Perfect Imperfection

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Perfect Imperfection

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Abstract

In this thesis, I will describe my journey of coming into a Master of Fine Arts Furniture Design program from an Interior Design and Architecture background and how I found my identity as an artist. I will present the installation *Perfect Imperfections*: a space that I created with the intention of allowing people to interact with alluring, sensuous, familiar objects; to have fun, and to experience joy with playful, childlike, imagination. I suggest that creating spaces and objects that elicit positive emotional responses are beneficial to health and well-being. I propose that this installation situates itself somewhere between the domains of Art and Design in a realm that could be called DesignArt[1]. I believe that I have found a place where I can make a difference, that, like Carl Auböck, good design can heal the world, (Kois 10) and that designers have a responsibility to do good (design).

Introduction

During my Master of Fine Arts curriculum, I explored and deepened my aesthetic by cultivating an intuitive way of working. I created an installation space that can elicit a positive emotional response from the viewer. I am interested in contributing to making the world a better place through my creativity and by sharing my energies and revelations with the people around me. I do believe the world can become a better place; that my beautiful creations participate in doing so. The main question that I had

[1] DesignArt is a term that I came across in a book by the same name. “Design art could be defined loosely as any artwork that attempts to play with the place, the function, and style of art by commingling it with architecture, furniture, and graphic design” (Coles 14). Being a designer in a school of art, I struggled with the idea of being an artist. Now, with the experience of designing and making an art installation that did not have to be grounded in the realistic concerns of Interior Design, I had the freedom to play around with the boundaries between Art and Design.

for myself during the process was whether and how people feel the energy I put into my creations. Can the good energy I put into making my creations help me to improve my own well-being and that of people who experience them?

Coming from an Interior Design background, I was always satisfying the desires of clients and bosses. Here, I gave myself the freedom to create objects that are not necessarily functional and do not need to satisfy the desires of anybody but myself. In more concrete terms, during these past two years, I learned many techniques that allowed me to create the objects that are pleasing to me and observed how other people interact with them.

I have learned that there is a place for me in the world and that creativity is of the utmost importance. Absolute perfection is not necessary and can be more of a hindrance than anything else. Now that I am more confident with my creativity and who I am as an artist, I can give back and make a difference in people's lives either by inspiring them, by teaching, or simply by creating beautiful objects and spaces.

Goal

My initial goal in obtaining a Master of Fine Arts degree was to get the terminal degree that would allow me to teach at the university level. My underlying goal in attending an art school was to deepen my creative vision and to get back in touch with the joy I had as a child for making things, an enthusiasm that I lost somewhere along my professional path. Did I dare hope to eliminate my creative blockages and self-limitations and live a happier, healthier life? I was going to give it a try.

I am conscious that throughout my adult life, I cultivated a rational way of working to a point where I lost touch with my intuition. In that respect, I felt out of balance, like I was limping along through life with a very strong leg and a very weak one. Throughout my MFA studies I wanted to get back in touch with my intuition, to foster it, and to trust it.

Background

I grew up with a father in the Air Force. This seems important to me because, until I went to college, we moved on the average every three years. I developed a keen interest in the spaces in which I lived. I remember as a child drawing floor plans of ideal houses and spending more time moving furniture around in my dollhouse than actually playing with the dolls.

At age 13, we moved to north Texas. This was not a happy move for me. When I found out about a foreign exchange program, I got very excited about my chance to escape Texas. My first summer in south France at age 15 was extraordinary. When my "French family" invited me back, I took them up on the offer. After graduating from high school in Texas, I went back to France for a whole year before going to college. This was, of course, a life changing, eye-opening year for me. I was stimulated by the smells, textures, sounds, materials, food, and architecture of the tiny village where I lived.

Once back in the United States, I began my undergraduate studies at Rice University. After a detour in the Engineering program (I was very good at Physics and Math), I applied to the School of Architecture. I felt much more at home in this new

curriculum but knew fairly early on that I had no ambition to be an Architect. I did complete the Bachelor of Arts in Architecture degree, as I knew it would lead me to many possibilities.

During this course of studies, I was exposed to many architects. Although I had an appreciation for all of them, in retrospect I think I was more partial to Frank Lloyd Wright than to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe or Le Corbusier. I liked his way of doing an all-encompassing design, the way he designed not only the building but the furniture, lamps, fabrics, accessories etc. I became interested in the possibility of designing these elements that were on a much more human, tactile scale than designing huge buildings. I was very much interested in paying attention to details.

Studying during the 1980's, Michael Graves and postmodernism influenced all of us whether we liked it or not. I appreciated his use of color, which was rich and finessed. Frank Gehry was beginning to make a name for himself. I remember an exhibition at Houston's Contemporary Art Museum and the impression that Gehry's fondness for fish made out of colorcore Formica left on me. I was also terribly fond of Otto Wagner's projects in Austria and their all-encompassing designs. I was drawn to the beauty created by lamps and furniture that worked harmoniously with the building.

While I was in school, one of the University's galleries had an exhibit of Memphis Group's design. At the time I was very excited about the colorful, playful humor in the groups' designs. I had a chance to meet and talk with the revered Ettore Sottsass, one of the best product designers to ever come out of Italy. Perhaps it is he who gave me the desire to go and live in Europe for an extended period.

After graduating, I worked for three years at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, in a Mies van der Rohe building (how extraordinary for an architecture graduate!) gaining expertise in designing exhibitions and a deeper appreciation for art. Then I set out for Europe. My goal was to live there for three years to have a more in-depth experience living abroad and to do some designing in a place where design was much stronger than in the United States. Our country was still quite “hermetique” (or air-tight) in the mid-eighties. I craved contact with other cultures. The more I travelled, the more I learned about other peoples and the more open minded I became. I believe this made me a better designer.

After a couple of months in Paris, I started working for a couple of young, ambitious architects at Studio Naco who saw no reason why a person couldn’t design anything from a teapot, to a piece of furniture, to a graphic design, to a building, or an urban design. I was so excited to be working with people who thought this way! They resisted being pigeonholed into one category or another. This was not easy as France is quite weighed down and bound by its tradition.

I just happened to arrive in Paris when French design was making a name for itself with the likes of Philippe Starck, Sylvain Dubuisson, and Andree Putman. I went to the world-famous furniture fair in Milan as often as I could to see the works of designers such as Achille Castiglioni, Borek Sipek, Ron Arad, Jasper Morrison, and even Salvidor Dali, to name just a few. It was a very exciting time to be in Europe for a young designer. I was able to visit most of Alvar Aalto’s projects in Finland, see Arne Jacobsen’s work in Denmark, visit Charles Rennie Macintosh and Margaret

MacDonald's projects in Scotland, experience the fanciful creations of Antonio Gaudi in Barcelona. I curated and designed an exhibition that was a homage to Shiro Kuramata, a Japanese designer who became famous not only for his interiors for Issey Miyake, but for his witty yet elegant furniture designs.

During my years in Europe, I came to know and appreciate a wide range of work from the designs of Hector Guimard (designer of Parisian Art Nouveau Metro Stations), Carlo Molino (an Italian Renaissance Man of the 50's known for his photography, architecture, furniture and interior design, ski racing, and racecar driving), Droog (the group of Danish designers that brought a freshness and a cleverness to the world of design in the 90's), Marc Newson (from whom I inherited a fondness for biomorphic shapes) as well as many others. I was also influenced by historical places such as the Al Hambra in Grenada, the palace of Versailles, and the entire city of Venice, for example.

In the late nineties, I started travelling to Morocco, which opened my eyes to Arab and Berber culture. I was fascinated by their use of pattern and geometry. Once again, smells, tastes, textures, and spaces affected who I was as a designer. I followed my desire to see the Sahara Desert and ended up befriending my guide. He asked me to photograph his wedding in the Atlas mountains in a village where most people don't have cars, where houses are built of rammed earth (called pisé), many don't have running water or electricity, and families eat together out of large communal dishes.

I ended up living in France for over 21 years practicing Interior Design, working on interior projects as well as furniture, graphic, and product design. My aging parents

were one of the primary motivations to come back to the United States. During the first three years back in this country, I taught Interior Design at Indiana State University and worked on an in depth renovation of a 1919 bungalow in Terre Haute, Indiana. Working on this structure that was typically American in its balloon-framed wood construction was a way for me to adjust to the culture shock of coming back to my country of origin after a long stay abroad. An interpretation of this wooden structure would make an appearance in my MFA installation.

Desire

I had always wanted to make aesthetically appealing objects and spaces. When meeting with professors about the work I was producing, they would ask me why I was making what I was making. The answer that always came to mind was "because it is beautiful." This answer did not seem as though it was enough, so I started asking myself why making aesthetically pleasing objects was so important to me. I knew that making them was extremely satisfying. At this point in my life, living harmoniously and feeling good about what I am doing was my primary objective. Feeling good was the best way for me to heal myself both physically and emotionally. Also, my making beautiful, harmonious objects and spaces that made other people feel good could contribute to their well-being. In his book *Emotional Design*, Donald Norman discusses the positive experience we have when we encounter aesthetically pleasing objects, ones with which we get emotionally involved. He goes on to discuss how the emotion a designer is having impacts his work. "…we now have evidence that aesthetically pleasing objects enable you to work better" (Norman 10). " The psychologist Alice Isen

and her colleagues have shown that being happy broadens the thought processes and facilitates creative thinking" (Norman 19). People who practice Macrobiotics believe that the energy a cook puts into preparing food, whether it be good or bad energy, is absorbed by the consumer who eats it. I believe the same thing is true of the energy we put into everything we make.

MFA Experience and Process

Throughout my professional career, I have been drawn to and influenced by architects and designers. Although I have been somewhat aware of what was happening in the art world, entering an art school allowed me to become more familiar with artists that I already knew and to discover other artists who have inspired me in my work during this MFA process. I had already discovered Anish Kapoor because of the architectural aspect of his work. His installations such as *Marsyas* at the Tate Museum in London in 2002 use space on an architectural scale. I love the geometry that he uses in many of his works as well as the clean geometry of many of his forms. I have become familiar with and fond of Tara Donovan's installations. I found her creation of space and texture with the repetitious use of the simplest everyday objects, wonderful. I was introduced to Peter Shelton's *thinmanlittlebird* at the Indianapolis Central Library after I had produced several torus (donut) forms. I was attracted to his monumental torus forms in particular as well as his installation that looks like a forest of primitive tools or weapons entitled *SWEATHOUSEandlittleprinciples*. Donald Lipski's installation *Seven Spades* at the Indianapolis Museum of Art always attracted me. I was

fascinated at how he created new fanciful, objects by reconfiguring or grouping common objects.

Being in the Furniture design program at Herron School of Art and Design, I was, of course, exposed to studio furniture makers. After having created several smooth curved metallic forms, I came across a particular work of Gord Peteran called *Three Bronze Forms* (Adamson 138-141). The three smooth, geometric forms that he created on top of a billiard-like table surface have no other purpose than for play (or perhaps contemplation). His work inspired me to continue my pursuit of creating a game-like installation with my geometric, abstract forms.

I have always been fond of tools: objects that are functional and beautiful thanks to the patina that they obtain by being used. They seem to come alive the more they are used. In the film *Still Mine*, the aged main character speaks about a dining table that he made for his family: “The first few years, every nick that table absorbed, I took it personally. It’s all I could see. The dent from a fork, the scratch from a skate blade, the ghost of someone’s handwriting…but as the years went by and the scars added up, the imperfections turned that table into something else” (McGowan). I am oftentimes more attracted to a soulful, functional tool than to a work of art.

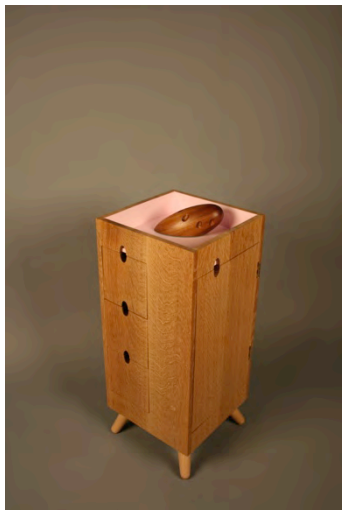
Projects

For my first project during my MFA experience, I undertook to make a relatively small piece of furniture: a jewelry box. I thought it would be an easy project with which

to start considering that the main body was only 16 x 16 x 4 inches. This was not an easy project. Before entering the Furniture Design program at Herron, I thought I knew something about the fabrication of furniture. I literally had a lot to learn.

I am proud that, in the space of about three months, I learned the following techniques: choosing wood, jointing, planing, ripping and cross cutting on the table saw, using the radial saw, the chop saw, and the band saw, dado-ing, fabricating tongue and groove joints, mitering, biscuiting, splining, and turning wood on the lathe. I learned glue-up techniques. I learned how to sand with the dimensional sander, the disc sander, the edge sander, the orbital sander, and the oscillating spindle sander. I learned how to oil my piece when it was finished. All of that with one small project! But most importantly, I learned how to swallow my pride and ask for help. A lot.

Once I finished that project, I decided to make the jewelry box's big sister, a vanity cabinet. On this project, I was able to improve techniques that I learned on the previous project as well as learning some new ones.

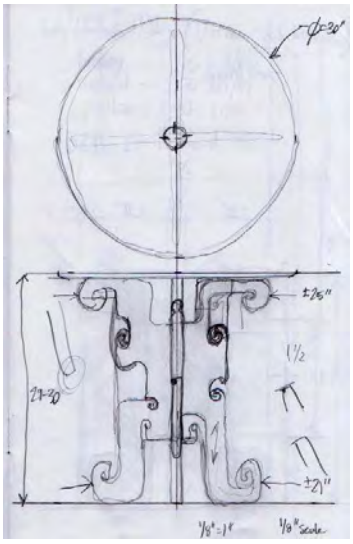


One of the techniques that I loved was turning rounded forms on the lathe. It was an intuitive process for me. Both the jewelry box and the cabinet highlight forms made with this process: the stem of the jewelry box's mirror, the feet of the cabinet, and the ellipsoid mirrors of both projects.

An interesting thing happened at the end of semester critique with this piece of furniture. I presented it with some of the abstract, "non-functional" forms that I had been turning on the lathe and several of my fellow students started playing with them, imagining that they could be various tools or recipients. This was one of the ideas that led me to my MFA installation. I enjoyed creating and grouping together shapes and forms that people would want to touch, use, and handle because of their alluring, sensuousness, and that would spark a sense of wonder, play, or even joy.

Sometime during the first year, I came across a book about the Carl Aubock family of makers in Vienna. I appreciated the attention they put into the fabrication of beautiful accessories and tools that are functional and sculptural at the same time. I also liked the way the objects were presented in "scapes": tablescapes, deskscapes, and homescapes. This is another idea that I wanted to include in my thesis exhibition: the idea of creating a sort of landscape on a table with various objects that were

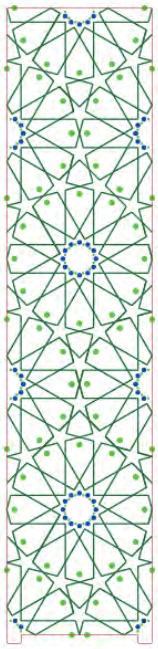
somewhat abstract yet defined enough to let people imagine their possible function, like sophisticated building blocks (Kois 18, 33, 95, and147).



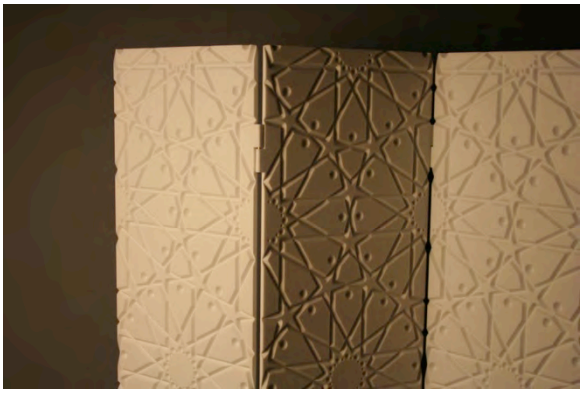
In the spring semester of my first year, I started a project using the Computer Numeric Controlled router as the main technique. I wanted to see if I could obtain similar three-dimensional results with less physical labor. I discovered that, to sculpt something three dimensionally with the CNC takes a long time so I decided to work with a v-shaped bit that would allow me to get 3-D like results with less time and effort. I created a table with soft maple wood destined for a collaborative exhibition with the MFA metals program at Indiana University, Bloomington. The subject that I literally pulled out of a hat for the project was “This Object Makes Your Eyes Dance.” Using spiral-like curves, I was able to create a pattern that I do believe makes your eyes dance.

Although almost all of the cutting and carving of the wood for the table happened on the CNC machine, I had to spend hours upon hours sanding and finishing the wood to achieve what I consider an average result. The table is beautiful. If you don’t look too closely. With this project, I started to realize that time

was of the essence, that I only had two years to learn a profession (that of furniture maker), to perfect it, and to produce a thesis project. I happen to like long-winded, meticulous projects and techniques. My fear was that this affinity and my perfectionist habit were going to be obstacles in producing a successful thesis exhibition. Here was my chance to overcome and go beyond these limitations!



My fourth project in my first year was to make a folding screen using the CNC router once again. I chose to use Staron, a countertop material similar to DuPont's Corian, that is homogenous through and through and that carves very well with the router. AND it does not need sanding or finishing afterward! Another characteristic of this material is that it is translucent. A pattern carved on one side would be visible on the other when lit from behind. I chose to use white Staron in order to enhance shadows and the translucent effect. My inspiration for the pattern to be carved was a version of a twelve-pointed star pattern fairly commonly used in Islamic decoration. This type of pattern can be repeated to infinity and conveys a sense of the endlessness of the universe.

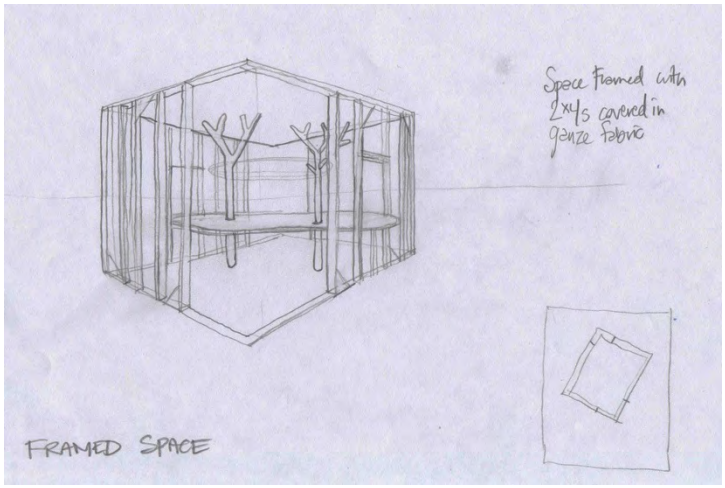


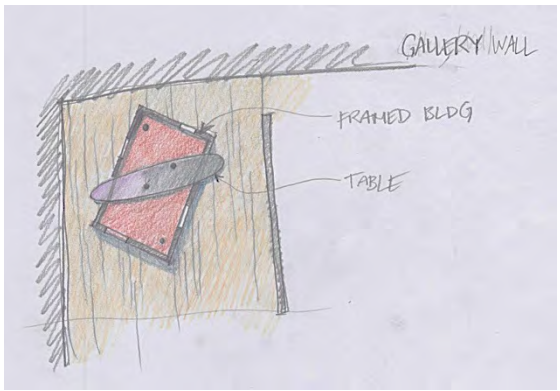
While perfecting my furniture making skills, I also worked in ceramics. This plastic material allowed me to explore my favorite forms, imprints, and earthy, natural textures in the Raku kiln.

In the summer between my two academic years, I learned how to cast aluminum and bronze in order to be able to include metal into my work.

At this time, halfway through my curriculum, I decided that I would work on a small scale in order to produce as much work as possible. The following photo shows how I started to play around with my created and found objects in the “scape” format.

After spending quite a bit of time focusing on the making of small objects, I turned my attention to creating a horizontal surface upon which the groupings of objects would exist. I did not want to overdesign this piece of furniture. I did not want the viewer’s attention to be drawn to the design of the table but to what was happening with the objects. I also wanted the positioning of the objects to be flexible and changing over time.





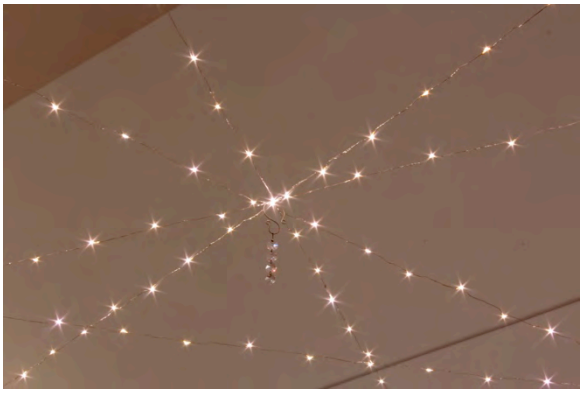
At the same time, not knowing where my work would be installed, I wanted to control the envelope around the tablescape.

After some brainstorming, I chose to create a space that would be simple, once again, not over-designed. I wanted to define the space around the table and the objects on it. I did not want the walls to be opaque, closed-in, and claustrophobic. My goal here was to create a space that was well-defined enough, that upon entering, the viewer would feel different, yet not so closed off that people entering the gallery would not see what was going on inside the space.

Description

The installation was placed in a corner of the gallery near two perpendicular walls. These walls were painted a pale lavender color. The installation consisted of three major components, the first being a 9 x 12 x 8 foot tall “room” defined by a woven sisal floor covering, a “ceiling” defined by a series micro LED string-lights placed in random diagonals, and four framed pine walls covered with unbleached cheesecloth. The walls were constructed of trimmed pine 2 x 4’s and 2 x 6’s. The vertical 2 x 4’s (which were actually 1½ x 3 inches after being milled) were spaced at approximately 3 feet apart. The 2 x 6’s (which were actually 1½ x 5 inches after milling) were the upper and lower plates. Two of the opposing walls had doorways at corner bays that gave access to the space. The other two opposing walls had window openings in middle

bays. The entire structure was placed at approximately a 19-degree angle to the walls of the gallery. Upon close examination, one found discreet surprises on the structure such as spherical wooden balls attached to the wood and crystals hanging from the “ceiling” string lights.



The second element of the installation was a large 15’8” x 3’ ellipse-shaped table. The table spanned the “room” from one window to the other at a 19-degree angle with respect to the structure. It was supported by the windowsills and a ladder like structure spanning from one wall to the other underneath the surface. The table protruded from the structure by approximately 2½ feet. It was made in four parts and was painted a shade of pale lavender similar to the gallery walls. It was an inch and a half thick and had a virtually square edge. The surface of the table had a random placing of carved-out semi-spherical and semi-torus shaped depressions. The sizes of these numerous carved-out indentations varied from ½ inch in diameter (numerous) to 4 inches in diameter (few). Around the edge of the table, painted in a shade of lavender subtly darker than the color of the table, in letters about ½ high, was a series of affirmations written in the first person such as “Freedom is my divine right” and “I deserve to be here”.

The third element of the installation was a grouping of objects made of glass, wood, aluminum, and ceramic. Some of the objects were functional, such as a vase, a decanter, or a dish; some were abstract; and some look like they were tools. Most of the objects were handmade and some were “found”. There are many white, pale blue, silver, and natural wood spherical forms on the table, in the carved out hollows, and in the recesses of some of the objects.

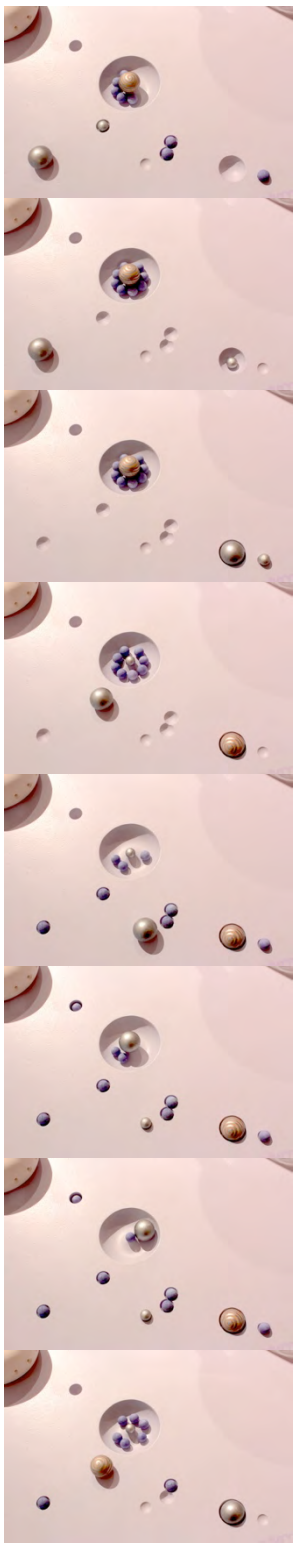
Analysis

The placement of the installation at an angle from the gallery walls and the fact that the table was placed at an angle with respect to the walls of the building structure itself gave a dynamism to the project. The doorway openings to the interior of the space were at opposite corners of the construction giving another dynamic. The pale bluish purple of the gallery walls looked as if it could be a shadow cast by the construction. The wall color and the similar color on the table gave a subtle contrast to the warm neutral colors of the wood, the unbleached cheesecloth, and the sisal floor covering. The viewer felt a cushiness

underfoot upon entering the space due to the sisal rug. The network of tiny string lights above not only gave a more intimate feeling to the space without enclosing it completely, but also added a sparkle to the installation by reflecting off all of the shiny surfaces. Harmony in the entire composition was achieved with a delicate balance of contrasts between the rectilinear building and the curves of the ellipse shaped table and all of the round forms on it.

There was a sense of peace and quietness in the space thanks to the soft colors and natural materials. Material choices were made to respect the environment as much as possible. The viewer could walk completely around the installation and could see what was going on inside without entering. The multitude of shapes forms and textures enticed one to enter. The forms were irresistibly sensuous. They fitted in the hand well. They were designed to be held and manipulated. They worked together well. One had the impression that the groupings were not static, that they were interchangeable. The table was laid for a feast with the glitter of glassware and ceramic, but a feast for the eye and hand rather than the mouth. The carved

depressions on the surface of the table received some of the objects and in some instances actually kept them from rolling off it. The pattern of indentations reminded some people of a map of the cosmos or a game such as Chinese checkers or Oware (pronounced oh-war-ee)[2]. The table looked like a complex game with rules that were yet to be defined. The objects were abstract enough to remind people of familiar everyday objects and tools. The installation was playful.



The building looked like an abstract, simplified version of American house construction with the use of the standard 2 x 4 and 2 x 6 timber formats. This room differed from typical construction in that the timber remained visible and had been cleaned up to look more presentable. The spacing between vertical elements, which in standard construction is 16" on center, had been adjusted to adapt to the size of the cheesecloth and the rug and to create a more open, transparent feeling. Because the walls were not opaque, space was more fluid. The fact that the table extended outside of the "room" raised the question of what was inside and what was outside. In fact, the table may have been reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's cantilevered overhangs in the design of his homes. The lighting and scale of

[2] Oware is a game I played as a child that consists of a board with a series of carved out dishes and stones that are scooped up and redistributed following certain rules. It is an abstract strategy game played throughout West Africa and has many other names depending on the region.

the space created intimacy and allowed the viewer to feel at home, comfortable, in a way, to explore, discover, and play. The perfume of the natural materials was calming, creating a peaceful atmosphere. The variety of textures was beautiful and gave a sense of richness to the installation. The rounded shapes brought out the grain of wood. The forms felt good in the hand. One wanted to touch them and feel their textures: soft, smooth, cool, and rough. Some of the forms existed in more than one place giving the viewer the impression of versatility or migration. One could imagine putting two or more objects together like building blocks to create a new form with a new function. The use of contrasting, subtle and strong colors and materials created a harmonious, magical, wondrous space full of fantasy.

The positive affirmations that were painted around the edge of the table were personal to the artist yet universal at the same time. Some people might have experienced pleasure and well-being when reading them and some people might have been confronted when reading them. Reading the affirmations might have produced a beneficial effect in people just as watching a violent movie would produce a negative effect on the viewer. “No matter what the problem is, our experiences are just outer effects of our inner thoughts” (Hay, 11) For each person to heal him/herself, he/she needs to replace negative automatic thoughts with positive ones. I believe that all of the problems that we face on this planet stem from the automatic negative thoughts that run us.

Interpretation

On one hand, I make the objects that I make because they give me a sensation of pleasure in the fabrication process as well as upon viewing the completed object. On the other hand, I hope that the viewer will also have a pleasurable experience not only upon viewing my objects and installations but also upon touching them. In the movie *The Guitar,* After being diagnosed with a terminal illness and given a few months to live, being fired from a thankless job, and being dumped by her boyfriend, the main character throws caution to the wind, rents a spacious loft, and uses her credit cards to surround herself with beautiful objects and clothes. She says "the objects speak to me…they whisper in a strange language…the language of objects…they give me hope by whispering rumors of redemption…" After maxing out her credit cards, she realizes that she has outlived the doctors' predictions. When her doctors examine her, they find no cancer! (Redford). This story is fiction but, according to Sternberg, scientists have studied how patients with a pleasant view of nature out of their hospital window heal faster and need less pain medication than similar patients who had a view of a brick wall. With this thesis, I would like to suggest that not only do healthy environments help us to heal but also the objects that surround us; the ones we use on a daily basis that give satisfaction, pleasure, or just make us smile. To go even further, I would like to say that even if a person doesn't have anything to heal (and I don't think there are very many of us that don't have *anything* to heal); surrounding him/herself with beautiful things contributes to strengthening his/her immune system and therefore his/her well being.

I wanted my thesis work to be irresistibly tactile. My intentions in creating what I make were not to have a precise reaction from the viewer, but I was interested in the sensations that he/she does experience. My intentions were good. My energy was good. My theory is that if I put good, loving energy into my objects, it will be felt and there will be a ripple effect.

I know that for years I have worked in an overly conscious or rational manner to the detriment of my intuition. My intention in exploring my funky forms is to work in an intuitive manner, to foster that side of the brain that has been slighted. I agree with Gord Peteran when he says in his Artist's Philosophy; "I suspect that our built environment is patterned after the subconscious. My work relies on excavating some of these "symptoms of life" from the kinds of space and objects we place between us and our architecture. The intimate domain of the home is a fertile landscape to draw from when assembling my ideas" (Peteran).

I have enjoyed using iconography to understand what I am doing with my artwork and to understand what other people may see in it. The words that come to mind in describing my thesis installation are: mysterious, marvelous, a playground, a laboratory, an enjoyable place to be, peaceful, serene, a lovely collection of curiosities. Some people may find the space strange or unusual. Other people may find the space too decorative or pretty. Some participants may find the space too jumbled or chaotic, while others may find that the space is a feminine one. Some say it is a perfect balance between feminine and masculine elements.

I have included four “word associations” and will discuss reoccurring themes.

Word association for the building:

Word association for the table:

Word association for the objects:

Affirmation word association:

The first theme is the sensual/sensuous theme. It is easy to see sexual devices or associations in my objects even though that is not the conscious intention. There

seems to be something visceral about these objects that fit into various body parts such as the hand. They are mysterious like a Rorschach test. I believe that these qualities tap into something primal in us. I would venture to say that the fact that they are not precisely defined or recognizable allows peoples' imaginations to run free. The objects are also sensuous in their form and texture. Visually they are alluring and intriguing. There is something human about my forms. This theme relates to ergonomics and the imprints that are found on some of the objects. These objects are made by a human for a human and show traces of use and function.

Another recurring theme in the aforementioned word associations is the "tool" theme. I love tools, so it is not surprising that I make things that look like tools. There is something incredibly attractive to me about a beautiful tool. They are made by humans for human use. The more they show traces of wear and use, the more I am drawn to them. The tools start to have a soul. In a way, they come alive.

Both of these themes speak to the tactile quality of many of the installation's elements. They are begging to be touched. The installation can take on a new meaning here in that my goal is to create beautiful (sometimes functional) objects that we can surround ourselves with. The installation is all about creating magnificent surroundings with a focus on the objects.

The last theme I would like to speak about is the childlike, playful theme. Here I

mean childlike in a positive sense. I believe it is healthy for us to allow ourselves to return to that state of innocence and discovery. Several of the proposed words/functions suggested to me by my friends when working on these words associations are quite childlike. The suggestions that people proposed to me during the exhibition proposed were childlike in their inventiveness and imaginativeness. This is a good indication that the intention for my exhibition to create a joyful, marvelous space is successful.

Perfect Imperfection

The title of the show, *Perfect Imperfection,* is intriguing. The title for this installation allowed me to accept imperfections in the fabrication and in myself. I was able to go beyond the extremely limiting concept of trying to attain “perfection”. I was able to appreciate and even rejoice in the perfections and realize that perfection is relative.

The knots in the wood were intentionally not hidden just as I learned to appreciate my own imperfections. The musician Jack White speaks of his love for recording music with analog equipment in the following manner: "Mechanics are always going to provide inherent little flaws and tiny little specks and hisses that will add to the idea of something beautiful, something romantic. Perfection, making things perfectly in time and perfectly free of extraneous noise, is not something to aspire to! Why would anyone to aspire to such a thing?" (Tingen). I remember as a child hearing an explanation of why Persian carpet weavers always intentionally wove mistakes into their carpets so as to not mock God. The Amish do this with their quilts as well. Navajo

weavers leave a small hole in the pattern of their rugs as a spirit outlet. I believe there is much freedom in allowing oneself to make imperfect creations.

In any case, if one does make a perfect piece of furniture or a tool, it will get a patina or get marred if not upon the first usage, shortly thereafter. So why not embrace imperfections as something inherently beautiful? In his famous book *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera said there are two types of womanizers: 1) men who are looking for the perfect woman and can never find her, and 2) men who convince themselves that every woman they meet is already perfect. Or as in the famous Steven Stills song "If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with…"

Future Projects

This project has many seeds of ideas that can be developed into future projects. I could easily expand upon the idea of developing the building itself into installations that people can experience separately from the table and objects. The table itself could be developed without the building into an elaborate imaginary game that viewers could play and invent the rules as they went along. The collection of objects could be elaborated upon as well, perhaps even without the table, in a similar manner to the works of Peter Shelton or Donald Lipsky, mentioned earlier.

Art Therapy is an area I can see myself exploring in the future given my strong desire to help others to heal. On another immediately concrete level, in the capacity of Interior Design, I can see myself working with clients to create harmonious, healthy, sustainable, environments in which they can thrive and prosper. The idea that creating environments that make us feel good and therefore help us to heal physical, emotional,

and spiritual issues could be developed into a full-fledged research project, perhaps even becoming the subject of a doctoral thesis.

Conclusion

Although the Master of Fine Arts Degree is seen as a culminating experience and although I already have a wealth of worldly experience, this thesis project is to me just the beginning of a more artistic career. With this exhibition, I have just scratched the surface of my potential as a “DesignArtist”. This experience has allowed me to focus on my own creative desires, to explore, to gain confidence, to express myself without fear, and to confirm the importance of creativity and the importance of doing “good” design to me, design that can help to make the world a better place. I hope that viewers that experience my creations will have an improved sense of well-being, will be inspired to surround themselves with beautiful objects, and to create their environment more consciously.

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