

TRANSLATIONS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Masters of Fine Arts

in

Art

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

April 2007

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April 19, 2007

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Form, line, and surface are the catalysts for my work. I have been constructing non-representational forms from clay that I see as translations. They are reflective of my conversation with the material and a record of the firing. The pieces in the installation do not reference any specific object. They are my attempt to explore volume, line, scale, and repetition in objects designed to translate the process of wood firing. They are about physicality, passion, and process. Each object becomes an individual variation of the total process. Most forms and objects created in art have some reference to some other pre-existing object and can have any variety of meanings attached to them. I know the viewer will create their own meaning and metaphor for this installation. My intention is to leave the specifics up to the viewer.

All of the work is fired primarily using the small anagama-style kiln at Montana State University. An anagama is a tube-shaped wood kiln which is fired for four days. The forms represented here lend themselves well to the wood-fire process because of their massive surface area and organic texture. The same can be said about the tea bowls with their surface treatment. The tea bowls are sketches, emphasizing an aesthetic which is a combination of an abstract expressionistic use of materials and allowing the clay to speak for itself. The wood-fire process is very physical and one is directly involved with the kiln and the work being fired. There are many variables that need to be taken into account such as stacking of the kiln, type of wood, oxidation and reduction, damper setting, air intake, stoking pattern, weather, and type of clay. One needs to have an understanding of these variables and make judgments concerning these variables in order to help dictate the outcome of the surface on the work. I say “an understanding of these variables” and not “control over these variables” because there is an element of unpredictability and an endless array of firing possibilities that factor into every firing. I enjoy the duality of connecting with the fire and, at the same time, giving way to the unpredictability of each firing.

The non-representational installation is about physicality and its presence demands more than a visual response. The piece generates an experience that precedes language. The forms’ precariousness and towering scale invoke a feeling of alertness which heightens one’s awareness of their surroundings. This is especially true when one is

immersed in the installation. The confrontational scale also helps activate the exhibition space in a unique way by using the power of the vertical line to create a sense of vertigo, adding the illusion of subtle movement to the work. The bulbous forms function aesthetically and logically as balancing elements to the linear components and allow for another surface area for the recording of the fire. Visually, they also give the linear components a beginning or ending, depending on how one views the verticality of the pieces.

I use the tea bowl to explore all of the issues I am exploring with the installation forms. The issues of form, line, surface and balance are all present. The main difference lies with the issues of scale and containment. One can hold and feel the form and surface with their hands and lips giving a special connection with the object and giving a sense of calm. Ideally, they speak from my hand directly to the viewer/user's hand. The installation and the tea bowl create a dichotomy between alertness and calm. The installation gives a sense of anxiousness with its confrontational scale, precariousness, and powerful linear presence and the tea bowls give a sense of calm with their intimate scale and utilitarian properties.

To conclude, I make art because I have to. I need to. I need the physicality of the clay and the physicality of the firing. For me, meaning comes from the process and the labor. I learn best by making and the current work functions as the catalyst for the next work.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

5



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8



Image 9



Image 10



Image 11



Image 12



Image 13



Image 14



Image 15



Image 16



Image 17



Image 18

12



Image 19



Image 20

13



Image 21



Image 22

14



Image 23



Image 24



Image 25



Image 26



Image 27



Image 28



Image 29



Image 30



Image 31



Image 32



Image 33



Image 34



Image 35

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Image 36