

.(In | Out)sider\$

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the insider/outsider dynamic experienced by individuals as they enter diverse social situations. The shift from insider to outsider is evoked through an art installation of 18 sculptures drawing influence from “goth” subculture, as the viewer enters and interacts with the art space. The subjects of culture and identity are discussed as they pertain to insider/outsider status.

Keywords: ceramic, clay, goth, gothic, figure, outsider, other, sculpture, identity, subculture

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Where it all Started

I got my first formal instruction in clay during high school in the early 1990s; prior to this my only experience with clay was forming it into balls from deposits I found in the yard and lobbing them against the side of my childhood home. It was a very sensuous experience for me; the smell of the earth, the way it felt on my hands as I formed the projectiles, the sound and visual patterns it made as it struck the wall of our home. I was hooked on clay and did not even know it at the time. As I have matured I can add the permanency of ceramics to the list of what draws me to it as an artistic medium. Inez (my wife) and I were talking about our artwork; she makes the work she does knowing that it could be gone within a decade. I have felt a need since my formative years to create lasting objects. That is one of the reasons I left my profession in I.T. to return to the study of art, principally ceramics.

Some of the earliest known artworks are made out of clay; they have been in existence for over 20,000 years (Vandiver, et al. 1989, 1002). I remember reading an article a few summers ago in a local Utah newspaper that spoke of a man who sat down while hiking in Utah's Manti-La Sal National Forest and found next to him under the ledge of the boulder he was resting against, a ceramic bowl that was over 1,000 years old (Man makes ancient discovery in southeastern Utah | KSL.com 2009). While weathered from its exposure to the elements it was recognizable as the original vessel. The possibility that my grandchildren's great-grandchildren could handle work that I create, in the same condition that it was in when pulled from the kiln, excites me. It gives me a connection to generations yet to come. In this ever-changing world they will have a connection to me through an object I molded with my own hands.

It was also during the latter end of high school that I met other teenagers who had aesthetic appreciations similar to mine and learned there was a name for the genre of literature, music and fashion I was drawn to. In this same group I found a safe harbor from the pressures of peers to forsake my standards and submit to the typical follies of teenagers. The name of this subculture is “gothic.”

About: ‘The Other’ and Figures in Clay

Identity and Outsiders: ‘The Other’ reference concepts that are and have been investigated by many different professions including artists, psychiatrists, philosophers, and sociologists. From the book, *Attitudes of Religions and Ideologies toward the Outsider: The Other*, authors Leonard Swider and Paul Mojzes write:

There is often an awareness of others who do not belong within the circle of one’s own religion [(sub)culture for the purposes of my thesis]. In some instances that awareness is implicit with no specific attitudes toward others being fostered among the adherents, whereas the actual response to the outsider may range from hostility, fear, curiosity, indifference to even partial acceptance and cooperation (Swider and Mojzes 1990, Introduction).

There are stereotypical representations of goths in mainstream media. Though as with most stereotypes having a grain of truth to them, they do not accurately represent those who identify within the given culture¹. The stereotypes tend to come from people outside the culture and not those who are a part of the group being represented. So what is “goth” or “gothic”?

The original Goths (this is Goths with a capital "G") were a tribe of Germanic origin (largely from Sweden) that moved into the area that is now southern Russia in the second century AD. The Goths evolved from a scattered group of barbarian tribes into a massive kingdom that left its mark across Europe. The name "Goths" took on a meaning derived from these conquerors- a reference to destruction, mourning, and loss. The gothic label was later used by Renaissance critics to describe a type of art and

architecture representative of the culture that (both literally and symbolically) destroyed the remnants of the Romanesque period. This new aesthetic was criticized as overly heavy, dark, and melancholy. Then there was the "gothic literature" of the late 1700s and early 1800s, a style of fiction that blends elements of horror and romance to create lush fables of human nature, often (again, literally and symbolically) confronting forces of evil, darkness, and ignorance. One interesting facet of the genre was the blurring of lines between good and evil, with villainous heroes and sympathetic monsters in stories that evoke raw human passions (Issitt 2011, 1-2).

"The word 'goth' has been used again and again to describe vastly different aspects of human culture related by their association to a similar look, sound, or feel— a touch of the dark and melancholy, a hint of horror tinged with romance. These are the threads that tie the modern goth to the vaunted arches of a Gothic cathedral" (Issitt 2011, 1). "Goths are and are not what they claim. On one hand, goths, like 'punks' or 'metal heads' or 'ravers,' tend to confine themselves to an identifiable style of dress and a genre of music. On the other hand, goths constantly negotiate what does and what does not count as 'gothic,' underscoring the dynamic and ever-changing character of the subculture" (Gunn 1999, 417). The gothic movement that I reference was born out of the post-punk music scene in Great Britain of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The subculture evolved from the music, the early goth and proto-goth bands set the esthetic in dress and style, and the fans of the music followed suit. They soon found they had more than music in common, movies, books, and other media also struck a chord with the fans. "In a 1983 article from *Zig Zag*, writer Tom Vague referred to the fans, rather than just the music, as 'goth' and the label stuck, spreading throughout the media and becoming the tag for a culture, rather than simply a genre" (Issitt 2011, 7).

Older than "Goths" ravaging across Europe is the use of clay in the creative process. Some of the oldest examples we have of ceramic art are sculptures of the figure. Since those times the figure has been explored repeatedly by numerous cultures. The figure is even

symbolically used in functional pottery, the elements of a thrown vessel are referred to by anatomical names: the lip of the cup, the foot of the bowl, the belly of the vase, or the neck of the bottle. I use this example to illustrate inherent connection that figurative work has with the ceramic object.

Identity Crisis

I have been making work that deals with identity; this is a theme that started during undergraduate studies, where I explored identity through ancestry and how our physical attributes are a reflection of our genetic heritage. Through my art I have been exploring identity as it relates to culture and our status as an insider or outsider in social settings. Why do identity and questions surrounding it hold such fascination with me? My explorations into the insider/outsider dynamic has led me to reference the Goth Subculture. It is a recognized outsider group, both by those inside and outside the subculture. I have been involved in the Goth scene for nearly twenty years of my life and as such believe that I can honestly represent them in my work. During my studies I have come to the realization that there is no true universal statement that can explain all of the reasons I create artwork. It is multifaceted. There are the social messages that I am trying to discuss and there are personal reasons behind my work as well.

Outside Installation

Eighteen ¾ size abstract figurative sculptures (Figure A - Figure **KK**); constructed from a stoneware clay-body and porcelain fired in a gas kiln to cone 10 reduction. The surface is a dry matte finish that is then adorned with various india ink colors, found object and mixed

media elements: including human and synthetic hair. The decoration of the work is done to draw parallels to the “Gothic” subculture. There are no pupils in the eyes or ears on their heads; they have no arms or body below the waist. The sculptures held at eye level by steel rods; attached three per oval steel armature facing inward but not making eye contact and arranged in a dimly lit reception hall as if in some social setting or dance hall. Throbbing in the background is an aural soundscape of selected tracks from various gothic and industrial music artists ranging from contemporary bands and performers to artists from the post-punk and early Goth movements of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Looking forward I have a series of exhibitions planned. I will be conducting a sequence of art happenings, taking the “outsider” on a collision course with the mainstream. In these art happenings the sculptures are going to be taken and set up in public spaces. I have started working with Provo Towne Center to secure a time and location within their complex, to set up the work unannounced to the general public. While the work is on display, I will be documenting the viewer’s response to the work through photographs and video. By taking my sculptures out of the gallery to the public I can reach a different demographic of participants, including those who are not prone to attending art openings and galleries.

What possessed you to make these?

Ceramic arts are one of the oldest forms of “Object Making”. People have been making clay items for tens of thousands of years; it wasn’t until recently that ceramics has come into the world of “fine arts” as a “valid” fine art medium. It was not until Peter Voulkos and his students at the Otis Art Institute in Southern California felt the influence of the abstract expressionist movement that the push to use clay as the vehicle for expression began to be

accepted by the wider arts community. Paul Soldner was Voulkos' first graduate student at Otis and helped him build the program there. Around the time that the California Funk Art movement was gaining traction on the west coast, Paul Soldner was experimenting with a Japanese firing process called Raku². Disappointed by the results he and his students were getting with the traditional methods he started playing with the post-firing processes.

American-style raku differs in a number of ways, notably the rich black surface produced by smoking the ware outside the kiln at the end of firing. Other innovations include the quenching of the red-hot vessel in cold water, the production of brilliant and many-colored copper lustres, the forced crackling of the glaze with smoke penetration, the white line halo or ghost image surrounding a black metallic decoration, and the discovery of a copper slip that sometimes results in an unusual yellow matte surface. American raku also utilized shapes other than the traditional tea bowl (Soldner, AMERICAN-STYLE RAKU 1990, 1).

This firing process quickly gained popularity within the ceramics community. The development of the raku firing method also brought about the development of a life philosophy for Paul Soldner. He started seeking for a "Rakuness" in everything around him. Paul explains this metamorphosis:

It changed my life. It also changed my work. I developed an appreciation for the imperfect, for the beauty of asymmetry, and for the value of an organic aesthetic. I found a new freedom of openness and acceptance. ...
In the realm of ballet and classical music, as well as in the competitive worlds of skiing and boxing, I sense what I would call a rakuness, but only at the top. What makes a top performance? Why do audiences wildly applaud one performance and not another? The quality of the performance is perceived to be so special, so breathtaking, so seemingly effortless that the audience senses that they are in the presence of something very rare, even unique, something not often experienced, yet somehow so apparently easy that we forget for the moment the discipline, the endless training, the pain, and the focused dedication that made it possible. If a performance attains such a level of effortlessness, it transcends its own process and uplifts the observer and gives meaning to human existence. It is at such a moment, that we experience raku at its very best. Words cannot really describe the experience when it happens, but when it does happen we respond emotionally. It is a feeling of rakuness. Can a simple tea bowl be imbued with this quality? Yes, if it is special enough. Understanding raku in this more elite and spiritual way broadens its scope--beyond the limited process we once thought it was--and

challenges each of us to embrace the effort needed to set our own work free. The struggle to attain rakuness can consume a lifetime--with only fleeting moments of success (Soldner, AMERICAN-STYLE RAKU 1990, 4).

I am seeking this rakuness in the work that I create. There have been times in my life where I have gone through the experiences as described by Soldner. I have sat in wonder and amazement at artwork or performances; I have enjoyed foods where their preparation exceed my expectations and caused me to want to share the experience with others. That is a strong measure as to the rakuness of something. When the experience is so poignant that I feel a need to share or record it that is when I have found a raku moment in life. It is something we need to be prepared for. If we are not in the mindset to recognize those moments, they will pass by us unnoticed and unappreciated. Another aspect of rakuness is the willingness to accept the “accidents” that occur and work through them, rather than giving up on a specific piece and starting over. It is my belief that of all the art disciplines artists who use the ceramic medium have to be best equipped to handle loss. Our work goes through a series of extremes as it is worked from inception to the final product. At many points along the way there are numerous chances for failure. Work can crack and break as it dries. The initial bisque firing pushes the organic substance of clay, chemically altering it into the ceramic vessel by driving off the water molecules from the clay itself. In order to do this it has to be brought up to extreme temperatures. These same temperatures will expose any flaw in the construction of the work introducing another vector for failure. Glazing ceramics is a lesson in chemistry, its only similarity with painting is that sometimes a brush is involved in applying the glaze and there are oxides used as pigments for coloring the work. For ceramics though the similarities tend to stop there. Our glazes do not chromatically look like the same pre versus post firing, we also

cannot mix them as one would paint to get a specific color, if you mix a glaze that fires red with a glaze that fires white, it will not turn pink; instead you may get a green or blue colored glaze as a result. Some of the reds are very hard to get, a change in the weather, barometric pressure, or a mistimed adjustment in the atmosphere of the kiln will produce a light blue or green instead of the brilliant red, rendering an entire load of wares flawed. A missed calculation in a glaze ingredient could cause the glaze to run off the work like water, or cake on the final product like a cooled volcanic surface destroying weeks of work and preparation. It is these losses that we must become accustomed to and willing to work with. When I first began working with ceramics I was consumed with perfection, the need to control every aspect of the process, to have every surface flawless, symmetrical, controlled. As I have matured so has my philosophy about ceramics, I have grown to accept the “chance”, to accept what may happen in the kilns and work with the accidents, I have learned to enjoy asymmetry in my sculptures, it is much like life, we can only do so much and then we must accept the rest as it comes to us. Paul Soldner's philosophy is much the same:

So my work was getting less and less controlled, more and more accepting of the organic, I would say, not so much asymmetrical, because a lot of it was still symmetrical, but the way it would be glazed or not glazed or smoked or whatever was different. And then that also did lead me to begin to alter the shape and begin to experiment with more asymmetrical, I would say more just casual, looser. I never thought about it like giving up symmetry at that point. I didn't even see it happening (Soldner, Oral history interview with Paul Soldner 2003).

Judith Shea is an American sculptor that I have recently become aware of, though she has been active since mid-1970. Her figurative work has gone through several stages, from abstract to mixed media representational. Her own influences in figurative art reflect mine as well. In 1994 she received a grant to study at the American Academy in Rome, Italy (Friedman

2005, 28). There she focused on the works of Bernini and Michelangelo. Of Bernini Judith says:

With Bernini, there was tremendous passion but also tremendous fun in his works. Sometimes, even the passion is tongue-in-cheek. ... What you have with Bernini is this constant explosion. In the religious commissions, he goes to the limit of martyrdom and to the limit of passion; in pieces like the Persephone, he goes to the limit of aggression, to the limit of sex (Friedman 2005, 28).

The embodiment of passion, expression, and emotion that is contained within Bernini's figures is the same thing that intrigues me about his work. His ability to capture life in marble transcends the medium in which it is sculpted. Judith's own work drew from her background in clothing design. She would sculpt "clothes without figures in them." Armless "hollow dresses" symbolized women, and voluminous overcoats were male surrogates (Friedman 2005, 30). Her later work after her study in Italy began to include the head and focused on its ability to communicate with the viewer. I am also intrigued by the faces' ability to communicate without uttering a word. There are volumes that can be said in a glance, or a simple expression. In the work that I create it is the head that holds the most importance to me. The bodies are an abstraction and a vehicle to carry the head of the figure. While the figure can and does communicate movement, the overall gesture is complete in the expression on the face. Being representative of the "outsider," the figure refuses to make a connection with the viewer. Unable to see or hear the observer, the figures deny contact and acknowledgement, preserving the spectator's role as an outsider. By placing the figures in groups I create a visual dialog between them, while at the same time shunning the onlooker. Through that exclusion the viewer is transposed from being the insider, "looking out," to a person excluded from the group. Similar to Judith Shea my work is on a journey from pure abstraction:

What is the connection, I [Martin Friedman] asked Shea, between these new works and her earlier generic figures, which bordered on pure abstraction? "They are a continuation of them," she maintained, seeing no disjunction between past and present. "When I think about my first works, which were made of cloth and looked like clothes installed flat on the wall, I realize that even then I was looking for characters, for personae, really, to occupy them. I used clothes as stand-ins for people... what I'm doing now is a continuation of what I've always tried to do-to make sculptures, whether they are extremely formal or obsessively descriptive, that will express human states (Friedman 2005, 33).

To a figure that is representational while retaining abstracted elements:

Her own figurative imagery is abstract to the degree that it has been fashioned from fabric, a material integral to her former training. In addition, her own aesthetic is one tending toward understatement or simplification of form. Even as her work has become more complicated in terms of movement in space and consequentially more pronounced in emotional tone, she has continued a certain reserve or control. Although there is no specific narrative or story told, the artist offers an outline for empathetical [*sic*] response. In her search for communication of meaning through the human figure (Van Wagner 1987, 7).

In Pittsburgh, I came in contact with the art of Sergei Isupov, a Russian born artist who later moved to the United States. Sergei uses the ceramic medium to build abstract, yet hauntingly representative figures. Working in Porcelain and Stoneware his craftsmanship is impeccable. The figure is not just represented in the form of the sculpture but drawn in glaze and under-glaze on the canvas the clay provides. Each of his works becomes a story, told in the illustrations encompassing the surface of the form including the bottom. Each work is done in a complete 360 degrees, the figure or bust morphing as you walk around it. Metaphor is used quite often in Sergei's work, as is irony and symbolism. Symbols like sex, the nude figure and the male/female relationships hold universal attraction, allowing Isupov to structure an iconographic system that communicates and transcends international borders, while making unique artistic statements. For Isupov, art is meant to communicate, to tell a story. These compelling symbols "make faster story telling" (Leigh 2010).

"Figures were not popular 10 years ago," when he first exhibited at SOFA, Isupov says, "because it was considered a craft show." But now, artists are trying to find new mediums of expression and new materials. "You go straight to the emotional level in figurative [forms], and you immediately strike some kind of relationship with people" (Daniels 2006).

It is this relationship with people that I am trying to create, dysfunctional as it may be.

Through using the human figure there is an instant connection. I want people to learn to transcend first impressions, which are so often wrong. I think it is very difficult in our religious culture to get past this. We are constantly taught to make [righteous] judgments and choose our relationships carefully. Often this leads to letting initial impressions be the basis of our decisions on who is worthy of our association. I fall victim to this myself. It would be hypocritical of me to think or say otherwise. I am fully aware of this limitation I have and am trying to make a conscious effort to work past it.

The final artist I wish to reference comes from similar roots as I do and shares not only aesthetic elements with my work, but comparably overlapping themes. "Raised in (at the time) small town Burbank, California, Tim Burton grew up feeling alienated from those in his small town. The adolescent alienation and small town minds inspired the young artist to find within himself the gothic places and unlikely heroes that have become a hallmark of his career" (Connal 2010, 28). I grew up in small town, Rough and Ready, California, nestled in the Northern California foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Like me Burton admits, "I didn't grow up in a really academic or museum culture" (Douglas 2009, 38). Most of what I came to know as art I was introduced to from the monthly visit of the art docent at my elementary school, or what I saw and learned of from Bob Ross on our local PBS Station.³ Pop-culture to me was a reference to Coca-Cola or Pepsi.

Mostly known for his film career Tim Burton started as an illustrator for Disney, and he is also well versed in drawing, painting, sculpting and writing (Douglas 2009, 38). In 2010 the MoMA held a retrospective of his work, focusing on his drawings, paintings, and sculptures. The retrospective filled the third floor of the MoMA. About this show curator Ron Magliozzi said, “Instead of using the films to interpret the art, let’s use the art to interpret the films... The art is the most important thing. The films are secondary” (Douglas 2009, 38). Helena Bassil-Morozow takes a different tack on this using both film and art in equal standing to interpret Burton’s underlying theme across all his work. In a nutshell Tim Burton uses the “other/outsider” to elucidate “‘artistic Western individualists who fight the tenets of the bland, unimaginative, provincial or metropolitan middle-class mentality’—‘individualists’ who are viewed as monstrous to those who do not understand them” (Fariss 2011, 427). The individualists are going through a process of self-discovery or “becoming” in Jungian language, “she defines individuation as ‘the urge found in all living things to persist in becoming themselves’... the path of individuation is marked with specific archetypal milestones, and she [Bassil-Morozow] organizes her analysis of Burton’s films with archetypal themes”—the child, the monster, the superhero, the genius, the maniac, and the monstrous society (Bassil-Morozow 2012). The others represented in my work also reflect these individuals in society seeking self-discovery, while armoring themselves against the stereotypical judgments of philistines surrounding them. Their armor is represented by their costume and adornment chosen to intimidate and mystify rather than obfuscate, creating an exterior shell to protect their fragile psyche. Of his creative process Burton says:

his creative process is more intuitive than intellectual: ‘I don’t trust my intellect as much, because it’s kind of schizy,’ Burton admits, “I feel more grounded going with

feeling.’ He starts with a vague image, and goes on to create a numinous symbol which often has personal significance for him (Bassil-Morozow 2012, 16).

As I go through my creative cycle I find I work much the same as Tim Burton. After the seed of an idea germinates, generally while I am working on something else, I begin to draw it in my sketchbook. Sometimes it is a word, other times a feeling or image that I need to work through and develop as I mull over it. If the work has no significance to me, I cannot expect it to mean anything to my audience.⁴

One of Tim Burtons iconic symbol is “the monster”. For him:

‘The monster’ is not simply an imprint of Burton’s own feelings towards the outside world which he perceives as ‘hostile in its normality’... the image of the monster acquires independence and becomes an archetype – a fluid, symbolic representation of a whole range of psychological phenomena - ... Meanwhile the audience is full of outcasts who feel unique and misunderstood, and each viewer adds his or her personal dimension to the image, thus adding to the picture’s interpretive volume. Being litmus papers for the state of culture, the best films resonate in many a soul; and that is why Burton’s Gothic tales of a loner’s conflict with society have a very wide fan audience. Which probably means that ‘the crowd’ is not so ordinary, cruel and insensitive, after all (Bassil-Morozow 2012, 23).

I use the “independent soul” often found in gothic subculture as the archetype/monster in my own work, referencing this often-misunderstood group of people in my art fills the needed role of the “outsider to normality”. Having associated myself with “Goths” for many years of my life, I feel I can speak from a place of authority when it comes to representing goth and using goth as a vehicle for dialog in my work.

Methods and Process

With a stoneware clay body I start by wheel throwing the torsos then altering the cylindrical forms creating shoulders and necks. Then using coils of clay the neck and head are constructed. After the clay has dried to the proper workable state I sculpt faces on their heads forming the

eyes (using porcelain for the eyeball), nose, mouth and then the overall general shape of the skull. It is at this time that I decide on the expression of the face, most being stoic. The constructed head and face leads me to decide on the gender of the figure and it is at this point I make the alterations to reflect that decision. The torso is lengthened by joining long slabs of clay to the bottom of the thrown section. Then tearing the clay at the end of the newly extended torso to create an asymmetrical line. I also use smaller slabs of clay at this point to create “Venus” like protrusions off the shoulder to indicate where the arms would be. After the work has been bisque fired, I cover the exposed ceramic surface with a flashing slip⁵, which has been formulated to mature to a gritty textured surface that varies in color from cream (when applied in a thick layer) to a dark orange-red color (when applied in a thin layer). The slip is applied with a pneumatic sprayer to help control the application of the coats. The figures then go through their final firing where they are heated in a gas kiln to cone 10 (2380 deg. Fahrenheit) in a reduction atmosphere. Along with the flashing effect, cracks and tears can appear in the ceramic figures. These flaws are left as they formed to record the process the figure has gone through as it has been transformed from clay to ceramic. Once the final firing is complete the process of inking the designs on the figures commences. A black india ink is primarily used along with metallic india inks of silver, gold, copper, bronze, and titanium white to highlight the designs. False eyelashes are glued to the eyelids and the wigs are constructed individually for each sculpture.

I do not start the sculpture with a specific model in mind. Each step in the process informs the next step. The shape of the torso and angle of the shoulders and neck influence the size of the head and the direction of the gaze. The size and overall shape of the head

influences the position, shape and size of the nose, mouth, ears, and chin with corresponding jaw line. As stated before the gender is not decided until the head is complete. I do look to outside sources for inspiration in sculpting specific attributes on the figures. While working on the nose of one sculpture, my daughter happened to be in the studio, so I had her sit and model for me while I used her nose as a reference. I pull hair and inking designs for tattoos and make-up from images of friends, acquaintances and those found in goth couture oriented media such as “Gothic Beauty” and “Dark Beauty” magazines, music videos and live music performances.

This is one of the great importances of art, to communicate from multiple perspectives. “Ludwig Wittgenstein ... discovered something of the limits of human language: Every description of reality is necessarily only partial for although reality can be seen from an almost limitless number of perspectives, human language can express things from only one perspective at once” (Swider and Mojzes 1990, 28). Most of my life I have felt like one of the “Others” in society, an “Outsider”. What is it about people that deem them worthy to be part of the group? How do our judgments affect “the other’s” ability to belong to the group?

All knowledge is interpreted knowledge. This means that in all knowledge I come to know; the object comes to me in a certain way, namely, through the lens that I use to perceive it. As Thomas Aquinas wrote, “things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower.” Such is an interpretive view of truth (Swider and Mojzes 1990, 28).

It is these judgments that often color our perceptions and abilities to create relationships with others. The judgments we make about those around us are learned behavior, passed to us from our environment. “Personhood is a social condition; it is made of relationships. We come to be the persons we are out of our personal relations: each relation teases into manifestation an aspect of ourselves that would otherwise remain unknown” (Swider and Mojzes 1990, 161). I

create groupings of figures (persons) representing the “Others”, placing them in social situations that seek to exclude the viewer, thus reversing roles and placing the observer outside the group, placing them in the role of “the other”. Through this I hope to bring awareness to our intrinsic need to belong and our need for positive social interaction. “Our lives are a constant shift into the role of outsider and insiders as we encounter diverse cultural situations. I want people to recognize that being the outsider is not negative but a role we all share as part of the human condition” (Clark 2014).

Conclusion

Developing this body of work has been enlightening. Reading the thesis has probably been frustrating for you. I have spent many hours searching through contemporary artists looking for connections between the aesthetic elements of my artwork or my philosophical ideas behind artwork and the message I am trying to convey. I have been able to better solidify the ideas behind my work. I have been able to pick through and find a common thread in my work across the different mediums I have explored over the years. I have also been able to better explain why it is I choose to use ceramics to represent my primary voice and attempt to create a social dialog with my audience through ceramic sculpture. I am exploring figurative representation of “otherness” in a social context. For the audience I am trying to bring awareness to the fallacies of the “first impression”, the need for positive social interaction, and that we all are an outsider at one time or another.

While everyone may not understand my aesthetic choices, “the fact that symbols cannot be precisely deciphered, or equally understood by everyone is not tragic – it is a necessary, and important, aspect of the human condition. Symbols unite people... Abstract ideas, or

archetypes, exist equally for everyone, and it is up to the individual to dress them up in appropriate clothes” (Bassil-Morozow 2012, 25).



Figure A



Figure B

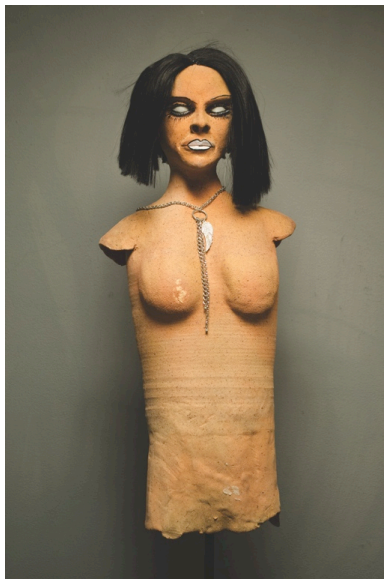


Figure C



Figure D



Figure E



Figure F



Figure G



Figure H



Figure I



Figure J



Figure K



Figure L



Figure M



Figure N



Figure O



Figure P



Figure Q



Figure R



Figure S



Figure T



Figure U



Figure V



Figure W



Figure X



Figure Y



Figure Z



Figure AA



Figure BB



Figure CC



Figure DD



Figure EE



Figure FF



Figure GG

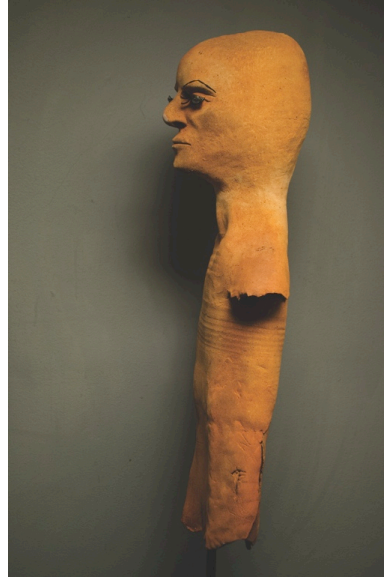


Figure HH



Figure II



Figure JJ



Figure KK

Endnotes

¹ I believe this concept is best explained by Joshua Gunn:

By history I mean the perspective one holds about the past that he or she has no memories of-only the accounts and narratives of others. ... Memories, however, are a kind of retelling of histories in reference to one's person ... I submit that it is the contest of memories and histories that make for subcultures. Mainstream or commercial culture seeks to represent subcultural histories, and these histories almost always are resisted by the (re)creation of collective memories of those represented. Unfortunately, the tendency of many of those intrigued by popular culture has been to dispense with historical perspectives in favor of ahistorical formalisms and essentialisms that situate popular culture texts in abstract schemes and mechanistic structures (Gunn 1999).

² “Japanese raku is made differently from American raku. Simply put, there are two kinds of Japanese raku: red ware, which is low fired and then cooled in the open air, and black ware, which is high fired. The color of red raku is obtained from an ochre slip, a lead glaze, and fast firing in a charcoal kiln. The salmon red and subtle gray flashing achieved with this technique was, and is, much appreciated in the tea ceremony. Black raku is obtained with a special pulverized-rock glaze, which probably has a high concentration of metal oxides such as iron, copper, and manganese. Like our stoneware, it is fired slowly at a high temperature (approximately 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit) and then cooled slowly” (Soldner 1990).

³ It was one of 3 broadcast stations that we could “get in”, a term virtually unheard of by today’s youth.

⁴ (So after writing the prior sentence and then the supporting arguments I realized that it was contradictory. I obviously hold some personal significance to functional wares.) The real reason I moved away from functional forms is that I did not feel challenged by them. I am

familiar with a lot of the potter philosophies that correlate the intimacy of a vessel to the user's life; i.e. the sensual nature of the formed lip of the vessel touching the user's mouth, thus providing them with a nourishing kiss. The bowl, one of Man's oldest forms carrying the sustenance that we need for existence, or the belly of the amphora holding the sweet nectar of life. I could go on and on waxing poetic about these relationships between man and the functional ceramic object, but it has been my experience that very few people outside of the clay circle make these associations on their own, more often than not the meaning is lost to the viewer, as they are shocked that for the price of one of my cups they could buy a dozen of "them" at their local Wal-Mart, but that is another paper entirely.

⁵ Flashing slips are normally used in 'Soda' firing; in these firings a combination of soda ash (carbonate), soda bicarbonate, and calcium carbonate are introduced to the kiln when it has reached its target temperature, these chemicals then vaporize in the heat of the kiln and condense on the surfaces in the kiln. While glazing the surface of the ceramic objects, the combination of chemicals also produces a 'flashing' effect in the slips applied to the ceramic ware. With my understanding of this firing process I was able to produce a slip that would replicate the flashing effect in a standard gas kiln fired to cone 10 eliminating the inherent problems with the results of a 'Soda Firing'.

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