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Body, Cell, and Ambiguity

Yuan Wang

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BODY, CELL, AND AMBIGUITY

by

Yuan Wang

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

Miller, Daniel W
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2019

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

Lanning, Lynne D
Art, Studio Honors Advisor

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Daniel Miller

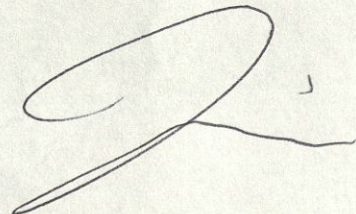
School of Art and Art History

The subject of my research project is exploring the relationship between body, cell and the concept of ambiguity. My first idea about this project came from several abandoned molds in the ceramic studio. During the class, I was required to cut and rejoin different parts of work made from the molds, and created a new ceramic project. I accidentally found the mold called nursing pig, which had a shape similar to the human body. The breast part looked very feminine, but the strong muscle curves and thick hair of the pig made the body looked masculine at the same time. This ambiguity between male and female body encouraged me to rethink the definition of human body. Therefore, for this project, I would like to keep working on the mold "nursing pig", focusing on the breast part to form a web that made with breasts.

In this project, I used different materials. At first, I chose to use mainly plaster to cast the breast shape, because I want to mimic the marble texture of human figure in Greek and Roman sculpture. However, working through the project I realized that when more and more breast models lined up together, the entire work created a new concept "cell structure". When cutting only parts of the shape out of a body, the consisting breasts became a single unit to achieve a bigger content. Therefore, thinking of the idea "cell structure", I started to work with resin due to its transparency. To use resin, I bought the product from Smooth-on to cast a new mold. My first test failed because I didn't secure the breast model on the base. As a result, I lost it completely inside the rubber mold, and became hard to take it out without cutting through the mold. Also, I experimented several times to find the best way to release the breast model from the rubber mold. With the online tutorial, I learned that applying a layer of light mist coating before the release oil would help to release. Interestingly, after making around 5 resin casting, I found I actually like the plaster better. I like the hard look of the plaster mold, which worked well with the masculine look of the shape, and formed a contrast with the feminine breast shape, which reinforce the concept "ambiguity". Also, the white texture reminded me of the white wall in the studio, which would match well for later installation. In this way, the wall would act like a entire body, and the small breast model would become a part of the body structure. Therefore, for the final work, I decided to use plaster for the casting. For the installation, I also had to experiment with different materials. After many hours of testing wires and threads, I chose to use threads to form the connection between each model, which reinforced the idea of cell structure.

I enjoyed experimenting materials through the project. Working with both plaster and rubber molds enabled me to better understanding the property of different materials. A rubber mold, for example, is flexible that can withstand stress compared to a plaster mold. Moreover, it does not require to wet mold before the casting. I also had a great fun with resin casting. The transparency of resin provides more capability for creation. Even though I chose to use plaster as the final media for this project, I would like to continue work with resin for later projects. Because of this project, I would have change to doing experiments to work and test materials that I never used before. I learnt to choose right materials that work better for me. And this is the most important part of this study.

Yuan Wang
4/23/19



4/29/19