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# **Reverberation in the Void**

A Thesis Presented

by

**Elizabeth Dee Heifferon**

to

The Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Fine Arts**

in

**Studio Art**

Stony Brook University

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Abstract of the Thesis

**Reverberation in the Void**

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**Elizabeth Dee Heifferon**

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**Studio Art**

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**2010**

This thesis serves as the written defense for the sculptural and performance work completed by Elizabeth Dee Heifferon at Stony Brook University 2007-2010. The work originates out of a concern for reconnecting the human and the natural through mutually beneficial energy exchange. In the philosophy that guides the work, there is a focus on the dynamics of energy exchange: within bodies, between bodies and forms, and within the void. In the corporeal aspect of the work, there is an exploration of environmentally safe materials and an emphasis on physical processes incorporating elements of contemporary dance and hatha yoga. This thesis introduces the work through the thoughts and intentions behind it: an interweaving of environmental and Eastern philosophies with various artistic and theoretical precedents. The work is then explored thematically rather than chronologically, moving from the development of the sculpture and installations, to the incorporation of movement work, to their synthesis in the thesis work.

## *Acknowledgements*

To grace,

To Adam, for his patience, wisdom, and humor,

To Mom, for avidly collecting, loving, and editing,

To Dad, for giving me humor and handiness,

To all my mentors near and far, I am grateful

For all you have taught me.

*Namaste*

## Table of Contents

List of Illustrations .....	v
Introduction .....	1
I.    General Statement .....	3
II.   Theoretical Grounding .....	13
III.  Sculpture and Installation Work .....	26
IV.  The Performance Work .....	40
V.   The Culmination of Sculpture and Performance .....	47
VI.  Summary .....	50
Bibliography .....	52
Appendix: Illustration Plates .....	54

## List of Illustrations

1. Sonoran Desert. Stock photo: <http://www.dreamstime.com/>
2. *Too Many Mouths to Feed*, 2006, cast iron, cast soil over armature, briars, stoneware, copper, steel, found object. (In collaboration: signature stoneware by Sue Grier, Ceramics Instructor @ Clemson U.)
3. *Too Many Mouths to Feed* (detail), 2006, cast iron, copper finish and patina, garden hose.
4. *Sustain/ Suspend*, 2007, bamboo, paper, blueberry juice, manila rope.
5. *(Untitled) Silueta Series*, Ana Mendieta, 1976.  
Color photograph, Courtesy Gallery Lelong, New York.  
© The Estate of Ana Mendieta
6. *Figure in Movement*, Francis Bacon, 1976.  
Oil on canvas, 198 x 147.5 cm  
© 2010 The Estate of Francis Bacon/DACS, London
7. *Suair de Mondo Cane (Mondo Cane Shroud)*, Yves Klein, 1961  
Dry pigment and synthetic resin on gauze, Collection Walker Art Center  
© 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

## Appendix – Illustration Plates

8. *Sympathetic*, 2008, encaustic, pigment, and shells on panel.
9. *Sympathetic* (detail), 2008, encaustic, pigment, and shells on panel.
10. *Sun Worship*, 2008, encaustic, pigment, and aloe leaves on panel.
11. *Sun Worship* (detail), 2008, encaustic, pigment, and aloe leaves on panel.
12. *Rain Baskets*, 2008, broken (inverted) umbrellas, recycled bamboo strips, plastic funnel, manila rope.
13. *Rain Baskets* (detail), 2008, broken (inverted) umbrellas, recycled bamboo strips, plastic funnel, manila rope.



14. *EKG Wave Rings*, 2009, cast encaustic medium, luminescent pigment, blacklight LEDs, bicycle inner tubes, hardware cloth.
15. *Maya Kosha* (detail), 2009, white stoneware, silica sand.
16. *Maya Kosha* (installation view), 2009, Plyboo™ platform, sound, moso bamboo, masa paper, white stoneware, sand.
17. *dissolutio(n-) humanitas*, 2008, red clay, white stoneware, water, plaster, IV bags, fabric.
18. *dissolutio(n-) humanitas* (detail), 2008, red clay, white stoneware, water, plaster.
19. *Inner Landscape* (detail), 2009, porcelain and nylon fiber, porcelain slip, on Plyboo™.
20. *Inner Landscape* (detail), 2009, porcelain and nylon fiber, porcelain slip, on Plyboo™.
21. *Healing Space in Earth Bound*, 2009, stoneware, moss, mica, silica sand, sea grass.
22. *Healing Space in Earth Bound* (interior), 2009, stoneware, moss, mica, silica sand, sea grass.
23. *Breath-Fed, Hearts Bled*, 2008-2010, white stoneware, sculpture clay, encaustic and pigment.
24. *Breath-Fed, Hearts Bled* (detail), 2008-2010, white stoneware, encaustic and pigment.
25. *Suspended Sea*, 2008, video still.
26. *Suspended Sea*, 2008, video still.
27. *Synaptic Weaving*, 2008-2009, video still.
28. *Synaptic Weaving*, 2008-2009, video still.

29. *Divine Love Document*, 2009, canvas, ink, clay slip.
30. *Divine Love Document*, 2009, canvas, ink, clay slip.
31. *CHAOS composed*, 2010, bamboo, paper, plastic, shells, porcelain, mica, wood stain.
32. *CHAOS composed* (detail), 2010, bamboo, paper, plastic, shells, porcelain, mica, blue wood stain.
33. *CHAOS composed*, 2010, video still.
34. *CHAOS composed*, 2010, video still.
35. *CHAOS composed*, 2010, video still.
36. *CHAOS composed*, 2010, video still.

## Introduction

As an artist, I am more concerned with the social implications and transformative potential of an active engagement with art than the physical product. This is not to say that my process in the making of the tangible part of the work is not important; it is, as is beauty, of a sort. Beauty resides in the fleeting and the ephemeral. Therefore movement and the possibility of change over time are paramount in my work. Cultivating a harmony of formal elements and arrangements moves me, particularly when I discover them unexpectedly. I prefer to challenge expected modes of beauty in art by incorporating evidence of organic processes and in transforming and recombining recognizable organic forms.

The energy exchanged as I engage with my materials infuses the sculptural portion of the work with presence. My process involves a full attentiveness to being in the “now,” as well as the inducement of a meditative state that allows what is eternal (creative intuition and grace), to pass through me and my materials. However, as a dancer, *yogini*, and environmentalist, I am acutely aware of how enmeshed we are in the world bodily and constantly involved in an energy exchange with our environment. The exchange I refer to is both the more apparent: social and physical, as well as the more subtle: chemical and metaphysical. I am especially interested in sensation and in the meditative encounter that occurs spontaneously while communing with nature. This meditative encounter is also possible in the experiencing of various arts, wherein the participant is emptied of thought and of self-consciousness, allowing a deeper consciousness to well up.

As I have opened up my art practice to more interweaving between the various arts that I practice (yoga, dance, and sculpture), the trajectory of my

graduate work has taken me beyond being a sculptor/maker of the aesthetic object to becoming more of an installation/performance artist. However, my aesthetic and material specificity has not diminished in import. My commitment to sustainable art making continues to guide my material choices. I am drawn to materials that are organic and unprocessed, and that I can harvest myself, like bamboo and briers, as well as materials that can be recycled easily, like clay. My work has always been conceptually charged, and that part of the work has only deepened. The inspiration for my work has always grown out of environmental concerns and biological processes and paradoxes, but now more abstract notions, from scientific theory to eastern philosophy have begun to take root. Thus, the space in which I locate my art has increased in scope. I find that I am presently much more interested in the possibility of exchange within the void, in the negative space and in the discursive space of the mind, and how form itself might invite such engagement.

In this thesis I will discuss the sustaining themes that still ground my work: Earth, body, presence and absence, but I will also explore the more freshly distilled ideas that have influenced my current work: sensation, the void, forces, and chaos. In chapter one, I will introduce myself as an artist a bit more thoroughly, including my own grounding as well as artists whose work has influenced me. In chapter two my approach will be a literature review: I will work to unearth the concepts I am currently concerned with through the written works of both theorists and artists. My work will appear finally in chapter three, which I will approach in three parts: my sculptures and installations, my movement-based performances, and my major thesis work, which fuses together my various artistic practices in a multi-media collaborative production.

## I. General Statement



### 1. Sonoran Desert

A nomad, settling for a time to live and create at the edge of the sea, I contain the desert from which I came. I am always outwardly in motion in order to maintain an inner calm: collecting, constructing, shaping, suspending. My movement background (ballet and modern) and eleven year practice of *batha*<sup>1</sup> yoga (which both began in the desert) feed into my way of making, carrying me inwardly back to my desert, regardless of my surroundings.

The delicate balance and austere beauty of the Sonoran desert, my childhood home, remain invisible to anyone who has not spent time there. This is not something that a photograph can successfully capture, but since I carry an internalization of it with me, the desert seems to unconsciously spill out into my work. A lonely childhood spent wandering around in the desert shaped

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<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit: sun and moon; the practice of the limbs of yoga that directly involve the physical body (asana [postures] and pranayama [breath control]) and that prepare the body for meditation.

both my identification with the universal energy manifest in Nature and artistic sensibility. (My childhood home was also adorned with my mother's avid collection of native Southwestern arts, which has at times echoed in my own artistic style.)

My own identification with the strange and paradoxical natural world, and the underlying universal energy, a sense of Self, shaped by what I know to be a fragile balance between man and Nature, continues to guide my artistic explorations. I define myself fundamentally as an environmental artist, although, I am continually in the process of redefining the implications of such a statement. In the past, as I was beginning to define myself as a sculptor with values rooted in environmental concerns, I knew fully that I wanted my work to serve a socio-political function: promoting the human responsibility of preservation of the natural world. However, the traditional metal shop focus of my early sculpture training left me feeling a bit hypocritical.



2. Too Many Mouths to Feed, 2006

Essentially, my past work commented on environmental issues, while some of my material choices were weighty not only in symbolic meaning but also in environmental impact. Drawing from a range of fabricated and discarded industrial materials and collected organic materials, I would set them up in situations of direct contrast. I would often employ dramatic spatial placement to achieve this contrast. I would represent the weighty consequence of human activity with cast iron forms confined to the floor. Then I would juxtapose these with the delicate beauty of materials found in the natural world



3. Too Many Mouths to Feed (detail)  
confused human and natural form.

suspended above. The material choices and placement in space emphasized the contrast between the heaviness of the metal with the lightness of the suspended organic materials, placing the viewer in a position to potentially look down on the human and up to Nature.

However, sometimes I purposefully

I now realize that though I may have been successful in the goal of my senior studio exhibition: projecting my own sense of unease over the decline of earth's biological systems into the viewer through sculpture that was at once grotesque and strangely beautiful, the limited evidence of conscious art making would not have inspired audiences to make more conscious decisions in their own lives and thus, prevented my work from having full impact. My inability to find a balance between the didactic and the poetic indicates that I may have been too focused on pushing a message than actually "being the change I wanted to see." I now realize that the time for consciousness-raising has past as we enter into a frightening new paradigm where change has to happen much

faster than it is. My sensitivity to the fragility of the balance between humankind and Nature and consciousness of interconnection, through my yoga practice, feed an unwavering commitment to diminishing the environmental impact of art making. Too often I come into contact with artists who use traditional artists' materials unquestioningly or assume the attitude of "how big could one artist's footprint possibly be?"

I'm not arguing that traditional working methods should be abandoned completely, but I do question why we, as artists should exempt our work habits from the greening efforts we might be making in other aspects of our lives. I believe that every action counts, no matter how little or seemingly insignificant. It's unfortunate that we as artists, who reserve rare access to creative and inspirational force, are potentially some of the worst polluters. I'd like to see more artists set an example that inspires others to not just think about their ecological footprint but to also take control of its size by making small changes in their daily habits. We can all share the responsibility of changing our ways and our world for the better.

Change ultimately means sacrifice. I consider the act of sacrificing highly processed traditional sculpture materials that I regard as having an excessive impact on the environment in favor of further experiments with organic or less processed, lower impact materials (some very non-traditional), to be a true test of creative mettle. I have, as a graduate student, challenged myself to distill and start aligning my art making processes with my unwavering sense of responsibility to the preservation of my main source of peace and inspiration, Mother Nature. As I make more responsible, informed choices in both life and art, my work no longer feels disconnected from the issues it addresses.

Using my traditional sculpture background only as a jumping off point, my work continually evolves through experimentation. I seek to find new ways



of making art: reusing what might otherwise end up in a landfill, wasting less, and avoiding the use of toxic materials and processes. I also draw a lot of my inspiration from my observation of natural phenomena and collection of strange and paradoxical specimens from the natural world. “When we discover the wider likeness, whether between space and time, or between the bacillus, the virus and the crystal, we may enlarge the order in the universe; but more than this, we enlarge its unity.” (Bronowski, qtd. in Furlong, 7).<sup>2</sup> Like Nature herself, my work is about process and change, creation and destruction, and universal connection.

Upon examining my artistic process, I find that in addition to striving to work sustainably through my material choices, I also tend to gravitate toward mediums that invite a haptic response within me that then informs my process. “Sculpture is a sensuous art.” (Bronowski, “The Ascent of Man” Ep.3, 5/5) I have learned, partially through the observation of natural forms, but more so through an intuitive negotiation with organic materials, to work with the underlying energies and inherent structures. The inherent energy of each material (clay, bamboo, sand, beeswax) determines the quality of energy I infuse into the creation of the work. I do speak here of invisible forces, but also of the physical path to knowing that is the realm of artists and artisans.

My preferred materials are organic and sustainable, and I seek a Taoist approach, operating more as collaboration with, than manipulation of the intrinsic qualities of these organic materials. My artistic process incorporates my diverse background in sculpture, yoga, and dance, which allows me to break

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<sup>2</sup> Jacob Bronowski was a biologist and mathematician best known for his British television series, “The Ascent of Man” (1973), which was the inspiration for Carl Sagan’s “Cosmos” series. In the series, he explored the role of imagination and development of knowledge through the physical, the hands-on, in the history of science and technology. Bronowski saw sculpture and architecture as prime examples of the impetus behind technological development.

free from my self. Through a dynamic exchange, I embody the rhythm of each material, bending and flowing with every nuance of its being, in order to reach a new becoming.

Like the Native Americans, Taoists, and other more spiritual cultures than our own, I believe that everything in nature has its own living energy.<sup>3</sup> To find true expression in art through a particular material, one must strive to know its living essence. This deeper motivation that drives my practice is a personal philosophy and spirituality, formed first and most profoundly from communing with nature: a simultaneous sense of presence and absence. This sense has much more to do with body and spirit than with rationalizing mind, and therefore resists being easily analyzed, or expressed in words. However, this raw sense has become more fully formed into an organically blended belief system that began with early exposure to Native American myth and Buddhism and has developed more thoroughly in my adult life through my study of yoga philosophy and the Tao.

I strive to create more intuitive work that inspires a feeling of spiritual interconnectedness between humankind and the natural world rather than more didactic work that infers physical interconnectedness. My hope is that the spaces and systems I create, which contain the energy of the primal interactions between my self and my materials, will catalyze further energy exchange. For me, the success of a work is dependent on whether that energy will translate into sensations felt by my audience as they relate to or interact with the work.

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<sup>3</sup> As an undergraduate I came across Chuang Tzu's "Poem of the Woodcarver." In the poem, the woodcarver describes his process, as first distancing himself from concern for praise or success, forgetting even his own body, and collecting his entire focus on the work: "All that might distract me from the work/Had vanished. . . /Then I went to the forest/To see the trees in their natural state. . . /When the right tree appeared . . . /All I had to do was to put forth my hand and begin. . . /My own collected thought/ Encountered the hidden potential of the wood;/From this live encounter came the work . . ." (Merton xix.10)

As an environmentalist, I wish to improve the visible and invisible energy exchanges between humanity and our natural environment. As an artist I seek to make visible spaces that invite a positive energy exchange, or that at least illuminate the fluidly dynamic relationships that are always present. By bringing the audience into a moment of present-mindedness, I hope to awaken a primal connection to the fundamental unity of all things. Successfully materializing form that achieves this lofty aim and desired affect will perhaps be my *dhárma/dubkha*<sup>4</sup> or lifelong struggle, but I know deeply that art is the only way. I both believe in the power of art and know without a doubt that this is my calling. In fact, I take Cezanne's words as a call to action, " 'the landscape thinks itself in me, . . . and I am its consciousness'" (Cezanne qtd in Merleau-Ponty 67). I want my art to speak on behalf of Mother Nature whose cries of distress fall on the deaf ears of those who have forgotten how to listen.

Still, resisting the urge to directly and didactically address environmental issues has become more important to me since the beginning of my graduate study. (I was guilty of being a bit heavy-handed in my use of symbolic imagery in my undergraduate work.) In artistic form, more poetry can be achieved through fragmentary discreteness than through giving the viewer too much visual information to sort through. To hold myself in check now, I often look to the purity of organic form achieved in the work of Brancusi, and his pupil Isamu Noguchi. Noguchi also had a long collaborative relationship with Martha Graham, which inspired me to find a way to fuse my sculpture and movement practices.<sup>5</sup> To rediscover the essence of the presence/absence that I

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<sup>4</sup> Sanskrit terms: virtuous path/suffering

<sup>5</sup> "Over the course of their collaboration, Noguchi produced fifteen sculptural set designs for dances which Graham based on Greek mythology and biblical texts; ultimately Graham would choreograph twenty-five works danced in settings by Noguchi. Thus began what is arguably one of the most important collaborations in twentieth century dance history" (Tracy 4).

feel the need to tirelessly express to my audience, I have over the past three years been working to distill more.

When I created my first bamboo installation (between undergraduate school and graduate), I refined, in a much more gestural way, what I had begun to see in my work once I had finished installing my BFA exhibition. I had then stumbled onto a key poetic element when arranging multiples within my work: rhythm.



4. Sustain/Suspend, 2007

When you move around a work that repeats forms, there emerges within the interplay of positive and negative space, the essential rhythm of life energy or *prana*. This presence/absence can be felt whether the work

involves cast iron fish, or hearts of various materials as in my BFA exhibition, or more abstract forms, which my more current work relies on. We are aware of this rhythm through the experience of our bodies and we find evidence of it in the observed ripples in a pond and at more intricate levels through scientific study, but the underlying energy remains a mysterious presence/absence.

I believe that artists can (perhaps somewhat unconsciously) capture this plunge into chaos, which is perhaps too complicated to comprehend if we approach art with an overactive rationalizing mind. If the mind is in a calm state when we approach the artwork, we are more likely to experience pure sensation, and distilled rhythm in the work can truly stir something deep and primal within the artist and viewer. I see Chris Drury's earthworks and Andy Goldsworthy's temporal rearrangements of varying natural materials that use

underlying natural patterns, as a rhythm that is evocative of a feeling of universality and connectedness. I aspire to such a level of pure poetry (but of course in my own way.)

The environmental artist, Betty Beaumont provides an answer to Plato's classic challenge of art's function, "The future is created by the quality of the present, and art can contribute to the making of a different future." In Beaumont's *Ocean Landmark* (1980), she made blocks of processed coal waste, which she deposited into the ocean where they became the foundation of a new ecosystem. Another artist I've admired whose art makes a positive environmental impact would be Mel Chin. His work, *Revival Field* (1990-present) employs hyperaccumulator plants that draw toxins like cadmium out of the soil. Although my work has thus far been primarily confined to gallery spaces, I am (when I find opportunity to) starting to follow the lead of environmental artists like Beaumont and Chin and move beyond the gallery walls and the purely anthropocentric function of art.

Perhaps the most influential artist on my work since the beginning, Ana Mendieta invented a particular blend of performative/body art and earth art. Her *Siluetas* series plays on notions of presence and absence through a hollow silhouette suggesting that she has been removed from the landscape.

Although Mendieta's work directly involved her own body and her decidedly unmonumental manipulations of earth and organic materials was documented as performance, she admitted no interest in the energy and spontaneity of live performance or the possibility of audience interaction.



5. (Untitled) *Siluetas Series*, 1976

My work shares the impetus to connect body with earth/organic nature and a method that often involves performance. However, it differs due my belief that my art isn't complete without those secondary audience interactions, which are invigoratingly unpredictable. The place of art isn't solely located in the object, the initial act or process, or the documentation. I see these parts as catalytic, creating opportunity for more energy exchange.

Mendieta's "earth-body work" also functioned for her as a ritual of rebirth and reconnection due to her identity as a Cuban refugee.

I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). I believe this to be the direct result of having been torn away from my homeland during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I reestablish the bonds that tie me to the universe. (Mendieta, qtd. in Viso 109)

On a personal level, I can somewhat relate, having left my Sonoran home, never intending to reside there again simply due to concern over the strain the current booming population growth places on the delicate balance of the habitat. I see the need for my work to reestablish similar bonds that Ana Mendieta wished to establish, only not so much for myself as for my audience. I want others to know, as I know, the immediacy of the need to reestablish the connection between the personal and the universal, to recognize that we are all part of a larger system that requires our care and respect.

## II. Theoretical Grounding

The sustaining themes that ground my work (Earth, body, presence & absence) have recently conjoined with newly distilled ideas (concerning sensation, the void, forces, and chaos). These new concerns have surfaced due to my growing sense of the relationality of human beings to the objects of art and the energy exchanged in the spaces created between the two. I owe this newfound awareness both to the experience of showing my work in gallery spaces and observing the interactions that take place, and of course to Gilles Deleuze's text, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, which I was fortunate to be exposed to at the very beginning of my graduate study.<sup>6</sup>

Deleuze's profound work on the painter Francis Bacon influenced how I fundamentally define art. In my formative years as a sculptor, I thought that the sculptural object (inspired by thought-concept) was it. Although I still put an enormous amount of effort into the making of objects with highly specific materials and details, I am now much more interested in distilling forces, or slowing down and extracting a bit of chaos even.

My most recent work centers on a particular conception of chaos, less of the modern "threatening," sublime quality, and more of a postmodern tranquil, harmonic, and vibratory quality. I was inspired by ideas of chaos and forces taken from Deleuze, but through the lens of Elizabeth Grosz,

'In the beginning' is chaos, the whirling, unpredictable movement of forces, vibratory oscillations that constitute the universe. Chaos here may be understood not as absolute disorder but rather as a plethora of orders, forms, wills – forces that cannot be

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<sup>6</sup> Theoretical texts do influence artists' work profoundly, but there's always a bit of a lag or sinking-in period. This is why I feel fortunate to have read Deleuze two years prior to beginning my thesis work!

distinguished or differentiated from each other, both matter and its conditions for being otherwise, both the actual and the virtual indistinguishably. (Grosz 5)

My thesis work explores the bringing together, the adjacency of unrelated systems, but not for the purpose of creating a random mess, but rather an overall unity, established through unexpected harmonies of color and form, and above all, rhythm.

However, rhythm alone does not compose the art. The art is in the sensation, the energy exchange between the work of art and the viewers/bodies who enter the space. The trajectory of my graduate work then, has been to move beyond being a sculptor/maker of objects and into being an installation/performance artist who creates spaces that invite an interaction and ultimately evoke a shift in awareness.

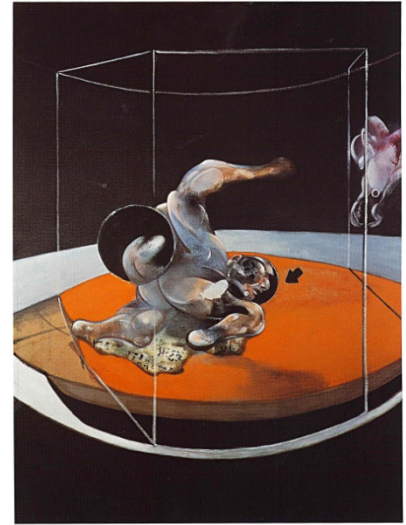
The shift must be initiated by an intuitive sensing, felt through bodily sensation first, before being processed rationally, and before even being perceived through our individuated senses. The mind's ingrained habit is to organize sensation into separate senses, which fragments the raw sensation, and leads to desensitization. Art has the power to bring us back to sensation prior to organization into senses, which today, amidst a desensitizing flood of communication and sensationalism, is more crucial than ever. "Sensation is the opposite of the facile and the ready-made, the cliché, but also of the 'sensational,' the spontaneous, etc." (Deleuze *FB:TL&S* 31). Art can at times be sensational, but art that taps into raw sensation has more lasting impact.

Sensation in art is an active and direct transmission, an immediate impression in bodies that are sensitive. Through an interconnectivity that developed through my practice of yoga, modern dance, and communing with nature, I am acutely aware of how we are enmeshed in the world bodily and constantly involved in an energy exchange with our environment (socially and



ecologically). Our bodies are much more permeable than our eyes can reveal, and this we forget because our sense of sight dominates our perception. The prevalence of cancers and diseases with unknown causes in our increasingly contaminated world suggests this permeability.

Deleuze's notion of bodies without organs expresses the amoeba-like perviousness of bodies, open to and incorporating surrounding matter and unseen forces. Bacon's paintings explore this permeability through his use of the Figure and surrounding Contour. At first the Contour seems to isolate, but it acts as an intermediary membrane that draws the Figure through a curtain, through a void, through contraction or dilation, into the Structure. "In short, it is a membrane, it has never ceased to be a membrane that assures the communication in both directions between the Figure and the material structure" (Deleuze *FB:TL0S* 29).



6. *Figure in Movement*, 1976

For Deleuze, sensation resides in the in-between, not in the subject or the object alone, but in their relationality. The presence of both receptive subject and enigmatic object creates a system of mutual exchange. In my sculptural installation work sensation inhabits the void, the fissure, the space betwixt, and is dynamically imparted by invisible forces.

Sensation is the zone of indeterminacy between subject and object, the bloc that erupts from the encounter of the one with the other. Sensation impacts the body, not through the brain, not through representations, signs, images, or fantasies, but directly, on the body's own internal forces, on cells, organs, the nervous system . . . It is not representation, sign, symbol, but force, energy, rhythm, resonance . . . Sensation draws us, living beings of all

kinds, into the artwork in a strange becoming in which the living being empties itself of its interior to be filled with the sensation of that work alone. (Grosz 73)

The finished artwork must of course have presence (or it never leaves the studio), and the human element is the complementary vital presence. However, I am increasingly interested in the absence, the void that opens up when my body departs and the viewer approaches. This is where sensation truly resides, where the exchange takes place, and transformation becomes possible.

The problem of addressing the absence in the void can also be expressed as a problem of (Lyotard's idea of) "presenting the unrepresentable."<sup>7</sup> How can absence, be presented by an artist without becoming a presence? I find it necessary to maintain the absence as a void, as an empty space in my work, however defined or enframed by what I build. I strive to preserve the openness of space (interior and exterior), which differs from both the approach in the modern tradition of Minimalist sculpture, concerned with enclosing interior space, and the more effective approach by artists like Bruce Nauman and Rachel Whiteread, of creating presence out of absence, through the casting of negative space.

Whiteread's work delimits interior space, by casting a negative space as a positive, replacing absence with presence, "a negation of the thing itself" (Daily 38). Her most well known works, like *House* (1993), are castings of previously lived-in spaces, in which the viewer encounters memory and

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<sup>7</sup> Lyotard's notion is expressed as absent presence, lacunae or gap, or in-between. In *The Inhuman*, Lyotard points to Barnett Newmann's "zips" as "presenting the unrepresentable," as interruptions of what is being presented, ultimately revealing the painting's structure. This is close to the way my sculptural forms are intended to work in an installation: to reveal the very structure of space.

nostalgia. She makes visible the invisible psychological space of the interior, the internal, which the sensitive viewer experiences through the emotional body.<sup>8</sup>

Some of Rachel Whiteread's early work recalls the work of Bruce Nauman. Interestingly, Bruce Nauman's work functions much like Barnett Newman's zips, which in Nauman's work, leap off the wall to become three-dimensional form. Newman's zip, or unexpected vertical stripe, both unifies and disrupts the fields of color in his paintings, and by calling attention to the spatial structure of the painting itself, work to present the unrepresentable:

It is a chromatic matter alone, and its relationship with the material (the canvas, which is sometimes left unprimed) and the layout (scale, format, proportions), which must inspire the wonderful surprise, the wonder that there should be something rather than nothing. Chaos threatens, but the flash of the Tzim-tzim [reminiscent of Kandinsky's synaesthetic Klang], the zip, takes place, divides the shadows, breaks down the light into colors like a prism, and arranges them across the surface like a universe. (Lyotard, 85-86)

Though I can appreciate the work of Nauman and the work of Whiteread for revealing spatial structure and drawing attention to negative space, for me, filling the void with materiality transforms it too much. The Minimalist conception of creating an awareness, within the viewer, of their position/relation to the work bodily can be effectively achieved through a shaping of space, preserving the void. One sculptor who does this particularly well (who I admittedly have a love/hate relationship with) is Richard Serra. His massive steel sculptures have an incredible power over the way people move through the negative spaces delimited by his positive (phallic) masses. "He changes your perception of how you put one foot in front of the other when you're walking around or through something. What happens is that you think

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<sup>8</sup> The emotional body is a deeper layer of being, housed inside the physical body (yoga philosophy).

about your physical place in the world” (Whiteread qtd. in Daily 55). I endeavor to create work that has a similar affect, bringing the viewer back into his or her own body, but my way is much more subtle (and sustainable.)

As I sculpt at a rather large scale, I must fully engage with my materials, employing much more than just my hands in the shaping of space. Inspired after reading the chapter on nests in Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, I consider my forms from their interior, the void that they enframe:

And Michelet suggests a house built by and for the body, taking form from the inside, like a shell, in an intimacy that works physically. The form of the nest is commanded by the inside. ‘On the inside,’ he continues, ‘the instrument that prescribes a circular form for the nest is nothing else but the body of the bird. It is by constantly turning round and round and pressing back the walls on every side, that it succeeds in forming this circle’ . . . Michelet goes on: ‘The house is a bird’s very person; it is its form and its most immediate effort, I shall even say, its suffering. The result is only obtained by constantly repeated pressure of the breast. . .’ Everything is a matter of inner pressure, physically dominant intimacy. (Bachelard 101)

Bachelard suggests that the greater intimacy involved in the formation of structure, the more relational it becomes to bodies. In my art practice, the heightened physical engagement in the creation of the work ensures this relationality and a greater transfer of my energy into the work. My hope is that this energy carries over and affects audience’s experience of the work, bringing them into an awareness of their physicality as well as perhaps awakening something primal within. Bachelard also makes the claim that images of nests and shells awaken primal urges to withdraw into the embrace of these types of spaces. There’s something rather comforting about them. What we know of nests and shells is that they are homes to particularly vulnerable creatures: baby birds and invertebrate sea life. They offer safety because they are built to conform so closely to the bodies of the inhabitants. My thesis work also

reflects this notion of a certain comfort in the interrelation of enclosing forms and the bodies that create and encounter them.

In order to create spaces that the viewer can relate to bodily as well as on deeper levels, my process involves as much of my being as possible (hand, body, mind, and spirit). Yves Klein, in “The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto” stated that: “It is necessary to create and recreate a constant physical fluidity in order to receive the grace which allows a positive creativity of the void” (n.p.). I wholeheartedly agree with his statement and have borrowed it as a mantra since my preoccupation with expressing the void began, but I interpret it openly. He was of course referring to his monochrome experiments of the period 1946-1956, and his blue monochrome period of 1957, works inspired by the vast totality of nature:

Once, in 1946, while still an adolescent, I was to sign my name on the other side of the sky during a fantastic ‘realistico-imaginary’ journey. That day, as I lay stretched upon the beach of Nice, I began to feel hatred for birds which flew back and forth across my blue sky, cloudless sky, because they tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work. (Klein n.p.)

Klein, influenced by Zen Buddhism, saw art as “a vehicle to the absolute” and he saw the role of the artist solely as the medium (Baas 110).<sup>9</sup> His monochromes and other works employing experimental modes of making that removed the evidence of the artist’s hand were produced to this end. However, his subsequent egoism and Neo-Dadaist interest in absurd theatricality undermined his project of creating art for a higher purpose.

For me, grace passes through my being and through my materials (some more readily than others). The more unimpeded it flows, the more the void is

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<sup>9</sup> Jacquelynn Baas’ thorough survey on the influence (applied and direct) of Eastern philosophy on Western art, *Smile of the Buddha*, which I discovered at SBU library near the beginning of graduate study and have been renewing ever since, having found it to be an ineffable source of knowledge and connection.

expressed. As a yogini, I ultimately define grace as *prana* or life force, something that is always in a state of flux or exchange between life-giving forces and between all life forms. “Prana is also translated to mean ‘to bring forth mystical vibration’ – that ineffable energy that exists in sunlight, water, earth, plants, animals, people, and wind or breath” (Lee 29). The rhythm of our breath, which constitutes a constant wavelike motion is our primary access to *prana*. Dancers and yogis both work to master the breath. The harnessing of this vital force drives the physical expression of these arts.

Yoga as a healing art serves to free up blocked energy channels in the body. These blockages can simply be overworked, tense muscle groups or the more complicated blockages of the emotional body within the physical body. The physical fluidity that results from the *tapas*<sup>10</sup> of *hatha* yoga and the work of dance allows practitioners to experience an inner bliss: we contain the void, receiving and radiating grace in a constant interchange. Having embraced movement work throughout my life and having enjoyed the resulting current of liberating positive energy, I can’t help but seek ways to share it. This is why I began teaching yoga six years ago and why I have made it my mission to develop an art that serves to transmit this energy exchange.

I tend to think of art, yoga, and Buddhist meditation as parallel practices. “Art comes from and is realized in a place before language, outside of the discursive mind. It shares this place, the place of emptiness, with Buddhist meditation practice” (Baas 10). In meditation practice (in both yoga and Buddhism), the habitual, constant turning of the mind is slowed and the turbulent flow of random thoughts is halted through varying techniques. This stilling of the mind is a Taoist aim as well. In the words of Lao Tzu, “To the mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders” (n.p.). The resulting effects are

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<sup>10</sup> Sanskrit: heat/focused effort

better clarity and concentration, present-mindedness, and tranquility.

Experience has taught me that these effects are also attainable through the making of and engaging with art. When we come into contact with an art that engages on the level of pure sensation, we experience an emptying, or void, surrendering to the experience and forgetting ourselves (and our overanalyzing busy mind) for a time, however brief. It is in this moment of present-mindedness that we rediscover our true, uncomplicated, blissful nature that is usually clouded over. “And what both the creation of and the perception of art share with Buddhist meditation practice is that they allow us to forget ourselves and thus realize ourselves” (Baas 11). Both challenge the conceit that thinking is the ultimate path to knowledge.

The arts (healing and fine) have more direct access to the more intuitive body of knowledge, than either scientific or mathematical theories, and can inform and enrich our experience of the more elusive inner realm that is pure spirit. Does the flow of positive influence move from human to nature, fitting nature into a mathematical model and constructing a world to fit the growing needs of man, or does it flow from nature to human, inspiring minds and enriching spirit? The statement, “God is a mathematician,” describes the foolish stance that mathematics and science (of human invention) can reveal how or why anything in nature was created, as if there were a conscious order.

I have tremendous respect for mathematics and science as powerful tools for attempting to make sense of our world, but they are limited in that they are still systems created by human intellect. When we become overly enamored with scientific and technological progress, we neglect more intuitive ways of knowing. Besides, even if we could figure out and explain away all natural phenomena, everything outside of the human realm, wouldn't that take the allure and excitement out of life experience?

Wassily Kandinsky, in his text, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912), implicated capitalism as the great corruptor of the soul and essentially what separated western civilization from more spiritual cultures (which often identify more closely with nature). In this work, he optimistically called for a new art of the sacred, that would bring some light (hope) to the dark (modern world) and make possible a spiritual rebirth:

Only just now awakening after years of materialism, our soul is infected with the despair born of unbelief, of lack of purpose and aim. The nightmare of materialism, which turned life into an evil, senseless game, is not yet past; it still darkens the awakening soul. Only a feeble light glimmers, a tiny point in an immense circle of darkness. This light is but a presentiment; and the mind seeing it, trembles in doubt over whether the light is a dream and the surrounding darkness indeed reality. This doubt and the oppression of materialism separate us sharply from the primitives. Our soul rings cracked when we sound it, like a precious vase, dug out of the earth, which has a flaw. (Kandinsky 24)

Often considered a late Symbolist, Kandinsky uses the unearthed, broken artifact as metaphor for both the soul and the state of art at the beginning of the twentieth century. A century later, his metaphor seems just as apt, but could be extended as well to the state of the environment. Even though the march of “progress” and the “oppression of materialism” that would lead to the exhaustive exploitation of resources were well underway in his time, Kandinsky and his contemporaries could never have foreseen the extent of environmental damage and global climate crisis that we face today. The allusion also brings to mind the well-known Taoist wisdom, “Shape clay into a vessel; It is the space within that makes it useful. . .Therefore profit comes from what is there; Usefulness from what is not there.” (Lao Tsu 11). The utility of the vase, the emptiness within that holds infinite possibilities, no longer holds true when it is cracked. An art that no longer has any spiritual,



symbolic function becomes empty decoration. Kandinsky's sense of the spiritual was probably shaped by the influence of Tibetan Buddhism.

Kandinsky's father was a tea trader from Kyakhta, "a Siberian city on the border of Mongolia, a center of the tea trade, the Eastern section of which belonged to China" (Grohmann qtd. in Baas 62). His great-grandmother had been a Mongolian princess, and in Kandinsky's time Tibetan Buddhism was the predominant spiritual practice in Mongolia. Kandinsky's belief in the power of art, to both originate from "inner necessity" and to be realized in a realm of expression that is pre-cognitive and therefore pre-language, reflects the goals of meditation practice. The ultimate goal of the practice is the stilling of the mind to allow the return to a non-thinking place of emptiness, pure spirit.

In the same year that he wrote *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky saw "a special exhibition of far Eastern and Asiatic, predominately Japanese art' on view . . .[at] the so-called 'Munich Exhibition 1908'" (Kandinsky qtd. in Baas 66). Through his unique synaesthetic perception, he perceived an "inner tone" shared by all of the works. He saw a variety of form, but still, all were united by this "inner tone." This experience was fundamental in shaping his concept of "Klang," an inner resonance essential to the presence of the spiritual in art. Published in the Russian art journal, *Apollon*, that year, his "Letter from Munich" proclaims:

'It is precisely this general "inner tone" that the West lacks. Indeed, it cannot be helped: we have turned, for reasons obscure to us, away from the internal toward the external. And yet, perhaps we Westerners shall not, after all, have to wait too long before the same inner sound, so strangely silenced, reawakens within us and, sounding forth from the innermost depths, involuntarily reveals its affinity with the East.' (qtd. in Baas 66)

Kandinsky did eventually work out his ideals in painting. His works possess a remarkable synaesthetic reverberation: the arrangements of form and

color striking the viewer with a sense of rhythm reminiscent of jazz standards. There are many examples of great works of art that contain an “inner tone” independent of any symbolic meaning that the artist may have infused in the work. This is what draws people from many generations and different backgrounds time and time again to certain works of art, that ambiguous *je ne sais quoi* that works through pure sensation. It is the strange power of the artwork that Kandinsky believed gave art the incredible “potential to serve as a positive spiritual force in the world:”

‘In a mysterious, puzzling, and mystical way, the true work of art arises “from out of the artist.” Once released from him, it assumes its own independent life, takes on personality, and becomes a self-sufficient, spiritually breathing subject that also leads a real material life: it is a being . . . [and] possesses – like every living being – further creative, active forces. It lives and acts and plays a part in the creation of the spiritual atmosphere.’ (qtd. in Baas 53)

Although I agree with Kandinsky’s observation of the presence of forces as being part of the power of art, I also take Marcel Duchamp’s view that absence is essential as well. Art is form, but art is also void. Kandinsky saw art as positive creation: as having its own inner life, which connects the artist with the viewer. “[F]or Duchamp art was emptiness, a space wherein the viewer ‘brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act’” (qtd. in Baas 55). An artist’s inability to perfectly capture his or her intended subject “creates a ‘gap’ that is energized by the potential of this encounter: ‘What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links which exist. It’s not what you see that is art, art is the gap’”(Duchamp qtd. Baas 55).

Duchamp’s “viewer-response theory” can be expressed in Sanskrit as *rasa*. “*Rasa* resides not in the artist or the object, but in the mind of the viewer

– just as the taste of wine exists not in the vintner or in its bottle, but in the mouth of the one who drinks it” (Baas 55). The emptiness of the mouth is key.<sup>11</sup> The place of art is not in the object, nor is it in the associative and intellectualizing mind of the viewer. For Duchamp it is in the still mind, the receptive void that can perceive the chaos of pure, unordered sensation. ““Art cannot be understood through the intellect, but it is felt through an emotion presenting some analogy with a religious faith or a sexual attraction – an aesthetic echo”” (Duchamp qtd. in Baas 55).<sup>12</sup>

Besides satisfying the need to express the fact that Duchamp practiced yoga, my intention in spending an entire chapter devoted to theory is to contextualize the work I will next describe. It will be necessary to keep in mind that these theoretical ideas developed alongside the work and are therefore more apparent in the later work. However, the earlier work I include will demonstrate my attempts to resolve and bring into union my interests in environment and in the shaping of space through movement and sculpture.

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<sup>11</sup> Isn't the connoisseur's method of taking a first taste of wine to then draw in a little oxygen/*prana* before closing the mouth?

<sup>12</sup> Duchamp's pairing of faith and sex here is due to the influence of tantric yoga. “There is evidence that together Brancusi and Duchamp explored the phenomenon within Mahayana Buddhism known as Tantrayana or Vajrayana – a set of psychologically sophisticated practices that utilize yogic techniques of internal concentration or visualization to achieve release from suffering” (Baas 55). The way toward *mahasukha* (bliss) through tantric contemplation is to overcome the dualism of male and female energies within the body. Finding a sense of union between the two generates a realization of nonduality. In light of this, Duchamp's female alter ego, Rose Selevy, becomes more of a conceptual heavyweight than I once thought.

### III. Sculpture and Installation Work

My sculptural work ranges from more intimate and visceral works to more expansive installations. Although my preference is to make work intended to be seen out-of-doors, I enjoy pushing the boundaries of gallery-acceptable work. My wall mounted encaustic works embody the fragility of nature and of bodies in their literal fragility as well as in their appearance. In these pieces, I explored the skin-like quality of an encaustic surface (a mix of pigment, beeswax, and damar resin or a more brittle wax.) In thinking of the wax as skin, I couldn't help but think of the waxy skin that protects the cactus and succulent plants back home in the desert. I was fortunate to find a suitable wax to use, Candelilla, which actually comes from a plant found in southwestern Texas and northeastern Mexico.

In the first of these, *Sympathetic*, I wanted to produce the effect of goosebumps and to play with the dichotomy of skin as both vulnerable and protective by confusing cactus with human skin. By layering the wax on a thin wood panel, I was able to create alizarin crimson pockets hidden beneath a white layer, topped by a slightly translucent pastel green layer. I then carefully pierced the pockets, placing cactus thorn-like shells in some of the bumps. These referenced the protective nature of skin, but also looked like hairs standing on end. I let some of the pockets remain unpricked, while pricking others with heated tools to let the crimson color rise to the surface. A couple of these dripped and give an initial impression that the panel is bleeding.

The most successful of these early experiments with encaustic, *Sun Worship* was chosen for "The 2009 Best of SUNY Exhibition" in Albany where it won Best of Show. This, at the time, struck me as funny because it too looks

back to the desert and has little to do with my experience of living in New York as a SUNY student. Although, considering my slow adjustment to the real winters here, missing the warmth of the sun may have partially inspired the work.

I used warm, vibrant colors to reference the effect of the sun: emphasizing the natural yellow of the beeswax, a bright coral to highlight, and a deep purple for contrast. I embedded aloe cactus leaves in the surface that had been dried by the intense heat of the desert floor into these twisted arabesques. They had struck me as too beautiful to resist collecting once while visiting my father. Aloe is of course used to comfort and heal sunburned skin.<sup>13</sup> Their orientation on the panel gives a more ominous impression. They reach like tentacles or solar flares toward the viewer. This work was a meditation on the unfortunate consequences (burns and cancer) of our sun worshiping behaviors. It almost seems a cruel joke that the source of all light that warms us and lifts our spirits could coincidentally be so hazardous.

Together, these works comprise my first forays into consciously creating multisensory affection through my art. I was after a real visceral response to the sensations presented in the works. Another reason for being particular about the waxes I use is that I want the delicious smell of the beeswax to draw the viewer into close proximity.<sup>14</sup> Then I want the soft, inviting surface of the wax to heighten a haptic response; the viewers' urge to touch is frustrated by a prickling sensation or the suggestion of a sharp prick.

My only opportunity to show work outdoors on campus was in "Unbound," a student run art exhibition I participated in during my first year at

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<sup>13</sup> When I was growing up, we would even keep cuttings in the refrigerator. The coolness would really enhance the calming effect on the burned skin.

<sup>14</sup> Many encaustic artists use microcrystalline wax (petroleum based) in order to cut costs, but I don't want my work to illicit a memory of pumping gas. I believe that the choice to use a material with a much smaller carbon footprint to be worth the extra cost.

Stony Brook. The work I initially proposed was entitled: *2020 Eidetic*, and continued my early tendency toward openly environmental activist art. The inspiration was an estimate I had come across, which stated that by the year 2020 the amount of useable water per person will drop by one third. Our global community will experience a serious water crisis.

Water, our most precious resource and life essence, had long been a persistent thread of my sculptural work. I found the opportunity for my work to move beyond the gallery walls, and being merely a commentary from within those confines, invigorating. My work could now possibly serve a biosocial function. By utilizing the outdoor setting and discarded materials found mostly on the Stony Brook campus, I staged an experiment in the form of a time-based installation. This work was directly influenced by my experience of walking across campus one day after a particularly windy rainstorm and finding the sidewalks littered with broken umbrellas. The wasteful, short lifespan of the cheaply made products we use and dispose of parallels our wasteful water consumption. Finding this to be an unseasonable end to such a useful object, I incorporated these umbrellas into a system of rain-catching baskets, reinforced with bamboo. They were intended to feed a potential garden in the form of handmade seeded paper planted in a spiraling configuration, composed of recyclable bond paper also found on campus. The intermediary steps I had designed to connect the umbrellas and planted paper, vehicles for water storage and transmission, were all made from waste tire rubber and sustainable materials – specifically bamboo and manila hemp.

My installation was meant to demonstrate possibility, growth, and change, through the invention of a simple solution to water use issues. I hoped to inspire the student population to start forward-thinking about their daily water usage and notions of trash vs. reusable materials. My hope was that the

garden would grow in during the latter part of the spring semester, greeting the passerby with a blend of vividly colored blossoms and sweetly scented herbs, a daily reminder that small changes made today will contribute to the building of a better future for both our local and global community.

Due to forces outside of my control, the modified inside-out umbrellas (which I now call *Rain Baskets*) composed the only part of the project that was fully installed. Although it would have been nice to see my garden grow, the simple beauty of *Rain Baskets* alone had lasting effect on viewers. This ended up being an important lesson for me: in art, purity and simplicity of form can be more powerful than overly complex installations that carry out a specific biosocial function.

The other outdoor installation I created during graduate study (albeit off-campus) was during my third year. *EKG Wave Rings* was accepted, under two categories: “Project Glow” and “Water Art,” into the 13th annual “D.U.M.B.O. Art Under the Bridge Festival™” produced by the Dumbo Arts Center (DAC) in Brooklyn. I floated a formation of glowing energetic rings, composed of cast beeswax and phosphorescent powder, out onto the East River from the shore along the Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park. Three sets of rings were securely mounted on inner tube platforms and lit by blacklight LED flashlights. The floating platforms were strung together like buoys and anchored to the shore by ropes.

At varying heights, the rings captured the crowning effect of a droplet of water hitting the surface of a body of water, frozen in time. The detail cast into the top of each ring was taken from an EKG image of an irregular heartbeat. The movements of the rings revealed the waveforms and current of the river as well as their interdependence on each other. My intent was to highlight an urban community’s interdependence as energetic beings that depend equally on

water, the source of all life. Each crowning set of rings represented the potential impact each of our lives has on our environment and others.

My intention behind work placed in public spaces tends to serve more of a public social function, asking viewers to think about their place in the broader context. The work I show in galleries tends toward providing an intimate, private experience for the individuals in the audience. The difference for me is that anyone can happen upon art in public spaces, which creates the opportunity to make a statement with the work that could potentially have broad reaching impact. The quiet contemplative space that is well established in gallery culture invites a more subtle reflective work. This, however, is by no means a black and white distinction. I prefer to push any limitations imposed by a site, to see what is possible.

The original ceramic versions of the EKG rings were part of an installation I created for my first solo exhibition, *Maya Kosha*.<sup>15</sup> I threw the forms on a potters' wheel and placed them in sand on a vibrating platform, eight feet by ten feet, and two feet off the ground. It consisted of a hollow sound box covered in bamboo veneer and Plyboo™ that housed two powerful subwoofers. Emanating from within the platform were repetitive, deep rumbling *aum* sounds. Those who entered the exhibition were invited to remove their shoes and walk on the platform.

When you walk across the platform the reverberation of the *aum* travels up the length of your whole body, and your chest vibrates as if you were chanting *aum*. Not many people get to experience the exhilarating vibration of the *aum*, so I wanted to share it.<sup>16</sup> Also, I wanted to experience and have others

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<sup>15</sup> Sanskrit: Sheaths of Illusion

<sup>16</sup> Not all students of yoga are comfortable with chanting Sanskrit, or anything that moves beyond the purely physical practice. I think it's out of a concern over not knowing exactly



experience what it feels like when the deep bass of a male voice is creating the reverberation.

Situated in the corners of the platform on beds of very pure silica quartz sand I had placed five sets of the energetic rings formed of white stoneware, glazed white. They had a very soft, inviting texture much like the sand. The outermost rings were low to the ground about two inches tall and some were broken into pieces. The innermost, narrowest rings were close to ten inches tall and contained blacklight LED flashlights. Because they were thrown on the wheel, they were very regular in their circularity, with the exception of the EKG wave carved into the top edge. Suspended from the ceiling above was a screen of bamboo frames shaped like over-sized, two-dimensional teardrops wrapped with strips of translucent white rice paper for light to shine through, plus gaps to look through. The whole installation was lit with blacklight, so the white paper glowed brightly enough to light the space while the EKG rings and the white sand glowed softly.

In this work I was exploring the yogic concept of *koshas*, which comprises the differentiated states of matter, mind and spirit. All of existence can be divided into three distinct bodies or dimensions: the physical, the subtle, and the causal. The physical dimension is composed of *Annamaya Kosha* (physical body) and *Pranamaya Kosha* (vital body). The subtle is made up of *Manomaya Kosha* (emotional body) and *Vijnanamaya Kosha* (intellectual body). The causal dimension consists of the innermost sheath, *Anandamaya kosha* (bliss body), which is still an illusory layer obscuring the universal Self, *Satchitananda* (truth-consciousness-bliss).

“The five bodies encase the true Self in a container called upadhi. *Upadhi* means vehicle. It’s good to have a body because it is a vehicle for

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what they’re chanting, and that this ties in to a particular religious practice that may contradict their own belief system.

consciousness. The problem is that we mistake our vehicle for who we really are” (Gannon, Life 31). It’s so easy to get stuck in our *upadhi* because the physical and subtle bodies are our primary access to the world of experience. The goal of yoga is not necessarily to deny their validity or what we can learn through them, but to bring all the layers into a balanced, homeostatic state. Certain yoga practices help to purify the five bodies and bring them into homeostasis. This frees us from the trappings of identification of the self with only our superficial qualities and allows pure spirit to shine through.

The sets of ceramic energetic rings had five layers, representing each of the *koshas*, and the bamboo and paper screen was meant to represent the *upadhi* (vehicle), so that entering the space represented a drawing inward. I will hold off on further description of the physical engagement with this work, including my live performance in the space, until I reach the section on my performance work.

Since my undergraduate study, clay has always been either an integral part of my work or my saving grace on the side. The metal work I was focused on, as an undergrad, for much of my “serious” sculpture was quite taxing on my body. I would afterwards go into the ceramics studio to relax. I could, for example, explore formal possibilities on the potter’s wheel without feeling pressure to make anything that would fit into the body of work I would be putting in my portfolio. Clay work has always allowed me to rediscover the pure joy of making. My early, clear distinction between serious sculpture and throwing on the wheel to unwind may also have developed out of the way my undergraduate institution, Clemson University, was structured. The Art Department there encouraged metal-shop sculptural work and wheel-thrown

functional ceramic work.<sup>17</sup> Looking back at my coursework, it would seem that while sculpture was my major concentration, ceramics was undeniably my minor. I was always drawn to the clay for its earthiness, but was taught by my undergraduate ceramics professor, Mike Vatalaro, to understand a clay body's living energy and chemical nature.

In retrospect, my attraction to clay is for both its plasticity: it just invites human touch, and for its fluid nature, which allows an unimpeded flow of grace or *prana*. Perhaps this flow of *prana* is what has invited the molding of hollow, void containing form throughout the long history of ceramic work. (Interestingly, hollow forms hold the most structural integrity through the firing process.)

Toward the end of undergraduate study, I began to question the necessity of firing the work, of converting clay into ceramic, and halting the living energy to create a permanent work. I completed my first experiment of leaving raw clay as the finished work while I was finishing the preparations for my BFA show. It was a playful gesture that I did not document well, having no idea of the implications it would have on future work.

I simply took scrap clay (earthenware and white stoneware) and pressed it into a two-part bird mold, to make about nine calico pigeon-sized birds. I then placed them in formation on a wooden platform. I set them up in the art and architecture building's central courtyard, facing the sliding glass door of my studio. I figured that I could watch the rain break down the figures, little by little, as they watched me complete the work for my show. I had no idea that

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<sup>17</sup> I did see graduate work being produced at Clemson that was highly sculptural. And I did produce some small sculptures for my ceramics classes and independent studies, as well as occasionally playfully pushing the boundaries of functional work until it only referenced the original function.

we would get hit with heavy rain the next night and I would miss even documenting the process.

For my first-year group show, “This is what we came with . . .” I gave the process of breaking down figural clay with water another attempt, but this time with a little more control. Entitled *disolutio(n-) humanitas*, the work included a solid humanoid figure modeled out of alternating layers of red and white stoneware with a pitcher-like lip in place of a head to symbolize the body as a vessel. I placed the small figure on a hollow plaster pedestal I had cast and drilled holes into the center of. I suspended a cloud of IV bags filled with water over the figure and hid a bucket inside the pedestal. I had finished the figure with a thin layer of white stoneware slip over the red clay, so in the initial stages of the process prior to dissolution, the figure appeared to be bleeding. The feel of this piece was much darker than my other work. I was dealing with some personal trauma at the time, including the death of my grandmother (who stopped breathing the day that the chest slid off the figure.)

The most recent raw clay installation I created was another playful work, like the birds, outside of my exhibition-destined artwork. *Inner Landscape* started as a chalk outline of my body, my periphery. I went over the outline with a porcelain clay body infused with nylon fibers. I pulled the clay up into thin ridges that, from the side, looked like mountain ranges.<sup>18</sup> I added extra rings of ridges at the site of the heart, the seat of the soul. I then poured porcelain slip into the interior space and let it dry and crack like the desert floor. The work is a nod toward Ana Mendieta’s *Siluetas* series. It reminds me of the barren Mojave Desert under moonlight, where I spent a lot of time with friends in my early twenties. For me, the place of the desert and the place of the soul share a calm, uncomplicated peace.

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<sup>18</sup> I reused half of my Plyboo™ platform to display the installation so that it could be viewed up close and from the side.

For my solo thesis show, I once again wanted to bring in living energy like I had done for the first-year group show. (We have certain liberties in the Lawrence Alloway Gallery that we wouldn't have in the University Art Gallery or other curator-run gallery spaces.) My goal for the sculptural component of my show, *Earth Bound*, was to create an inviting space out of ceramic forms lined on the interior with living moss. My original intention was to create two human-sized dens or irregular bowl-like forms that people could actually curl up into. I considered the gallery space only a temporary home for these dens. I envisioned them someday sitting in a field in a sculpture garden or park. I built them out of thick slabs over wire mesh and plaster drape molds, then cut them into irregular shapes to be fired separately, then fastened together in the space.

It was quite a complicated design. Given my time constraints and equipment limitations, only a few of the irregularly shaped pieces came out of the firing process successfully. I was still able to create a *Healing Space* by mounting these on bricks, covering the interiors with moss and placing them in a hexagon shaped ring formation. I poured pure silica quartz sand into the interior space, the outer limits of which were contained by a threshold of sea grass bundles. I lit the interior space so that it glowed, which contrasted with the dark purple and brown outer surfaces of the ceramic fragments, which I had treated with red iron oxide and manganese prior to firing. I did add a subtle glow to the exterior surfaces with the addition of mica.

I had intentionally left three-to-four inch triangular shaped holes in the den fragments. This was something that happened naturally, due to the way the clay moves when it is rolled into a slab. I had decided not to alter these, partially thinking that a fully enclosed space is not quite as inviting as one that lets a little light in, but I was also thinking back to Bacon's paintings through the lens of Deleuze. Often in Bacon's paintings, there is a void that the Figure

is drawn through, in a movement of contraction or dilation, into the Structure. I wanted to open up the possibility of exchange through the void here. In a sense, the final form of the installation in this exhibition was unimportant, as long as the void opened up a positive exchange for the viewer.

A more playful, but more time-invested work is *Breath Fed, Hearts Bled*. The inspiration for this work came the first time I saw the Bleeding Hearts flower. I saw it in the Eastman House garden in Rochester, NY, and was fascinated with the curious form and name of the flower. The opportunity came up for student work to be selected for display in the lobby of the new wing of Stony Brook Hospital, which was reportedly perfect for sculpture. I started to devise a sort of a healing tree. As a yoga instructor, I'm very much interested in the healing power of breath and wanted to create a fantastical tree with the possibility of a kind of interchange between plant and animal forms for the anatomical forms in the human body.

I already had the mold for a pig heart, the closest anatomically to the human heart. Just as the bleeding heart plant is named for a body part, we have in our lungs, what is sometimes referred to as a bronchial "tree" through which the air (and *prana*) flows. After studying diagrams of the bronchial tree, I realized how much the form resembled coral, thus another possibility for interchange arose. I decided to make three bleeding hearts suspended from/supported by a seven-foot bronchial tree, in reference to the way that breath supports health and healing of the heart as well as our other systems.

The semester that I was building the bleeding hearts in, I had an opportunity to visit the home and studio of Dennis Oppenheim, who has often met with difficulty in getting public art approvals due to the confrontational nature of his work. One thing he said that really struck me was: when you are proposing work to people who don't understand art but who you have to

convince in order to show your work in their spaces, you have to find a way to kind of tell them what they want to hear while handing them your uncompromising work. Basically, you want to have the work appear to be harmless and aesthetically pleasing, but still be the work that you want to make. It can still say what you want it to say, so if they had the tools to understand it, they might not want it in their space.

I really wanted the work to comment on the state of Western medicine. It's become so unaffordable and so technologically advanced that the caring human element is often missing. It seems to me that people aren't being taken care of on all levels, but are being worked on more like machines.<sup>19</sup>

The form of the bleeding heart flower reminded me of open-heart surgery, the heart being split open and something being extracted from within. I made the bleeding hearts out of white stoneware, using the cast pig heart for the external form and adding some hand-built additional elements to it to make it more flower-like. I actually used two cast hearts for each one, so that the four halves being split apart allow you see both sides of the heart from each viewing angle.

For the internal form, I wanted to represent the intervention of medicine so I drew from the medical symbol *Caduceus*, a staff wrapped by two snakes and topped by a pair of wings. However, for me the symbol was just the jumping off point. I ended up developing a thrown form that had somewhat of a bird body and head of a snake. I had been looking at the differences between head shapes of venomous and non-venomous snakes.

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<sup>19</sup> Integrative medicine is taking hold in some places, incorporating yoga, nutrition, acupuncture and other therapeutic approaches, but this is still more of a luxury than the norm.

The thrown form became the center of the “flower,” the venomous snake representing the disease to be extracted. Wrapped tightly around this central form are two coiled forms meant to look like non-venomous snakes that are squeezing the venom out of the heart. I cast a couple of wings and placed them on either side of the head of the venomous snake. For me, incorporating the wings was important beyond the fact that they’re part of the *Caduceus*, because wings also symbolize freedom and release.

The form of the tree was an interpretation of one side of a bronchial tree along with references to coral and the flow of energy in the body. I chose to give the form a subtle spiral so that it would have more movement and hopefully balance evenly around its center of gravity. I gave the trunk a segmented pattern, defining an upward fluid movement through both a carved pattern separating the segments and a wavy texture on the segments of lower relief. I then broke up the pattern as it approached the branches until the patches of higher relief became like bubbles or blood cells.

I had intended for each of the three branches of the tree to surround each heart, appearing somewhat like a hand gently gesturing for the heart to open. However, during the building process I had to stack up piles of clay boxes and scrap wood to support the weight of the branches, so I was unable to get a clear visual on the overall effect until after the piece was safely fired. When I discovered that this effect wouldn’t quite be realized, I added some delicate, white stoneware eight-finger forms, inspired by the “buddha hand” citrus fruit, to each of the nine branch ends.

I finished the tree in vivid encaustic, using colors that referenced the plant and sea life that had initially inspired me. I also used color to up the playful quality of the work, which could otherwise come across as too creepy, more of a Frankenstein monster than a healing tree. My best reason for using



encaustic though, is that the smell of the beeswax both draws the viewer nearer and elicits a spontaneous deep inhale.

As the tree was the largest ceramic piece I had ever built, I had to take special precautions with it, using a heavily grogged<sup>20</sup> sculpture clay and building it in sections that fit snugly together. It took me another entire semester to build the tree. Meanwhile, we learned that the architect of the new wing had objected to student sculpture being shown in his lobby. With the work currently homeless, I am keeping an eye open for opportunities to finally see it in a hospital setting.

The work is meant to comfort those who are about to have open-heart surgery or who have had open-heart surgery. It is also to remind every patient or loved one to just breathe. The surgeons can only do so much. Their part of the healing process is the small, violent part of it, but there is a much bigger non-violent part that has to take over, breath support. The heart is after all a muscle, and the body can only get nourishment and healing to damaged tissue if it is relaxed. This essential relaxation can come only from the depth of the breath of the person needing to heal. That's the power of the breath.

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<sup>20</sup> Clay bodies usually contain grog (a crushed pottery or brick of various grain size) that adds strength to the clay to allow both for large clay structures to be built and for the clay to withstand the thermal shock of certain specialty firing processes.

## IV. The Performance Work

Lacking any early exposure to performance work, I came into graduate school hungry for more information and exposure, but I also just started developing performance pieces alongside my sculpture work, drawing from what I already knew: yoga and dance.

When a call for submissions was announced for a performance art event at the Charles B. Wang Center on campus entitled “Who is Asia America?” I proposed my first performance piece, *Suspended Sea*. The work was self-created ritual that synthesizes varying mediums and techniques for meditation. The work incorporated aspects of Navajo sand painting, Zen Buddhism, *karensansui*<sup>21</sup> gardens, *hatha* yoga, metaphysics, and creative movement. My primary concern at the time had been water use issues. The sculptures and installations I created around the time vacillated between representing and incorporating water. This performance allowed me to bring the concept of water home by acknowledging my identification with the water as an essential part of myself.

*Suspended Sea* developed primarily out of my devoted study of yoga. A tool I had recently added to my yoga practice, the Omgym™ sling, an American yoga invention, makes the benefits of the rope wall practice of the Iyengar yoga tradition portable<sup>22</sup>. Using the sling as a meditation tool, I suspend myself in an inverted position, revitalizing my entire body, and improving

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<sup>21</sup> Japanese “dry-rock-garden” Traditionally, stones are placed in a very calculated arrangement to represent the islands of Japan. The stones are surrounded by gravel or sand, representing the wave pattern on the surface of the ocean.

<sup>22</sup> The one of the great aspects of B.K.S. Iyengar’s technique (this is the tradition of yoga my teacher training was based in) is the use of props. Various props allow the body to be eased into a greater range of postures with less effort. He made yoga accessible for those in need of therapeutic benefits.

mental concentration, *dharana*, readying my body and mind to move into meditation, *dhyana*.<sup>23</sup> As a former dancer turned *yogini*, I have always found moving meditation the most accessible avenue toward inner peace. By flowing creatively between postures, *asanas*, on my mat or in the sling, my body rediscovers its fluid nature.

In the *karensansui* garden, the gravel or sand is raked in such a way as to represent flowing water. This practice is associated with Zen Buddhism, and invites a moving meditation. For the original performance piece, I built a small sandbox garden and filled it with the pure silica quartz sand. I hung inverted over this box and used fluid movement to rake it with handcrafted bamboo finger extensions. The bamboo represents sustainability, a conscious connection to the effect our touch has on the world, and links back to my sculpture practice. This was actually the first work that I would use silica quartz sand for, but afterwards I reused it in the installations mentioned above.

I chose to use the purest quartz sand I could afford, simply for its healing and energetic properties recognized in both Eastern and Western traditions. Also, for me the dryness of the sand mirrors the illusion that our bodies are solid and impermeable. The silica in the quartz crystal is also found in our bodies, in our bones and joints. The movement in *batha* yoga practice (as well as dance and other low impact fitness activities) is intended to keep these joints fluid, and working properly. When we are born, we are 90% water but as we age we tend to dry up to 60-70%. Hydration and movement are key to preserving our fluid nature, and health.

The practice of sand painting for healing purposes is found in the Native traditions of the American Southwest, which I was exposed to growing up in Arizona. In the most well known of these practices, the Navajo medicine man

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<sup>23</sup> *Samadhi* is the final stage of meditation, an enlightened state that stays with the practitioner once they have moved out of the meditation practice.

draws sacred images by letting colored sands flow through his fingers. The order and symmetry of the finished drawing reflect the harmony that the specific patient wishes to reestablish in their own life. In the final stage of the ceremony, the patient will sit on the sand painting as it acts as a portal for the exchange of energies. Afterwards, the sand painting is considered toxic since it has absorbed the patient's illness and must be destroyed. Asian versions of sand painting: Tibetan *mandalas* and Indian Rangoli, Kolam, and Rangavalli traditions are also essentially ephemeral, symbolizing the fleeting nature of life.

My performance and mark-making were also meant to be fleeting: the sand smoothed prior to the start of the performance and erased soon after. However, due to difficulties over receiving final approval from the administration, the acceptance of my work into the show was even more fleeting. I was asked to dramatically alter the work a week before the event or I would not be allowed to participate. Instead of using the structure of the building to hang and perform the action live, I had to relocate to a tree in a park off campus to shoot the performance to present as only a video.

Using a (hikeable) smaller amount of sand I threw together a makeshift square sandbox, ringed with twigs. I had a classmate run the video camera while I attached my bamboo finger extensions and lowered myself into the inversion. After adjusting to the position and starting with breath, then small movements of expansion and contraction extend out of the breath hovering above the sand. As my body movements increased in breadth, I began to extend the movement through my fingers and into the sand. Twisting, contracting, and extending, I made marks reflecting the quality of my movement on the surface of the sand. When the drawing was finished, I lowered myself into it, in a posture of surrender to the earth.

My intention with this self-created ritual was to create a meditative space through my personal and unique interpretation of earth-body art. By sharing a live performance based on my personal experience of meditation, I hoped to inspire viewers to discover their own paths to meditation. In my experience as a yoga instructor, I have encountered many students who mistakenly believe that they cannot meditate. I want to communicate that meditation can take on many forms, the physical expression and the level attained are not as important as practice or the intention behind it.

I next created a performance piece that was actually intended to be seen as a video, for the purpose of creating an illusion or abstraction of the body. *Synaptic Weaving* also dealt with meditation, but focused more on the difficulties of stilling the mind. I again used my Omgym™ sling, but this time only for levitation purposes. I suspended myself over a *zafu* style meditation cushion I had woven out of thorny briars, which I filled with down. I was suspended so that the sling was out of the frame, as was everything above my waist. The resulting image was of disembodied legs weaving through a strange dance of discomfort or impatience. My legs could have been read quite literally, as the difficulty of withdrawing from the senses (*pratyahara*) to be able to sit still long enough to do a seated meditation. They also became symbolic of the constant turning of the mind, which the goal of all meditation practices is to stop.

The void was strongly manifested in this work, both in the strange disembodiment of my figure (my black leotard disappeared readily into the background) and in the open space within the brier cushion. When I incorporate woven objects into my work, I choose rather inflexible organic materials that only allow an open weave. This is both for the messy, nest aesthetic and for the openness that reveals structure and invites exchange. The

gap here between my being, the briers, and the down which had settled to the bottom represents the unattainable.

As I mentioned earlier, I did give a live performance for my first solo exhibition, *Maya Kosha*. This was my first attempt at a large-scale installation that incorporated live performance. The environment I created invited performance: the blacklights and the reverberating *aum* gave an otherworldly feel, while the platform easily became a stage. Before the performance, I had adhered strips of paper to my legs and arms, which were exposed, the rest of my body covered in bright white stretch fabric.<sup>24</sup>

The work was only loosely choreographed due to time constraints, but the intention of my movement in the beginning was bound, as if I was stuck in a net. After I peeled away some of the layers, my movement became more free and unimpeded. Although I value improvised work as well as choreographed, for this piece I wish that I had had the time to practice in the space. The work would have fit the installation more if the movement had come more from a studied response to the experience of the vibration than just out of my movement vocabulary.

What I meant to convey is that we get stuck in the superficial, whether it be in terms of physical appearance or attachment to physical pain. This becomes what we identify with or identify ourselves by. Even the intellect, part of the subtle body is only one of the other outer layers that we can also get stuck in, identifying with and prizing our rational selves so highly. We seem to sometimes forget that there's more to our humanity than just that. Of course there are many more layers to who we are and the work is about stripping away the outermost layers, If you strip away all the outer layers, you will reveal the

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<sup>24</sup> I had originally adhered this paper to by first bamboo installation. When I peeled it off to reuse the bamboo for another piece, I noticed the paper had this beautiful waxy texture and looked almost like aspen bark, so I had to reuse it too.

soul, the pure spirit, the body of bliss. In yoga philosophy the heart is supposed to be the seat of the soul. The reverberation of the *aum* is also like the heartbeat. Both you can hear, but also feel in your chest – and that’s pure energy.<sup>25</sup>

I included a “document” of a private performance work in my final solo exhibition, *Earth Bound*. Inspired by my interest in Tantra (like Duchamp) and my joy of falling in love over the summer, I wanted to create an interpretation of Yves Klein’s *Anthropometries*. This work had always bothered me. Klein had distanced himself from the canvas by using buxom models as living

paintbrushes, just directing them while he was dressed as a dandy. As a feminist, I wanted flip the equation: to take on the subject/object dichotomy of using my own body as well as to direct a man, and get more than just my hands dirty.

I met Adam Levin by completely random chance at a concert near the



beginning of the summer. We walked 7. *Suaire de Mondo Cane*, 1961 and talked through Prospect Park under a gentle rain all night. Then he immediately left to study architecture in Beijing all summer. I travelled, too, backpacking through Spain, Italy, and southern France (where I experienced an Yves Klein overload at MoCA Nice). We relied on correspondence throughout the summer, describing our adventures and inspiring each other’s work. He

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<sup>25</sup> In the *aum* you actually move your voice all the way up its path. Just as in singing when you learn to place your voice, you move through all those positions when you chant the *aum*. A – u – m : chest – throat – mouth and followed by the lingering vibration felt in the nasal passages.

told me that he was working on traditional ink wash techniques, which I've always wanted to try, so I insisted that he teach me when he returned to the States.

*Divine Love Document* was perhaps the most personal work I had ever shared, so I was only comfortable showing the canvas that resulted from the work, no video or photographs. We used the Lawrence Alloway Gallery space, where I laid out enough canvas to cover the walls. We steamed the canvas and applied layers of ink wash to create a ground with a gradual tonal shift and a splotchy pattern on top.<sup>26</sup> As the ink was drying, we mixed up slip using scrap clay from my den building work, with a little glue added in. We then painted each other with the slip and pressed our bodies against the canvas.

The aim was tell the story of our meeting and increasing synchronicity despite the distance, through abstraction of specific gesture. The document could be read from both sides, starting from the left or the right, and meeting in the middle. The male figure came first in the pairings to the right, and the female figure came first in the pairings to the left to represent our two perspectives, but the two sides mirrored each other. The first impressions represent each of us being dragged back into single life (painful breakups), then the two of us turned away from one another at the concert, not open to possibility of each other, then a turning toward one another, rising up and walking side by side. On the back wall the mirroring is interrupted. On the left, he takes my hand and pulls me under a tree for shelter (I am both the tree [*vrksasana*] and myself here.) On the right, I take him by the hand to take him home with me. Two big splats represent the merging of our two energies, male and female becoming one, and in the center is an empty space, a void (and just a tiny splatter of clay slip), *mahasukha*.

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<sup>26</sup> Applying ink wash to canvas does not allow for much control, but the ink does spread out beautifully as it is absorbed into the canvas, resulting in mold-like forms.



## V. The Culmination of Sculpture & Performance

*CHAOS composed* developed as a collaborative work, composed in both space and time of sculptural suspended elements and dancers' bodies performing contemporary choreography. The work centers on the tranquil, harmonic, and vibratory conception of chaos (mentioned earlier), inspired by ideas of chaos and forces expounded by Gilles Deleuze and interpreted by Elizabeth Grosz.

The work explored the adjacency of discrete organic and inorganic systems, but not for the purpose of creating a random mess. I intended nothing of the kitsch, but rather an overall unity, established through unexpected harmonies of color and form, and an essential rhythm. The sculptural installation consisted of a lightweight skeletal system of rings of bamboo, spiraling up to the ceiling, its funnel shape resembling a tornado, enclosing an empty void, the quiet eye of the storm.

Collected onto and woven into the surfaces of the bamboo structure are a multitude of materials, many representing their own systems: paper; particular types of shells: white and indigo, worn and hole-ridden, found on the shore of the sound (representing many systems of time: calcification, disintegration, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization);<sup>27</sup> porcelain aura/waveforms;<sup>28</sup> and

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<sup>27</sup> Taken from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), deterritorialization denotes the removal of an established order from a particular place, and is usually followed by a reterritorialization, the replacement by a new order. It struck me that the original inhabitants of the shells I collected had been long gone, and that the tiny holes in the shells were made by burrowing insects living on the beach.

<sup>28</sup> This porcelain was actually fragments of my periphery from *Inner Landscape*, the earlier raw clay work (which someone had suggested had the appearance of an interpretation of an aura), that I decided to fire and reuse (clay infused with nylon fiber cannot be rewetted to be reused.)

of course, found plastics. I should explain, before you assume the kitsch (due to the criminality of incorporating plastics in art), that as an environmental artist and a *yogini* concerned very much with being present even in my artwork, I have to make work that deals very honestly with the experience of living on Long Island. In my youth I was more cynical in my environmental stance, but I now know that change requires hope rather than cynicism. Now my stance is to accept the present, the given, and to see what beauty is still possible, what change can be created, starting from where we are now (even if it is a huge mess.)

My interactions with Amy Sullivan, director of the dance program at Stony Brook, both her positive encouragement of my own movement studies and her enthusiastic embrace of interdisciplinary work between the arts, enabled me to conceive of and accomplish a major collaborative production. For the movement component of *CHAOS composed*, I developed a contemporary dance piece with a collaborator, Jaclyn Lee Ward. A good friend who I had danced and choreographed with in high school and early college years, Lyna continued her pursuit of dance and is today an incredible contemporary choreographer and teacher. I was thrilled that she agreed to work with me because I knew she would understand and honor my vision, even from a distance,<sup>29</sup> and her wealth of choreography experience would lend integrity to the work.

The organic movement we came up with drew from yoga, contemporary technique, as well as an interpretation of water and the movement of aquatic life forms: from seaweed to fish to birds of prey. Employing ten dancers, including Lyna and myself, the desired effect was to create an impression of a plethora of forces, wills and orders. Each individual sometimes surrenders to

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<sup>29</sup> Lyna is currently based in Arizona, so we had to work over Skype for the majority of the collaboration.

chaos, being impacted by outside forces, but also sometimes harnesses those forces, becoming empowered. The individual may even become part of a collective: which entails some surrender and some impulsion.

This work was not as an addition imposed on the installation, but an essential element intended to further unify the work. This was accomplished through the incorporation of an organic rhythm, an ebb and flow, alive and coursing through the bodies of dancers. The sculpture of course holds its own rhythm through linear repetition. But what happened when the viewer stood still? I wanted the rhythm to continue for them and perhaps, even be something that they feel within their own bodies, compelling them to move.

All of these elements I hoped to unite together not only to subtly show their difference, but even more, to evoke an awareness of the fundamental unity of all things. By bringing the audience into a moment of present-mindedness, inclusive of an awareness of how they relate bodily to the work, I hoped to awaken a primal connection to this fundamental unity.

## VI: Summary

I see the fusion of dance and sculpture in my work as the most pragmatic solution to communicating how enmeshed we are in the world, constantly involved in energy exchange with each other and our environment. Collaborating with choreographers and dancers creates a multiplicity of exchanged energy far exceeding what I, as a solo artist, can infuse the sculptural portion of the work as I engage with my materials. The ideas behind my work are abstract and complex, so introducing the literal body, the common denominator and primary means to perception and understanding, helps to communicate what might otherwise be incomprehensible.

The moving meditation of dance, yoga, and relating bodily to sculpture all involve a present-mindedness that allows what is eternal (creative intuition and grace), to pass through the work as ephemeral beauty. My goal is to create the unanticipated and extraordinary in conventional spaces to generate sensation and perhaps even a spontaneous meditative encounter in the audience. Bringing dance into the gallery space, with dancers' use of the space breaking down the barriers that usually separate them from the audience, is a practice I'd like to continue to pursue as well as utilizing other public spaces. The trick is to keep the intention of the work coherent and positive in its execution so that it inspires rather than confronts.

Through my graduate study, I have come to a lucid understanding of my own resolute stance as an artist: to be a positive force for change, but in a calm yogic way rather than a confrontational way. I go boldly forward, and will continue to push the edges of sculpture, installation, and performance as my mode of positive contribution to the building of a better world. I am unsure of

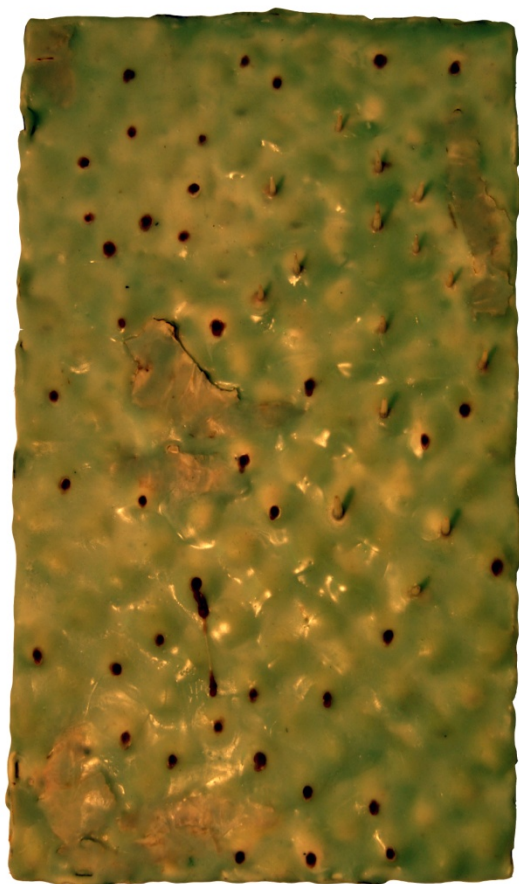
the particularities of the path ahead, but sure of myself and steadfast in my personal philosophy that I've developed and that will continue to guide my work. I do not feel that my philosophy has yet been fully realized in my art practice, but this is not discouraging. After all, Kandinsky worked out the philosophy behind his work years before his painting reached a level that matched his lofty aims. I see a multitude of challenges ahead, and questions to be asked rather than answered.

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8. *Sympathetic* (detail), 2008



9. *Sympathetic*, 2008





10. *Sun Worship*, 2008



11. *Sun Worship* (detail), 2008



**12. *Rain Baskets*,  
2008**

**13. *Rain Baskets*  
(detail), 2008**

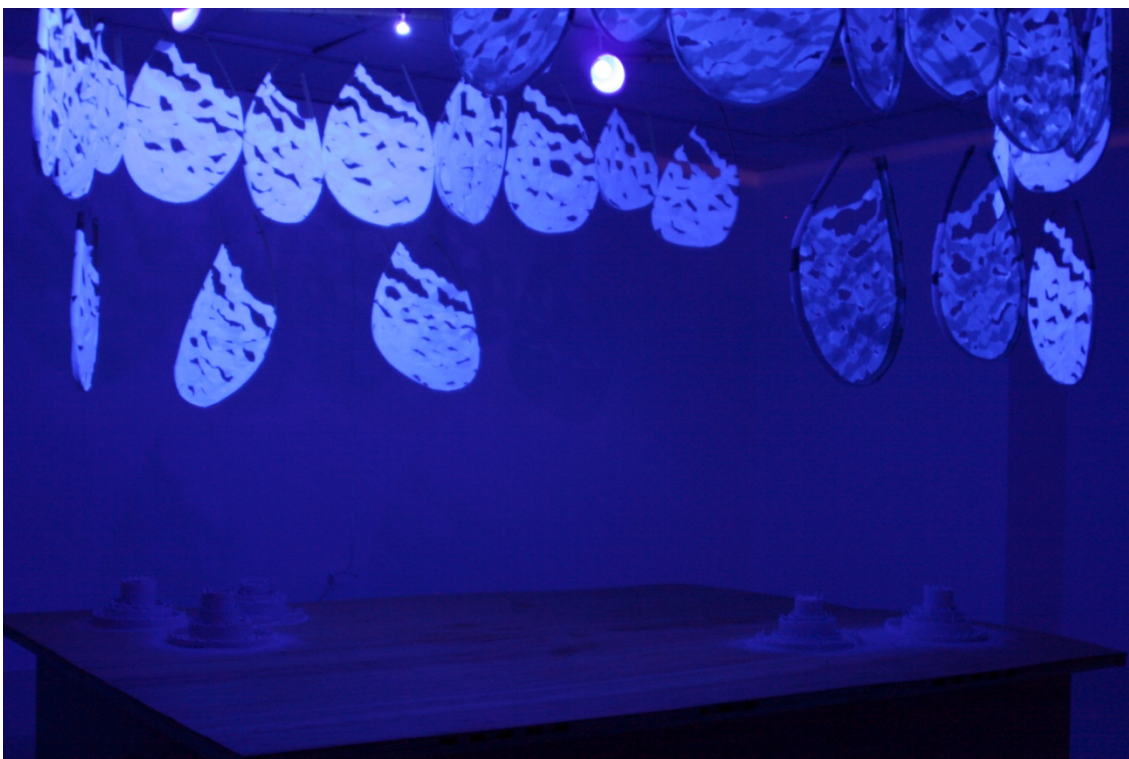


14. *EKG Wave Rings*, 2009



15. *Maya Kosha* (detail),  
2009

16. *Maya Kosha*, 2009





17. *dissolutio(n-) humanitas*,  
2008

18. *dissolutio(n-) humanitas*  
(detail), 2008





19. *Inner Landscape*  
(detail), 2009

20. *Inner Landscape*  
(detail), 2009





21. *Healing Space*,  
2009



22. *Healing Space*  
(interior), 2009



23. *Breath Fed, Hearts Bled*, 2008-2010





24. *Breath Fed, Hearts Bled* (detail), 2008-2010



25. *Suspended Sea*, 2008



26. *Suspended Sea*, 2008



27. *Synaptic Weaving*, 2008-2009



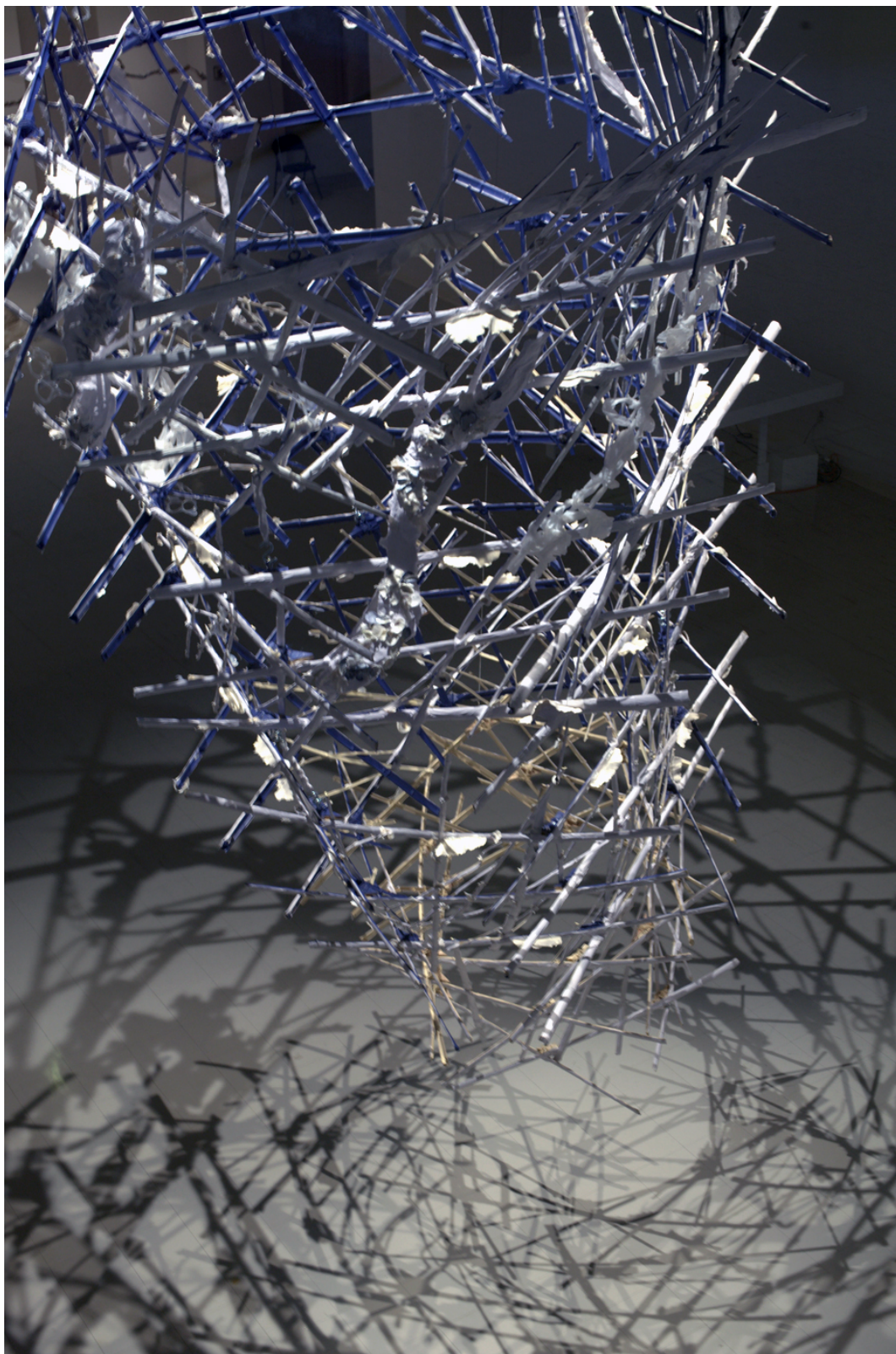
28. *Synaptic Weaving*,  
2008-2009



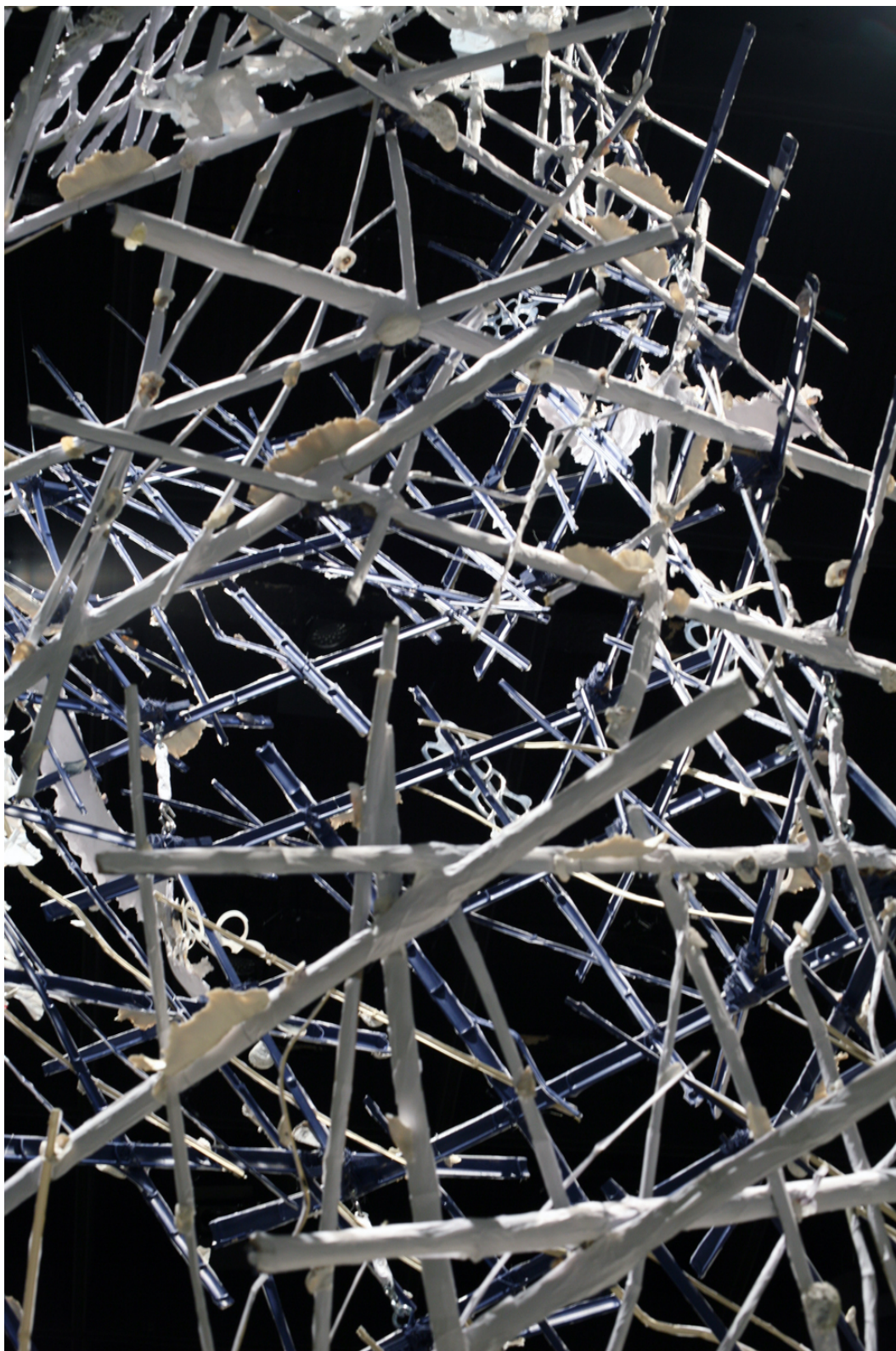
29. *Divine Love Document, 2009*



30. *Divine Love Document, 2009*



31. *CHAOS composed*, 2010



32. *CHAOS composed* (detail), 2009



33. *CHAOS composed, 2010*



34. *CHAOS composed, 2010*



35. *CHAOS composed, 2010*



36. *CHAOS composed, 2010*