SHOP TALK VOL 5

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KENDALL BUSTER: 
THE SCIENCE OF SCULPTURE

By Michael Anthony Smith

Kendall Buster is an artist who lives and works in Richmond, Virginia. She is a Professor in the Department of Sculpture and Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University. Following her training in the sciences, she earned a BFA at Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C. Three years later she attended the Whitney Museum’s Independent Study Program in New York City, then earned an MFA in Sculpture from Yale University. I spoke with Kendall Buster prior to her departure for South Africa, for an installation of her latest commission.

Steel rod armatures covered in white and green shade cloth, polycarbonate sheets and IKEA tents are a few of the synthetic materials Buster uses to create her sculptures. Her works range from transparent or opaque small-scale models of cities to microbiological landscapes, and suggest living, breathing organisms swelling before your eyes. Her large-scale sculptures exist somewhere between object and architecture. The translucent surfaces both conceal and reveal form, while engaging the viewers’ powers of seeing. Buster has had solo-exhibitions at Artists Space in New York City; the Houston Center for Contemporary Art; the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh; KwaZulu Natal Society for the Arts in Durban, South Africa; and the VCUQ Gallery in Doha, Qatar. She is currently working on commissioned sculpture and installation projects for the grounds of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Johns Hopkins University, the New Chemistry Building at Princeton University, and the San Francisco International Airport. Buster has received the Kreeger Museum Artist Award, an American Academy of Arts and Letters Visual Art Award, and grants from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Mid-Atlantic Art Foundation. As an academic, Buster has co-authored a textbook that addresses a gap in the literature pertaining to the study of art, “The Critique Handbook.”

Kendall Buster, Yellow Hydrant, 2005. Shadecloth, steel, 12” x 12” x 12’’
MAS: When I read your biography on your personal website the first thing I noticed was that you show your sculptures in museums, arenas, and medical or science centers. Why is that a consistent trend in showing your work?

KB: I make large-scale works and am interested in designing and building in a kind of conversation with the particulars of a given architectural space. For example, the arena space you mention had an interesting curved wall, a massive open atrium. Another site was an open twelve-story atrium with walkways spanning two buildings. I often do site-responsive permanent works. Because of my background in science (I studied science and got a BS in Microbiology/Medical Technology before studying art) I am often commissioned to do works for locations that are sites for scientific research, schooling in the sciences, or medical services. Forms found in biological models often inform my works for these sites.

MAS: In 1976 you received your Bachelor of Science Degree in Microbiology from the University of Alabama. What was it that attracted a student of science to move into visual arts?

KB: I have always been visual and my attraction to microbiology was the world beyond ordinary vision. Also, I was always interested in the complex forms found in the natural world and this interest informed my work. Scientific studies required imagination, and artistic projects experimentation and discipline. For me, they are not so dissimilar experiences.

MAS: You have said that your sculpture New Growth is based on “old forms that generate new forms through processes that suggest budding, merging, hybridization or absorption.” How does recreating historical architectural forms emerge as new forms if the viewer is already familiar with the shapes they see before them?

KB: It is true that there are in the New Growth installation recognizable references to a kind of inventory of architectural forms — the arena, the cooling tower, the high-rise, and the church. But they are combined into what was for me an almost seamless membrane. I wanted to suggest that these forms were in a process of expanding and combining and merging; that the city, a combination of structures, was always in flux. That is why the transparent material was important to me. It enabled me to build the city like an apparition of forms.

MAS: Critics have described your work as autonomous objects. I feel that you dictate your own laws of self-control for the viewer as they walk or stand inside of your pieces. Is it your intention to control the viewer with these abstract or geometric forms without them knowing it?

KB: The singular forms that have accessible interiors do indeed offer a single entry point and position, (in contrast to, say, Parabiosis, where there are a number of chambers). I think that all architectural space controls movement to a degree. But the recent work is not about control as a concept. The earlier work, like Steel Hide, was certainly about a trap and sanctuary combined.

MAS: The power of vision intrigues you, based on your interest in the Panopticon prison design created by philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. Do you make any comparisons to the way viewers will see your work with the way prisoners are locked inside of a Panopticon, being viewed without knowing it?

KB: Yes, in Steel Hide, as I just mentioned, I was very interested in how a structure with an accessible interior could be experienced as both protection and trap. Also, I was interested in the dynamics of looking that occurred for a viewer inside, invisible to the outside viewer. So inside one was protected and hidden — thus empowered — but also inside the armor and potentially trapped.
MAS: If you were given only one viewpoint in a space for one of your sculptures, which would it be, and why?

KB: Two examples:
1. Inside of the vessel (White Highrise Vessel and Yellow Highrise Vessel) looking up: I love the oculus.
2. The view above the Yellow Column Field where you recognize that the columns you have walked through are really an extruded hexagonal surface.

MAS: I have read that you used to draw from the medical slides that you viewed through a microscope. These slides were of human blood cells or bi-concave discs. What is the aesthetic appeal that you see in these cells? Do you think the scientific order of natural organisms is different than the order and precision of architecture?

KB: My sculptures (unlike a functional object like a chair or desk) do not operate with an exact practical function, so the discussion of functionality is more complex. Can one enter the chamber? Is one drawn to do so? Does the form engage the architecture? Does it suggest movement or conjure an image of a provisional model city? Each work brings its own logic.

MAS: In an interview on NPR you said that, “the blood cells or bi-concave discs is the form that best serves its purpose.” Do you believe that your fabricated forms, that exist somewhere between object and architecture, best serve their purpose?

KB: Not sure what you are asking here. Some have accessible interiors. Some suggest models that one must enter only in the imagination. For me, the model is a metaphor for the idea made physical – when it is yet to be fully realized and is all promise and possibility. I am also interested in the way that a work that suggests a place can be open-ended in terms of imagined scale.

MAS: What limitations do you place on yourself when you design your pieces on the computer and how do these limitations affect the fabrication?

KB: I do not use the computer much to design. I first draw, and then make crude 3-D models with cardboard, wire and carved foam. I only render for presentations and to generate templates sometimes.

MAS: In some of your sculptures you create objects that look like places where the viewer cannot normally go to, physically. Are you referring to older architectural forms that no longer exist, or are you referring to something metaphorically?

KB: I can’t say why. A twisted sickle cell or target with the concave area bulging out do not operate normally and indicate pathology, but are no less beautiful. Natural organisms to me are often about providing a site — a place where germination, digestion, etc. can take place. For a building to work it, too, provides a site for activity.

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Kendall Buster’s work can be viewed online at www.kendallbuster.com.
ALIVE AND DANGEROUS: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEX KANEVSKY

By Christopher Hill

Alex Kanevsky’s studio is located in an old Catholic school in Philadelphia. It has high ceilings and squeaky hardwood floors. Panels, canvases, and mylar are arranged around the room, all works in progress. A large glass palette sits in the center of the room next to an oval shaped painting depicting a group of sitting women, mirrored against each other. Kanevsky’s subject matter is mostly figurative, although the occasional landscape or panoramic does come up.

Kanevsky’s method of painting employs countless layers, all of which are painted quickly yet with precision. These paintings are figurative at the core, but retain a shimmering abstract quality. Kanevsky’s process of layering is best described as stacks of Swiss cheese; the good holes stay, and the bad holes are painted over. Each painting is worked and reworked until the entire piece is resolved. The freshness of his brush marks and the delicacy of his figures sets him apart from his contemporaries.

Alex Kanevsky received his MFA in painting from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts after emigrating from Lithuania. He exhibits internationally and has received numerous awards, fellowships, and residencies. Kanevsky has been featured in numerous publications such as Harper’s Magazine, Art News, and The New York Observer. Kanevsky teaches as an adjunct faculty at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

CH: What would be your greatest learning experience?

AK: Every now and then some show comes about that you see and it changes the way you look. Seeing a Gerhardt Richter show at the MoMA, or Cezanne’s show here, or going to the Barnes Foundation here in Philadelphia and looking at some beautiful Soutines. Lately a lot of influence came out of [Antonio] Lopez Garcia. He came to Boston and had that talk and the show. I always liked his work but it was even better in person. Euan Uglow — I haven’t seen many of his works in person. I went to his gallery in London and they just had one little drawing. But that had a lot of influence.

CH: I’ve found a lot of beauty in the subtle shifts and planes in your color. Do you plan out what color you’re going to use or is it more arbitrary?

AK: It’s defined by the subject. It’s a presentional painting whether I have a model here in the studio or I use some photograph. It originates in reality with a color. Also this particular space defines a lot. You see a lot of cold gary light here. So a lot of paintings have been this way. Before that I had a very dark studio with a beautiful velvety brown darkness and a lot of my paintings were like that.

I have a very good visual memory. I have this library of images in my head from my life that struck me as somehow relevant. I remember the color and I remember the light. It usually is associated with particular emotional responses. For an example, I like snow; it makes me happy. When it snows outside I have that sense
of calm and wellbeing. So if I wanted to use that particular emotional climate in some perceptual painting I would think of one of those snow days that I have in my memory, I would probably go for those particular colors, on an assumption that the combination of those colors would recreate that emotional climate. Then you can get just a little bit more creative with it and mix and match things, and try to find something in reality that corresponds to that image that you have the memory of.

CH: You’ve described your painting process in previous interviews as like layering Swiss cheese, or like the Zen mentality of a beginner’s mind. Was this a process that you developed or something that you were taught?

AK: No, I wasn’t really taught as it turns out [laughing]. I had lots of teachers and some of them made a difference, but I never really had a big figure-figure teacher. Going to art school is a complicated process. A lot of what you become as an artist happens as a reaction to what you are taught, rather than the result.

I found the way to deal with who I am and paint the way I am. I don’t have the patient accumulative way of painting where you slowly build this complex layered system. I don’t have patience for that. It’s more important for me to feel completely in touch with what I do all the time. Then it remains kind of dangerous and interesting. But I had to figure out how to produce good paintings doing that. Slowly, that layered-with-holes process developed for me. I’m a fast painter that does very slow paintings. Every layer is quite fast, but I’m always unsatisfied with it, so I’m always repainting it. It takes forever, but what you see has that freshness of having hit the right note in the right time.

CH: How many paintings do you work on at one time? You were talking about keeping things fresh. Are you working on all these right now [referring to the eight or nine pieces around the studio]?

AK: Yeah, I’m working on all these right now. I mean, I’m not working busy-as-a-bee on all of them. This one’s been standing here for the last two months without being touched but, as far as I’m concerned, I’m working on it. I know it’s not done. It’s just not clear to me yet what I need to do. I prefer to arrive at the painting with some sort of clarity of intent and purpose. It’s sort of like a dialogue. You do things to it and it does things to you. At this point, I think I’m doing things to it: it’s doing things to me and I have to respond. It’s not very clear to me how to respond yet. Other ones happen faster because I get lucky sooner.

CH: I always agreed with your philosophy of painting as a dialogue or conversation between you and the piece. What was the outcome of your most disagreeable argument?

AK: Sometimes things do change and burn, unfortunately. I have this whole pile in the corner that didn’t work out. The most unpleasant and dispiriting are the ones that go for the longest time and go through some really quite nice stages, and then still crash and burn. I wish I had a way of dealing with those situations. I suppose it’s better to ask a lot from them than to let them go when you’re just 80% happy. Luckily, it doesn’t happen very often, but there are always one or two or three paintings every year that go in that direction. It would be more if I didn’t consider them in the working stage for so long. Some of them probably are quite hopeless but they still are in the works.

It has happened in the past where something stood around, let’s say a year. Every now and then I would do things to it. It would get worse and worse and just stay evenly mediocre. Then, one day I would come in, I would know exactly what to do and I would do it, and it would be one of the best things I had ever done. So I am always hoping that the next one will be better.

CH: Do you ever have trouble letting go of your pieces? When do you decide to leave something and when do you decide to paint over it?

AK: I have a hard time giving things up. I am just not very good at that. Maybe it would be nice to be more humble and to admit defeat every now and then. It’s not even connected with self-esteem. I just love them and I want them to amount to something. I have that mental image of what it could be. If I’m not getting there, I feel that it’s my own shortcoming, because the painting can be good. It can exist in that shape that I have in my mind—I just have to physically do it. I have a hard time giving it up, but sometimes I have to because there’s just not anything left.

Other times, it’s part of something else that comes through. How should I put it? ... Well, I’m painting on a board; there will be paintings that don’t work out completely. I just take a sander to it and sand it off. The first time I discovered this sander I was completely transfixed by how beautiful those boards were. When you sand through encrusted layers of paint, sometimes you have these really beautiful things.
When I was working with Charlie Kaufman on the movie, they sent this huge teamster and a truck from New York to pick up all the studio debris. They just scooped everything. You know: the dirt and the old palettes, all those boards from the corner. There was this one board that had a painting that was sanded off. I kind of liked that board; it looked almost like a landscape even though what was there originally was a nude. They eventually returned everything, but I didn’t realize that one piece was missing. Six months later I get this call saying, ‘We discovered another painting of yours. We’re going to overnight it to you with FedEx.’ I was completely curious to find out what it was. It was that sanded-off board. It wasn’t a painting but it looked like a painting to me, and it looked like a painting to me.

CH: About the vertical marks in your pieces: when I first saw them, I thought they were drips, but then I realized they were brush strokes. Is there a purpose for them? Do they represent something for you, or are they purely formal?

AK: It’s an artifact. I don’t sit there and place the drips on purpose in the painting to decorate it. I assume that everything that I do while I’m painting is fair game, and everything I do, and that involves dripping because some of the white paint is alkyd and it’s quite liquid. So if I’m singing around this large brush and doing something on top of the painting, there will be drips. Then I have a choice of wiping them off or leaving them in. I figure if that’s something that happened as a result of the process then it’s fair game—I’m allowed to keep it. So I pick some that I like and they stay and other ones go. I like those things; they add something—another layer of removal from what’s there.

I’m not terribly interested in the narrative that is behind the painting. I’m more interested in that weird conflict between the narrative and the surface of the painting. Things get particularly interesting when you really don’t know which part is stronger—when the abstract formal qualities overwhelm the narrative, whatever it may be. Sometimes I feel that the painting needs more physicality and I either do something to the surface or I allow things that happened in the process to show.

CH: You were talking about how you see these artifacts and pieces of the surface as a way to remove yourself from the narrative. I’d read a few interviews where you were talking about using photographs as a way to do that. Could you elaborate on the pros and cons between using life and photos as a reference?

AK: There are people that have a direct line to their emotional life. Some perceptual painting in its best reincarnations has a direct claim upon the emotional life of the artist. I never felt that I could do that directly. You know, just take whatever emotion and swing the brush at the canvas. So the representation comes as a middleman between me and my emotional response to it. In other words, I insert a thing in there and sometimes I feel that there isn’t enough, because I don’t think that my emotional response is all that interesting or unique.

Emotional responses are predictable. Let’s say you see a picture of a sunset; we all get more or less the same emotional response. We see a picture of Hitler; we get another emotional response. I felt that it would be interesting to build up enough layers in between the reason for doing a painting and the way it’s done. So, the photography became very useful. I think that Gerhard Richter really utilized the camera that way more than anybody else.

This desire to step away—I call it ties into this weird edge of recognition, when what is on a painting and what the painting is physically, are on opposite sides of the scale. You get some sort of equilibrium where you really don’t know what you’re looking at. Are you looking at paint or are you looking at reality? Reality itself is not terribly interesting to me. It is interesting, of course, but it’s not why I’m painting. I have friends that paint landscapes because they just love the way the trees look, and a field in a certain light. I love the trees in a field as much as any other guy, but that would not get me painting. I’m not a very good photographer, so I get all sorts of artifacts in my pictures because I mishandle the camera. I don’t really pay attention to all those things that I’m supposed to pay attention to as a photographer. So as a result, I get a picture full of various things that happened to it. Those things add a little bit more to the in-between. They also take away some aspects of reality that reduces the visual clutter.

That was something that David Hockney noticed when he was doing his photo-collages. There’s this one photo-collage of Route 66. The whole thing was taken out of the car window with many different pictures and stitched together. He noticed that when you see something and it’s moving fast by you, the details are not visible. All the unimportant stuff falls off. They make you see the reality in this sudden and fresh way. That’s what photography is to me.

CH: I’ve seen some of your photos and then I’ve seen the paintings from those photos, like the girl in the bathtub. Did the photo inspire you to paint from the photo? Were you trying to recreate it—or was it just a reaction to it?

AK: We took lots of photos of that model in that bathtub with that Japanese robe. It was her idea. She said, “Alex, I have this robe and I think that it would work well for you.” I said, “No, we cannot do the robe. It’s just too cheesy. I can do this, with all these flowers.” But she insisted. It had a very bold, geometric pattern with some sort of flowers on it. When she was moving the lines and the geometric patterns started to appear in those swooshy things through the interior. I started taking pictures of that. This is something that could’ve only originated from a photograph. So the photograph produced the artifacts from what was there, and the exposure time was too slow for the situation. That engendered the idea for the painting. The painting was started from the photograph and it eventually departed from the photograph and went on its own.

CH: So the photo is a jumping off point.

AK: Yeah, it’s a jumping off point and then you come back to it sometimes. Then, at one point, the photograph becomes a hindrance so you get rid of it altogether. This painting [pointing to an oval-shaped panel depicting several women in blue, their mirrored images reflected beneath them] originated with another painting. I put two of them together upside down just to see what it would look like. I had a mat with an oval hole that would look like. I liked that much better because I’d always like the abstract pattern of what happens with the skirts there. So I thought I would do a painting like that. I assembled all this in Photoshop. But then I looked and I thought that I couldn’t do it with Photoshop. So I actually have a model here every couple weeks. See those things on the floor? Those are the chair marks. There’s five positions where she keeps on moving her chair.

So it originated from the photograph, and it’s actually being done from the model now because the photograph didn’t carry enough potency. So, you see, it goes in both directions. I don’t have strong feelings, like many people, whether it should always be done from the photograph or from life. We have Scott Noel, who thinks that photography’s an abomination. Then we have Vincent Desiderio, who thinks photography’s the best thing ever for painting. I really don’t care either way.

CH: I want to talk about your aquatint etchings. I see you have an x-ray over there. Where did this departure from your paintings originate?

AK: That was one of those situations where several things came together at the same time. I had an opening at Caccinola in New York. This incredibly glamorous, beautiful woman came up to me at the opening and said that she would like to model for me. I said, “Of course,” you know! She had just broken her ankle. I thought this would be really interesting to take some photographs of her moving around on crutches, because it completely redistributes the body weight. If you walk around, you’ve got all resting on your pelvis. With crutches it’s...
problems printing on this very finicky Japanese paper.

That’s how those things came about, from the model and her x-ray, and from Erica and her knowledge of the printing process. Now we’re talking of maybe doing something bigger, so I’m trying to collect some x-rays from people.

CH: When did you start trying to paint on mylar? It’s not really a traditional surface.

AK: I played with it when I was a student at the Academy. I can’t say that I absolutely love mylar: it produces it’s own interesting textures for the paint. But three or four years ago, I was going to that residency in Ireland and I wanted to do a lot of paintings outside. There’s only so much that you can bring with you on an airplane. I thought that mylar would be ideal because you can just roll it all up in a tube. I would just tape it to some piece of plywood and go outside. It turned out to be a perfect surface for that because I did a lot of work in the six weeks there. I came back with it rolled up again and at home I started mounting it on a board.

CH: One of the things that I like about mylar is that it’s so smooth that every brush stroke that you make is that much more important because of the lack of texture. The final result is from how you apply paint, not the surface you’re working on.

AK: Well I usually paint on a pretty smooth board, anyway. They’re gessoed so they don’t have that quality of mylar: where you can remove the paint and end up with a ghost of the color. But I mostly like the fact that you can cut and paste any way that you want.

CH: You had said in a previous interview to “put all of your eggs in one basket,” and to “give up something once it starts working”. Could you give me an example of how you would apply this to what you do, and to your work?

AK: The idea of commitment is very important. In a sense, I only started getting interesting results from painting when I started to do that — putting all the eggs in the painting basket. All I’m doing is painting, I think that this sort of commitment actually pays off. You start discovering things that were unavailable to you if you just showed up. I’m here everyday because I want to be here everyday: I am always doing painting — not five different things, but one thing.

The popular wisdom is that you need to diversify your options. This way you might hit upon something nice. I really don’t think you will — unless you’re a stockbroker. In our world, finding something that works for you and really going deep into that makes things available that weren’t before.

As for “things that work and then giving them up,” that came from the processes of working as a student.

People always think that their paintings are defined by style. Style is a collection of your personal clichés, which don’t get you anywhere. Fashion designers need clichés because they need to have recognizable things.

We actually need to have a direct connection between what you have inside and your painting. The moment something does not answer that need, you just discard it. That’s why that Richter show was a really big deal for me. He switched at will between many different modes of functioning and he didn’t seem concerned with keeping that thing that worked. Or Olievenbom, changing horses midway, twice during his lifetime. I don’t think that my painting looks now how it looked five or ten years ago. I’m hoping that it won’t look the same way ten years from now. It keeps things alive and dangerous, and that’s interesting. Once you’ve got it all under control, it’s not terribly creative. The painting doesn’t have a chance to talk back to you: it’s like that idea of bullfights in Spain: both bull and matador have a chance of hurting each other. Therefore, the spectacle is interesting.
AN INTERVIEW WITH PHIL RENATO: ANYTHING BUT CRAFT

By Logan Woodle

Phil Renato and I have next to nothing in common. I use a hammer. He uses 3-D rendering software; I embrace craft, he avoids it; I eat meat and he has a giant vegan tattoo. Yet, or perhaps because of this, I have found myself drawn to his work more and more each time I see it. It begs you to run a finger down its streamlined, virgin surfaces; it speaks of a moment frozen in time and of tomorrow; it’s high art begging for the masses. Phil Renato is a workhorse in the jewelry/metal field and the founding professor of the Jewelry program at Kendall University in Michigan. His work spans many media and is ever evolving. He is currently using CAD to explore the physicality of fluids. These explorations are leading to the creation of rhythmic, organic objects that serve as both sculpture and functional jewelry. When I was given the chance to interview the artist at the 2010 Society of North American Goldsmiths annual conference in Houston, Texas I jumped at the chance to see my own field through a very different, skilled set of eyes. His views—often very different, sometimes very similar—have made me more able to understand my place in a field of exploding contradictions.

LW: Briefly, what is your artistic history?

PR: I took art and drafting classes in high school; ended up in a two-year vocational training center for Advertising Design. Quit after a year, then worked for a jeweler three hours a day in a co-op education course during my senior year. I tried to get into the Cooper Union in NYC; didn’t. I guess I wasn’t supposed to be an artist. I ended up at Eastern Michigan University, following an ex-girlfriend as a Graphic Design major, then Art Education, then an English major; and finally settled on Painting and added Metalsmithing somewhere in there. I was definitely the ‘art nerd’ in high school, where I did terribly in almost every other subject but English. Focused in college and became someone who takes art and design much more seriously than I should. Not just in terms of productivity, but critically. I am not a great peer unless we really see eye to eye. Is that artistic?

LW: Who taught you, who were your greatest influences? Where did you find your drive?

PR: In metals: primarily Skip Hunter at EMU and Mary Lee Hu at UW. Where did I find my drive? A few things: mainly reactionary, I hated where I grew up. I hate my father, my brother died just after high school. I was a terrible student, I have always feared being mediocre, I hate evil and lazy people, and I’ve only ever seemed to find any refuge from these things through success in the creation of ‘creative’ works and the teaching of same. I am in awe of cars, architecture, the human body, the sciences, especially physics and chemistry, film, music, and how cruel people can be to one another on micro and macro levels.

LW: How have these people and things shaped your work today?

Phil Renato, Anticosti. FDM ABS, dimensions variable.
**Ph: I don’t work in that many in any given period - but the answer in general is drawing. That’s the way I think and show and refine and compare what I am making with what I am thinking. There is simultaneous technical research going on all the time – which sometimes takes over the process as it suggests some direction. And sometimes the sketches require that I seek out other materials, processes, and/or formats to explore.**

**LW:** Do you design for the project or the material?

**Ph:** Ideally, I design for the outcome to solve the problem, to communicate the form. Practically, I would say I design for the form. Always, that the form is rendered in a given material - say plastic or metal - is simply a physical constraint placed on the work by the requirements of weight, durability, desired surface, my level of skill, etc.

**LW:** What is the role of technology in your work? Is it a way of deciding the limits of a project? Is it a tool, a medium, an inspiration?

**Ph:** By technology you mean tools or you mean computers and their peripherals. Technology in the broad sense, is literally the tools by which I make my ideas into objects. In the more narrow sense it is an extension of my hand, in a very similar way that my pencil or a hammer is, with the exception that the computer is a sophisticated studio filled with tools. Those tools have subroutines and methods of action that are authored and which obey rules laid out by their programmers. Which isn’t so awfully different from a hammer except that it evolved over a much quicker time period, and has nearly infinitely more subtlety. Both are task-designed, but can be easily transformed to work on things they were not strictly designed to do (i.e. both are general tools - not fixed in terms of their outcome).

**LW:** Your work has always been extremely tactile. What is the role of touch in your work, and how does this affect how you show it?

**Ph:** I wouldn’t say that’s true. It has surfaces that allude to touch, maybe especially sensual touch. But it’s the same surface a Corvette or a spoon has - it is not surprising. It is designed to interact with the human body of course - and the hand and wrist and neck in many ways complete it. But I don’t think I maximize it in either my documentation or exhibition. I’m going to give a big “work in progress” answer on this one.

**LW:** With this in mind, what is the role of the viewer in your work? The consumer? What is your own role?

**Ph:** The consumer makes all determinations of value, even if led slightly aggressively toward a different read on the work. I cede all control beyond what I am able to competently communicate in the work, and what little support documentation I can get someone to invest their time with.

**LW:** I once heard you say that one of your greatest goals was to have your work in production for Target. Can you speak to this desire?

**Ph:** Yes, absolutely. To have the work succeed - to be desired, consumed, and completed through use. I am not really sure Target is the place, necessarily, but I do believe that there is something to the idea that bigger and more is kind of better. I understand the problems with it, but I much prefer it to the work living in my closet or being consumed exclusively by the rich - or worse - by other members of our field alone.

**LW:** What is the overall role of community in your creative process?

**Ph:** For most of my career the only community I’ve known is the academy. And it really consumes me. Not my peers. Especially when I was a student. But the community of scholars and scholarship - it makes me feel small and desire to grow big.
LW: You often work in collaboration. What is it that drives you to do so?
PR: Curiosity. To see what happens if I pretend other people have good ideas and we share what we have to see if there is any synergy.
LW: What makes an object successful to you?
PR: Jaw dropping form and impact, pleasurable use, and lasting effect. (“Visceral, Behavioral, Reflective” - Donald Norman)
LW: Once you said that the first question you ask a student when they want to make a vessel is, “What goes in this?” You said that this often discourages them from continuing. Why do you think this is?
PR: Why are they discouraged? Because they can’t answer the question. I ask the same question in a number of different ways. Why does this need to be made? Do you really care enough about this to go through all the work? Who is this for? Will they want it? Some of them can never effectively answer these questions, and so they quit or flounder. And they should. If they don’t care enough to struggle they should do something else.
LW: Where do you see the field going?
PR: Art metals? Not sure. I would love to say something rosy - but given the fact that there seems to be a small audience outside of the art scene for this work (and there are certainly too few professional opportunities for the ridiculous number of BFAs and Mfas we are producing), I’d say overpopulated and overindulgent. But maybe that’s just because I’ve been arguing with Bruce Metcalf over email about the state of things.
LW: Where do you see your work going in the coming years?
PR: I am not sure. I have been saying production for years, and I’ve been getting closer. But I’m still unconvinced of the viability - for a number of reasons. I hope to finally get a handle on color. Someday I will practice what I preach and I will put the user first in the conceptual phase of my design process. I will likely continue down the uncomfortable path of rule-driven generative design, even if it’s not the controlled process I’m the most equipped to execute.

Phil Renato’s work can be viewed online at his website: philrenato.com
Kukuli Velarde is a ceramic sculptor and painter. She was born in Cusco, Peru and received her BFA from Hunter College in New York City. She currently resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and the Racine Art Museum and the Kohler Arts Center in Wisconsin. Velarde has received many awards for her work including fellowships from the PEW Foundation, Evelyn Shapiro Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Bronx Council of the Arts, by the Andy Warhol Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. She was recently named a USA Knight Fellow, in Crafts and Traditional Arts.

Ms. Velarde is direct about the content of her work. She’s not afraid to be blunt about topics she feels a strongly about, and voices her opinions whether you like them or not. Velarde grew up in a political environment: her father was a journalist who covered events during the 1960s liberation movements that were sweeping across Latin America. Her artwork addresses colonization and its repercussions. She draws inspiration from Pre-Columbian figurative sculpture and pottery. Ms. Velarde has reclaimed these works of art by placing her own face on her sculptures. She titles each piece using racial slanders associated with the people of this region, as a sign of solidarity and connectedness with those who were forced into colonization within her own country and throughout Latin America.

I spoke with Kukuli Velarde at the Barry Friedman Gallery LTD in Manhattan, surrounded by her new work, the day after the opening of her solo show, Patrimonio. The exhibit includes a series of large paintings on aluminum panels and ceramic sculptures from her Plunder Me Baby series.

Kukuli Velarde, Chichimeca Autotations (Mask with Five Drawings, Peru, AD 1, 800), (aka La Ofensiva To whoever fits! [Peru no hay papeles]); 2008 Terracotta and underglaze, 23 x 21 x 12 inches. Courtesy of Barry Friedman Ltd., New York.
DD: How did you come up with the idea of incorporating elements of figurative and ancient pottery from Pre-Columbian cultures and bring them into your work?

KV: Well one of my personal obsessions is colonization. All my work has always dealt with it and it is not something irrational, it responds more to a personal and emotional feeling. For instance, the first pieces in which I worked in clay were this series titled, We the Colonized Ones. It was a response for the 500th anniversary of Columbus landing in the Americas. After that my work has always had something to do with what colonization has meant for us. The series Plunder Me Baby, it also talks about how we have been de-contextualized in our own land and our own history. Colonization is a trauma that hasn’t finished to have a repercussion and we are still living with the consequences of it.

I always admired some Pre-Columbian pieces. I felt very connected with them and the first time I felt an inclination to re-do one of them was with the series titled Ishachapita. I saw this piece in a book and I felt the figure looked so much like me. If it is true that artists do self-portraits in their work, then I played with the idea that maybe the person who made that work probably looked like me. Maybe I made that piece a thousand years ago. That was the first time I took a Pre-Columbian piece and re-ed it.

In that series I repeated the shape and changed the surface. In Plunder Me Baby, I’m not repeating the shape; I’m changing the shape and surface, but I’m keeping it close to the Pre-Columbian ornamentation of the pieces. What I’m changing are the faces: they’re all anthropomorphized and I give them all my face. I title them all with racial slurs. I thought I had to take those names on me so that it was not like I was insulting other people. These insults are given to people like me, and that’s why I took these Pre-Columbian ceramic pieces I’m talking about them and how they were alienated.

DD: What type of clay do you use with your figurative work that you are doing?

KV: I use different types of clay that I buy from different companies in the United States. I try to find different types of terra cotta, because the last work that I’ve done, the Plunder Me Baby series is inspired by Pre-Columbian ceramic pieces from different countries in the Americas. I know they used different clays, so I always try to make them diverse. I am not trying to copy the clay body, that these different cultures had, that’s not a point of my work, but I try to give them diversity. I like the idea of having different types of terra cotta and different heights of temperature, so that they are different from each other.

DD: As an artist, did you find it hard to open up with your personal feelings about how women are portrayed and viewed in society?

KV: I don’t have a feminist agenda. I’m aware of how the situation is, but I don’t make it a mission or a purpose to transfer it in my work. Nothing that you see in my work is more rational than emotional. I don’t plan to make a piece that is going to talk about how women are treated or how indigenous people are treated. They are personal opinions, and they happen to have those emotions. I think there is always this emotional need to make the issue yours. For instance, like the character Santa Chingada: Perfect Little Woman, I created years ago, which means the Fucked Saint. I was responding to friends I would visit and they would tell me about what I should do with my life because they are so pious and suffer so much, and their husbands are drinking on the corner, or are assholes, flirting with some women, and staying out late for parties or having other lovers. But they are wonderful... because they stay at home and raise the children and are “good”...they are a “good woman”... I’m completely fed up that a woman has to be stupid to be “good.” It made me think of this woman who is pregnant and accepting all the indignities and insults and mistreatment from her husband, because he thinks that she is her place and, because he’s a man, he can do whatever he wants. I hate it when I see men like that. It really irritates me profoundly. I despise the idea that women have to suffer to be “good.”

DD: What type of message do you hope to evoke with your current work?

KV: I feel like my current exhibition, Patrimonio, is very Baroque. You have two different bodies of work that want to talk with each other. The ceramics and the paintings do not have any elements of reconfigurations, generalize Latin America but you see that in society, the same model repeating: the woman suffering, staying at home for her children, and giving up her life for her husband and children. This Catholic idea that women have to suffer to be “good,” it just irritates me.

DD: In your new work you return to painting. What’s the reason behind this?

KV: Well I don’t know. I was a painter for many many years and I stopped completely for twenty years. One day I felt strong enough to go back to painting. I mean “strong enough” because it was a big responsibility when I was younger, and my father enforcing too much on me, to the point that painting was one of the reasons I left Peru. I didn’t want to keep painting, so it took me awhile to feel safe to take it back again.

DD: What type of message do you hope to evoke with your current work?

KV: I feel like my current exhibition, Patrimonio, is very Baroque. You have two different bodies of work that want to talk with each other. The ceramics and the paintings do not have any elements of reconfigurations.
Where do you see your art in the history of Western ceramics?

KV: I like to believe that I am continuing an aesthetic that is disappearing. Because the more Western we get, the less these things are going to exist. Maybe I am just doing a continuation of my own aesthetics history. I think that is what I am doing in my own way.

DD: Where do you see your work going in the future: more ceramic work, paintings, or both?

KV: I hope someday I can connect them. They are two different worlds, but I know I can connect them. They have been connected in my society in many ways. There is still a struggle there and within me. I’m thinking about doing a series or a continuation of Plunder Me Baby but I’m planning to dress Pre-Columbian pieces with colonial clothing, the fabric and oil paint and gold leaf. I’ve done something like that before, but I wanted to store the idea away. I didn’t want to dress up a Pre-Columbian piece wearing colonial clothing, because it’s what the people had to go through.

In the first years of colonialism, you already had native painters painting virgins and Jesus and saints as early as twenty years after the conquest. It was a different way of thinking and working, and must have been horrible. I cannot grasp in my mind how these people had to go from the aesthetics they had, to change completely, working and thinking and portraying their work through painting. Those people must have gone crazy. Mentally it has to be shocking. Could you imagine someone coming from Mars and making you do artwork that has nothing to do with everything within your life? And it happened, it happened! And you see the paintings, and you wonder about their struggle. So maybe I am a continuation of that struggle. How can you do this, and expect two worlds to come together? In which moment is this going to happen? I don’t know.

Kukulí Velarde’s work can be viewed online at her website: www.kukulivelarde.com and at www.artsat.com

except my face for different reasons. Despite that, they are still completely disconnected. I like that, because that is the representation of our reality, in my eyes of course, in my own country. We are people who have survived a very difficult history and we have these currents of culture that ran side by side, but do not connect. We don’t become one culture completely.

My exhibition represents the duality of this Western world that is represented in colonial references and some contemporary popular cultural references. Each grouping of work represents the visual history of the person. I hope the viewer can understand this duality. This reality of ours is hard to read in one sitting. We respond aesthetically to different tastes: they are completely ours, but they may never mix. But they are still ours. There is a complexity there that I am still trying to figure out.
A TOUCH OF REALITY: A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE WORLD (OR WHAT APPEARS TO BE) OF ANTHONY WAICHULIS

By Parker Seward

“Categorized as a contemporary trompe l’oeil painter, Anthony Waichulis is known for a meticulous level of detail, that often results in visual tricks designed to make the viewer question which parts of the paintings are real and which (if any) are applied. In “Unnatural Distraction” what appears to be a photograph of flowers taken at close range, transforms into a painting through the clever inclusion of a ladybug that has seemingly landed on the flower (having been deceived by the realism) and thus smearing the paint. Both paintings can be taken at face value, or can be seen as symbolic of the disconnection between our world and that of the natural world.”

- Ginger Gregg Duggan, “Without a Trace”
Orlando Museum of Art Exhibition Catalogue

More often than not, the foundations of art are abandoned in the name of “self exploration”. The trouble with this is that it usually happens before the artist is ready for such a journey. Rarely do you come across someone who is not only qualified to take that journey, but has also chosen to bring the traditional elements of art along with him for the ride. I spoke with Anthony Waichulis, a modern day trompe l’oeil and hyperrealist painter, about this journey. A graduate of the Schuler School of Fine Art in Baltimore, Maryland, Waichulis now heads a private atelier where students come to learn the art of realism. Working out of northeast Pennsylvania, his work has been featured in over thirty exhibitions, forty publications, and is included in many private collections. During the interview Anthony Waichulis explained how realism is much more than just “trying to fool the eye” and how, when executed correctly, it becomes one of the most honest as well as conceptual art forms available.

PS: You were recently selected to participate in an exhibition called “Without a Trace” at the Orlando Museum of Art. Could you describe that experience?

AW: Being selected to participate in any exhibit is a great honor for me. When I first heard about the concept, a tribute to Alan Weisman’s book The World Without Us (an exploration of just how nature would go about un-doing what civilization has wrought), I was even more thrilled. The exhibit featured significant works of contemporary art from collections in the Orlando area. The works of mine chosen for the exhibit were put forth by a very special patron. His willingness to share these works with the Orlando Museum of Art made this experience a very special accolade.

Anthony Waichulis, Keepsake. Oil on Masonite, 11”x14” Photo courtesy of Anthony Waichulis
PS: You paint in a very realistic manner, with traces of Peto and Harnett in your work. What influenced you to paint this way?

AW: I embarked on my first trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art while I was in college. It was on this trip that I had first seen the trompe l’oeil paintings of William Harnett, John Peto, and John Haberle. When I saw these brilliant paintings, so filled with technical precision and clever gags, I was overwhelmed. I knew immediately that trompe l’oeil would be the genre that I would pursue without pause.

PS: Although many of your paintings are smaller in size, ranging from 5”x7” to 16”x20”, I would imagine they take a great deal of time to complete. What would you say are the pros and cons of working in this scale?

AW: The vast majority of my works do take considerable time to complete. I gravitate towards some of the smaller sizes for my endeavors in an effort to strike a balance with the work’s complexity. There are many variables that must I consider when determining the size for a specific work. It would be difficult to generalize pros and cons as it pertains to general size. Rather, I would say the challenge is to find the best scale or format with which to communicate my concept and allow for an ideal balance of texture, form and illusion.

PS: I can understand how each piece would dictate its own size. In “Tachyon’s Reply,” you depict a photograph of an old telephone as an object in the painting, but in your newer work, “Paradise,” you have painted out to the edges, giving the impression that the piece is an actual photograph and not a painting. How do you decide which way you will represent the subject matter?

AW: I make every effort to consider which format would best facilitate that which I am trying to communicate with my audience.

PS: How do you choose the subject matter for your paintings?

AW: Many of my subjects are selected due to their character. I tend to choose objects that carry a great deal of visual narrative. For example, looking at the baseball in the painting “Foul Ball!” you can see the history of bunts, grounders, foul and fly balls that tattoo the leatherly surface. Subject matter this rich in character reveals volumes without requiring much influence from me to “speak up.”

PS: I’ve noticed that older and sometimes outdated objects seem to be a constant theme in your imagery. Is there an overall underlying theme or does each work possess its own? And do you feel that the objects you depict have just as much contemporary significance as modern objects?

AW: I believe that throughout an artist’s career he/she will develop a visual vocabulary of familiar subjects, motifs, symbols, etc. that will eventually form a unique language. While each work I create does have its own theme, I believe the ongoing development of my language has given a consistency to my overall body of work. I believe the influence and relevance of the subjects you choose are determined by many variables. Recently I painted a work entitled “Boardwalk” that explored how subjects can speak very differently to viewers by way of our varied perceptions. Initially the composition appears to be a standard trompe l’oeil shadow box composition until further investigation reveals it is actually a photograph taped to a flat surface. I decided to use this dual illusion to bring attention to how subjects can ‘change’ depending upon the manner in which we choose to perceive the overall scene. It’s a very interesting effect — but I believe it echoes the way we shape our unique perception by way of our experiences. Like a simple ticket stub — just a tiny scrap of paper — but the experiences and emotions it may hold makes it something far more. It just depends on how we are looking at it. This is why I chose the subjects I did for this particular piece. Under the umbrella of vacations at...
You mentioned different variables, but there is one element that is consistent in nearly all of your paintings. Your work seems to incorporate the use of shallow spaces in the overall painting, yet a great deal of depth and perspective is present in the photographs you depict.

In “A Spot of Tea” you depict a photograph of a tea cup, but in the upper left hand corner you have painted a stain that the cup would leave on a table. Is this another way of adding to the illusion?

In addition to a well thought-out concept for each painting, your work demonstrates a great attention to detail. Do you have a favorite type of paint or brush?

I, too, use smaller brushes, so I had to ask! I get the impression that you take great care when approaching color. Do you have a specific way that you approach color?

Often with my own work I have people ask, “Why paint in such a realistic manner, why not just take a photograph?” Have you encountered this in your career before, and what is your response?

People associate very ‘tight’ representational paintings with photographs because people tend to only find such verisimilitude in the products of a camera. I do not believe that my attention to accuracy and detail makes my work better or worse than anyone else’s. I am a trompe l’oeil painter at heart and my paintings are created to
be illusions of reality. The subjects are supposed to look “real” when photographed – yes my paintings look like photographs because it is a photograph of a painted illusion of actual objects.

The much shorter answer I give is that I can not help it that photographs end up resembling my paintings...

PS: What is the typical type of criticism your work receives, both positive and negative?

AW: I have always considered myself extremely fortunate with the way my work has been received over the years. The greatest compliments come from watching people react to my work in utter disbelief. They investigate the works from just about every angle you can imagine trying to uncover the mechanics behind the illusion that they find themselves experiencing. The sign “Do Not Touch” and “Everything Within the Frame is Painted” signs that have peppered the walls during many of my exhibits are definitely a testament to this. Early on in my career I was often mis-categorized as a photographer or collage artist.

I do receive criticism regarding composition or placement of certain trompe l’oeil elements. Many involve statements such as, “If you just moved that masking tape it would be better!” or “Did you have to cover this area with an annoying piece of paper?” or “You should have moved that card a little so I can see this better!” While these statements may seem overly critical to most, they are exactly what I am hoping for.

Throughout my experience with the trompe l’oeil genre I have found that the ability to offer the viewer an almost insatiable urge to interact is an extremely powerful device. I make every effort to arrange visual elements to hint that something very important is hidden just a few centimeters behind or under. Often I will incorporate compositional elements that seem oddly out of place, prompting — almost during — the viewer to move them. I believe this elevates the drama, promotes the urge to interact, and enhances the visual experience.

PS: You are represented by the John Pence Gallery in San Francisco, a prestigious gallery aimed towards realism and representational art.

AW: My experience with The Pence Gallery has been incredible. Being able to exhibit along side such staggering talent has given my efforts a platform that is far greater than anything I could have hoped for. John Pence has been one of the greatest influences on my development as an artist. His guidance and direction helped me to establish my goals confidently, chart my course carefully, and dedicate myself completely.

Anthony Waichulis’ work can be viewed online at the John Pence Gallery website: http://www.johnpence.com/visuals/painters/waichulis/index.htm
ART MUST BE A CONTACT SPORT:
A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID ELLIS

By Jason Thompson

As I walk through Brooklyn with the skyline of Marcy Projects on the horizon, I hear the booming sound of Grand Master Flash’s The Message echoing down the narrow side streets. I follow the beats, looking for the address given to me by artist David Ellis, and arrive at a large brick warehouse with a couple windows open, and Grand Master Flash pouring forth from them. This is David Ellis’ studio.

David Ellis started making art as a graffiti artist in rural North Carolina at age twelve. He received his BFA from Cooper Union in New York City, and has been working and living in Brooklyn ever since. His urban hip-hop beat-influenced style of painting has resulted in commissions, murals, and shows in Paris, London, New York City and many other places around the world. As part of the group Barnstormers, a collective of friends and colleagues, he has painted barns in small towns across America and completed commissions on behalf of MOMA. David Ellis is an energetic, exciting, and extremely passionate artist. Viewing his paintings is like seeing the visual embodiment of music floating through the air in front of your face. His motion paintings, which can be watched on YouTube.com, make the act of painting a picture the work of art itself. His sound sculptures will affect you like no simple object resting on a pedestal.

JT: With the popularity of graffiti based artists such as Banksy and Shepard Fairey, do you see the ‘fine art’ world being more accepting of this kind of work?

DE: Uhm, I hate art. I like music and sports, so I will do my best to answer this question with all sincerity.

What we are trying to do with art is clean out all the bullshit from the art world. You know what I’m saying? I like Willie Nelson as much as I like Ol’ Dirty Bastard, because they both have voices full of gravel and dirty red clay, and if you can bring that into a sculpture, performance, or a painting, and know about Duchamp, you may be ahead of the curve. David Ellis is just an ordinary guy trying to make art. I’m trying to uplift culture and spin the world backwards and that shit comes easy to people like me. But for real, street art is goddamn played out and I want you to know that because everyone is sweating Banksy, Swoon and Shepard Fairey.

What’s great about Shepard is when the goddamn presidential election happened last year and Obama popped that shit, Shepard did the portrait of him. You’re looking at the National Portrait Gallery in DC and you see blah, blah, blah, blah... what ?!!! And Shepard did a portrait of Obama. Meaning, it’s possible to spin the world backwards. And I’m trying to say art, more than anything at this point in time, must be a contact sport!

If you’re not running down the field trying to get first downs, you’re not doing shit.

JT: Is graffiti the new ‘folk art’?

DE: First off, graffiti is old, and the preservationists within graffiti try to keep it old. I saw the remnants of a dinosaur without a mate. Basically what that means is graffiti was over in 1987. And a lot of people told me the same thing- graffiti writers. All of a sudden we get resurgence. And when you have a resurgence of a culture that is as powerful and dominant and visually...taking over the reins of a dead dinosaur, you have a preservationist ideology.

What I would like to propose to the youth who are affecting culture today is, what do you really have for tackle, what do you have for bait? Because Damien Hirst has proved that sharks are welcome in a gallery. So how do you catch a shark? You catch a shark with a goddamn big boat and a big-ass test line and a big-ass goddamn plan to affect culture visually. What he did was so substantial to make people go to art school, look in the history books, look at Duchamp.

I have to give a lot of people props who aren’t graffiti. But if you do a good wall you may have come up. And if people see that outside of a gallery and it’s actually saying something, you realize that in this day of Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, and phones, you do not need to build a tower and have a goddamn radio station for five million dollars. All you need is a couple hundred and a desire to affect culture. I mean that. If you want to affect culture, start affecting.
JT: Your work involves music, whether it’s being played over your motion paintings or created by your sculpture. While other artists have made work using sound, why do you think so few have merged the two art forms of music and painting or sculpture?

DE: In 1920 Kandinsky fucked with that. And he basically said a piano is a projection booth. His thoughts - dig him up – were, you hit the C note on a piano you’re actually also hitting the color red. He had all these ideas about spectral and visual production running alongside visual culture. It’s not my favorite shit, but what he wrote got me really hype on some yellow sound-type shit.

JT: When I create a piece of art, I see a completed piece in my head before I start. Do you hear a beat that either influences the flow of your paintings, or a beat you want to create via sculpture?

DE: When I create a piece of art, I see a completed piece in my head before I start. Do you hear a beat that either influences the flow of your paintings, or a beat you want to create via sculpture?

JT: You often collaborate with other painters or musicians on your pieces. How much does your work feed off their energy?

DE: Roberto Lange is possibly the best musician I know on the face of the planet. We collaborate on many things. That collaboration’s different than collaborations with other artists in that he actually is a visual artist. The guy draws, he paints, he does all these things, but he also is a visual artist that understands sonic qualities that can be appropriated and used efficiently with today’s technology to expose a point.

JT: Have you ever experienced any problems?

DE: There have definitely been episodes where I’ve brought a bunch of people together and some one has went over somebody too quick. The whole idea within graffiti is you don’t go over somebody. I want to say, give respect to other people out there going on a limb and putting their thing out there. I would like to encourage other people to not buff people that are legends.

JT: Once a Buddhist monk completes a work of art they will destroy it to show their lack of attachment to it. I was reminded of this while watching your motion paintings. Is there ever a moment where you think, “Man, I love this; it kills me to basically erase/cover up this layer”?

DE: The question is, is any condition permanent? It’s a Buddhist idea that no condition is permanent. The crew I roll with, the Barnstormers, had an exhibition titled No Condition is Permanent. Three weeks into this exhibition, which consisted of people painting on the floor daily and different people buffing each other out, the events of 9-11 transpired. After that we had an entirely different perspective on what ‘no condition is permanent’ meant in this city, the five boroughs of New York. When our tallest buildings collapsed, we realized, “hey, no condition is permanent.”

If you’re Buddhist you understand if you don’t clean the soap dish every day there won’t be a collage of soap accumulating in the bottom of your soap dish. The idea that I really respect in Buddhism is the daily cleansing of the space in which you dwell. So then you have a little bit more clarity in your mind to focus on things that could possibly affect culture.

JT: When working on a painting – either a motion painting or a work with the Barnstormers – is the work improvised, or is there a composition planned out beforehand?

DE: The answer is both. Say you spend a day painting and you make this thing on the floor, and when we get together over a period of time, a period of two weeks to six weeks and rock, we have everyday a different artist coming in to say something meaningful in his life or her life. Say that I come in and Doze and one of my heroes has just done one of the most beautiful paintings I have ever seen in my life. The consequence of
I love your Rube Goldberg-esque sound/music machines/sculptures. At what point did you feel you needed to take your art into the 3rd dimension?

I talk to me a little bit about when you started the Barnstormers. How did you find such a talented, like-minded group of artists?

How are undertakings like this funded?

What artists out there influence you?

While watching videos of your work on “You Tube” you are always introduced as “Brooklyn-based artist David Ellis.” How much influence has the culture of Brooklyn had on your work?

What do you think your work would be like if you weren’t located in the art mecca that is New York City or the culture-rich area of Brooklyn?

What artists out there influence you?

While watching videos of your work on “You Tube” you are always introduced as “Brooklyn-based artist David Ellis.” How much influence has the culture of Brooklyn had on your work?

What artists out there influence you?

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What artists out there influence you?
ENCOUNTERS WITH NATURE:
AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMEY GRIMES
By Caitlyn MacDonald

Jamey Grimes is an artist based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He received his BFA in painting and a BS in Biology at Birmingham Southern College, and his MFA in sculpture at the University of Alabama. His work has been shown at Sculpture Key West and exhibited throughout the country. I met Jamey Grimes at the University of Alabama, and the interview took place in his home studio.

Grimes’ work investigates the human attempt to rationalize natural space. Through the playful experimentation of synthetic materials he creates large installations that reflect how he perceives nature. His large ‘clean’ sculptures become areas of meditation, like a dream space. His pieces reveal both the polarity and commonality of human and natural worlds.

Grimes’ selection of materials is interesting. He uses materials such as mylar, corrugated plastic, acetate, and Yupo paper. Though these materials are not typically thought of as sculptural media, Grimes’ use of a heat gun causes the plastic to roll and turn in ways that are unimaginable. The lightness of his sculpted forms transcends the media he utilizes.

CM: You mention being influenced by your encounters with nature. Has this always been a common theme within your work, or is this a more recent concept?

JG: I think it’s always been there. If I look back towards my undergraduate work, which was more painting, I feel like nature was always present. But I think there was a stronger narrative in my work. I always wanted to tell a story, and there were a lot of natural themes that came into the story. I followed those themes in sculpture. I became more interested in the formal aspects, and it was more interesting than the story itself, so I detached the narrative from the formal qualities to a large degree.

CM: Do you have a main inspiration you draw from nature?

JG: I think so. My subconscious is visually influenced by nature — I can’t help but see it that way. I’ve accumulated many aspects of the natural world that I filter into an imaginary dream-space, or something like that. I studied Marine Biology for a lot of my undergraduate work, and spent a lot of time looking at plankton under a microscope. I see the strong influence of that experience, as I imagine myself moving through the space around the plankton. This experience is similar to walking through a forest, or swimming underwater. I regularly draw from this type of visual language in my sculpture. I will have dreams that are really bizarre and weird, but when I step back out of them I can tell they come from nature.

CM: You just said that you put yourself in your work, and I recently read about your piece, Throughfall, that you use the sculpture to imagine yourself at 100 feet tall walking through large trees. Do you always try to put yourself in your installations in a manner like that, imagining yourself within these spaces you create?

JG: Yeah, definitely. A lot of it is about environment and the things that I am doing are little tricks to play
with scale. A lot of it has to deal with lighting, but I think of the scale as constantly shifting in terms of the relationship between the viewer and the physical object. That’s what I was saying before; the planks and the trees being the same kind of thing. One’s microscopic and one’s bigger than you are, and it’s a similarity between the two which is interesting to me.

CM: How do your materials relate to your memories?

JG: In a lot of ways they don’t. It’s what I do with them that will relate it back. In another sense it’s like a clean slate. I definitely think ‘clean’ in terms of materials when I want to get started. If I was recycling politician signs or something like that, there is a whole level of content that gets thrown in with that. I don’t even care about the political associations people might misinterpret; it’s that the thing’s in ink on it and I want it to be very clean. That’s my crazy mode I want to only isolate a couple elements each time. There’s a tendency to put too many things into a piece and when I reflect on what I don’t like about a piece, it’s often that there’s too much going on. I’d rather it be a simple effect that becomes a complex effect through repetition. You can pay attention to that subtext instead of just trying to bear down on people over the head with too much information.

CM: I have noticed that your work has minimalist qualities to it. Is that something you like and try to do?

JG: I do and I don’t. I actually get drawn to that complexity. I realize I was not being as effective when I would try to do too much, and that’s how I cut the narrative out. There is just too much clutter. What am I trying to do when I make art? I try to get to the point. There really may not be that much of a point. It’s just this fun thing I want to do or build. I really respect minimalist art and I appreciate the effectiveness of it.

CM: Are there any artists or other theories that you are drawn to?

JG: Yeah. I am always looking for stuff that’s trying to handle what I am doing in a similar way of what I am doing. Tara Donavan is an easy one. I really like the way she handles materials and is doing a better job of what I am doing and what I want to do. I can’t help but be influenced by her. It’s just absolutely beautiful work. I try to pay attention to how she was able to get to the point. There are other people who are doing some similar things with light and space and scale and nature. I have a lot of interaction with what Maya Lin is doing with her response to a physical environment and thinking about the process of nature, transitioned into this minimalist art. She’s got some really beautiful pieces that I am just overwhelmed by.

One of my major influences is Craig Wedderspoon. He was my professor. His thoughts, questions and powerful artwork let me understand the power of formal work. Responding to the installation itself while the installation is occurring: Ludmika Ogorzelez. I met her last year at Sculpture Key West, and this year I got to talk to her about her work. She doesn’t like to talk about material because for her it’s all about the line. She has this extreme passion for these gestures, and every time she puts the piece up she gets to make another piece, depending on where she is and her reaction to the space. We hear this talk all the time: responding to the space, and it’s different every time you put it up. It gets to where you are not paying attention to it anymore, but I think of her when I talk of how installation responds to a particular space. And it’s really about the gesture more than anything else.

Christina Inglésa is another; she’s Spanish but she has work all over the world. I am perplexed about some of the similarities and I started paying attention to the way she deals with rectangular forms and broken forms that catch part of the light, cast shadows on the walls… there’s similarities in dealing with materials.

CM: Installation-based work is all about creating space which captures and involves the viewer. How do you successfully accomplish this within your work?

JG: I have always liked how kids respond to work and ‘successful’ could mean, ‘do they get the work’ and also, ‘did it survive them being there’? I have failed and succeeded in both of those. We have been working with the gymnastics program here at school, and they have a huge fan base. They go to national championships and lots of people come to those gymnastics meets. They invited us to do some things with them that looked like glorified confetti. I was interested in how we could play in that space and the idea of what kind of object might fall, and how it might fall, and in a different way in which people have seen before. They have done balloon drops and confetti canons, but they wanted us to do something unique and different, so we’ve been playing around in that realm. My piece Throughout, I just put that up for two days, for the gymnastics ‘pink night’, and they lit the piece up pink. There are kids literally running and playing through it and a lot of them were getting it in a playful sense. I like for them to interact with it. We had guards there to make sure people didn’t get out of hand, and parents say, ‘Don’t touch it, don’t touch it’, but I kind of wanted them to touch it. I want people to walk through it, touch it and interact with it, look around it, to be in a weird place in an instant. To me that’s the essence of a successful piece.

CM: I remember reading somewhere that you are interested in the playfulness of the materials, but you are also interested in the playfulness of the human interaction.

JG: Yeah, I hadn’t necessarily thought about it as the same thing. Playfulness for me is a different kind of adult seriousness, meaning in the way the plastic rolls when I am melting. There is playfulness in that. The playfulness of a child is something completely different. It’s nice to be able to tap into that, but it’s more of a playful observation and after-effect.

CM: You mention frequently that imagination plays a key role in your work. When creating a sculpture do you depict a memory of how you imagined spaces as a child, or is it how you would imagine them today as an adult?

JG: It’s as an adult. It’s filtered several times, to some degree. I might say it’s being like a child, too, because there are recurring themes that I am trying to penetrate—or unlock, or understand—and it’s basically the subconscious being represented by a physical form. It’s just a metaphor of the subconscious, or that we think of a subconscious. So, in filtered that thought of playfulness, it’s odd because most of my work I have thought of in a darker sense, in terms of decay or dark caves, or this weird space you can’t reach. It’s an adult sense, to a degree, but it’s also things that scare us as children. The same things that scare can make us very fascinated, depending on how it’s presented. That has something to do with how all the sculpture is bright and white. I think I have mentioned ‘clean’ sculpture before: it’s a clean version of things that would frighten us except that they have been cleaned up, so they interest us instead.

CM: When creating a sculpture, what is your end goal? Do you want the viewer to leave with what you intended, or do you like the viewer to have their own thoughts? Does it even matter?

JG: I lean towards them having their own thought. But you want to send them in a direction. I find time again and again that people have the same kinds of reactions categorically. People say about the melted plastic pieces, that they are either underwater, up in the trees, or in the clouds. Sometimes people throw in some bizarre things like, ‘I am in a bowl of Cheerios!’ It’s different, but the way it’s the same it’s still what I intended. I don’t want people to look at it and think, ‘flock of birds’ or ‘frog eggs’; I don’t want it to be so concrete that it’s done. If they see clouds, it’s only almost clouds in the same way it’s almost under the ocean for somebody else. I like that it can sit right between the two, even once you identified it. But if it’s something as clear as frog eggs, then it’s just frog eggs and you can’t go anywhere else with it. I want it to be open enough that people can do their own thing with it.

CM: I have noticed that you use corrugated plastic, and that you use a lot of light and shadows in your
pieces, like in Between Space. Is that an important aspect to your work? Do the shadows complete your piece?

JG: Yeah, I have shown that corrugated plastic stuff outdoors and the shadow—it just totally changed. I never resolved myself to that version of the piece. There were things about it I liked but I didn’t get to spend a lot of time with that. I still want to experiment with that because it’s such a great material for being outside, and I want to get into more outdoor work. But, yeah, one of the essential elements is the lighting. There is another instance, when I installed it in a lobby: it was a nice space but there was no relative space to walls or shadow, and it hurt the piece. There are other ways to make the piece work, but I prefer to light with shadow.

CM: Have you ever faced any limitations when creating an installation?

JG: Yeah, as simple as time. It’s been tremendously difficult for me to juggle teaching and getting sculptures done. There are wonderful facilities that I have worked with, and they are bending over backwards to let me get in there, in a weird window of time some long weekend. It’s easy to underestimate the problems that you are going to run into, when you are already driving twelve hours there and back on a tight window, and you gotta spend twenty-six hours a day installing. I don’t like being in that position, so I am doing a better job at understanding the level of the installations before I get to where I am going. Time is a huge factor.

Your work also has to be adaptable. A lot of my success in terms of installation has been accidental. The first corrugated plastic ceiling piece I was doing, it turned out very versatile. Lots of little pieces, and I could hook them up, throw them in the back of my little pickup truck, squash down and unfold to be fifty feet if I wanted to. It was lightweight, and I could carry them up a ladder or whatever I needed to do; it was just convenient. The difference between working on a ladder or a lift is a big deal. I have had places where I have installed where the ceilings are thirty feet up; I would spend the first day doing nothing but throwing rings over I-beams and tying them up, so I would have a ton of strings to tie stuff the next day.

CM: Why are you interested in creating installation-based work? It seems like a majority of work is installation-based.

JG: It primarily is. I am still interested in smaller work in the near future. It was a transformation that happened primarily when I was working on these boxed pieces called Outside In. They were layered pieces. They were all about cavities, spaces, and layering. That’s all still very present in the work I am doing now. I build these things, I want to see them, and I want to get inside them. A lot of this was originally a visual journey: you’re trapped outside of this box, and you look in these tunnels trying to get to these places you can’t get to. The larger pieces transform a gallery into that box, so that walls of the gallery are the box.

I also like the idea of this cross-section, this little scientific plug that we have pulled out of something else, and it insinuates this infinite plane beyond these walls. I like the idea of the installation; it’s so much more immersive. What your imagination does in the smaller piece, your body does in the bigger piece. Once you’re actually in the space it’s so much bigger. It’s bigger because it fills the room up; it’s actually smaller because it transforms you as a small thing. It seems large. The insinuated space becomes infinite in a way that shrinks you.

CM: When creating a piece, do you have an idea then find the material, or do you have an abundance of a material and go from there?

JG: Yeah, I usually have a bulk of stuff. You can get trapped into doing the same work again and again. There are some things I have been doing at the same time, because the same piece needs to be in two different
I am in academia. We get our art history in a row. I was studying East Asian civilization and art history, and everything seemed to make sense and I thought everything was normal, and everybody was going to understand in that way. Now I am trying to teach art to guys, where some of them might not even be able to read. Some of them come up with some great stuff, so there’s a reality to it that doesn’t require all of the education. Trying to get them to isolate what it truly means to be an artist has really made me question it within myself. Because I will do things that follow things that are successful. I forget why I made it the first time. I am making it more because like the piece but, I start forgetting what the piece is about. I am just cranking stuff out at some point along my path. When I create a new work, I have all the say about nature and things we think about, and the poetry we walk around and can’t hear, and all this stuff. It makes clearer sense when I think about the situation these students are in. It’s pretty serious.

I have a new class coming up that I am really excited about. I have an idea about bringing in imagery. There is a new publication with some great scenery of Alabama. It’s inspiring stuff. It’s at the core of everything I have been talking about, with what gets me going with nature and why I do art. It’s important to share my passion with these guys, but it is tortuous to show these guys this stuff! It’s difficult to figure out. I want these guys to be the artist. I want to get out of the way. I want to give them the chance to think of something bigger. I want them to think about art in a way that is as important to them as it is to me.

It’s all about how they see the world. They ask me for things like an eagle flying over a mountain, but I have to be careful because if I give one person that they will all want that. Then, everybody will be drawing an eagle flying over a mountain. So I give them a book and let them pick out something, but that’s still tricky. I want to transform that: I want to give them a loupe, to look at the texture on their clothes or the dirt on the ground. They can draw what they see, this idea of magazine and scale change.

It’s an ability to think about this beauty that might be ten miles from where this prison is, that they may not be able to see again, or beauty in the stone wall, or the dirty white shirt they are wearing. If they come to a place in their mind where they can see that, then that’s interesting. It’s changed me, but I don’t know it really has. It’s hard to see these guys and what they are dealing with, and to treat it with the right kind of respect. But what they want is just a little bit of attention and a little voice that they can carry outside of the walls. They do publications and people get to see their stuff. It’s a way to get out of the prison, even if it’s just the two hours they are drawing. It’s an emotional outlet, a better place to put bad things.

I feel like these guys are set up in so many ways to be better artists than any of us because of the material they got to deal with, if they choose to confront it. I mean, we all got it pretty easy. I am conveniently an artist in this world. I don’t have all the struggles that our predecessors have had. I mean, what do I have to suffer through to get my art done? Maybe suffer through the occasional long installation in Key West. I mean — it’s not a bad thing.

Jane Grimes’ work can be viewed online at his website: www.janevytimes.com
**DREAM WEAVER**

By Marybeth Agayev

Tari Kerss is a weaving and textile artist. Her artistic style and concepts are strongly influenced by her early life in Japan and her interest in dreams and the subconscious. Her pieces aren’t simply born of an idea, but of feeling, emotion, dreams and childhood whimsy. She studied at San Francisco State and the California College of Arts in Oakland. Since 2008 she has been spreading her passion on to others as an Instructor of Weaving and Textiles at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. I interviewed Tari Kerss at her residence in Edinboro, where many of her works were on display.

MA: You refer to your style of textile as “California Abstract.” How did you decide on three-dimensional weaving in an abstract form as your specific style?

TK: I didn’t necessarily decide on it. At one point I worked in three-dimensional forms with other materials. I really loved doing ceramic sculpture. So... I was working two dimensionally but I wanted the material I was working with to have a double-sided piece, and you naturally get into having three-dimensions if you have something that is double-sided. It just evolved into being three-dimensional. I go back and forth between three and two dimensions.

MA: I find it intriguing you refer to your work as sculpture. Is that because of the 3-D format?

TK: Yes it is because I am working in art, and in art it is often 3-D unless it is functional. I just think of sculpture as a 3-dimensional format, therefore we use the term sculpture. The trees out there are three-dimensional, they’re very sculptural, but we call them trees. For a natural form they are very sculptural.

MA: How did you discover your passion for the 3D weaving versus flat designs, such as wall hangings?

TK: It’s not like I switched from 2-D to 3-D at any given point. I’ve always gone back and forth with all different materials and media. It’s not like it is a choice, like working with materials would evolve, not like I would define myself as strictly two-dimensional or three-dimensional. I think it is just wherever I need to go with materials and intuitively what is coming out of me. Some of the three-dimensional form comes from the fact that my father was an architect and he was always building around me, and so a lot of times when I do larger pieces I like to have a relationship to the pieces. Three-dimensional form allows me to do that more than two-dimensions.

MA: Do you see your pieces as being more decorative in nature, or do you create functional pieces as well?

TK: Well, there are other options between functional and decorative. Decorative means there’s sorts of a surface quality and a design element and I am not really as concerned with decorative. My pieces are definitely not functional in terms of being utilitarian. I have done functional pieces, clothes I used to weave and scarves. I did love working with color and texture and the layout of the pattern, but what they didn’t allow me was to really tap into my internal world, my psychological world, which is more of what I was working with in some of the pieces, some of the sculptural forms.

By Marybeth Agayev

There was a period of time when I was working a lot with dreams and doing a series of watercolor drawings from that imagery, doing pieces in an unconscious way. You can’t really work unconsciously, but I’m trying to tap into something that is not in my dreams, coming out of my body and my emotions and my feelings. The most recent work, from five years back, started the sculptural forms. I started with dreaming I had about a huge wave of water washing over a high tower and I began to work with the teardrop form. I grew up not being very verbal because I was born in Japan and lived there until I was five. There was a different language there as well so I would cry, and that became an issue in my life because it was easier to cry than to talk things out. I began to work with the image of the teardrop as a catharsis or a process. It took me a year just to figure out how to get that form in my materials. Those were done with purchased fiber, organza, silk organza. Once I decided to be a weaver I wanted to go back to my own materials. That is where I got back to large forms and monofilament and the relationship of the monofilament, being clear and somewhat like water or tears. There was a period of time where I really directed my focus into the teardrop form.

MA: Your piece, Laguna Grasses (2007), very much resembles a basket. Was that the intent?

TK: It is like a basket or vessel form and it is called Laguna Grasses because I loved to walk out into the lagoon and the wetlands, and there are different colored grasses and water and layers of texture. I did a series of those pieces and they were a tribute to the wetlands. There is one wetland area from when I was a kid that I used to play in, and it got covered over and filled in with dirt and a shopping center put on top of it, so that was why that was important for me. There was a period of time when I was doing large sculptural forms. They were like twelve or sixteen feet and they were done with wood. I would gather all these branches and vines and natural materials, and created large forms from that and rope and twine, and would put netting over these forms and create larger forms that were sculptural. Most of those disintegrated back into the environment. I left them to disintegrate. Composting was part of the theme.

MA: You also participated in some exhibits under the heading “wearable art.” Were any of those considered functional pieces?

TK: I got out of graduate school and took a trip to Europe. In Paris and Venice, the functional work was so beautiful, the clothing and the couture, and I began to want to take sculptural forms and integrate them with the functional forms. Clothing, of course, is a fiber sculpture being used all the time and so I began to make clothing. I would weave the fabric and dye the silk for the living and then I would sew the whole thing together — jackets and capes, mostly.

It was so time consuming so they were really not very good for money, although I loved making them and I loved the idea that they would go out in the world and be worn. I felt that because the whole point of it was that I could make a living from it. So then I went into flat forms like throws and scarves and shawls and I did that for a couple years, and did trade shows. Then I worked in the industry for a few years, working for a woman that did silk for interiors, and ran a production line for a while and worked in a couple weaving studios. Then I decided that I wanted to do work that had no purpose or use, that I could be liberated and work with whatever came up, and not have to do things according to certain shades.

MA: What are your feelings on your weavings being viewed as a craft versus being seen as art/sculpture?

TK: I don’t really like that separation by hierarchies. I want to weave. That’s the medium that I have chosen to work in, and I want to create forms that are expressive, and people out there can bring their issues to it. I am going to keep believing that it is a strong medium to continue working in to express ideas. I’m not going to try and persuade the whole world the way that they should think— it’s an art form to me and it’s also a craft which takes a lot of skill and it’s a craft that I would love to see continue on and remain alive and be vital. I love both the traditional and the innovative. There are traditional craft techniques being lost that I would love to see brought back.
MA: In your artist statement you cite a bevy of sources for your inspiration and mention that your works are created by “instinctive internal dialogue that occurs in the midst of the creative process.” Does that mean you leave your pieces open to change as you go?

TK: Yes. And also I work from piece to piece, so I never feel like I get everything in one piece. I’ll go from one piece to the next, building on an idea.

MA: You do sketches and drawings, and then translate them into woven structures. Is color taken into consideration then, or simply the architectural design?

TK: A lot of times when I am planning a piece it is mostly the form and the structure. It often starts with an idea on paper in a sketch, then color comes in as an idea of what I am trying to express, or it comes in intuitively. I’ll just grab colors and look at them and see what I am trying to do with them. I am always doodling, so I take my doodles and cut them up and glue them down and what that form is beginning to happen from — that’s the beginning of working it out. Then I go into what colors and materials I would use and then I can begin to work with it and weave the cloth. Other times I will just weave the cloth and adjust as I go; no drawing, just working with materials, and seeing what comes out of that.

MA: You weave on multi-harness looms and use computers to draft the pattern and structure of each weaving. Is there a specific program that does this?

TK: The loom has a computer built right in. The software programs vary; you can get them from different companies, and buy them separately. The one I use is called Weave Point. I just use the weaving program for the more complicated structures because I need more harnesses and I need more treads. It depends on the weave structure.

MA: You received the Dream Art Award from The International Association for the Study of Dreams. Do your dreams influence your designs?

TK: At that time I was doing a series of scrolls. The house I grew up in, my parent’s collected Japanese art, so there were a lot of Japanese scrolls. The scrolls were painted on silk and backed with fabric. When we think of scrolls we think they are more of a fine art, but they are actually a fine art on fabric, so I took that idea and I did a series of scrolls based on my dreams. One dream I had actually took me back to my childhood in Japan so I went and got some old photographs and made silkscreens. I went on the computer to Photoshop and worked the imagery into a collage, and then I made an acetate and burned it to a silkscreen, and made a piece that had a series of images that had a narrative. I actually made several of them on silk fabric. I went to a place where they restore Japanese scrolls and they usually back them with a paper backing, so I learned how to back the fabric with paper in the Japanese style. So, specifically, there were a series of scrolls based on dream imagery.

MA: You stated that you gather ideas from nature, dreams, and some “unidentifiable source.” Does weaving draw from your senses, specifically a “sixth sense” or something spiritual?

TK: Art to me is spiritual because it takes you into a place, out of the practical world, and you are actually engaged in making something. It draws from that part of me, like the dream world, which for me has a relationship to daily life. It is an aspect of reality. I think it is very real and alive.

MA: Do your pieces inspire you to dream or envision more ideas for incorporation into future pieces?

TK: I think in the periods of time when I have been working every day, or even five days a week, ten hours a day. There have been periods of a couple years when I have had that kind of intensity, where I have been able to focus like that. There is this real relationship between my dream life and my awake life, and I have had instances where I’ll have a dream and I’ll go into the studio and I will look at the materials I am working with, or the patterns and the colors, and somehow the imagery and the dream and what is happening in the studio… there’s this relationship, and they are completing each other. That doesn’t happen a lot, but when it does happen there is a connection that can’t be made through the intellect; it is made through something else.
CLAY PRINTS: THE VOCABULARY OF PRINTING ON CLAY WITH PAUL ANDREW WANDLESS

By Earl Elowsky

“Studio 3 Art Company”: these are the words that Paul Andrew Wandless has graffitied on the door of his studio space in the Lillstreet Art Center in Chicago, Illinois. Entering the space, you immediately notice the gestural figure drawings that adorn the walls and the wordplay that accompanies the imagery. It is easy to forget that this is the studio of a ceramic artist. Wandless makes clay prints and ceramic sculptures, but also works in many other media. He is an artist, educator, author, and curator.

Wandless is the author of Image Transfer on Clay, which describes the possibilities of what one can achieve by printing on clay, and co-author of Alternative Kilns & Firing Techniques. In addition to books, Wandless regularly writes articles for Pottery Making Illustrated, a monthly publication that provides technical information to ceramic artists. He is an Assistant Professor of Art at Harold Washington College in Chicago. He has presented numerous workshops on clay and printmaking at various institutions, including Penland School of Crafts. He has also lectured on the subject of minorities in ceramics and the arts at the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) annual conferences. He is currently on the board of directors and Vice President of the Potters Council, a national organization that supports and promotes the ceramic arts.

Wandless earned an MA from Minnesota State University, Mankato and an MFA degree from Arizona State University. He is the recipient of the 2007 Outstanding Achievement Award from NCECA. Exhibitions he curates have featured multicultural artists and other artists who combine ceramics and printmaking. He is co-founder of Cultural Visions International, which is a website that serves as a gallery and resource site for multicultural artists.

As a student, Wandless created rectilinear sculptures inspired by the work of David Smith. His professor at the time noted that his work was very formal about shape and activating space, but wasn’t expressing the emotions and ideas that he wanted to convey to the viewer. This is when Wandless started to develop his mature aesthetic and the concept behind his work.

Wandless grew up in the 1980s, right in the middle of the explosion of graffiti. He was instantly attracted to the gestural quality of the paintings of Jean Michel Basquiat, and was influenced by the choice of bold colors and quality of line in those paintings. This influence is very evident in Wandless’ naïve drawing style, selection of color, and the graphic quality of his work. The graphic nature of his imagery results from his choice to use printmaking processes on his two-dimensional ceramic work.

When Wandless took a course on myth, religion, and art in college, he had to create his own mythology while utilizing the constructs of traditional and ancient mythologies. Since then, he has continued this practice in creating narrative artwork. He wants to tell a story but, more specifically, he wants to tell his story. Expression of one’s own experiences is the key to making strong work, according to Wandless. “If you didn’t
live it, you don’t have any visceral connection to it. Strong work is work that’s personal expression, whatever that is. It doesn’t mean it’s serious, it could be tongue-in-cheek or funny, but it should be something that you have some kind of direct connection to.”

Wandless’ narratives are direct expressions of his thoughts and experiences from his everyday life. “The characters I use are friends. They are all people I know.” He uses the tools of a clay artist and printmaker as symbols to bring himself into his stories as a character. It is important that his characters and symbols remain consistent when he makes clay prints or sculptures. “I appropriate myself,” he says. He does this by using the bits and piece of his imagery in his clay prints, traditional prints, paintings, and sculptures. “Each symbol or word is an individual component that I can put together in different ways to make a different song or story. I can use the same words, but use different languages. The different languages are the different media, and they will give different qualities to my story.”

Wandless has a stack of tracing paper with the drawings of all his characters so that he can use the exact same drawing, but change the information that is presented. He has studied the construction of languages, alphabets, hieroglyphs, and pictographs so that he can predict how the viewer will read his symbols, text, and icons. He utilizes geometry and the compositional patterns of Renaissance artists that relate to beauty, while guiding the viewer through the image. “If I want people to read my work, I need to set it up in a way that can be read. I can’t make up my own reading system. It wouldn’t make sense. I can’t code my information without a code that people can apply to it. Instead of making up a code, there are codes that already exist out there.”

While Wandless wants the story to be accessible, he doesn’t want you to immediately understand everything. He intends for each viewer to take a different path to reach the meaning of his work. “Good art has something to offer that anyone can find on their own. If there’s only one path to get there, then you either get off at that exit, or miss it. There’s not just one interpretation, but there are multiple interpretations.” He believes that the viewer should be able to see his work, read the title and the statement, and be able to discern what is going on. If he needs to be there to explain the meaning of his work, he feels that it is unsuccessful.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of Wandless’s work is his choice to make clay prints. He contradicts the traditional notion of a ceramic artist, by primarily working two dimensionally. This work hovers precariously between printmaking and ceramic art. “It’s not clay and it’s not print, so they are clay prints. I want you to think about the image, and get caught up in the idea, not that it is made of clay. If you automatically think about that it is made of clay then it is unsuccessful.” He has taken an interdisciplinary approach to working with clay throughout his entire career. None of his educators were traditional clay artists, so he decided not to be a traditional clay artist. “Clay was a medium that was used, but that was about it. It was no more special than that. I’ve always had that attitude about clay, which is sort of an anti-attitude to traditional clay folk, but to me clay’s always been a material.” He has specifically chosen to work in clay for the effects he can achieve with the color of the glazes and underglazes. The materials give him a very different result than would be achieved by printing traditionally on paper. “I’m taking advantage of the materials to create this aesthetic that’s a bit unique, but I’m also doing it in the context of printmaking.”

Suites of images are created rather than editions, because Wandless wants to be able to change the information in each image. Unlike an edition of identical images, a suite will use the same matrix for each print, but with different colors or information. Conceptually he addresses the printmaking idea of the multiple even though he is working in clay. It is important for his work to maintain this relationship with printmaking, even though he views it as a separate genre.

Wandless uses traditional printmaking processes to create his imagery, but also takes advantage of new
Paul Andrew Wandless

Prize Fighter: 2007.

Low fire clay linocut embossed images, glaze and underglazes

26” x 12” x 12”

underglazes and printing processes. He utilizes linocuts, hand drawn and photographic screen-printing stencils, bisque stamps, and photopolymer plates. There are two ways he can print to transfer the image to clay: directly and indirectly. In the direct method, he prints the underglazes directly onto the ceramic tile. For the indirect method, he prints with underglazes onto a plaster slab to make monotypes. In this process he builds up his image from the front to the back on the plaster slab. He often paints with the underglazes and slips at this point, as well. After the image is created, he pours a low-fire casting slip onto the slab and the image is absorbed into the slip. Once the slip dries, the monotype is separated from the plaster slab and trimmed into a tile. To preserve the colors of the underglazes and slips, all of his work is low-fire. Once the clay print has been fired, he frames and displays it like a painting.

There is an implied narrative evident in Wandless’ work, and it suggests that it is part of a larger story. Wandless’ imagery includes recurring symbols and characters. The characters often have halos or wings, which refers to his interest in creating a mythology that is based on religion. Some of his figures are frontal or profile portraits, often his own face. Other images have multiple characters interacting with one another. Recurring symbols include chairs, ladders, stars, hands, birds, and the tools of potters and printmakers. His more recent work introduces text into his pictures. His imagery is very colorful, but the palette is often subdued. He juxtaposes the graphic quality of the various printing techniques with a painterly approach to the application of color.

In his three-dimensional work, Wandless continues to use simplified figures so that he can accentuate the emotions he is expressing through gesture and color. He uses the same characters and symbolism, but in three-dimensional form. He uses a similar color palette and painterly application of glazes and underglazes, as in his clay prints. In a hand-built series of large heads, the surface has been embossed with linoleum printing blocks, and he has drawn his symbols onto the surface using underglazes and underglaze chalks. He accentuates the embossing using an oxide wash. His more recent sculptures, featuring simplified figures standing on platforms with symbolic objects, are screen-printed with underglazes. He incorporates text by writing on the figures in a way that resembles graffiti.

Wandless believes in the power of working in a group. He keeps a constant dialogue with other artists who work with clay and print so they can promote their work as a whole. Wandless plays a major role in this cooperative effort by organizing exhibitions that showcase the work of artists who combine printmaking and clay. He states that this is nothing new, and relates it to the models used by earlier art movements in Europe. Artists in this unofficial collective include Kathy King, Scott Rench, and Paul Scott. In order to have a cohesive membership, Wandless believes it is necessary to “…define what you’re doing, create a vocabulary, and use the correct vocabulary when describing your work. For these clay prints, we are using the language of print, and need to keep it consistent.”

Another crucial component to the success of the collective comes from publishing articles. Writing about the work of other artists in the group further helps to unify and strengthen the goals of the members. “…There are maybe twelve people writing about ceramics. If you can be one of those people, and create discourse about the work you are doing, then you control what is important and documented in the world of ceramics.”

Wandless believes that by documenting the work and discourse in writing, art historians will recognize this group as a legitimate movement and be able to categorize these artists in the future.

While Paul Andrew Wandless may have a non-traditional approach to making ceramic art, he strictly follows the traditional models that artists have used for centuries both in creating his own work and unifying a group of artists into a movement. He has had great success in exhibiting his clay prints and sculptures, but he is more concerned with the fortunes of the group. In addition to creating work, he spends a great deal of time writing, speaking, and curating in order to promote the movement. He believes that the strengths and successes of the individual members can never surpass the cumulative success of the group as a whole.

Paul Andrew Wandless’s work can be viewed online at www.studio3artcompany.com
I walk along an industrial street in Brooklyn overshadowed by large brick buildings hoping to see a wheat paste or some evidence of artist Dennis McNett’s presence on the long urban avenue. Dennis McNett is a printmaker who is known for his intense and energetic relief prints. His work is informed by the aesthetics of the skateboard and punk scenes of the 1980s, as well as Nordic mythology. McNett’s work is diverse, encompassing with printmaking, sculpture, installation and performance art. He received his MFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY where he now teaches printmaking. He continues to work out of Brooklyn, where he also resides. McNett’s installations incorporate the aesthetic of relief printmaking into sculptures and murals. He has exhibited as the Stanton Chapter in New York City and Space 1026 in Philadelphia, in a solo show at “Life Art Gallery” in Portland, Oregon, and has participated in numerous group exhibitions. His work is in the permanent collections of the New York Public Library, University of Wisconsin at Madison, and the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University.

I greet McNett from afar; he has a smile on his face and a skateboard under his arm. We enter the stairwell of a large brick building and walk up a few flights of stairs. We make our way into his studio, a shared space with three other artists. A printing press resides in the center of his studio, and I see evidence of familiar images of McNett’s work on the walls. There is a large stack of wood blocks in the corner and one of his Wolfbats is suspended from the ceiling, staring me down. His studio has a large window where I glance downwards at the industrial landscape and skyscrapers in the distance.

SP: I’ve seen some examples your large-scale relief prints and the Big Damn Prints event that you’re involved in. Can you discuss the physical printing of the large-scale relief prints?

DM: I do a project at Pratt every year, Big Damn Prints. That’s when we rent a steamroller, and everyone does 4’ x 8’ woodcuts. We ink it up with straight relief ink, and we use a carpet felt that is pretty cheap. The blocks are cut on MDF ultra-light and are sealed up with shellac and then ran over with a steamroller. I’ve hand-printed them; a lot of the actual 4’ x 8’s that I have are hand printed on muslin. Muslin is good because you can see it come up when you’re printing. I don’t want to do it on a sheet of paper that size.

There are some that I’ve cut down 40” x 17” that I’ve printed by a press at Mason Gross (School of Fine Arts) at Rutgers. The first time I did them we used 1/2” birch plywood. Everyone was struggling trying to get the stuff around. When you’re at 1/2” the wood is a bear to move. We use 1/8” ultra-light. It’s about half the weight, cuts twice as easy, and holds up to the steamroller.

SP: Can you talk about your experience with Cannonball Press?

DM: Cannonball Press is Martin Mazzorra and Mike Houston and they started it about ten years ago. They
publish people’s prints that they like. I met Mike and Mark when I moved to the city, and they asked me if I wanted to do a few prints with them. We’ve done a couple collaborative projects together. We did a big 11” x 17” banner. The three of us went to Estonia to do a show and we collaborated on some things there. I used to share a studio with them and I branched off because it’s really their thing. I needed to do my own thing. It felt like at some point I was just doing their projects and I didn’t have a lot of input, so I cut loose.

SP: What role does scale play in your work?

DM: It doesn’t. I don’t limit myself. If I feel like doing this little 14” x 16” image then that’s what I’ll do, and if I want to do a 4” x 8” woodcut I’ll do that. If I want to build a wolfbat that’s bigger than a car, I’ll do it. It depends on the presence. If I wanted to have a presence to come down the street I might build it the size of a car. The scale usually makes sense to whatever I’m making.

SP: I’ve seen pictures of Swoon or Tom Huck working on large-scale blocks on the wall. How do you work on these things? Do you work on the table or the wall?

DM: I like to be over top of my work. I usually just put it on top of a table and carve away on it, standing. I’m not sitting down when I cut. I’m usually standing over top of it.

SP: Wood versus linoleum – do you have a preference?

DM: I like linoleum for a more fluid, sharp line. When I’m doing these big woodcuts I don’t have to do a tiny, fine line. A 1/4” cut is going to look very detailed on something that size. Wood’s cheaper, and it’s more rigid. A piece of linoleum that size would be a nightmare to handle.

SP: Mark making seems to be a key element in your work. It possesses an exuberance and intuitive energy. Can you discuss the process of your wood block prints?

DM: As soon as I was introduced to relief printmaking I knew that’s what I wanted to do. I tried drawing and painting, and when I found relief it related to the marks that I enjoyed growing up. They looked harsh and graphic, the same way the old skateboard graphics did. The way punk rock album covers, the show flyers, and stuff like that. They had a harsh graphic quality. I like drawing with the chisel and I like the resistance like I do in drawing. Because of that resistance you have to put energy into it and the energy comes through in the mark, which is definitely what I enjoy about it.

SP: Printmaking and drawing are always related to me: the reproducing of a drawing, or a new way of drawing.

DM: It not only reproduces the drawing. I do a lot of the drawing with the tool itself. Usually what I sketch on the block is pretty minimal. I make a lot of the marks using cross-hatching and contour lines, creating the illusion of volume and lights and darks.

SP: Do you work from reference?

DM: I always use visual references. Say I’m into making images of goats (points to one of his goat prints) - I’ll look at images of goats and I won’t copy it, but I’ll look at how the face changes, or what their eyeballs look like, or the ways that their ears flop, the way the horns come out. I’ll alter the curve of their horns or wrap it into a snake and definitely refer to images, but not copy them.

SP: Who are some of your artist influences?

DM: Not so much in imagery, but in spirit would be Richard Mock. He carved linoleum cuts for the New...
York Times for about eighteen years. When I moved to the city I met Richard, and he was the real deal. When I walked into his studio, his press was on one side and his bed was on the other and everywhere you looked, knee deep, were linoleum cuts. Bill Fick, another artist that I'm really influenced by- he and Richard were the only reasons that I really stayed here.

Before that, all of the graphics from skateboarding, and Courtland Johnson... Like I said, Thrasher magazine. The whole aesthetic of that magazine, the flyers, and the punk rock album covers, Raymond Pettibon's Black Flag cover, all that stuff. That was an aesthetic that I always liked and was really raw and real.

SP: Your recent works have been very diverse in terms of the way that you use printmaking in installation, street art and performance. Are you trying to accomplish different things with these works?

DM: Nah, I just don't want to limit myself to just making prints. I don't want to limit myself to anything. I get into different things, and sometimes I have different energy and I want to get it out. One way of doing that is if I do a performance and I'll make costumes. Once I have a costume on I drop any kind of fear I have of cutting loose. Because once you have that mask on, you can be anything you want. That stuff is really fun. The three-dimensional stuff is the same thing. I like the marks of printmaking and I like things that occupy space. Installation is fun, with the creation of an entirely different environment. I can make my own animals and the environment they live in and a space.

SP: When I saw the three-dimensional prints I thought they were the coolest things. Do you think of the 3-D prints as sculptures?

DM: I definitely think of them more as sculptures. I'm just drawn to the mark of printmaking and the mark that I want on my sculpture. And I take advantage of the medium.

SP: How do you make 3-d prints?

DM: All my sculptures and masks are made from papier mache. The inside is just wood and chicken wire- an armature. I'll papier mache it and collage the prints on the outside.

SP: How do you think three-dimensional prints are going to affect printmaking?

DM: I really don't think that it's anything new. Red Grooms was doing it, I just don't think that it's a new thing or that it's going to push printmaking into a completely new direction. More people are getting interested in it for sure, and I've seen some other people doing it. I'll go to the print conference every year and I'll bring things like that. But I don't think it's changing anything.

SP: Do you find people respond more to your installations, or to the performances?

DM: I've had pretty positive responses. The skate and surf world- that whole scene- latched onto the graphics that I do. And that's where it comes from or originates from. The aesthetics coming out of Thrasher magazine in the mid 80s: that was my bible. It all tied together, and it wasn't just the skating; it was the aesthetic of skating, the grinding on the curb, the blood, the scabs, and the encouragement from your friends. The punk rock music, the graphics at the time, the graphics on the album covers, the show flyers, and all that stuff had the same flavor. There are others aspects- some of these schools are coming out with this performance stuff.

SP: In reference to installation and performance, what kind of experience are you trying to provide people with — a specific experience?

DM: Yes, the installation I did on the Lower East Side was something that I did right after I did a cross-country road trip. It was the first time that I've actually done that, and went through Arizona and the Midwest. I was completely awe struck. And when I got back here I was so energized. I wanted to give people that kind of experience with the Old Hornded Deity show. I wanted to give that sensation of being awe struck by nature, so on the back wall there was a central image with a star burst with Pan at the center, and I did a landscape down the side. It had a leopard sculpture, an eagle sculpture, and filled the space, so that when you walked into it you were overwhelmed by it. That's the point.

The Deitch art parade was a story of Fenris, a giant wolf from Nordic mythology who was killed by the gods. I have an affection towards wolves, so I re-wrote the ending. In my eyes he was killed unjustly. They had bound this wolf and he hadn't done anything, but they were afraid of him. He didn't hurt anyone, and they bound him and put him beneath the earth. I re-wrote it so that Fenris' sister Hel finds her brother's remains and resurrects him. I had her cross him with a bat so he could fly the earth and hunt down the rest of these gods and kill them. So that's where the 'wolfbass' come in. The Year of the Wolfbat was a rising of the spirit of Fenris, because I remember the performance, and when people took their masks off they looked six to seven years younger in the face. They were like little kids. They were pumped. It was like they were evoked by the wolfbat. So this next year is going to be the Year of the Wolfbat.

SP: Your imagery deals with predators, mythology, and references skateboard graphics. What relates them all together?

DM: I'm just doing things that I'm interested in. I like reading mythology and I like stories. I like graphic imagery. I've always been drawn to it and I still have an affection for it. The animals - I just like them as characters. I used to have a timber wolf when I was younger. As a character she was so intense. You knew when she was pissed; she didn't growl or bark, but she would curl her lip and expose all of her teeth and throw the hair up on her back, and stomp her front feet down and hold kind of stiff. And when she was calmed she looked so relaxed and was really affectionate and really disciplined.

Sometimes I get obsessed with things like snow leopards after watching Planet Earth. There was an episode where this leopard was charging down the side of a cliff, and grabbing a goat and killing it and dragging it up to its den. It's almost a mythological creature because they've rarely been seen, and are on the endangered species list, and it was the first time that they had ever been caught on film. So I did some snow leopard imagery.

SP: What role do predators play in your work?

DM: I think I'm just drawn to animals that feel alive to me.

Dennis McNally's artwork can be viewed online at his website: www.howlingyinnes.com
SUBSCRIPTIONS TO CULTURAL
IDENTITY: AN INTERVIEW
WITH PAVEL AMROMIN

By Kevin Rohde

Pavel Amromin is a Sculptor currently living and teaching in Panama City, Florida. He received his BFA in Sculpture from the Art Institute of Chicago and his MFA in Ceramics from the University of Florida. He is an Adjunct Professor at Gulf Coast Community College. His work was displayed most recently in a solo show, Adventure Bound, at The Clay Studio in Philadelphia. Other exhibition venues include the Westchester Arts Council in White Plains, New York; the Society for Contemporary Craft in Pittsburgh; SOFA Chicago and New York; Blue Spiral 1, in Asheville, North Carolina; and the Crossman Gallery at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Amromin’s work has been featured in Ceramics Monthly and in two Lark Books publications, 500 Figures in Clay: Ceramic Artists Celebrate the Human Figure, and 500 Animals in Clay. I interviewed Pavel Amromin at his home in Panama City.

KR: Could you talk about the process of moving from Belarus to Chicago?

PA: We moved to Chicago in 1990. My family came over and then my grandparents came over. There’s a huge Russian community there, so that was nice, but you still have to adjust to America. When I first came to school I couldn’t speak a word of English. The thing with the big Russian community was that you didn’t really have to immerse yourself in an American culture so you’re always a part of these two worlds, halfway in Russia and halfway in America. Well it’s not really Russia: there’s Russian Russian and American Russian. The reason I still have an accent is because I didn’t really have to speak English outside of work or school. The rest I could take care of in Russian, so you always straddle these two worlds and I got an outsider perspective, on both sides actually. You are an outsider in America, but after a while of being in America, you understand America and you can look back at your own culture with different eyes. Having this double perspective helped me in my work. Not directly, nothing I can pinpoint, but by learning to see from a different point of view. Then I met an American girl and had American kids.

KR: Do you think that outside perspective influenced your becoming an Artist?

PA: I always drew and doodled and always wanted to be an artist. It wasn’t like it influenced it. Definitely not going from one place to the other. Having a different perspective, that’s a plus, but there’s always the minus of not fitting in right on both sides.

KR: Do you ever feel restricted if you work from a drawing you made for a Sculpture?

PA: I get the basic idea of what I want to do and then I go from there. Because it looks different in 3-D than 2-D and you have to make all sorts of adjustments. You have to make sure it works with the base, and it looks good from this angle, that angle.

Photo courtesy of Pavel Amromin.
KR: Could you talk about the Boy Soldier series?
PA: I wanted to do something with teenage boys posturing: a boy trying to be a man, boys acting, young kids in power. You know, you see gang kids throwing up signs; they always have the same face on. Chest out held high, things like that. Never smiling, keeping your eyes a certain way. It's a big act. Not that they're faking. It becomes a way of life. You don't want to seem soft. That's what I was interested in. So that was the very beginning of it. I started thinking about the military thing and the idea of war, of violence. The idea of acceptance, of training and violence, and all of these things kept piling on. It all began to make sense.
KR: Was it a conscious choice moving from larger scale figures to figurines?
PA: Like I said, these ideas sort of came together, and the figurine idealized something you aspire to be, in line with your principals. In Victorian art they had these scenes of little shepherds horning around, playing with goats and calves. At that time, the country life was the idyllic life. “This is the perfect life, this is how things are supposed to be.” You’re supposed to be in nature and frolic around but, if you took a picture of real farm life at that time, it was a bunch of dirty, shit-covered people! The idea is never the reality.
So, there is my beginning. The action itself is horrible: gut-wrenching atrocities. But the way it is presented with beautiful cheery colors, the figures are rather appealing. By using the figurine and making adjustments to the idyllic — or something we strive to, something we celebrate, or something we are proud of — I imply that we are all participating in war, or going to war. We all support it by being a part of this system. By sending kids to war, bringing them back and making heroes out of them, new kids aspire to be heroes... and the cycle repeats.
The idea of support for murder, rape, and violence — I always have that. In a lot of my pieces I always have somebody watching, right? That somebody watching; I want to be us. Like, knowing what’s going on, and by watching he approves...and that represents the whole world. It is important to show that.
When you buy knickknacks and figurines, you buy them because you might like the aesthetic but you usually also subscribe to the principal. Think of all those things they sell in the Hallmark store: Precious Moments. There is a whole bunch of different figures that go along with it. It’s this big Christian thing and they sell these Christian values like being nice to your neighbor, and then they make a little figure out of it and sell it to you. Then you say, “HEY! I want to be nice to my neighbor,” I’m gonna show that is this what I believe in by buying this little figure and putting it on my mantle.” Or, “I’m gonna buy this happy couple with a kid because I believe in a family unit”. So when you buy one of my pieces (not that’s why I make them) the logic goes: you approve of what goes on. You approve of the rape and the violence and everything else. So that’s my figurines. It’s something you take home, because you approve.
KR: Are you using porcelain or a porcellanous clay body?
PA: It’s a fake porcelain. Pure porcelain has too much slumping but, yes, because it’s a figurine, it’s something precious.
KR: So you are press-molding those. Is there a reason that you are using press-molds instead of using slip-cast parts?
PA: Yes, because with slip-casting I would have to make figurines the way they have to be, or pretty close. I can move the arms around but only slightly. If I were slip-casting I would have to make a model for each one, take a mold, and slip-cast the mold. By doing this I save a lot of time when making the basic structure. So press-molding allows me to really work on the figure. I can move them in the position I need. I can cut them up, move things around, and I can introduce new folds new wrinkles. There’s a lot of different movement in the body so that’s why it works with press-molds. It’s also difficult that they are press-molded because the clay tends to crack a lot more. It’s not one continuous piece but it’s the best solution that I’ve found. I also use press-molds because the idea of a victim and a persecutor are the same. The guy who is getting killed, mugged, and raped is the guy who is doing the killing, mugging and raping.
KR: So, is that important?
PA: It’s very important that they are identical. There are all these rules, about finding out that they are the same guy. It’s important that way, that they are the same guy, but it’s also important that I don’t have purely evil guys and purely good guys. There’s no good guys or bad guys, there’s just guys. So it’s important that they’re the same.
KR: How do the titles relate to the concept of the figurines?
What was it like working as an artist, outside of academia?  

KR: I’m done with the Boy Soldiers. I’m not making those any more. What I’m making next I don’t know, but I’m done with Boy Soldiers because it’s exhausted. I might make two or three more of the White Figures because I think I have something there. I feel like if I make anymore of these it’s like pornography of violence. How many more positions and forms can I do without saying the same thing? I think I pretty much covered it. I made thirty or forty pieces in the whole series and that’s not the point, so that’s why I’m done with that.

With the White Figures I might do a couple more because there are a few more allegories I need to get out, like the photography tile. I kind of want to make another photographer. This joy becomes the witness; he’s taking the picture like a memento, he’s making a souvenir. But there’s a guy making a souvenir, that same action in the piece. I think I have a few more like that. Not like pure exhibition of rape or violence, but this picture-in-picture moment. That maybe is the only thing left. I’m not really confined by what I do. I make what I want and then do something else. Often times you follow an artist and they have the same style and perspective. You’re like, “Oh shit, man, you’ve been doing this for thirty years. Something new, maybe?” But it’s a dilemma when you have a gallery and a following. People expect certain things from you. Do you continue to use the same strategy or do you change? At my gallery, Ann Nathan: it took them a long time to show that work. They didn’t take it right away.

KR: Did you show other work there?

PA: Yeah, all my work I showed there. They were never like, “You should do this or you should do that. Just do what you do and we’ll show that.” But still, they are not selling like hot cakes.

KR: So, how did you end up getting in that gallery?

PA: I was in a two-person show at a really nice place in Chicago, made for young artists. The woman from the gallery was friends with Ann Nathan, so they invited me to be in their art gallery and I’ve been there ever since. I kind of lucked out. I’m not very good at promoting myself. I don’t have that kind of personality. It’s not hard for all people but it’s a little hard for me.

KR: What was it like working as an artist, outside of academia?

PA: There’s a shit ton of people out there. Only so many people can be potters, and not everyone wants to be a production potter. They want to make eight cups here and twenty cups there. They don’t want to be a machine. Nobody wants that. So that’s the problem: how do you make a living, especially in a culture that doesn’t appreciate or isn’t interested in art? Everything has to be marketed if you’re gonna be an artist. You’re gonna sell your work or you’re gonna die.”

The whole idea of government support for the arts is necessary? Is it legitimate, or not? They say America gives less than any other country to the arts. They give, like, the cost of one plane. It’s tough. Is this a viable career path? Is what you do valuable or necessary, or is it bullshit? Not to be determined by yourself. Are you a valuable, contributing member of society? How is that? If the government refuses to support you, and the government represents the people, then maybe you’re not.

KR: Could you talk about the political aspects of your art?

PA: I don’t want my work to be political in the way that politics are today. What we talk about in the twenty-four hour (news) cycle becomes irrelevant in two weeks. The work that I made is not my reaction to the Iraq war in any way. I started that work long before the war started.

My whole thesis is that the work is on the micro and macro level. The micro is how it affects the individual. The reason that they’re dogs is because they are trainable and they aim to please. On the next (macro) level we socialize our kids not to hurt, not to kill, and not to do bad things. We socialize our kids to have empathy for other human beings but it doesn’t come natural to kids. It takes them awhile. Only after awhile it starts to make sense to them. The boot camp idea is to break you down, to reverse that. The whole idea is to de-sensitize you, and make the enemy the other, not you. Not a real person, a cockroach, a dog: something that you can kill and destroy without remorse.

At eighteen years old when you enlist, you are a boy. If you’re a soldier and you feel bad about killing other guys then you are not a good soldier. You break those things down because you need to be a soldier. That is the whole macro level. So then these guys come back, and all the mechanisms of normal life are broken down. That’s why you have these murders and rape, because they weren’t able to re-adjust. The way soldiers re-adjust to society is by being celebrated. They know what they did, but the cheering and parading is society saying, “We know you do what you have to do, but we are going to forget about it because we have to. We’re gonna absolve you of your sins, we are going to celebrate you and make a hero out of you.”

So you become a hero; you become real men. When they go, they are kids. They are not real men, they are working on becoming real men. Once you are a real man you create this whole myth of being a real man and being a hero. The world is full of them. Every society is full of them. The boy behind you aspires to be a man like you, and it starts again. That boy who wants to be a man is readily available to join and to follow all the breaking down instructions, because that is what is necessary to become a man. That’s the cycle, and it’s not this war or that war: it’s repeated in every function of society because we need to have soldiers to do our fighting. That’s the macro. The micro is all about the individual and how it impacts the individual. To extrapolate from the individual to a larger societal: it might be a little too much. But, that’s my take on it.

Paul Antronino’s work can be viewed online at his website: paulantronino.com
REINVENTING OBJECTS: AN INTERVIEW WITH RENEE ZETTLE-SERLING

By Robert Thomas Mullen

Renee Zettle-Sterling is an artist from Ridgway, Pennsylvania. She received a BFA in Fibers/ Papermaking from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and dual degrees from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania: an MA in Jewelry/Metalsmithing and an MFA in Sculpture/ Installation. She is an Associate Professor of Art and Design at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan where she teaches Three-Dimensional Design and Metalsmithing/Jewelry. Zettle-Sterling is best known for her investigations in several diverse media and procedures. Her work has been exhibited nationally and worldwide in locations ranging from Philadelphia to Tokyo. The inclusion of her works in publications such as Metalsmith Magazine and multiple Lark 500-series books has established her as an essential representative of the craft field.

RM: You use an array of techniques and media to convey your ideas. How did you first approach combining media? Do you find that there are certain concepts that translate better through other materials, rather than metal?

R Z-S: I first started mixing media immediately upon entering undergraduate school, where I majored in fibers and papermaking, which is a field that lends itself to mixing materials and media. I also studied fashion design for about a year. I loved all of the fabrics and the accessories. I feel as though I have a really varied background compared to most artists. Even though I sometimes lack confidence in working with metal, I feel fortunate that my background has given me a vast repertoire of assets that I can pull from. Before I get started making the work, I have material culture to pull from. I have always been interested in the material world and the associations that objects such as cups, scissors, and combs provide. I need objects to play with, because they give me a place to start — a springboard of sorts that clay or canvas do not offer. Using found objects and mixing media allows me certain freedoms that I do not feel with just using one material.

With the Actualities of War series, most of the forms are made primarily out of metal and the same goes for the Objects of Mourning series that I’m working on currently. There is more metal being used in these forms, because conceptually I am using the associations that metal has in the sources and inspirations that I want to reference. There’s this heaviness: metal is a major material in war, as seen in tanks, guns, and bullets. In this case pretty much everything is made out of metal. Metal has a somberness that I wanted to explore, but when I’m dealing with lighter topics or more spiritual topics I would rather use more found materials. With the Objects of Mourning, there’s something about the metal and the ability to darken the copper that can help me articulate a sense of sadness, as well as reference the past. I really enjoy mixing the colors of the metals, rather than making everything out of one color of metal.

RM: What brought you to the idea of creating functional objects?

R Z-S: I think you learn that you can actually make something out of something. You can make a piece of jewelry out of something that you’ve been working with like a piece of metal that you’ve been pouring into a mold. You can make jewelry out of the metal that you have and the metal that you’ve been working with. You can make jewelry out of the metal that you have and the metal that you’ve been working with.
RZ-S: I haven’t always been interested in functional objects. I was more interested in material explorations and exploring issues of identity. For me the transition happened due to issues with the scale of working in sculpture. This began to disinterest me and I also felt disconnected to the materials. Working in metal allows me to have a focus. There was something about the scale and intimacy of working with metal, and the association that the tools I was using that was intriguing to me. I have never felt like I could speak as fluidly creating installation work as I do creating site-specific body forms. The body also became a focal point for me. Our relationship between our bodies and everyday objects inspires the forms that I started to make and that I am currently making. So it was this kind of bouncing around and finding an outlet for my ideas that was a perfect fit.

RM: What is your process in designing the mechanisms for your pieces?

RZ-S: I would sit for hours trying to figure out how to make a pair of scissors for the Devices for Contemplation series. You think, ‘okay, scissors are simple. It has a fulcrum. It’s easy.’ Well it was not, at least not for me anyway, because I am not mechanically minded. I would do paper maquettes and do drawing after drawing to figure it out because I want them to move fluidly.

My process is usually always the same: it starts out with sketching and moves to playing with the physical components of my pieces. I like to have a lot of elements at my disposal, so I do a lot of casting of plastic objects, such as toys, tools, and domestic parts, then I can start putting things together. My process at its most basic level is just tinkering. But it really starts with sketching. I collect images and take notes. I google constantly. I’m also interested in gadgets and inventions from the 1860s or 1870s. I like objects that are a little quirky, that you can’t quite place, and the simple mechanics involved are really interesting to me. My pieces will go through multiple phases, and usually change slightly from the original sketches and original ideas. Flexibility in my process is also important: I never want my process to become static or controlled. Research on the objects that I am referencing and reading about the philosophy of objects is also the cornerstone to my process.

RM: How do your ideas translate into your large-scale installations? What is the process that leads from an idea to a realized installation?

RZ-S: I think it goes the other way around. I went from making installations to working in metal and creating devices and body-oriented pieces. Installation art has had a huge impact on the way I think about my work and display. I rarely send my work out to a gallery without very specific modes of display. For example, the “bubble blowers” were displayed on round tables that were painted the color of dirt and there was artificial grass on the tops of each table. Each piece had its own space within the artificial grass. Along the wall were tightly cropped images of my son playing with bubbles and mixed into these images were also images of several of the “bubble blowers.” The images and the grass-topped tables created a context of sorts, and allowed the viewer to create connections, without giving away too much of the work’s meaning.

With the Actualities of War, I displayed each piece on rounded topped pedestals that were lined up, like soldiers at attention. On the tops of the pedestals were cropped, subtle images from my research and each of these images of war reinforced each piece. You could see the images, but not too much, so as to not overwhelm the work. A corrugated metal wall separated the Actualities from my research. You could listen to my interview with the veterans, and I also had large plexiglass panels with printed letters from soldiers to their friends and family, and vice versa. What was really unexpected about this exhibition, which had a lot to do with the way I chose to stage the work, was that it became a war memorial of sorts. It was so solemn that no one spoke above a whisper. Sometimes you don’t really know the true effect of your work until it is completed and on display.
Because of the nature of the metal and the intimate scale you can get caught up in just focusing on the surface and the details within the form, and forget about the relationship the forms have to the environment. Studying installation art has helped me to better consider this issue, and forces me to ask myself questions regarding display throughout my artistic process. ‘How will the presentation of this work effect it’s meaning?’ How am I going to stage it? How much is too much?

RM: Are there limitations in creating the functional parts of devices, such as the Devices for Contemplation?

RZ-S: I don’t think there are any serious limitations in creating the devices. I need the limitations that working within a series affords me. I am lost without them. Moving from one series or idea into another is a very organic process and is a product of research and mindfulness. I try to pay attention to what the work is telling me, and I try not to focus too much on pushing my agenda on the work, or micro-manage the work. I also never limit myself to a number of pieces within a series; it naturally transitions from one series to another. Although I work within a specific theme there are overarching themes, such as identity, spirituality, and attempting to comprehend our humanness that runs through my work. Actualities of War are about identity, specifically how war impacted the veterans’ identity, and how a personal narrative is important to the understanding of our humanity. Studies in the Ephemeral and Devices for Contemplation are about our relationship to our senses and how they help stimulate memory and tell us who we are. In Artifacts from Self-Making, I am questioning the power that objects hold and how we are shaped in relationship to objects and their context.

RM: How do you feel about the presentations of your pieces that require interaction, such as Studies in the Ephemeral and Objects of Mourning? If looking at them in a gallery setting, I would want to know if I should interact with the pieces or just contemplate them.

RZ-S: That question always comes up around my work a lot. ‘Why don’t you do performances with them?’ I get this question because the work actually moves, and they actually do things. I am okay with them being performative objects that reflect on function and interactivity. This reflection on function helps to create the meaning of the work. It provides an edge to the practical level of them, so delicate, you can’t just have viewers pick them up and play with them; the work would be destroyed. I like that viewers can imagine themselves within the functional structure of the work. I typically present the work next to images of the work being used. I think this allows the viewer to see the connection between what it does (the form) and the metaphors I am trying to create. Images are crucial to the understanding of my work. I think about Andy Goldsworthy’s work, and the necessity of photography to his ephemeral practice. My relationship to an image is not as allied as his is to his practice, but it is important in terms of representation.

Currently, I am working on Mourning Project: Liminality, which requires that I physically engage in the making process every day. I am pretty good about consistently working, but through this project I have been creating and wearing a brooch a day, for a year. Therefore, my practice and the mediation and reflection that this project provides becomes more interactive, and more fully a part of my everyday life. I am hoping that, through this experience, I can start to consider ways in which my work can become experiential for the viewer. So far this process has been really good for me and there’s a Zen-like aspect that I am really responding to. Everyday I make and contemplate this one thing (the loss of a loved one). I have had a lot of loss in my life and I’ve waited a long time to talk about it, because I didn’t want it to be overly personalized. I think work should function in a universal way, even if it comes from a really personal place.

The 365 brooches will be sewn onto 121 feet of satin and velvet ribbon, with beaded numbers marking the days. I am hoping that the work can be displayed all along the gallery wall, creating a metaphorical cut or scar. Basically, a whole year will be displayed in length. This length of ribbon will allow flexibility in terms of what I can do with it at different venues. For instance, I can decide that I would rather hang it vertically or wrap the outside of a building. I’m pretty excited about the possibilities.

RM: When does that series finish?

RZ-S: It’s done the 21st of June. That’s when I started last year. It will be on display the 20th of June, so I’ll be sewing on the last brooch during the opening day.

RM: Your work has been featured in many books and magazines, such as Metalsmith and Lark’s 500 series. Do you feel that this exposure has affected the direction of your artwork?

RZ-S: I get excited when I see my work in print, but it hasn’t really changed the way that I make my work or the way I approach my practice. I do, however, get frustrated because at times I feel a little marginalized, because I do not typically make jewelry. There are quite a few galleries in the jewelry/metals world that I can’t show my work, because I do not make jewelry or functional craft objects. And, on the opposite spectrum, I work with materials that are associated with the craft world, so there are a few more spaces that I can’t show in. Sometimes I feel like I am stuck in between worlds, literally. I do not want you to think that I am complaining. I am grateful for the spaces that do show my work, such as non-profit spaces, art centers, and universities in general. So you can see why I like Lark books and Metalsmith magazine. Printed material lives on for more than a typical four-week exhibition.

The publication opportunities have not made me rethink my work, but the gallery situation has made me reevaluate making jewelry. It is hard because I am content with playing with the idea of functional things. Truly functional things, such as jewelry, scare me because they really have to function in the real world.

RM: In the series, Artifacts from Self-Making you have found a way of taking very familiar objects and altering them, making the viewer question the object, and possibly the world around them. Is this a desired effect or a pleasant byproduct?

RZ-S: Yes, that’s the desired effect. I’ve been playing with found objects, making things that look like scissors, or making things that look like bubble blowers. But in Artifacts from Self-Making I wanted to deal specifically with the found object, and it is my hope that the work is as much about the object as it is about my interaction with it. Aside from dealing with the performative aspect of the object, I am also interested in the associations that the objects carry and how objects really are reflections of us. There’s a great book about our relationship with objects by James Elkins called The Object Stares Back. I also like several essays by Clive Dilnot on this topic, especially The Enigma of Things. They both discuss how objects are cultural and personal signifiers and they define who we are, even though they are our construction.

The work was technically easy to make, but unbelievably difficult to consider and develop. I didn’t want them to be overlyorny or overly obvious. I wanted them to resonate and express universal content, so it was important that I had a prior relationship to the objects. It would not have made sense for me to take an object from another culture, or an object that I have no real understanding of, and alter it. This relationship with objects and my particular approach to them has always been there. A student called me a “philosopher of objects” and it was funny because I thought, ‘I guess I am.’ Oddly enough, that moment helped direct my approach and I began to create this body of work. All this time, I had been working around them, but never specifically dealing with the objects themselves. Artifacts from Self-Making has allowed me to consider deeply the layering of associations that an object is instilled with, but also my physical relationship to the objects in my life.
RM: It seems like you have shifted over the years, from using mainly one type of material on a piece to combining several. Did you gain a confidence or lose a fear to accomplish this?

R Z-S: I have never felt really confident as a metalsmith, because I never really had that hardcore training. I came late into the field with zero experience. But I am confident with working with found materials, because that is what I've been working with for quite a while. Teaching metals and taking workshops has definitely helped me become a technically stronger metalsmith. Over the years I have gained a better grasp of technique and a broader skill set. Now I have a lot more answers and I'm more confident. I have a lack of confidence in being a metalsmith, because I've never been one for craftsmanship, but it's a challenge that I really like.

RM: How do the new materials that you choose to work with get selected?

R Z-S: The Salvation Army, Goodwill, and Dollar Stores are great places for finding small plastic objects and odds and ends. I'm constantly thinking about where to get materials for casting. I do a lot of plastic burnouts and I rarely make a mold, unless I need to make more than one. I also like to have a library of cast objects so that I have flexibility in my process. Depending on my needs, I approach the collection of materials and objects in very different ways. With the "Artifacts from Self-Making," objects were given to me, I shopped for objects, and I also went through existing objects in my home. It is funny how cyclical life can be; after I finished the series I had so many leftover objects, I had to make several trips to Goodwill.

I just love objects like wax lips, lip-shaped lollipop holders, or anything that revolves around the mouth. The mouth is a very intimate place. We speak, take in food, and show physical affection through our mouths. For me it is an unbelievably interesting and provocative place on the body that I like to deal with in my work, so I am always on the lookout for objects that reference this area of the body.

RM: In "Actualities of War," you incorporated research on war veterans to enhance the piece. Did you find that the imagery and materials conveyed what you wanted?

R Z-S: I did a lot of research for that work. I even went to Europe with my Grandpa, who was in WWII. I was interested in how the landscape, for him, became a catalyst for retrieving memories. We started in Utah Beach in Normandy, which was where he started the war, and we went the whole way through France, the Netherlands, and Germany. It was so amazing as it all started to come back to him and he began to talk more and more about his experience. We also visited memorial after memorial and museum after museum, and this information gleaned from the trip was critical to my understanding of what war does, and its impact on a culture and the individual.

The interviews with the veterans were really powerful. I had the honor of interviewing Mr. Bowser, who jumped into Normandy before D-Day. There is a famous picture of Eisenhower talking to the 502nd Parachute Infantry and 101st Airborne Division, with their faces blackened, hours before jumping into Europe. Mr. Bowser is standing in the back, right behind Eisenhower. He is still alive, but it is sad because most of the men I interviewed have passed away, except for three. Those interviews still stick with me; they were so powerful and each distinctive. Some of the men seemed resistant, because it was not something that they always talked about. The piece with the toy army guys coming out of the faucet in the form of a drip was my response to this experience of talk with these absolutely wonderful men. It starts as a drip, then it got bigger and bigger and bigger; they became more and more wanting to talk and share their stories. The research for this show was pivotal in creating the work and maintaining an honest approach towards illustrating their experiences.

I am not sure that the work specifically reflects this, but I was interested in how this intense experience
changed their life. How they managed to move on after an experience such as war is unbelievable. So you can
imagine that I was hoping for the work to be seen by non-artists. I sent images of the work to West Point’s art
gallery and several other military academies. They were very nice in their rejection letters; nevertheless I was
disappointed because I thought they might find the work interesting and meaningful.

RM: Lena Vigna wrote of you on the Art Jewelry Forum website, “Soft and sweet, her pieces are
simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar—with stitching and little beads and things we would like to keep
close but reconstructed in a way that makes them seem a little alien.” I feel like this is an accurate way to
describe your intentions. Do you agree?

R Z-S: She’s talking specifically about the Objects of Sentiment, but I also see this in some of my other pieces.
I think there is warmth or coziness to my work, even when I approached the more masculine topic of war.
That tension that she’s talking about is the deconstruction of the ordinary. All of the fabrics in the work were
deconstructed and then sewn back together. They are bundled and tight and there’s a tension in that. The
forms aren’t loose and easy. This work posed conceptual problems along the way. I find it exciting but difficult
to maneuver through objects and ideas that are sentimental, like beadings, vintage fabrics, and lace.

Ideas that relate to the sentimental and nostalgic can become stagnant. What do we do with sentimental
things? We keep them hidden away where nobody can see them, or out of immediate distance and touch.
There’s something that is kind of lifeless in a sentimental objects, and by deconstructing them I’m trying to
breathe an altered, more metaphorical life into them. I also find humor an important element in my work,
which helps create that contrast in the familiar and the unfamiliar. I enjoy taking serious topics, such as the
ephemeral and transcendent nature of spirituality, and inserting slight humor through the use of material or
the specific forms the work takes, such as bubble blowers or scissors. Even after my brother died, I remember
laughing about a shared experience with my mom and sister, and it felt so odd but so unbelievably important.

RM: Do you think that each person can perceive your pieces in different ways?

R Z-S: Yes, but I also want my message to be clear. If you want to get your idea across… simplify, simplify,
simplify. Don’t congest it, conceptually or formally, with all these other things. It is important that
the work is open to interpretation; everybody comes with different experiences to the work and different
relationships to objects and forms. Because my work comes from such a personal place, I am really aware of
creating work that is also universally understood. When you present really personal work, people can become
uncomfortable, put off, and disinterested. It becomes a one-liner and only interesting to the artist who created
the work. Art should grab your attention and hold it there and, like an interesting person, reveal itself slowly.
Works of art should operate on multiple levels or associations.

I cannot help but think about the Artifacts from Self-Making. There are several pieces that I think are funny and
quick to interpret, and then some that hold your attention for longer, that create questions for the viewer
and make them contemplate their relationship with that object. When you are making forsy of something,
lke the Artifacts, it’s okay to have those pieces that don’t exactly move you. They might make you chuckle
a little bit, but they don’t move you. That’s why I like to work within a series, because it becomes bigger than
the individual piece. I’ll show them individually in group shows and such, but I work in a series for a reason. I
enjoy looking at the bigger picture and the overall meaning that is created.

RM: It seems as though your pieces handicap the wearer’s movement. The pieces hinder you instead of
helping you. Do you agree?

R Z-S: That was definitely my approach to several of the pieces in Survival Tips and several of the Studies

in the Ephemeral. I was making these contraptions that either help or hinder you physically within an
environment. In quite a few pieces the forms look as if they’re hindering you, not helping you — but they
really are. They are allowing you to contemplate, quieting the mind and finding personal insight. One of my
favorite pieces is a large white doily that allows the wearer to peer through; it creates a veil, which is both a
private and public space. It allows you to reflect back on yourself, and looking through that white doily is also
like peering into the past.

I have a real interest in objects, such as doilies and hand fans, because we no longer use them in our daily lives.
I try to reference these objects because they create a fracture in my work and also reference the past. I love
that there was an etiquette and language behind the use of hand fans. How you opened it, moved it across
your face, or fluttered it communicated something to the observer. The patterning in doilies can also become
a tool for communication. A doily can have imagery that also tells a story, and many contemporary artists are
using text within the patterns of the doilies, creating different avenues of communication.

RM: Your pieces are brought to a high level of craft. Do you find this difficult in any way?

R Z-S: I’m interested in my forms communicating ideas, and I feel as though my work exhibits an appropriate
level of craftsmanship. I am just hoping that my work is well crafted enough that someone is not walking
away saying, ‘Oh my god, that’s bad’. The craft should never get in the way of the reading of the work; that’s
ultimately what I strive for. I also make every attempt to be a good metalsmith but I know that I am not a
‘metalsmith’s metalsmith’. It is an unbelievably humbling experience when I sit down at my bench and attempt
to make something — it is a constant struggle from start to finish. I just hope that struggle is not entirely
evident in the work. I like it when work looks effortless.

Renee Zettler-Stirling’s work can be viewed at her website: http://zettlerstirling.com