

SMP in Studio Art I
Document Book
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Table of Contents

Research

- Artistic Background to SMP I Page 5
- Summer Work Page 5
- Interview Questions Page 6
- Art Events Page 6- 7

Inspiration

- Source to Self: Louise Bourgeois Page 8-11
- Studio Visit: Lisa Scheer Page 11
- Studio Visit: Joe Lucchesi Page 11

Intention

- Intention Statements with Commentary Page 12-13
- Wall Text Page 13
- Future Readings Page 13- 14

Introduction

I come from a rural background in Baldwin Maryland. I had always enjoyed drawing as a kid coming up through school and I was not exposed to many other mediums besides drawing and painting. My first two years of college I took no art classes it was only when I had to pick a major that I chose art because it was the only thing I found myself truly happy in exploring. I have worked since I was physically able to, as a result I have had many jobs throughout the span of my life so far. I find working to be enjoyable when I create something that I can be proud of. This background led me to sculpture as I began my academics as an art major. I really enjoy working with my hands and building things but I had never pursued sculpture before. I find that I love art because of its ability to inspire and affect people in ways that science and other practical things cannot.

In my work my intention is to create work that communicates a strong idea or emotion. This work is usually portrayed through narrative whether in process or composition. When I create a piece of art I ask myself what the most specific way I can convey my ideas in an artistic form so that they influence some sort of reaction in the viewer. I do not want to create artwork that is boring or not accessible to people who do not have a background in art. When I am creating art I try to make it so that it has a compositional aesthetic value that is pleasing to my eye in some way or another, I am uncertain what is pleasing to the public in general and I do not set that as my primary, secondary or tertiary concern. I am also striving to find the way I can depict something as clearly as possible while avoiding clichés. My purpose in making art is to do the best that I can because art is the only thing I am really passionate about in an applicable setting. My motivation is to move past artwork that I feel can hang in a fridge and move towards creating artworks that mean something in a gallery.

Research

- Artistic Background to SMP I
- Summer Work
- Interview Questions
- Art Events

Summer Work

This summer I worked in landscaping, telemarketing, sunglasses retail, and Bus detailing. These had varying influences on my art coming in this semester. The physical labor I found very stimulating because the end result was very rewarding. Doing a good job and having a client more than satisfied with your work in trying to make something look even better than before is really awesome in my opinion. Telemarketing and sunglasses retail are more motivations for why I want to succeed in art in some way, those jobs truly were terrible. I was also granted the opportunity to study art abroad thanks to the college. I found this experience tremendously helpful in expanding my horizons and getting a more intimate look at some of the artists I most look up to.

Interview

AL: What was your first memorable art experience and how is it relevant to what you are doing now?

JM: For the fourth grade talent show all of my friends had really cool acts and I wanted to be included so I drew a squirrel in 15 seconds. No one could see it and it was pretty lame. I'd say it's unrelated to what I'm doing now

AL: Who is your favorite artist and why?

JM: Salvador Dali. He is extremely individual and his work really turns me on

AL: What inspires you? What are some of the sources, both within art and outside of art that you turn to?

JM: Emotions and feeling really inspire me. Additionally aesthetic beauty or value.

AL: What draws you to the medium and materials you work in? / How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?

JM: I like plaster, sheet metal, oil pastel. Broken glass and found objects. They contribute differently in each attribution.

AL: How is your art a response to the world you live in?

JM: It is a response to emotions or feelings I have felt as a living person in the world.

AL: Is your work ultimately more about your process or about the final product? Why do you feel that way?

JM: I'd say both I think there is a lot of value in process and that intensive process lends itself to the final meaning

AL: Do you have a mission? What do you consider to be your purpose for creating art?"

JM: To produce something I am proud of and conveys notions that I have set out to convey

AL: What about making art intimidates you?

JM: Limitations of materials and not being happy with my work.

AL: If you could have your portrait done by anyone who would it be and why?

JM: Salvador Dali it would probably look really wild.

Art Events

Throughout the semester I attended art events to study what real life working artists had to say about their work. The variety of Artists that came to this college inspired many new ways of thinking about art for me. Here is a summary of a few art events I attended.

I went to the art event with visiting professor Jerry Truong. The root of Mr. Truong's work lies very deeply rooted in his family. Truong has worked through a variety of mediums which include but are not limited to photography, sculpture and installation. Truong's heritage is the root of his highly conceptual artwork. He showed two pieces that were involved in his family's journey to America. I found these

pieces particularly moving because of the fact that they put the viewer in a framed mindset of the trial of taking a boat to America that was not very sea worthy, risking everything they had including the artist's uncle's life. Truong also showed portrait photography that was very successful in capturing aspects of the family and everyday life that I felt were somewhat universally relatable, at least in America. These portraits related to nuances and aspects of everyday life in a family that are sometimes overlooked but are still very precious in the way a family works as a whole.

Cassandra Kaspos is another visiting professor, her artist talk was rooted around her work as a photographer and her recent work in her community in Baltimore, MD. Kaspos is from a small town in the Midwest, I found this very relatable being from a small town in MD. Her photography is based in the landscape, however, this landscape is not limited to mountain ranges, seascapes, and rolling hills but more concentrated in the landscape of the city and architecture. Kaspos was really inspired by her interaction with her mentor at MICA and stressed the importance of finding someone like this for any artist. Finally, her recent work in Baltimore was really intriguing. She spoke about how she was working to beautify her community by adopting a lot for artistic purposes. She worked with her community and its members to create work that the whole community could enjoy and this inspired her community to continue pursuing art. Kaspos also worked to beautify the city by cleaning up trash and erecting it again in a sort of shrine. This was very relevant to the city and things you see in there on a daily basis.

Lynn Tomaszewski was an artist who showed in the Boyden gallery who focused on organic forms. She works mostly in oil paint but also produced ink drawings, projections and installations. While based in the idea of creating organic forms there is also inspiration from current events and wildlife in her art. She is interested in populations of things and how they move as a result of one thing or another. For instance her installation was a projection that's colors and movements reacted to how the audience was moving around the room. Or in the example of her large ink drawing on plastic paper she was studying a flock of birds' migration.

Katherine Gagnon is our visiting artist this semester. Gagnon presented an interesting body of oil paintings that are much cemented in abstraction and color theory. Gagnon's talk was interesting because for some reason to me she was more relatable in her journey to becoming an artist. I was most interested in her piece in which she painted a piece of galvanized steel and directed a light towards it. This piece was called "Love Letter" and I thought it was a neat association with the aesthetic value of the piece, I also enjoyed the combination of materials. Two of her panels from her Loon calls at Night series were also particularly interesting to me. They depicted an abstract landscape that resembled running through the forest at night. I found this very aesthetically pleasing as well as mentally enjoyable.

Inspiration

- Source To Self: Louise Bourgeois
- Studio Visit: Lisa Scheer
- Studio Visit: Joe Lucchesi

Source to Self Research Essay: Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois was a French-American artist who focused on confessional and autobiographical art. Using abstract representations Bourgeois alludes to her home life growing up. Louise Bourgeois was born in 1911 in Paris, France to Josephine Fauriaux and Louis Bourgeois. Her father had affairs throughout her childhood as her mother turned a blind eye. Her father also had a mean temper but she still wanted to please him regardless. She kept all of these memories in her diary¹. She went off to study geometry and subjects of that matter and enjoyed them for their stability and unchanging nature of the subject matter. When her mother died she decided to pursue art, her father did not support modern art so he did not support her².

All of these events had a very influential role on pretty much all of Louise Bourgeois work. Her work can be narrowed down to a few pervasive themes for the purpose of this paper. Three themes that can be found in Louise Bourgeois' heavily autobiographical work would be; Place, Figure, and Narrative. I will group these in a study of pieces that mainly deal with each although there is some overlap.

Throughout her work Louise Bourgeois has featured spiders to symbolize protection by her mother. Whether it is overseeing a place such as in her cell pieces or occupying its own space altogether, the spider towers above the viewer's line of sight and is usually much larger than the viewer. The tortured style of the body of the spider emits notions of the way that her mother was treated in her marriage to her father. However, the spider still stands above a seat or a space that someone could stand. The area underneath the spider communicates the protection her mother gave her as the legs of the spider illustrate a sort of an interior for the viewer to enter surrounded by this larger than life abstracted spider³.

Red room was a piece that clearly related to her father's affair. As the viewer walks into the sculpture you pass what can be perceived as a child's room⁴. The theme of the piece is saturated in red symbolizing violence, or something sexual that has occurred⁵. On the parents bed the sheets are red and there is a mirror reflecting towards the bed. This can be read as a direct relation to her mother knowing about her father's affair. The proximity of the child's room to the parent's room also lends

¹ Stuart, Paul. "World Socialist Web Site." *Sculptor Louise Bourgeois: A Year of Events Celebrating Her Life and Work*. World Socialist Website, 4 Jan. 2011. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.

² Stuart, Paul. "World Socialist Web Site." *Sculptor Louise Bourgeois: A Year of Events Celebrating Her Life and Work*. World Socialist Website, 4 Jan. 2011. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.

³ Michael, O'Sullivan. "'Louise Bourgeois': Transforming Pain Into Art." *Washington Post, The n.d.: Regional Business News*. Web. 12 Nov. 2014.

⁴ Lowrey, Frédérique J. "Louise Bourgeois - Artnet Magazine." *Louise Bourgeois - Artnet Magazine*. Artnet, n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/lowery/louise-bourgeois6-15-10.asp>>.

⁵ Lowrey, Frédérique J. "Louise Bourgeois - Artnet Magazine." *Louise Bourgeois - Artnet Magazine*. Artnet, n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/lowery/louise-bourgeois6-15-10.asp>>.

itself to the idea that the affair was known about but not talked about. The sculpture is meant to be walked through but it creates an air of uncomfortableness as the space to walk through narrows the viewer experiences these motifs of adultery violence and breaching into an area that seems very private.

Many of her cells show different kinds of pain, the pain of rejection from her father is something she always struggled with. Sometimes Bourgeois depicts houses as heads such as in the piece titled *Femme Maison* or houses inside her cell pieces. This relates to the structure of her life. The house attached to the head of a figure directly relates architecture to the schematic of the head or mind. In another way it can relate to the desired structure for life being in order. In an interview Bourgeois said all her father wanted her to do was marry a rich man and be a good wife, so that he in a way could be done with her. You can see the negativity of her feelings toward her father in her piece *The Destruction of the Father*. This artwork was inspired by a dream where a mother and child tear the father limb from limb and then eat the father's body. This dream could be read psychologically in a few ways. In one way it is very reflective of Bourgeois feelings toward her father, however, on a deeper level it can be related to her deeper desires for her father. As any child Bourgeois always wanted a connection with her father but could never truly attain it. In *The Destruction of the Father* she is able to metaphorically connect to her father through eating his body but also demonstrates her deep negative feelings through ripping his body apart with her mother⁶.

Alternatively, it can be seen that Bourgeois is not always being autobiographical. One scholar presents how Bourgeois is merely touching on worldly human feelings and relationships⁷. This is because the viewer can relate to the piece in most of her works because of the intense narrative it provides, such as in *The Arc of Hysteria*. The exaggerated pose suspended in air dramatically portraying a figure of intense feeling putting the viewer in personal context with the piece.

Bourgeois brings the viewer to a very intimate and personal feeling through her "autobiographical" art. The execution of her intentions is contributed to by how well she knows the subject matter. She brings the viewer into the intimacy of her past and provides eerily explicit direct context to the feelings of inferiority, insecurity, and other notions derived from her past. I connect Bourgeois work to my own through true emotion. When Bourgeois talks about her use of plaster she comments of the life like property of the cast, she says it is a true document of person and in turn their life⁸. I also see this value in the plaster mold. Rather than creating a depiction of emotion through sculpting with materials such as clay or carving from wood or stone you are taking the emotion directly from the source; the person.

Bourgeois work is purposefully autobiographical. In a way my work is also biographical in the sense that it is based on things I believe to have experienced in full. In my opinion the work that I produce that is strongest is centered on an emotion involved in some sort of narrative that I hope that my audience reads. Just as Bourgeois pours out her experience in her autobiographical works I feel that I try to depict feelings that I have been immersed in and have thoroughly felt in every way. It is at the

⁶ "Louise Bourgeois." *Louise Bourgeois*. Radford University, n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women%20and%20art/louise%20bourgeois.html>>.

⁷ Michael, O'Sullivan. "'Louise Bourgeois': Transforming Pain Into Art." *Washington Post, The* n.d.: *Regional Business News*. Web. 12 Nov. 2014.

⁸ "Louise Bourgeois." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/louise-bourgeois>>.

root of this feeling that I can find its true essence and using that I try to bring that idea to three dimensional abstract form.

Finally, I can relate to the process in which Bourgeois created *The Destruction of the Father* in a piece I am currently working on. Where her piece is based on a dream it is a product of psychological interpretation. The materialization of psychological interpretation is something I am trying to do by creating an interpretation of my own thoughts in the piece I am currently working on. I am trying to visualize a metaphor or allegory in which I can present ideas related to strong negative thought. Not unlike Bourgeois I am using an interior space kind of like her *Cells*. The piece I am currently working on also lends a nod to architecture Bourgeois has used in her *Femme Maison* pieces through the architectural structure of the room and relating this structure to the human mind.

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Studio Visit: Lisa Scheer

I had a meeting with Dr. Scheer to discuss my ideas for a sculptural installation piece for the end of semester show. I discussed my idea which goes as follows: a constructed black wall with a chain being pulled from the middle by a plaster figure emitting light that dims on a timer. The conceptual idea of this stems from looking at the mind as a house and the sculpture depicting a room of the house shut off from the public. Dr. Scheer and I discussed strengths of this narrative particularly in the act of pulling the chain making the figure weaker as well as stronger.

Dr. Scheer brought up a variety of interesting ideas. The first pointing out that I am striving to create a sort of tableau so maybe additional walls could help and also I need to think about how I want my audience to view this piece. She gave me a few examples such as Louise Bourgeois and the artwork titled *The Man Who flew out the roof*. Additionally, she presented the idea of only presenting part of the figure to carry a different symbolic meaning. This is conjecture with some sort of mechanism or chain to the hands could help communicate my narrative better. Dr. Scheer also brought up some interesting ideas about the set-up of the room. Is there a broken chair in there is the room falling apart, are there chains from two walls relating to the body? All of these were interesting ideas that I have taken into account as I move forward with this piece.

Studio Visit: Joe Lucchesi

For my second studio visit I sat down with Dr. Lucchesi to discuss ideas for my final sculpture. After having already talked with Dr. Scheer as well as Professor Friebele and moving forward in creating my final sculpture I wanted one more expert opinion on directions I could take my sculpture. Dr. Lucchesi told me to look at two artists Francis Bacon and Ed Kienholz when thinking about how I wanted the figure to look in the final composition. The commonality of these two artists in the figure is their disfigurement. Kienholz also makes tableaus, Dr. Lucchesi told me to check out State Hospital. State Hospital is a Hospital in disarray with two figures lying in their hospital beds. The top figure is encapsulated in a speech bubble made out of neon.

Intentions

- Intention Statements (chronologically)
- Future Readings

Intention Statements

Artist Statement

In my work I would really like to create a strong body of artworks that could communicate feeling and beauty. I try to explore form in many ways as sort of a pure essence of beauty as well as works that are aesthetically pleasing even though they may be broken or distorted in some way. Along with that to explicitly name some things; form as a pure expression of beauty, aesthetic qualities of the broken and distorted, and being able to communicate feeling to any type of audience. The narrative conveyed to a viewer through something that is aesthetically pleasing is compelling because as the viewer looks at a piece of art they create their own meanings and associations. Ambiguity is also something am interested in. I want the viewer to arrive at some sort of conclusion themselves. Interpretation is based on experience so I do not want to force anything on the viewer or push them in any direction rather present something that provokes thought.

The first assignment to follow this statement was the marathon. We were challenged to make 20 different artworks and explore different techniques and materials. Sadly I did not make all twenty works but some of the pieces I was proud of.

Post Critique Intention Statement

The root of my art lies in process. Process is key to my aesthetic as well as conceptual value when I make art. Without process and work put in my art pales in meaning and interpretation. Given that, the intensive amount of work put in breathes air into the lungs of what narrative I am trying to convey. This narrative is usually tied to some sort of intense emotion. Emotion is one of the most relatable things in the human condition. I believe that an artwork gains some value from what the viewer experiences while looking at the piece of art. Finally, I believe I am trying to make art that is accessible or understandable to not only “art people” but the general public, such as my friends and family. Ultimately I believe I am trying to use process and composition to convey a narrative or emotion that my audience can interpret in a variety of ways according to their own personal experience.

It was clear in my critique that I need to get better at talking about my art so that my audience can base their critique off of that. Trying to let the work speak for itself prompts nothing from your audience. It cannot influence your audience in a positive or a negative way the audience is just prompted with nothing but what they are looking at. I may hope that the audience can look at my work and arrive at their own conclusion but this is not always the case. Another thing I drew from my critique is that I need to draw better sources for my art. Without sources I cannot connect my intention with regular intention in the art world. It would also be a good idea to brush up on particular styles of art that I’m trying to make. This way I can present myself more clearly in critique. Finally, from my critique I can gather that my work is most effective when my artistic hand can be seen in the final piece. Whether this has an emotional or physical effect it is the root of my artistic “success” in the past.

During this time I was able to get a lot of brainstorming done in and out of the studio. I believe I have successfully derived an idea for my final sculpture which I presented for my In-progress critique.

Post In-Progress Intention statement

I have found through my critiques that I am able to explain my art best when I make sure to articulate every piece of a finished work to a specific intention. This helps me make decisions in what changes I should make while creating an artwork. I have also found it is easier for me to create when I outline a specific narrative or emotion that I want to capture with an artwork. This narrative is easiest and best executed when it is an emotion or idea that I feel that I can narrow down to a specific presentation. I am most "successful" when this emotion or idea is something I feel like I have a solid understanding of. My work is in a way theatrical in its dramatization. I believe I am also taking a look at existentialism in some way, more so figuring out what that word means for me and my artwork. As always artistic process is important to me and is a reoccurring theme in my work. Process gives my work value to what it is meant to communicate and its visual aesthetic. Finally, I believe I am trying to make art that is accessible or understandable to not only "art people" but the general public, such as my friends and family. Therefore, whatever I am trying to convey must be clear and in a way simple.

Future Readings

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