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Full

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FULL

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 Arts

in

The School of Art

by
Leanne Rose McClurg
B.F.A. University of Minnesota, 1997
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ABSTRACT

As an artist I want to make my human experience sharable. I am interested in the connection between the act of consumption, the desire that leads to that act and the repercussions of fulfilling that desire on the body both social and intimate. I have chosen the hand made pot to express my thoughts of filling the vessel. It is in the arena of eating that I begin to understand larger philosophical issues about sentience.

Using dishes I made, I have chosen to illustrate the experience of consumption by leaving remnants of a dinner on display during gallery hours. How much each person ate, what they did not finish eating, and how they chose to maneuver through the dinnerware was all visible in what was left behind. I am allowing the viewer to be voyeur to an event that they were not invited to.

FULL

“I was in love with the whole world and all that lived in its rainy arms. Sometimes I’d look out on my yard and the green leaves would be glowing. I’d see the the oil slick on the wing of a grackle. I’d hear the wind rushing, rolling, like the far off sound of waterfall. Then I’d let everything inside.

After sometime I’d swing the door shut and walk back into the house with my eyes closed on beauty until it was time to make the pickle brine or smash the boiled berries or the boys came home. But for a while after letting the world in I would be full.”

Louise Erdrich, Love Medicine

I begin with myself, my body, my perception, it is the genesis for all that I make. My impetus for making is to convey a certain truth about my experience in life. I use my work to make my experiences as a body sharable, social. I have concerned myself with communicating the concept of fullness. To be full, to fill, to excessively contain all that is possible, to the brim between overflowing and empty.

I have chosen the hand made pot to express my thoughts of filling the vessel. It is in the arena of eating that I begin to understand larger philosophical issues about sentience. I am interested in the connection between the act of consumption, the desire that leads to that act and the repercussions of fulfilling that desire on the body both social and intimate.

As an artist I want to make my human experience sharable. I want the viewer to see commonalities in our individuality. My work represents an extension of my physical being. When someone uses a cup I made I want them to think of my lip kissing theirs as they drink. I am giving them a piece of my body when I give them my work. My body is the vessel of consciousness. It is also the vehicle that allows me to interact with others. It is within this duality of body and consciousness that I share my life. My body is one of fullness, softness, and a compulsion for the tactile. My perceptions as a body are one of reflection and invention that create a joy for living.

I draw inspiration from how my full body interacts with other objects, other bodies. The way a dress fits me, the way my ass fits in this chair as I write, the way my tongue intertwines with that of my lover when we kiss, these are all sources that filter through me and that I put into to the work of a form.

I do not intend my work to be about self-acceptance or trying to grapple with my own beauty. I do not wish to make my issues of body image excessively feministic. My intent is to address truth and consequence, not judgment. My work is how I give form to that which is unutterable; my own pleasure and pain as a body. It represents the body of a living thing that has flesh and breath and responds to touch. My work takes on the life of something soft, something animal.

In my process, I feel a bit like a beaver most days, working hard to dam up a stream so that I might fill an acreage to flop around in for a while. Inevitably the dam breaks, the stream trickles by, and it is my own compulsion that drives me to rebuild. While this beaver act may seem futile, my compulsion to work overwhelms me so that the finesse of the process becomes as essential as the product. The presence of my hand in the work is proof of my body as maker, it is proof that I am alive. Every breath, like every fingerprint in clay, is a record of my existence.

I concern myself with the buoyancy of flesh,
with the delight and the grotesque.

I concern myself with the necessity of sustenance,
with consumption, digestion, and expulsion.

I concern myself with the truthfulness of self,
the sensuousness of touch, and the peculiarity of life.

My initial training as an artist was that of a singer. My breath was my media. With each fill of my lungs I would focus on how to control the expulsion that was to follow. In the cycle of filling there is that point at which one stops for reflection. The questions follow; Did I take in enough? Could I hold more? It is at this apex that I hope to take my work to. I want to capture a full breath in the body of the vessel.

Like an inflatable pool toy, when a body is full of breath it is buoyant. Relieved from gravity, relieved from weight, we float. Part of what I want to convey in my work is my own weight and buoyancy. By implying breath in the work I imply the tension of weight. Gravity acts upon me and pulls me downward in my struggle both as physical body and on my consciousness. When my body is in water I am free from the traditional pull of gravity. On land the weight of my past, my expectations, act upon me like gravity and drag me under the surface.

In the forms of my work I try to convey a sense of buoyancy through volume and line. I intentionally leave parts of the process as a marker of my presence and also to convey concept. Often I leave a seam, a scar where a plaster mold once supported the form while I worked. The mold (like water) helped me defeat gravity for a while so that I might work upward. By leaving the line of where the mold once was I hope to evoke a watermark, like on a boat pulled up on shore. A scar where once there was a vulnerable underbelly that is now exposed.

While eating is a necessity for life, as a vice it leaves a watermark upon me. The compulsion to eat is connected to weight. I use food to act like water and alleviate the weight of my own knowledge. When I am particularly weighted, uncomfortable with my own skin I over indulge in vices, like eating or walking. My indulgence brings its wrath upon my body in the form of fatness and blisters on my feet. Through pots I choose to focus on my own obsession with eating as vice.

It is my desire to reach out to the viewer, compelled to touch, to experience, to take in sensation, to fill consciousness. To do this I use forms that are reminiscent of appendages, like fingers, to breach the border between vessel and viewer. Swellings flow off a central buoyant form to show how this being is reaching out of its skin. To show where and how it is being pushed outward by an inside force and pulled outward by a gravitational pull. It is at these metaphorical fingertips where the work reaches out to the viewer. It is at my own fingertips that I reach out to the viewer through the object.

fulfill
fulcrum
full figure
fitful
willful
fanciful
grateful
lustful
wonderful
full force

Too often I make work that goes out into the world and I never see how it is interacted with. I know what my intent is in making but the truth of the life of the work eludes me. With my thesis show I wanted to address an issue of time and fulfillment. I wanted to bring my show into a familiar yet parallel realm to me, the theater. For six days, six different people will have dinner in the gallery after hours. I have made tables, chairs and silverware to set the stage on which the performance, interaction of pottery and person, will take place. With only a gentle push from my will, I have left the performances unscripted and the cast up to chance. Valuing chance and playfulness in my work, I have tried to bring the same spirit to the dinner parties. I put over 40 names in a bag and had three people pick names randomly to create the guest list. The guests are to enjoy a dinner that is prepared for them one night and then through inspiration or their own genius they are to prepare a meal for the next night so that another six might enjoy.

In the work for the the dinner party I have made choices about clays and palettes to address separate issues about the body and awareness. I have made the individual dinner sets out of porcelain and serving dishes out of earthenware to make a physical break between private and public. In the porcelain work I chose a monochromatic palette to allow the viewer to explore the form and to glorify the naked body. My intent is that the luster touches make the objects precious and private.

Earthenware vessels were created for the shared, public part of the meal. The serving dishes are used both to reference the more visceral aspects of the internal body and the timbre at which I choose to clothe my body. There is a tension between body and clothing that I explore in my work. I do not decorate just to decorate, there are contentual choices in how I dress a pot. A busy surface complicates the form and changes the viewers perception and interaction with the object through investigation of layers of information. Choices about color and running surfaces are made to accentuate the wet goeey insides of our bodies, the space where the food we consume is to arrive.

Clearly I am interested in excess. For this reason I have made an abundance of serving dishes, far more than is needed to serve six. Accompanying the service are 15 cake stands used to accentuate abundance, decadence, and overindulgence. By having more serving vessels than is necessary, it is my intent that the participants will be made aware of the quantity before them. For some the spread may reference an all-you-can-eat buffet that only encourages gluttony. For others

it is possible that the abundance may be too great, the task too overwhelming, one that renders them incapable of a desire to eat.

The task set out for me still is how do I share something private/ personal, like the after hours dinner party, with the public in the gallery. I can accomplish some of this in the studio but I want to make public another person's experience with my work. I have chosen to illustrate their experience by leaving remnants of their dinner on display during gallery hours. How much each person ate, what they did not finish eating, and how they chose to maneuver through the dinnerware will all be visible in what was left behind. I am allowing the viewer to be voyeur to an event that they were not invited to. They must Sherlock the scenario back together.

So often pots are viewed as what they could do potentially. They are displayed as empty vessels so that the viewer might complete the act of future use in their mind. It is also easier to sell work that is empty and clean. If commerce is your goal, to present a pot a dirty would seem counterproductive. In my house pots are on display more as wreckage from past use than as clean and "in waiting". A pot's destiny is to be filled and emptied repeatedly. I am trying to capture the pots in-between those two extremes to find a new realm of ceramic display.

To be true to my own experience I want to show my pots as how they live through the stages of fulfilling their purpose. I want the gallery viewer to be able to see a pot's past and present and to determine its future. I want the work to be as messy, visceral and direct as they were when I made them. I do not want to see them eager, empty or waiting to be filled. I want them to be like me, full. I have a history, my body has flaws and scars from use and sometimes abuse, my work should be viewed in the same light. When my life is messy then my life becomes my own; visceral, sensual, full. It is my hope that the viewer comes away with a filling feeling that allows them to connect with me, my body, my experience and through this find their own truth.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8



Image 9



Image 10



Image 11



Image 12

VITA

Leanne R. McClurg was born in Medford, Oregon, on April 27, 1973. She is the daughter of Linda Powell and Patrick McClurg. Leanne was raised in Anchorage, Alaska, where she graduated Bartlett High School in 1991. She then completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with an emphasis in ceramics, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the University of Minnesota in 1997. In 1999 she moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree at Louisiana State University, which will be awarded at the August Commencement, 2002.