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Full Artist Statement – I Inherit All Blood Sacrifices
SMP in Studio Art, 2013

I have always been interested in the voice and touch of the individual. When a work comes across to a viewer (or myself) as being a unique, one-of-a-kind statement, I immediately feel more connected and invested in a work. The voice of an individual makes it known that the artist came into contact with a particular subject and was so moved that they could not help but make a very specific and individual response – so what surrounds or impacts the artist’s mental state leads to a very unique “touch” or “presence.” To this end, the artists and bodies of work that I am most interested in always tend to have the following elements: gesture, marks, and the presence of the artist’s own hand.

In my own artistic practice the subject that is constantly impacting me and driving myself to make new work is: the written word.

In our day-to-day lives we are constantly being surrounded by words and messages. As soon as you wake up you begin the day by checking your phone or the computer for instant personal and global news updates. We are living in a constant state of anxiety; feeding off of information that will somehow help us live a better and more informed life. The words that we read in these “messages” or “information” act as a signifier to the larger events that we now know about instantaneously. In my paintings and drawings I seek to display words and word-

like marks that confront the viewer in a manner that may not provide them with such a “clean” or direct image or message.

Through these paintings I seek to identify myself as a unique individual within the world around me through my own use of gesture, objects and my own handwriting.

My works contain statements that I have gathered and combined from a variety of sources (such as magazines, encyclopedias and personal and overheard conversations) that may come across as romantic one moment only to be obscure the next. My pieces stand against our society’s use of written words in that my written marks are the final focal point for a viewer – they give no absolute specific opinion on any historical, political, scientific or religious concepts – although the works may implant or bring up similar ideas in the viewer. In this manner, if a viewer finds an issue or insight from one of these paintings, then that is based off of what they are personally experiencing in that moment.

In terms of the actual production of the paintings I only begin each work with the “statement” or words that become written on the final piece or become the basis of the marks. I then begin each piece as rapidly as possible – by working quickly and allowing for any changes or mutations that may occur in the creation process I am presenting the results of an honest process of development of the piece in relation to my body and thought’s own minute changes.

Throughout the creation of these works I have consistently been drawn to artists that have responded to the outside world with a force that is entirely their own and in a way that immediately identifies the response as unique to that specific artist.

This individual-meets-world interest of mine is easily connected to the work and writing of the Abstract Expressionists, and in my own practice, Robert Motherwell's writings were a prime influence in understanding how I operate as an artist in the world. Motherwell specifically wrote that, "...It is natural to rearrange or invent in order to bring about states of feeling that we like, just as a new tenant refurnishes a house" (Ashton & Banach 54). I know that I took this statement to be a type of "blessing", one in which I knew that it was okay to make work with seemingly direct references to my surroundings, as opposed to making entirely gestural and spontaneous work, which is what I was doing in the fall semester.

Motherwell also wrote in his essay *What Abstract Art Means to Me* the concept that Abstract Art is in fact a "sign" that shows that men are able to respect and follow their inner feelings. At the same time these "modern men" are working to close the "void" between the artist and the world through intense and direct experiences (Ashton & Banach 158-159). Examples of Motherwell's ideas can be seen in his piece *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 110* (1971), in which as part of an on going series to remember the Spanish Civil War (The Art Story). Motherwell presents dramatic and dark oval and rectangular shapes to the viewer as a way to spark a mood and feeling about the destruction and loss of life during that event – all without providing any necessarily representational imagery. The work evokes a somber mood that the artist intended to leave as a personal testament to an event in history.

In a similar way I see my own work as reflecting the larger concepts as talked about in Motherwell's writings. I see my work as creating a "rearrangement" or

ordered statement of what I see as important or what has called out to me from the outside world; this stands in contrast to Motherwell's work, in which he took on large, global events that he took on as an individual. Instead of world events I am taking on something minute or everyday, which I compose into an ultimatum or abstracted statement. My works present information that might seem unneeded or unknown but specifically emphasizes these facts or statements as being essential to existence through gesture and the presence of my own handwriting. I see my current work as being a form of communication from myself (as an individual) and also as a method to present these certain facts or ideas that have come to mean something or have a certain power in my own vocabulary.

Another artist that I looked at as using their work to comment or solidify an aspect of the outside world that impacts them is the painter Brice Marden. What I am most drawn to about Marden's paintings is the function that they serve in relation to Marden's own life, which is that the art he produces, "...Takes out of life an essence of experience and memory, thoughts and feelings and attains it's own autonomy" (Garrels 11). To this extent, many of Marden's large monochromatic paintings, such as the painting *Thira* (1979-1980) with it's massive panels of red, green and black, were influenced by the environment around his studio in Greece, including the intensity of the sun and the light and shadow dynamics and not to mention the affects that the changing of the seasons has on the area around him (Garrels 19).

What I connect to the most out of Marden's working process is the concept that the final work, whatever it might look like or be about, functions as a way to solidify

a certain aspect from the world around him. However, if he looks to cycles of nature and how that strikes him as what is “remembered” from life, my own work deals with language and statements that I come across in daily life, which I refigure as a means to solidify them as having an impact on my own person.

Now before my most recent SMP work began to take shape, I had been interested in work that utilized text and words as a form of communication with the viewer. This interest was formed in my earlier text-based works, *I Can't Breathe When You Sleep* and *Great Room Statements*. In these projects I used vague statements, which I was personally interested and invested in, yet the statements produced a wide range of responses that were all entirely based on the viewers reaction and interpretation of the words I presented them with. I was fascinated and excited by the varied responses that I got to my work – some viewers/receivers thought I was being sweet and romantic, while others thought I was being creepy and felt uncomfortable by receiving or reading my works. However, no matter the response I was fully interested and enjoyed how the written word played off of the viewer.

Throughout this time in which I was working on these projects, I was very interested in the work of Barbara Kruger. Kruger's work tends to be about issues in society that affect every living person; this so called “War at Home” that she addresses contains issues between good and bad, men and women and “Sociocultural dissonances” (Indiana 9). Her works pose questions and statements that address issues that face or deal with the viewer, even if they were not fully aware of them before seeing the work. Yet despite some of the works cryptic messages, there is a direct purpose or situation that Kruger is addressing, which can

be seen in her work, such as in her ongoing piece *Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)*.

This piece, which can be seen in galleries, magazine ads or on city billboards, portrays Kruger's response to gender issues and problems faced by today's women in society. My own work is functioning in quite the opposite manner in that I am not projecting an issue or a phobia of society onto that society as a way to critique it. Instead I am taking in pieces of information and responding to them in a way that might mask the meaning through a mass of marks or rapid gesture, but still works to express my own individuality as a human within society.

The other artist that I looked at in depth, and whose work added to this idea that the artist's own voice is gained or developed through outside ideas was Cy Twombly. Besides his work being my biggest influence in a solely visual sense, I am most interested by how his paintings "channel" an essence or feeling of an outside topic or idea that are personalized through the artist's hand working on the surface. Many of his paintings and drawings contain a multitude of "scribbled" lines and marks and written phrases alluding to classic Greek or Roman mythology or historical events. In regards to this, Roland Barthes has said that Twombly's work appears as being both written and unwritten at the same time, and in a way being superimposed on each other; the repetition in the works creates, "...A single state capable of containing both what comes into being as well as what fades away" (27).

If I was initially obsessed with all of Twombly's very personal and unique touch with the materials, which I sought to imitate or apply to my beginning SMP work which were drawings completely covered by marks that were "my presence in the

moment”, it was only in the second semester that I realized that Twombly was working and drawing inspiration from the world around him. He was not just living in his own world, but he was directly engaged with his surroundings and with culture and history, which he transcribed in his own handwriting in his paintings.

This can be most obviously seen in his paintings that have references to Greek mythology, such as the painting *Apollo and the Artist* (1975) in which Twombly scrawled the name “Apollo” across the surface and filled the image with scribbled names and images that make reference to or are symbols for that Greek god. This work and others like it function as Twombly’s translation and interpretation of what that Greek god or historical battle would look like after being transcribed by the artist. The works are very unique and personalized to the artist’s own hand, but they are dependent on a huge cultural idea or concept for the artist to be inspired by or respond to.

I see my own work as following this Twombly tradition in that I am interested in thinking on, commentating and providing a sense of myself on a variety of various “topics” – all of which have been chosen due to their having had an impact on myself; it is my duty to present these pieces of information and respond to them. However, it is important to note that the ideas and concepts that Twombly dealt with, like Motherwell, are often times these very large and grandiose ideas, such as his pieces dedicated to Apollo and other Greek gods, which are transcribed through his hand.

In my own work, the ideas or “subjects” that I am working with are often much smaller, or less universal, than an overarching idea or theme like a famous battle or

the seasons, which Twombly often makes pieces about. Instead of commentating on large, worldly concepts, my works are arrangements of information that one might come across everyday, but repurposed into something much more dramatic and powerful. I am giving a power and purpose to what may be overlooked or ignored by many, but by personalizing these statements and objects I highlight their power in my own vocabulary – which may impart or pass some element to the viewer.

When I realized that Twombly was “channeling” these outside sources, which happened near the same time in which I reread Motherwell’s writings, I took it all as a sign or blessing that it is absolutely okay and interesting and powerful to make work with references to the outside environment. I have since realized that my paintings function in two distinct, yet interrelated ways: on one hand they represent interactions and manipulations of the outside world, which I come in contact with (seen in my marks/text and found objects) which are the “sacrifices” I allude to in my project title. On the other hand, the works also operate as a way to identify myself as an individual through these same marks and texts. Simply put, these pieces are the result of my person manipulating pieces of information by responding to them through gesture and manipulation. My own individuality is a response to and reconstruction of external stimuli.