material’s symbology and function in service of narrative and intention. In my own work I want to directly handle material and transform the relationship to the material through interpreting experience and material experience simultaneously by working in an aesthetic practice. In this way fiber is a fascinating substance for me as it holds multiple, flexible points of connection that behave like feelers that can hold or let go of one another, all dependent on the treatment of the fibers by the artist. Fiber is very malleable, and the many kinds of fiber available further expand the possibilities of these

manipulations. In my way, I consider handmade paper a fiber, and how I feel manipulating cotton paper sheets or cotton fabric is no different. Fibers have a give and pull, and with little arrangement of stitches, starching, etc. a natural *contrapposto* can be formed with the materials to create form, movement, volume, life. The story of process too can imbue the work with struggle and accomplishment and demonstrate the context in which a work was made. This means process art lends itself well to narrative works and to works demonstrating physical or material experiences with an art object. As I have developed themes of the body and intergenerational trauma in my own art, I have found process to be an essential element in telling that narrative. Either in breadth of print edition size or color complexity or sculptural works made with fiber, I work to incorporate the “how this is made” part of what I make because I value the implications that holding that question and its answer has for us as human beings.

In my creative thinking I am attempting to represent the feeling of making, of seeing the parts of the whole, and the transformative history each part, or the material, might hold. Often, we want things to be concise and pleasing to whatever our “eye” has been trained to see as such. With my process-based art I hope to reject the single beautiful object and instead prompt the viewer to ask questions and see the many parts of the whole, leading to questions and considerations on what makes us and how *we* have changed *our* shapes. In my thesis work I have attempted to hold these ideas together to demonstrate the struggles and visceral experience of being a human made of many fibrous parts, the resiliency found in adaptation, the attachments of the artist to institution and formality, and what we can learn from each other as we build good things with broken parts.

METHODS

To begin with materials, I reviewed and selected a variety of fibers from professional artist suppliers. These include cotton linters and rag from Twin Rocker Paper and a small selection of linters and loose fibers from Arnold Grummer. I selected both of these suppliers because of their company's history and development of handmade papermaking in the United States as well as the quality of the product. The majority of materials were ordered from Twin Rocker, with two varieties of cotton linter and stiff cotton rag ordered in 10lbs amounts each. Before I had ordered materials a professor offered her extra papermaking supplies, and I began experimenting with some of the tougher cotton linter from Arnold Grummer I had in excess in order to devise a plan for the way I wanted to efficiently use my materials when they arrived in the mail. I tore down about 2lbs of cotton linter good for paper cast, soaked the cotton squares in water,



Figure A - Paper cast no. 1

and blended them into a workable pulp. No additives to prevent discoloration were added and the water pH was not tested. From this fiber I pulled a variety of paper sheets and made two cast busts (Figures A and B, page 8). I did color some of the pulp, but I didn't add my sizing properly or use a retention aid as I had falsely believed the sizing would help bond my pigments to the fibers (they did not). From this work and my copious notes, I found the

and blended them into a workable pulp. No additives to prevent discoloration were added and the water pH was not tested. From this fiber I pulled a variety of paper sheets and made two cast

weak points in my process, including that tearing linters by hand and then beating them with a blender took many more hours than I had estimated. I also made notes about my additives and when my dry papers began to yellow, I ordered a calcium carbonate additive and pH strips I could dip directly in the pulp so I could continuously check pH through the process. From this tentative beginning, I found the plan I needed to begin my actualized project. I decided that I would first execute a series of colored paper cast busts and related paper sheet wall pieces made of each individual paper type following a more rigorous processing method.



Figure B - Paper cast no. 2

To begin processing, the equivalent of one pound of fiber, often one whole sheet of linter, would be selected and then torn down to 1x1 inch squares. These squares were made by alternating tearing by hand or using scissors, and then placed in a marked paper bag which was then weighed on a kitchen scale. After the bag reached 1lb it was ready to go through the pulping process. This was done for every one of the five fibers chosen. From there each pound went through a similar pulping process, with a few exceptions for fiber quality and content. To begin pulping, the contents of one of the bags of fiber was

added to a bucket of water to soak before blending. At the time of soaking, the water pH was tested before the fiber was added to the water, and then after the fiber was added. The tap water I used for the project at my house consistently tested as 7, or neutral. After fiber soaking the pH often changed, becoming either more acidic or alkaline (6 or 8). For archival quality paper works the fiber needs to be neutral. Each 1lb of fiber soaked approximately 1 hour to 24 hours, depending on the strength and thickness of the individual fiber type. For example, the cotton rag and abaca fibers needed at least 24hrs to become fully malleable and soft enough to use in the blender. Before blending, 4tsp of calcium carbonate (to prevent yellowing from acidity) was stirred into the soaked fibers. Over the course of a couple hours, the soaked material was then chopped and blended in half cup measurements with 1½ cups of water in the blender, blending for approximately 1½ minutes in batches. The slurry was then drained through a mesh sieve



Figure C - Paper sheet

(which helped me cut down on water usage by recycling the drained water) and then squeezed by hand and placed into a plastic bag for later drying in the drying box.

Individual fiber type by individual fiber type, the batches of pulp clumps were placed on the floor of the drying box and dried for two purposes, firstly, to preserve pulp lifespan by drying so that all the batches of fiber could be ready to turn into paper without spoiling the fiber by having it sit in a slurry of water waiting to be used, and second, to test that drying and re-hydrating home processed fibers would work effectively. With the blender I chose, a standard large kitchen blender with a decent consumer rating, I noted that the motor could take only doing about one batch, in this case 11lb of soaked fiber squares, at a “time” (usually a day’s schedule), with it taking about 1-2 hours to blend, allowing for breaks to cool the motor. Anymore use at a time highly increased the risk of burning out the motor and rendering the process inert. When I was ready to use a specific pulp, I re-hydrated it in a bucket of water for several hours and then quickly ran the



Figure D - Paper sheet

whole batch through the blender again. This made sure the slurry of fiber was re-created without any clumps and I noticed that re-blending after soaking the dried blended pulp created a smoother and finer fiber texture overall, improving upon the texture and quality of the sheets later pulled from the batch. This was in contrast to the test batch I had made previously where I only blended once and then immediately put the pulp to use.



Figure E - Paper cast no. 3

After the pulp was rehydrated and blended for a second time, it was ready for the additives. My liquid additives were sizing and retention aid, followed by liquid dispersed pigments. The small business that I ordered my sizing and aid from is Carriage House Paper and they provide data and use sheets for their products. I appreciated the available information included with Carriage House's products as this kind of clarity is difficult to find with other brands and products. The many inconsistencies with the descriptions of additives and batch measurements in the many how-to books and educational resources I read for this project was interesting as it limited the scope of each author's recommendations and although I was willing to improvise, for truly small scale and perhaps more frugal or efficient papermaking processes, improvisation with difficult-to-source additives isn't ideal. Using the available guidelines, I mixed 2Tbsps of sizing per pound of dry pulp in some water, pouring the mixture into the pulp as I agitated the slurry

with a plastic cooking spoon for approximately 10 minutes. This agitation, according to the instructions, was to be done not by hand but with a cement mixer beater which is the assumed pulp beater of choice for many home papermakers interested in larger scale production. This leads me to believe that adding sizing during either the pulping via blender stage (if using the pulp immediately) or at the re-hydrating and re-blending stage would also be effective. Sizing is important in papermaking because it can improve sheet texture and surface stiffness as well as provide some level of a waterproofing effect which means inks, watercolors, paint, etc. may be applied to the paper sheet without bleeding or running. If extra or excessive sizing is used, it can prevent absorption of any additives to the sheet surface and stiffen the paper significantly. I chose to follow the



Figure F - Paper cast no. 4

general guidelines provided by the supplier because I wanted the paper to have the integrity to hold up to ink or watercolor, but I didn't want to make especially stiff or waterproof paper.

As per the instructions, I then added a retention agent in the same way as the sizing, with 2Tbsps per every pound of dry pulp, agitating for 10 minutes. Retention agent was added to the pulp to charge the fibers, allowing

for pigments to bond. After this I added the water dispersed pigments from Twin Rocker by mixing teaspoons or tablespoons of pigment into a measuring cup with water and then pouring the mixture into the pulp and agitating for at least 10 minutes. I mixed color based on sight, knowing that some pigment would be rinsed away when I washed the pulp and that the paper would dry lighter than it appeared. In my previous test series with the excess linter I had added both excessive sizing and no retention agent. In addition to making the paper almost too sized to be drawn or painted on and absorbed, the extra sizing can also “over charge” the pulp fibers and not bond with pigments. When I added pigments to the first batch, the colors ran freely as I did not wash the pulp before filling the vat so much of the pigment washed away unevenly as I pulled sheets. Learning from this, I was more considered with my sizing additions and careful with the retention agent, adding more to bond more pigments and deepen color as needed. With the following pulp batches, I washed the pulp using the utility sink in my basement. This was a laborious



Figure G - Paper sheet

experience which added much water waste as well as potential environmental impact to the pulp-readying process. The benefit of this was that by washing the pulp in a sieve under running water, pigment that didn't attached to the fiber was washed away meaning that when a vat was filled and sheets were couched, highly pigmented water would not run across my wet work surface or basement floor which would make cleaning up very problematic.

For sheet formation I considered several things. Firstly, how thick did I want the sheets to be? This was answered in part by the original fiber content and by the mold I used. Secondly, what do I want the surface texture to be? Surface texture can be altered by the way one dips or pours the mold, the grace with which one couches a sheet, the material the couching is done upon, and the way the paper is dried. Additionally, it can be altered by pulp painting, by manipulation by hand, by pressing things into the wet paper, by dripping water or pigment on the paper, etc. If done in a methodical way, these



Figure H - Paper sheet

variations can be used by the artist to communicate diverse ideas with the same materials in direct and immediate way. For casts I attempted to pull consistent, medium thickness



Figure 1 - Paper cast no. 5

sheets that could be handled. To some of these sheets I either isolated some pulp and colored it a deeper or contrasting color or I would draw with a plastic bottle filled with watered down pigment. Both of these methods had successes to varying levels and added contrast and texture when applying pressed sheets to a cast. With my other paper sheets, I tried many different sheet formations and additions. I separated pulps and colored them, pouring the isolated colors into one mold. I pressed ephemera, such as scrap of fabric and manufactured paper scraps, into the sheets or pressed ephemera in between two sheets couched on top of one another, creating thicker, imprinted sheets. I also pulp painted and drew with pigment to try to make marks that would withstand sheet pressing and drying. Alongside my series of casts, with each individual cast I made several doubly couched sheets embedded with dried fiber scraps and materials from the previous process. After couching the top sheet, I would open up

sheets that could be handled. To some of these sheets I either isolated some pulp and colored it a deeper or contrasting color or I would draw with a plastic bottle filled with watered down pigment. Both of these methods had successes to varying levels and added contrast and texture when applying pressed sheets to a cast. With my other paper sheets, I tried many different sheet formations and additions. I separated pulps and colored them, pouring the isolated colors into one mold. I

holes and pull forward these mounds of other materials, creating ruptures in the surface. These sheets were air dried for a long time instead of pressed and/or ironed to preserve the forms that document the cyclical nature of the process.

Throughout I considered color and what colors I was choosing. In keeping with my other 3D body works in fiber I wanted to use a palette developed around reds and pinks. Both cool and warm fully saturated colors or neutralized earth tones I found to work for this palette, with the additions of concentrations of primary colors via watered-down pigment applied by bottle and mixed organically on the wet pulp surface. By using color this way, I could control the way the fiber textures were read when dry and I could paint-in with watered pigment areas of visual interest or abstracted patterns that would further describe texture and form.



Figure J- Paper cast no. 6

After pulling a series of sheets, with the exception of the 3D sheet works, I would then press the stack between two boards, standing on the stack until water was no longer actively running. If I was pulling many sheets at a time or I needed to manage my time

differently in the studio, I would put a bucket of heavy items on top of the stack, letting time and 50lbs slowly press water from the sheets. This kind of pressing is not particularly effective, but it is practical for a small working space. For many small home papermaking studios, the press is a central point of contention that can be resolved in a variety of ways and the decision of how to resolve this can be affected by the choice of drying methods. Generally, pressing sheets in a large stack with several hundreds of pounds of pressure, or thousands, is effective way to begin drying sheets as well as to further interlock the fibers, or pulp painting, together on the sheet surface and because the water is so efficiently pressed from the paper the drying time is faster and the ability to handle damp sheets and dry them well is increased. This means for large editions of uniform sheets that are likely to be used for other purposes building some form of a hydraulic home press is a pragmatic pursuit. I chose to not focus my energy or funding on



Figure K - Paper sheet

building a press, focusing my attention more on quality materials and low-power and low-tech tools. For me this meant pressing sheets between boards with either a bucket or by myself, meaning that the pressure exerted on any of my pressed sheets maxed at 125lbs. For the sheets to be used as paper, after pressing I layered them in stacks in my drying box, rotating out the stacks over a period of days until fully dry. The drying box consists of stacked cardboard and a box fan at the back of the stack, covered by plastic drop cloth and secured over the sides and top with duct tape, creating a vacuum in which to consistently blow air over and through the layers of paper between the cardboard layers. For the sheets to be used for paper cast, I step-pressed them, applied the paper as I wanted for the cast, and then brought the cast to the drying box, removing the cardboard stacks and encasing the cast in the continuous airflow of the box. With so much surface area, my casts dried within 24 hours which is nice turn-around time for an otherwise long process.



Figure L - Paper sheet

LITERATURE REVIEW

In my research I looked to many texts and guides on papermaking and its history as well as studio practice and process art. I looked for books that would offer diverse perspectives on small batch papermaking and studio set-ups so that I could make informed decisions when setting up my own paper studio as well as make decisions about materials and focusing on archival quality papers. I ordered practically every book in the MaineCat system that directly covered Western handmade papermaking and its processes, with texts spanning across the last 50 years. From these inquiries I took relevant bits of information and notes for my studio and learned more about the creative approach's different artists in the North and South Americas have taken in their practice.

In the historical sense, Betty Bright's *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America, 1960-1980*, provided context for the birth of papermaking and the related arts in the American arts scene. Bright discusses the issues of the emerging book arts scene of the '60's-'80's and how the works were taken seriously, or not. Bright writes on how "paper had broken through the barrier between craft and the art world" and discusses the medium and its aesthetic roles as well as its related fields, papermaking and printmaking, noting how material choice and design have played into perception and "worth" in America (158).

In "Over + Over: Passion for Process", the authors Gregg and Fox discuss the differences in process works writing, "Process Artists tended to leave the nature of the material evident and exposed in the final work" contrasting that with their conception of the "HyperProcess" artist who transforms the material (Gregg and Fox, 14). In their argument, "HyperProcess" as an artistic practice examines the "illusion" of order and

replicability through that very thing by the manipulation of craft and found objects/materials in cyclical series that mirror the making of the works (Gregg and Fox, 14). I found these ideas applicable to my own work, despite the authors potential objections, I can relate my own goals of handmade papermaking to these ideas of reimagining our relationships to material and order or chronology.

“Hiding Making - Showing Creation: The Studio from Turner to Tacita Dean” discusses in depth the history of the artist studio and the showing of works in relation to ideas of artist as personality and hidden artistic labor. It is argued that the studio must be studied as a “crucible of philosophical reflection on some of the most fundamental problems of the artist in the modern world” those issues being “the nature of the art object, the role of process and material, and the relationship of the artist to the world beyond the studio walls (Esner 11). These in turn all relate to the perception of the artist and the work produced and in a series of essays, the authors discuss the history of the creation of “artist as genius” through the presentation of studio space, revealing the studio as another means of composition or communication to the outside (Esner 11). This is something I’ve considered as I work in my studio and think about the presentation of the studio and working within it, and how this presentation adds or detracts from the presentation of my work, or myself as a professional or student artist as I write from the studio space.

Looking at writing on studio practice and process works, one teacher’s research on process and pedagogy provided some key insight into narrative and understanding oppression in process art. “Anti-Oppression Imaginaries: Art, Process, & Pedagogy,” a dissertation by Carrie Elizabeth Hart, discusses how to apply materials and process art

learning with students as a way of developing anti-oppression praxis. Although her work is ultimately focused on the pedagogical role within a classroom for children, Hart delves into what it means to discover empathy and understanding through process artwork and analyzes how teachers and figures around her use their roles within their life to impart these lessons of anti-oppression to their students and themselves (90). I found this dissertation useful as she articulates the connections that can be seen in process art and how organically people can connect with the meaning and experience of the work.

The article “The Artistic Process and Arts-Based Research: A Phenomenological Account of the Practice” by Donald S. Blumenfeld-Jones discusses art-based research and the need to be able to both record and understand the mindset of the artist and experience of working in the studio while also understanding that trying to perceive said thing needs its own language and approach (325). Because art is so experienced through non-verbal means, we cannot verbalize the experience, but we can build a set agreed upon descriptors that can be applied in arts research and this language can help develop a methodology for arts research. I found the thinking compelling and it tackled a place of contention within my own work, which is how I can verbalize research that is intended to be experienced and has only been experienced by the artist. Perhaps through engaging process art a kind of research language can begin to be developed in the visual as the description of methods and organic response to material is integral already in the written language we use to conceptualize process work outside of the moment it is made.

While making the paper and the studio, these texts in particular were essential. Firstly, *The Complete Book of Papermaking* by Josep Asunción is a tremendous resource book which clearly troubleshoots homemade papermaking practice as well as provides a

guide for setting up papermaking studios with limited means (86). Asunción includes paper samples as well as photographs detailing the step by step process of the craft, all while including notes on historical papermaking as well as pointing out styles of Western papermaking in conjunction with other methods and approaches to the medium.

The second essential text through the process became Helen Hiebert's *Papermaking with Garden Plants and Common Weeds* which provides many clear illustrations and diagrams for the papermaking process and goes into depth discussing additives and colors. Although I didn't use the bulk of the text on using common plants and weeds, her writing on keeping good notes, fiber handling, and the way to approach additive usage were all methods I used with some modification. Specifically, the drying box method from her book is the one I built (Hiebert 60), and I found her writing wholly applicable to the way I addressed the process, despite the difference in fiber choice.

The third essential text is *European Hand Papermaking: Traditions, Tools and Techniques* by Timothy D. Barrett. This work fully explains the traditional European cotton-based papermaking process to which all of these processes discussed for paper are owed. In this text, Barrett provides a contemporary guide to Western hand papermaking with photographs of the studio and making space, charts on materials and chemicals, and descriptions of tools and machinery, sometimes quoting my former professor at the University of Maine at Machias, Bernie Vinzani (95). This text is most applicable to someone building a much larger studio space with more attention to traditional methods, but for my purposes it served as a useful glossary and future guide for expanding my papermaking endeavors.

Another small text of note is *300 Papermaking Recipes* by Mary Reimer and Heidi Reimer-Epp which is an excellent resource guide on paper fibers, and it provides many paper recipes as well as photographic examples of texture, color, and techniques.

ANALYSIS

This thesis is a synthesis of the many ideas and experiences with media and process that I have accumulated through college. With my choice of subject, display, and narrative I follow the thread of my own life and the cyclical experiences within it through



Figure M - Paper cast no. 7

material, process, and focus. As a student artist I have been working steadily and thematically through the many media on the subject or question on how to communicate highly personal yet universal experiences of the body and adaptation. Adaptation is how we may go from surviving to thriving. Within this context this isn't about ignoring the power structures at play, but it is about treating those structures transparently and acknowledging our own human capacity for change and trying to get

curious about a future made of those adaptations. Some forms of adapting are made possible only through the resources inherently available (grants, networks) or accessible (education, accommodation). I am extremely grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by way of research funding, as I know it is only through those funds that the breadth of materials collected, and the studio set-up itself, came to fruition. Transparency is critical to me, and in this way, I want to note that by way of funding my thesis was able to grow significantly from what I had originally envisioned, and this led me to considering

different issues of resources access and how arts research is practiced. By funding my thesis, I was able to transition my work from a small experiment with frugal but fine papermaking or a testament to my time at school, but into a whole work of experiences that demonstrate the impacts that resources and adaptation to change have had on my thesis work. I feel the funding and the materials gifted to me by a professor are also reflected in this work by my approach in materials use and the way I recorded my research and methods. Approaching materials acquisition from this perspective changed what and how much I used and how I used it. This is part of the “process” of the process art, and it articulates the living history recorded with my paper pieces.

Through this thesis I have learned so much about process work, small studio work, and what being a “working artist” could look like. I

think that with this process art I have answered many of my questions that arose throughout the setting-up and making experience. Many of those questions could be reduced to “will this work?” and I believe the answer here is “yes”. To me, the paper and paper casts that I have made as a collection answer many of these questions. I learned



Figure N - Paper cast no. 8

about a small studio set up and what could be done with so many hours in a day, I discovered what worked and didn't work for myself as an artist. If I could go back in time, I might make a different decision about how I would take cotton from linter to usable pulp. And yet, I learned a lot about the limitations of the blender and the successes one can have with it, adapting as needed to how I was experiencing the process.



Figure O - Paper cast no. 9

When I began making sheets and objects, I didn't have a specific plan. I knew I had my subjects, flesh and fiber, body and trauma. I had a palette and that

was all because I knew I needed to be in the process with the material to know what I could say with it. This resulted in many gooey, lumpy sheets in bloody red and bright pinks, demonstrating the cyclical nature of the material and the experience remaking oneself. As I pulled sheets, I discovered that with the methods I was using I was making sheets more applicable for paper cast than usable paper. I had guessed this might be the case, and I modified the chicken wire armature of an old sculpture to create a headless shoulder and torso bust. With this I cast my several torsos highlighting the differences in the fiber textures and used color liberally to articulate the feeling of the "flesh" I wanted to communicate at the time. In my way, the torsos describe that feeling of taking control

of one's messy parts and refashioning oneself into a unique individual and I think my process of making and the resulting works demonstrate the narrative of "rebuilding from bad parts" while also showing modes of self-articulation and autonomy that are contained within the "whole".

With these works I think I succeeded in describing more visceral and incomplete experiences of self-determination and building from incomplete or imperfect materials. The additive layers of fiber and color forming a human landscape of chest and hand over

heart communicate the "whole" contained within the piece itself, the individual within the universal, the body. A culmination of many hours of work and experimentation, these fibrous pieces exist too like a "wearable", meaning an art piece that can be physically worn on the body and is made or shaped with the intention of it being worn. I myself physically "fit" within these vessel-torsos and in many ways, they are molded to me, but like my sweaters and like the subject, it can



Figure P - Paper cast no. 10

also be literally and figuratively repeated by others. By wearing, or perceiving to wear, one of these pieces, the lived experiences of both the artist the material can be felt by "the

wearer” while also inserting the individual into the experience, making it their own. What can be shared too in this work is a history of my life and body, what I have been through, seen, done, and what I have made of myself. For this I’ve chosen the language of process and the labor of process work to breathe life into the narratives I explore materially.

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