

Summer 2020

Through the Fire

Carolyn Mimbs
Fort Hays State University, carolynmimbs@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Ceramic Arts Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mimbs, Carolyn, "Through the Fire" (2020). *Master's Theses*. 3157.
<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses/3157>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository.



THROUGH THE FIRE

CAROLYN MIMBS

CAROLYN MIMBS

Graduate Catalog
Master of Fine Arts Degree
Fort Hays State University - Hays, Kansas
June 19, 2020



THESIS STATEMENT

Through exploration of my roots and establishing a deep appreciation for family, heritage, and upbringing, I have been on a journey into realms of personal discovery and a reconnection to the earth. I am drawing upon my past through a vintage aesthetic yet elevating the humble vintage souvenir-style work through sensual, vulnerable figures interacting and struggling within their surroundings. I am setting myself along the same path and rhythm of my pieces, which shift as I regain control of my own life and direct my desires towards personal betterment. Using clay as the primary material in my work gives me the opportunity to slow down and enjoy the process of life and art which is evident in my commitment to realism and craft. My use of print-on-clay animates the surface of the ceramic work with time-worn textures, transforming intimate imagery of my past. My interdisciplinary work in fibers, pyrography, and video documentations show the union of earth, erosion, and time through installations in both gallery and natural settings. There is a tension between my archival work and explorations of disintegration as I capture nature's elements interacting and eroding raw clay works in an effort to remind us all that our corporeal bodies will one day return to the earth, completing the cycle of birth, formation, enlightenment, and death. This catalog is submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



Struggling to stand on my own, I grasp these stark branches of the unknown. The roots of home, family and religion are more accepted and provide a stable foundation, yet where am I in that world? It is time to step into reform. I am exposed and vulnerable in this tension, but I am going to try anyway. The future is disjointed and uncertain, but I am going to seek anyway.



Reaching

2018

Stoneware, Underglaze, Cloth, Moss, Rock
60w x 72h x 60d

Time Capsule

2017

Stoneware, Underglaze, Acrylic Wash
60w x 48h x 4d



Burnt Island in Ontario, Canada has been home to my family's cabin since 1948. It has become a repository of family history, an ever-growing arrangement of artifacts that clutter this utopian escape. The objects encapsulated on this small, remote island bring a pang of nostalgia. Aged mementos and the surrounding terrain transport me to a cool summer evening, picking wild blueberries among the lichen and spruce, the scent of smoke and lake mingling in the air.





My origin story began with death. My only memory of my father is going to visit him in the cemetery. I have no memory of him holding me, of his laughs, of the way he rubs his nose, but I hug and laugh and rub my nose the same way. He is ingrained in me, this stranger. He was laid to rest in a peaceful place, between a vineyard and a river. His spirit can pick fresh fruit and take a quick dip in the river, coming back to lay in the grass under the trees.



Approaching the Cabin

2017

Stoneware, Underglaze, Glaze

18h x 17w x 5d



Oregon Trail
2019
Stoneware, Underglaze, Glaze
18h x 17w x 5d





Something deep inside draws me to the forest. I have reverence for the way redwood trees absorb moisture from the dense fog that flows in from the coast, seeping into each needle, strengthening and hydrating themselves from their tender tips into the depths of the massive trunks. I long to hydrate my skin, my bones, my soul in the same way these trees receive their life. They grow clustered in expansive forests with interconnecting roots, an unseen tether to each other and the earth. We all have invisible tethers, to our family, friends, memories of pain, disappointment, and passionate encounters. I long to grow my tethers to many, through the way I live and create, each piece of art forming a new connection to another being, whether through their eyes, hands, or heart.



Decompose

2019

Stoneware, Mono-printed Underglaze, Glaze

16w x 18h x 14d



Burnt Memories: Contact Paper
2017
Stoneware, Mono-printed Underglaze, Glaze
26w x 10h x 10d

With a single mom working on a PhD, my sister and I would spend summers with various family members. I can still remember the wallpaper leftovers and carpet squares, patch-working my great grandmother's upstairs bedroom together. The retro flowers in rows, flipping from avocado green to mustard yellow and rusty orange. They were in awkward contrast to the elaborate gilded filigree wallpaper on the adjacent wall. Each nook had a different era etched into it, with these patterns as the backdrop for vintage dressers, knick knacks, and crooked photos. The flytraps would hang from the window sills flickering like sun catchers. I would spend hours combing the room for a picture I hadn't seen before, a seashell lamp that was now burnt out, a dusty picture of my grandma and her 8 siblings. I used to remember all these things so clearly, this museum of familial memories that were not my own, but were held tightly through my lineage of blood and marriage, divorce and death, and stories retold at each Sunday lunch at great grandma's. These memories became an inheritance. I could feel the weight of them even as a child, desperate to be held and passed on, but they were fleeting as age and distance became a controlled burn for my heart, clearing the path to make room for new memories. Occasionally I can dig my way back and recall some parts, but I can't seem to turn my mind to the right to see what's on that end table, trapped in the unfinished room.





Creating with the goal of disintegration fills a need for process. I ache for the moment I'm in and moments past, but rarely the finished object. This action brings me closer to the earth and into my body as I walk through rushing waterfalls, watching the dragonflies choose my art as the perfect place to land. I seek out the perfect tree to heal with my perishing bandage. Nature calls deeply when I feel overwhelmed, forcing me to slow my breath and awaken my senses.



Erode

2019

Time-based Installation with Video Documentation
Mono-printed Underglaze, Raw Clay, Waterfall



Scorched Earth

2019

Stoneware, Saggar Fired Terra Sigillata

28w x 12h x 15d

Reborn from ashes of my past, I am intimately connected to the earth. This metamorphosis feels overwhelming and crushing, smoke puffing from pores as the sinking mud extinguishes the last embers. The skin has been burned away, exposing pink flesh to the new breeze. The pain of transformation is acute and white hot, tingling as numb extremities awaken.







Canopy
2020
Stoneware, Underglaze, Ferns
72w x 60h x 12d



From Within

2020

Stoneware, Underglaze, Moss

28w x 32h x 28d

Surrender to the process that is life. Hold expectations, ingrained habits, unconscious bias and past trauma with an open hand. Let these burn away, releasing their power over you. Choose a new path. Allow epicormic shoots of beauty and justice to grow within you, pushing through the foundation that has been restored through fire. Feed this new growth with compassion, discomfort, and action. You are becoming new and whole again.





Summers in high school were spent renovating houses with my grandfather. I loved being his apprentice even though he often challenged me with tasks I was unsure I could handle. Whenever a problem seemed too difficult for me, he would encourage me to enjoy the process. I have adopted this as my own mantra for challenging situations. If I take the time to enjoy the process then I know I have learned something, I have worked through a problem, I have made a difficult time a little more pleasurable. This mantra also takes the pressure off of an end product. Does it really matter that I made a masterpiece, as long as I enjoyed the journey of making it?



Disintegrating

2019

Mono-printed Underglaze, Slip, Tree Stump

36w x 10h x 36d



BIOGRAPHY

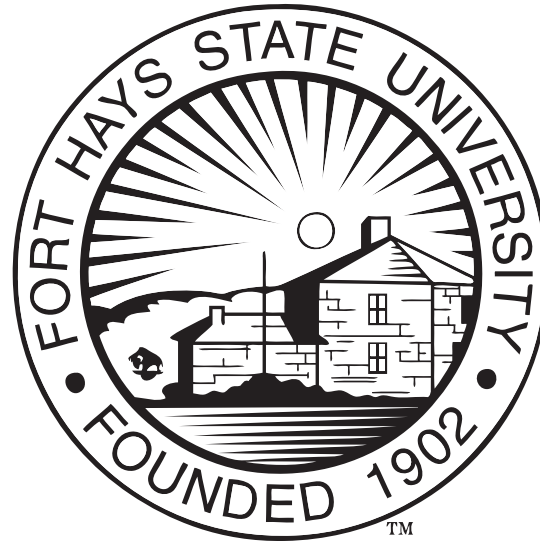
Carolyn Mimbs was born in Gold Hill, Oregon in the summer of 1985. She has been teaching art for twelve years at the middle school level in Kansas City, Missouri. She received her BS in Art Education through Missouri State University and is currently working towards her Master of Fine Arts at Fort Hays State University. She will be graduating with her MFA in Ceramics on August 14, 2020. Mimbs has been an active member and volunteer at Belger Crane Yard Studios and has exhibited her ceramic art locally, nationally, and internationally including exhibitions at the Sweetwater Center for the Arts in 2015, Red Star Studios in 2016, New Orleans Clay Center and the Clay Studio of Missoula in 2017, a solo show at the Trap Gallery in Kansas City in 2018, and the Hilliard Gallery International Contemporary Figurative Show in 2019 and 2020. She has thrice been the recipient of the FHSU Graduate Scholarly Experience Grant, furthering her exploration of printing on clay. She has dreams to travel the world while creating her art and expanding her artistic community, as well as aspirations to one day work at the collegiate level, preparing future ceramic artists.

Contact Info:

carolynmimbs@gmail.com

carolynmimbsclay.com

This catalog is submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



Interim Dean of Graduate School: Mr. Glen McNeil
Chair of the Department of Art & Design: Karrie Simpson Voth, Professor of Graphic Design

Graduate Committee:
Chair - Linda Ganstorm, Professor of Ceramics
Member - Dr. Betsy Crawford Leeds, Assistant Professor of Special Education
Member - Tobias Flores, Professor of Sculpture
Member - Amy Schmierbach, Professor of Drawing

Catalog designed by:





**Fort Hays State University
FHSU Scholars Repository
Non-Exclusive License Author Agreement**

I hereby grant Fort Hays State University an irrevocable, non-exclusive, perpetual license to include my thesis ("the Thesis") in *FHSU Scholars Repository*, FHSU's institutional repository ("the Repository").

I hold the copyright to this document and agree to permit this document to be posted in the Repository, and made available to the public in any format in perpetuity.

I warrant that the posting of the Thesis does not infringe any copyright, nor violate any proprietary rights, nor contains any libelous matter, nor invade the privacy of any person or third party, nor otherwise violate FHSU Scholars Repository policies.

I agree that Fort Hays State University may translate the Thesis to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation and access. In addition, I agree that Fort Hays State University may keep more than one copy of the Thesis for purposes of security, back-up, and preservation.

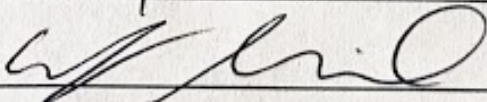
I agree that authorized readers of the Thesis have the right to use the Thesis for non-commercial, academic purposes, as defined by the "fair use" doctrine of U.S. copyright law, so long as all attributions and copyright statements are retained.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, both during and after the term of this Agreement, I agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Fort Hays State University and its directors, officers, faculty, employees, affiliates, and agents, past or present, against all losses, claims, demands, actions, causes of action, suits, liabilities, damages, expenses, fees and costs (including but not limited to reasonable attorney's fees) arising out of or relating to any actual or alleged misrepresentation or breach of any warranty contained in this Agreement, or any infringement of the Thesis on any third party's patent, trademark, copyright or trade secret.

I understand that once deposited in the Repository, the Thesis may not be removed.

Thesis: Through the Fire

Author: Carolyn Mimbs

Signature: 

Date: 7.7.20