MFA Thesis Defense: The Multivalence of Materiality
Brittany Anderson

Documents submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art

2018
Approved by: James Hirschfield, Mario Marzan, Beth Grabowski
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS: ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Introduction:
Thanking committee
Where the title came from - Syntax of objects

Quote:
“There is nothing quite like the physical experience of transformation that occurs beneath our hands, when we shape a piece of the earth.”
-Tim McCreight, The Syntax of Objects

• Bringing in ownership
• Establishing a hierarchy and a private relationship
• Objects acquire power through ownership and contact
• Relationship to things
• A continuum of interaction
• Adding to the material world, or at least manipulating it
• We respond to handmade objects and feel cheated by the manufactured surrogate
• Materials make up the texture of the world


Studio Practice:
• Landscape
• Architecture
• Transformation

Landscape:
I have always had the intention of working deliberately with natural landscapes that I inhabit, places I have been and have grown a relationship to. I was raised in the Midwest, which impacted the story of my work and how I observed my surroundings. I have always been influenced and motivated by where I am from, influences consisting of childhood memories of barefoot escapades and scraped up knees, where I made the evergreens my jungle gym – to solo traveling across the western states, taking in the landscapes that are unfamiliar to what I’ve never known.

Collection:
• What does it mean to collect?
• Story of collecting rocks as a young child
• Using the tin cans as a container for senses
• Rubbings
Reference: Mark Deion

**Painting:**
I come from two backgrounds, one being a painter. I strived to replicate the places I have connected with, solely based on the duration of what I captured and stored as a memory. Using oil paint as my tool, temporal landscapes appeared across the canvas surface. Wide-open skies of dense storm clouds consumed majority of the substrate, while the foreground conveyed snapshots of flat lands of the Midwest to the mountainous forms of various regions and countries. Within these temporal landscapes, I posed the question of what it means to be connected yet disconnected within the same place.

**Romanticism:**
- Emphasizing the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental
- A deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature; a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect

**Painting with the curiosity of place:**
I have always been fascinated on how exactly place and art defines whom we are. I continue to ask myself on what level am I attached to the term place – what does place mean? How does one exactly define attachment to it, and why is this important? Place can be described as, a particular position or point in space. For example, a home is a place, an intimate bond - familiar and nurturing, while also serving as a space which invites exploration\(^1\). Depending on the duration of this “place”, determines its importance, as well as our identity. Permanent places accumulate more sentiment and play a greater role in our sense of self than places we merely visit.

*Source: Tuan, Yi-fu, and Tammy Mercure. Place, art, and self. Santa Fe, NM: Center for American Places in association with Columbia College, Chicago, 2004.*

**Architecture:**
I come from two backgrounds, one being a painter, as well as an architect. I am constantly observing the functionality of materials and the roles they contribute.

Architect Brandon Cole:
“You can view it from a 2 or 3 dimensional form, but you generally can’t travel through it without it becoming a structure in and of itself. Architecture, unlike art, is designing an inhabitable piece of beauty and thus adding the 4th dimension, where traveling through it as time passes by, makes architecture one dimension more intricate than art.”

*Source: Cole, Brandon."What is the difference between art and architecture?" 13 Answers - What is the

Reference: Frank Gehry and Maya Lin

- Bridging architecture and art
  - Architecture with someone functional and practical
  - Art with form

**Points (2016-17)**

Is an installation that occupies a 12x15 ft. room and each line of the electrical wire mimics the notion of drawing. Three walls were designated and consumed with wire strands, these strands connected to the wall by drilling a small hole and then twisting the end of the wire into the open space. Each wire acted as a branch, connecting one wall to the opposing side

- Influences From Architecture
  - Architect Maya Lin is an American designer and artist, whose practice connects art and architecture as one entity. Her work focuses on the natural world, the place between things, and the place where opposites meet: art/architecture.

*Source: Mayalin.com*

**Transformation:**

Material - Focusing on form follows material, I choose to work with materials simultaneously to identify agency. Concrete, foam, wood, charcoal and moss are examples of the materials that I come into contact with on a daily basis. Each one of these materials has practical functions. My intention as the artist is to remove a material’s functional identity, and allow the elements to communicate together as I live with them over time. As long as this conversation continues, the potential exists for the work to change.

**Bauhaus:** (house of building)

Brought attention to the level of distinction between fine and applied arts, and to reunite creativity and manufacturing. This is reflected in the romantic medievalism

**Authorship:**

When solely focusing on the transformation, relationship, and process of the materials, the question of practical labor and materialist aesthetics is brought up.

In order to understand the material I am using, I must be aware of the history of it and the mastery of it, in order too not only use it as an aesthetic element, but as a conceptual anchor.

**Aesthetics:**
Science of Sensory Knowledge
Bringing in the senses again

• Much has come to supplement this sensory base, factors such as meaning, memory, metaphor, symbol, and history, but it is important to reaffirm the central place that sense perception holds in aesthetic experience, for the senses are essential and indeed central to the study of art and natural beauty.

• Of course, the early emphasis of aesthetics on beauty has changed with the evolution of the arts, and today the field embraces a wide range of qualities and features of perceptual experience that may be termed, in some fashion, ‘aesthetic’. These include the ugly, the grotesque, the comic, or playful, as well as the conventionally pleasing.


Momentary paintings:
Eliminating the concern of having a beginning and a conclusion, ultimately embracing happenstance and open-ended transformation.
Continuing the conversation, so the work has the potential to change.

Reference: Nikolaus Long
• Who physically separates landscape from landscape
• Relief from 50 meter deep guarry – lifting it away from its location

Reference: Richard Long
• “The same thing at a different time at a different place.”
• “A stone brought from somewhere on a past walk, placed on the summit of Snowdon for a time during a five day walk in North Wale, and carried down to be left somewhere on a future walk.”


Ready made and natural made:
“A ready made being a found object is a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it.”

Source: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/r/readymade

Invisible Labor:
What my practice has in common with its objects
• Act of bringing in these materials – these elements from outside From its
landscape – to my studio – to the gallery

Reference: David Nash

- Charred wood Sculptures
- “With wood sculpture one tends to see “Wood”, a warm familiar material, before reading the form: wood first, form second. Charring radically changes this experience, the surface is transformed from a vegetable to a mineral – and one sees the form before the material.


**Negotiation 2018**

Is an installation piece that is 13x4’, consumed by individual dirt formations. Components of my studio practice are crumpled and absorbed by collected dirt and soil. These components consist of notes, strips of old paintings, rocks, and photographs. The installation itself is nailed assembled in 4 rows, with an additional row stopping mid sentence to indicate a future continuation. There is no specific distance between the individual clumps of dirt as I continue to place them along each other as a documentation of my time spent in the studio.

**Comparing:**
The distinction between the ordered and chaotic - structure

Reference: Essere Fiume

“The value of the work doesn't change whether it is in a museum or in a street. It’s always the same. It doesn't need the content of the space to exist. It’s like a stone; it’s like a man. Its something that always has it values. Perhaps if it is in a museum all the people will think it is an art object; if it’s in the road, perhaps some people wont. But that’s an art problem. The work itself doesn’t change.”


**Closing:**
- Direction of using form and the integration of painting
- Back to basics with the landscape

END.
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Statement of Landscape, Architecture, and Transformation

The work I produce is derived by the syntax of material. I am constantly seduced physical senses, through the action of separating natural and man-made elements from their environment, and creating potential compositions after living with these elements in my studio, I create dialogues between the objects, forming connections and relationships that lie within controlled arrangements. My adopted materials become momentary paintings, by liberating the concern of needing a deliberate beginning and a conclusion, ultimately embracing happenstance and open-ended transformation.

Focusing on form follows material, I choose to work with a variety of materials simultaneously to identify new agency. Concrete, foam, wood, charcoal and moss are examples of the materials that I come into contact with on a daily basis. Each one of these materials has practical functions. My intention as the artist is to remove a material’s functional identity, and allow the elements to communicate together as I live with them over time. As long as this conversation continues, the potential exists for the work to emerge.

*Negotiation* 2018, is an installation consisting of individual dirt formations, which consumes a 13x14’ wall. Components of my studio practice, consisting of notes, strips of old paintings, rocks, and photographs, are hand crumpled and molded by collected dirt and soil. I nail and assemble these components systematically in 4 rows, leaving an additional row stopping mid sentence to indicate a future continuation. There is no specific distance between the individual clumps of dirt, as I continue to place them along
each other as a documentation of my time spent in the studio.

I have always had the intention of working deliberately with the natural landscapes I inhabit, places I have been and have grown a relationship to. I was raised in the Midwest, which impacted the story of my work and how I observed my surroundings.

I continue to be influenced and motivated by where I am from, influences consisting of childhood memories of barefoot escapades and scraped up knees, where I made the evergreens my jungle gym – to solo travels across countries, taking in the landscapes that are unfamiliar.

As I collect, observe and assemble, my choices and decisions are guided by my sensations. Working in such an intuitive manner, I am able to expand what I see as intrinsic connections between various materials ultimately leading to new areas of investigation. As a traditionally trained painter, such an approach can be daunting, but at the same time, exciting and liberating.
The Multivalence of Materiality

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Thesis Defense
2018
“There is nothing quite like the physical experience of transformation that occurs beneath our hands, when we shape a piece of the earth.”

-Tim McCreight
Landscape Architecture Transformation
Landscape
Cloud Series No. 1, 2014
Oil and Graphite and Dirt on Canvas
24x30"
Joseph William Turner
*Fort Vimieux*, 1831
Oil

Snow Storm, *Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812
Oil
Architecture
"You can view art from a 2 or 3 dimensional form, but you generally can’t travel through it without it becoming a structure in and of itself. Architecture, unlike art, is designing an inhabitable piece of beauty and thus adding the 4th dimension, where traveling through it as time passes by, makes architecture one dimension more intricate than art."

-Brandon Cole
Line to map, 2017
Wire
2017
Wire and charcoal
Transformation

Position, 2018
Found concrete, plaster
Position
Found Concrete, 2018
Position, 2018
Found Concrete, Plaster
Position, 2018
Found Concrete, Plaster
Critic | Artist, 2018
Steel Pipe and Paint Roller
Critic | Artist, 2018
Steel Pipe and Paint Roller
2018
Unprocessed Charcoal, Charcoal Block, Found Concrete, Aluminum Rod
2018
Charcoal Block, Found Concrete
Scapes, 2018
Fire bricks, Charcoal
Scapes, 2018
Fire brick
Nikolaus Long, 1987

Overleaf

Sand quarry, South Australia
The soft, 2017
Lava Rock, Housing Foam
24x24”
The same thing at a different time at a different place
“A stone brought from somewhere on a past walk, placed on the summit of Snowdon for a time during a five day walk in North Wale, and carried down to be left somewhere on a future walk.”

-Richard Long
2018
Lava Rock, Shelf
2018
Lava Rock, Shelf
2018
Cotton, nail, moss, unprocessed pigment, insulation casted in plaster
2018
Insulation casted in plaster
2018
Unprocessed pigment casted in plaster
2018
Plaster
2018
Moss casted in plaster
2018
Found railroad tie
“With wood sculpture one tends to see “wood”, a warm familiar material, before reading the Form: wood first, form second. Charring radically changes this experience, the surface is transformed from a vegetable to a mineral – and one sees the form before the material.”

-David Nash
2018
Found railroad tie
Volcanic caves, Iceland
2018
Moss, weeds, flowers, bark
2018
Moss, weeds, flowers, bark
Front view, 2018
Unprocessed pigment, Plaster dust, LED light
12x28"
Back view, 2018
Unprocessed pigment, Plaster dust, LED light
12x28”
Right side view, 2018
Foam, Plaster, Fire brick, LED light
12x24"
Left side view, 2018
Moss, cement, exposed plywood
Left side view, 2018
Moss, cement, exposed plywood
Charcoal, LED light
12x12”
2018
Charcoal and dust
Negotiation, 2018
Earth, potting soil, paper, canvas, rocks with acrylic binder
My Weapon, 2018
Panel, Paintbrush
“The value of the work doesn't' change whether it is in a museum or in a street. It’s always the same. It doesn't’ need the content of the space to exist. It’s like a stone, its like a man. Its something that always has it values. Perhaps if it is in a museum all the people will think It is an art object; if its in the road, perhaps some people wont. But that’s an art problem. The work itself doesn't’ change.”

-Essere Fiume
How's it going? 2018
Oil, Cement, Earth, Plaster
Thank you.