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A Charming Re(a)d

Chelsea Ramirez

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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A CHARMING RE(A)D

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Art

in

The School of Art

by
Chelsea Ramirez
B.F.A., University of Central Florida, 2011
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ABSTRACT

A Charming Re(a)d is an MFA Thesis Exhibition portraying the domestic still life surrounding the human emotional attachments to objects. A residual memory surfaces within a specific gathering of things: a moment that resonates over time becoming peculiarly precious in the daily routine. *A Charming Re(a)d* combines poetry with experimental collages with paint and a ceramic sculptural sound installation all rooted in drawing. Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* and pieces of the artist's own written text appear as descriptive, abstract prose that define mundane objects with substance. These elements come together to further commemorate the domestic home. The written portion is an intimate tour of the house inciting memorable and relatable nuances that occur in the home. It begins in one room of the house and ends in another.

A STILL LIFE.

The still life is a composed arrangement of mundane objects based on the formal qualities of each object. This style of imagery gives freedom to two-dimensional media, evolving from perceptual depictions to a conceptual, mixed media approach for the composition. *A Charming Re(a)d* exalts this evolution and focuses on human emotional attachments to objects—humanism within the still life.

With a focus on objects, my still lives expand on the humanist stance of object-oriented ontology (OOO). The basis for this ontological concept is equality between individual objects referencing their deemed importance in our daily routine.¹ This relationship is established by us, an anthropocentric perspective on the domestic object.² In conjunction with this philosophical stance, *A Charming Re(a)d* zooms in a collection of things that spark relatable interactions and memories felt during the daily routine, like a row open cabinets because the magnet is not as strong as it used be(see figure A2). Through this painting, a bad habit is portrayed through the quirks of the object itself, a nuance between person and object developed through use. By pointing out the object's developed personality, a sequence of events, memories, and emotions establish a communal domestic life—a collective bad habit.

¹ Bogost, Ian. *What is Object-Oriented Ontology? "A Definition for Ordinary Folk"*. Published December 8, 2009. http://bogost.com/writing/blog/what_is_objectoriented_ontolog/

² Bryant, Levi. *The Democracy of Objects*. (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011) 136

These chosen objects are pieces of life that exist outside the image through its use. In the piece *These Shoes Don't Give Me Blisters Anymore* (see figure A4), the repetitive line of simplified shoes is broken by an individual pair of shoes, a special pair of shoes. Looking towards Martin Heidegger's analysis of Vincent van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes*, a painting with layers of truth, emotion, and charisma exist outside the image only described through the individualized parts of the boots themselves.

“In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls.”³

In an object, like a row shoes, the still life develops its character and personality; through its utilitarian nature, it marks the familiar essence of the thing—“a thing as a bearer of traits.”⁴

The evolution of the still life in my thesis combines with poetry, specifically Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*. These poems abstractly describe the domestic home with a rhythmic, unconventional syntax repetitive in nature like the daily routine.

³ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Off the Beaten Track*. (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2002.) 14

⁴ Heidegger. “Origin of the Work of Art.” 11

“A Blue Coat.

A blue coat is guided guided away, guided and guided away, that is the particular color
that is used for that length and not any width not even more than a shadow.”⁵

The description is not one of recognizable immediacy, but rather a collage of color, sounds, and words evolving around the object, obscuring its actual form with its own visual imagery. The flow of words with abrupt pauses is mimicked in the process of *A Charming Re(a)d*: the process of drawing.

⁵ Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons: Objects*. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1914)

DRAWING

Contemporary drawing has evolved passed the preparatory sketch into a more substantial genre. The continuously rising practice changes in its specificity to medium and approach, but what does stay the same is its nature of immediacy. In this light, drawing is formatted to fit the needs of a responsive, prompt way of making: process facilitating contemporary drawing. Its qualities are, now, embraced in making such as its aloofness to its new place in contemporary art. It is elastic, swift, and exploratory; it is a middleman between formal technique and conceptual ideology. Drawing, then, becomes the mediator between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional in terms of an active approach. This performance avenue in contemporary drawing lead to the development of *A Charming Re(a)d*.

Categorized with a loose definition in media, drawing creates *A Charming Re(a)d* through mixed media approaches rooted in its active attribute. Drawing as painting, collage, sculpture, sound, and writing establish the connection through each individual piece. Active mark-making follows the fluidity of poetry with torn pieces of paper in sync with verbal interpretation. An application of paint, loose and swift, worked in competing levels to symbolize the passing of time. Drawing crosses boundaries between material and imagery that combine to further reinforce the significance of the hand. *A Charming Re(a)d*'s active process relies on the movement of the hand, the representation of thought, and the history of change through making. The touch, thusly, is apparent in each piece.

Through language and image, a nostalgic, domestic still life materializes. A daily routine consists of repetitive interactions with our things that become monotonous. This autonomy, though, develops deeper, memorable relationships between things and their owners--snippets of emotional attachments. *A Charming Re(a)d* lingers on the still life as a thingy gathering within the domestic home and the objects that live there. The ongoing complementary relationship begins to surface the distinct personalities of our things.

A RED.

A boldness that peaks out through a crowd that calls attention to itself. Poking out of a queue like an extra tall person. A red, a bulging red.

A red just out of the corner that turns your head in its direction. A noticeable specialty item in a line of commons. A red that is unlike anything else that surrounds it. A color that deems itself important and substantial standing out of the pack.

This red, the primary red, varies with more tints and shades as the light hits it. This red made up of all reds, varied reds made from purples and greens. Most reds are tyrannical as they overpower the rest, those that never stood a chance.

The red is renowned.

Like the body, this red is soft and luscious. A sexy, subtle coloring to liven the mood: a caress says it all.

A lovely, warm extension of togetherness without words. Red, meaningful to both of us, showing that you actually care.

An affectionate, loving, arousal. Lustful in its nature as a sweltering room draws two bodies together,

still.

An enticing and carnal indication screams out to be noticed like red that quivers on the each individual ridge of the lips.

Sweet and suggestive implication of meaningful moments. A red that means something more and more than a sensuous hue.

A paramount aggression that blankets the softness. Red with a harsh temper and a quick wit, an outspoken tone that, again, strikes forthcoming and ominously.

A lost, young girl walking in the street, noticed from above.⁶ A memorable red that reappears, again, noticed. The initial frightful red that carries itself over time.

A striking focus that occurs throughout the mundane like a bump on the shoulder from a stranger to bring back your attention. A bump that stops the autonomous routine.

The noticed red.

⁶ Spielberg, Steven, Steven Zaillian, Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, Ralph Fiennes, and Thomas Keneally. 1994. *Schindler's list*. Universal City, Calif: MCA Universal Home Video.

OBJECTS

A buried nostalgia coursing through the home,

A swarm of attachments to objects.

A favorite sweater, cup, spot on the couch.

A developed charisma in objects, a special quirk that keeps me using it for specific occasions. Embraced imperfections that are meaningful.

An unbalanced coffee cup because the handle is too big, a handle too far away from the mug but my hand does not get burned. A perfect casualty.

An assortment of things permitted to stay in the cozy home, in fact, chosen to be part of it. A specific place for a certain thing:

Like a side table in the living room placed always on the left. That's my spot on the sofa.

An allowance for occupation, objects that live in the home. More than ornamentation but more a necessary decoration of the home. An assemblage of memories attached to objects, and their obligatory arrangement.

The Still Life: a thingly gathering.

Objects in a still life, humble and shy.

A still life is not a symbol, it is not outside of the image.

The thing is. The Thing is

The muddy brown of the wobbly dining room chair,

Wobble from the front right leg, a tilted seat.

The still life: demure and warm.

A collective of charming. Personalities for stuff. The timid table, yellow in dim light,

Pushed into the back of the room against the wall. An invitation for interaction, still.

A familiar awareness recalled by things. A charming disposition and a quaint temperament.

An object, itself.

A TIME TO EAT.⁷

The dinner set, set.

A found collection picked up along the way. A way of making it home.

Mismatched.

My chicken does not taste like my mother's chicken--her chicken does not taste like her mother's chicken,

Still.

A line of open cabinets and open drawers. Left open due to my habit of just walking away. A repetitive, obnoxious habit that gives character to the room. A room of open cabinets and bowls revealing its lack of contents.

A scattering of kitchenware. An itemized disarray of utilitarian objects, utensils thrown in after a wash.

Forks overflowing the silverware container but there are barely any spoons and

And piles of lids for previously used jars.

Geometric shadows on the wall from the angles of the open doors. Variations of yellow for a yellow wall.

A lively wall from irresponsibility.

An open cabinet barely filled, small stacks next to empty space. A collection still building.

A line of doors slightly ajar, the magnet is not as strong as it used to be.

A line of angles that compose different angles of shadows, a cast shadow from a single bowl left. The rest used.

The last bowl never used because it is at the bottom of the stack.

An ignited light from the gas stove and the scarce light from the window. The sun sets.

The dinner set, set.

A soup bowl and a salad bowl. A warm, friendly excerpt in time, alone at time at its best. A penetrating scent lingers as the pleasant light dissipates. A golden brown on the stove sizzling filling the room, a golden, buttered room losing its amber light.

Alone time at dusk with a luminescent hint smothered with sweet and spicy.

⁷ Stein. *Tender Buttons: Objects*.

A bent fork scratching on the plate and the hairs on my arms stand. Goosebumps-I cringe at the sound of scraping glass. The bent fork with an orange, plastic handle.

A bright (handle), a warm hand.

A fork that I did not know that I even owned, the bent fork with an orange handle.

Honest sounds of use.

A thud, a clunk, a drag, a swallow.

A loudness overwhelming the quiet dining. A partner substituted with a tonality of eat.

A murmur from the living room, a TV show hums to break the calm. A chewing

So quiet, quieter than if someone was present. Basking in the soft lull of a singular dinner more aware of the noises I make when I'm alone.

Alone not lonely.

The faded red chair with flashes of orange as the color washes away. A speck of dirt, scraped arms weathered away by the elements.

The wobbly, curbside chair that used to be an office chair. The free chair.

A teeter and sway as the leg hits the floor with a thud. A shift in the shadow on the wall

As the chair rocks back and forth. The lop-side sits on the right front leg and a bunched cushion makes a crooked posture. A skewed seating that I have grown accustomed to

The Clunky Dinner.

A set of bowls but not really a set. A mismatched meeting of bowls.

A soup bowl, a salad bowl, a tea bowl,

Stacked but not neatly.

A little bobble, a tilt, a sway. A clink and a clank. A precariously built tower of bowls.

I've let the dishes overflow. The mist of water scraps food crusts off as the tower dwindles and dwindles to nothing but mucky water. A tilted pile of bowls set to place in their place. An open cabinet door beckons their placement.

A messy set. Necessary for an even distribution of bobble and wobble, an organized collection of stacking. An off kilter way, Handmade bowls just don't stack right.

CLOTHED.

A shoe, a comfortable shoe, a sneaker worn, ripped, and smelled from sweat of a foot without a sock. A fitted shoe, molded to the foot.

These shoes no longer give me blisters.

A blister, a red rubbed raw heel from a new shoe. A red sensation of discomfort from a barely worn shoe. A special occasion shoe.

Work boots, a variety of wear for a variety of occasions. A working day, a tiring moment of truth after a tiring day. A mandatory wearing dreading the upcoming day.

A heel rubbed red, tender, and raw with a flapping of skin slightly torn from a crisp new shoe, barely worn.

A swollen heel from the strap, pinching in the toes splitting a toenail and the pressure on the ball of a foot.

A pair of shoes I never really wear.

A high heel, a higher heel than most heels, for a special occasion, a fancy outing to show the possibility of still caring about one another. A forced occasion.

A barely used pair of shoes, a walk as if I have never walked before, a walk like a toddler,

A little bobble, a little sway.

A clunky walk, a thudding and buckling at the ankle.

A pair of shoes. Wearing away from the wriggling toes and the hole in a sock that is left inside. A matching wear. This sock goes with this shoe.

The vacant closet lacking in organization and substance, built up from busy weeks; a few weeks of wearing and re-wearing the same pants, shirts. A wearing and worn out texture, loosening and loosening around the waist, thighs, foot, arm.

A stretch for the wear, in wearing.

An empty closet with a gaping open space, a peering into the back wall. A pale, yellow cement wall scuffed over years of living.

Clattering of empty hangers against each other, a scuffling against the support bar and a messed dresser. Procrastinating on cleaning. It is easier to re-wear than to clean it all.

The red sweatshirt, alone draped over the dresser messy from a search for something to wear. The only things left to wear are things that are never worn.

The lone, red sweatshirt with a weight for the cold weather, a stiffness in a seam,
and a smell of new,

still.

What is the importance of this sweater, the sweater that I barely wear, and a
sweater that carries a strong sentiment? A sweater with a serious demeanor.

It didn't belong to me.

A tight knit cloaked collar, fitted. So fitted that it is a gasp for air, a
smothering like a blanket over the head. Fitted, too fitted. A stifling
sweater.

Stiff sleeves, an elastic not stretchy enough. A static sentiment,

In memory of someone that I used to know,

still.

A sweater that was on loan for a night, maybe two. An
accumulated gift, one that was my favorite though I never wore it.
Just a little too big. A sweater that became mine over time but
given away, given away too soon. Gone before it should have
been. A memorable sweater, once yours, now mine.

No longer around,

A single, red sweater that I cannot wear anymore.

THE SPECIAL OCCASION.

A soft and subtle nod in my direction, a significant outing forcing a suitable wearing. A rigid togetherness, stiff like the jacket kept in its plastic bag.

A creased jacket, on its original hanger. The smell of the department store bag, never worn leather and the lingering sample perfumes stuck on the rustling of plastic put behind the ordinary waiting to be worn,

Still.

A special occasion- a warm, joyous togetherness defined with its significance and impactful impression. A hustle for elegance. A nervous scramble to find appropriate measures for arousal. How utterly necessary it is to excite.

Shoes, a dress, a scuffling between drawers. Messy drawers with clothes thrown about. A red sleeve stays out and the drawer is stuck,

Like a snagged zipper.

An exhilarating need to impress triggers a pleasant agitation. An unacceptable shirt thrown on the floor, this occasion calls for exquisiteness. Enough to show off even just for a few moments. A special attempt for a special occasion.

HOME.

A warm haven between walls. An enclosure specifically for comfort and ease outside of resentments and worries. The place for just complacency.

The explicit need to stay grounded. Beginning in a room, a room dedicated to comfort and relaxation. A togetherness for us to sit in silence without distractions. Dedicated to seeing each other without necessary precautions. A living room, a comfortable room.

A charming atmosphere that emphasizes an essential comfort level like walking around with your shoes off and floor boards creaking with each step.

And a quiet resting spot cluttered with things, things that have been used and reused.

A pile of laundry on the floor, clothes thrown off the moment I walk in the room like a pair of jeans that I have been dying to get out of all day.

And a bed, a flowing bunch of blankets, two blankets. We both get our own blankets to ravel, split down the middle. Each person gets their own side. A sprawling out that breaks the line so that our legs intertwine but really an uncomfortable way to lie. A bed riddled with casualties of frustrations.

A pillow case that never stays on. And a fitted sheet, an ill-fitted sheet that twists and gets pulled off the corner revealing the pink, fluffy mattress. A good night's rest.

. A fan too loud and too strong that the two blankets just are not enough. Without-- more clothes on the floor. A fluctuating temperature. I would rather be cold than hot.

Yet an ability to overlook the mishaps and annoying nuances of the home stands forward and completely envelope a soft, simple, pleasant home. A place that I sink into the sofa wearing my favorite pair of shorts for the third week in a row. Silence.

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APPENDIX: IMAGES



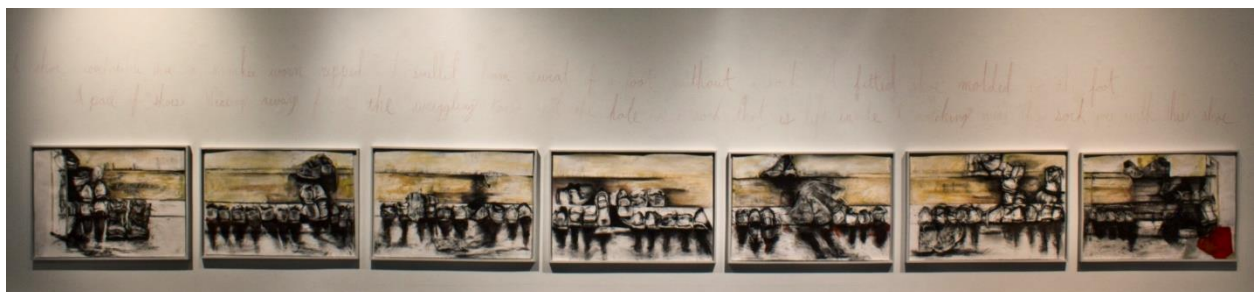
A1: *My Chicken Doesn't Taste like My Mother's Chicken*, Oil paint, pastel, masking tape, torn paper, 2014



A2: *The Magnet is not as Strong As it Used to be*, Oil paint, pastel, collaged paper, 2015



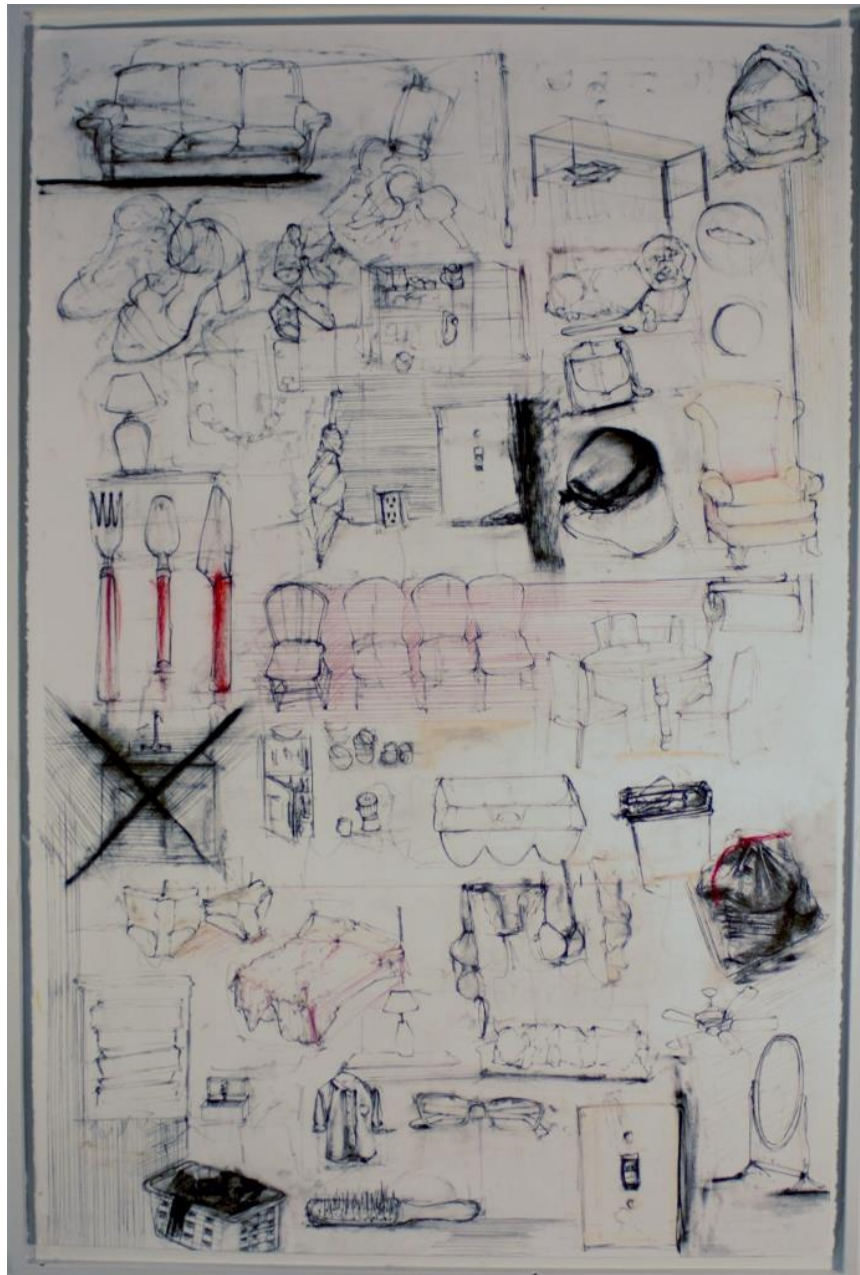
A3: *Handmade Bowls Never Stack Right*, Oil paint, pastel, torn paper, 2014



A4: *These Shoes Don't Give Me Blisters Anymore*, Charcoal and acrylic paint on paper, 2015



A5: *A Sweater with A Serious Demeanor*, Oil paint, pastel, masking tape, 2015



A6: *A Charmed Home*, Charcoal pencil, 2015



A7: *The Special Occasion*, Charcoal pencil, torn paper, white gesso, masking tape, 2015



A8: *Stack but Not Neatly*, Ceramic sculptural sound installation, 2015



A9: *Stack but Not Neatly*, Ceramic sculptural sound installation detail, 2015

VITA

Chelsea Ramirez is a mixed-media artist from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She received her B.F.A from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, and continued her study of drawing and painting at Edinburgh College of Art and Design in Scotland. She expects to receive her M.F.A. from Louisiana State University August 2015, where she is an instructor of Record teaching foundation courses for Drawing, Figurative Drawing, and Painting. Chelsea has attended the New York Studio School's Drawing Marathon and monitored the Open Figure Drawing session at LSU. She plans to continue her experimentation with media while continuing to make work in New York City.