Suppressing My Inner Caravaggio

Nathan A. Childs
Washington University in St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/samfox_art_etds
Part of the Art and Design Commons

Recommended Citation
Suppressing My Inner Caravaggio:  
A disruptive and controversial Masters of Fine (FULK) Arts Thesis by Nathan Childs

A thesis presented to the  
Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts  
Washington University in St. Louis

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

Thesis Advisor:  
Monika Weiss

Primary Advisors:  
John Sarra  
Denise Ward-Brown

Graduate Committee:  
Adrian Cox  
Joan Hall  
Monika Weiss
Suppressing My Inner Caravaggio

A disruptive and controversial Masters of Fine (FULK) Arts Thesis by Nathan Childs

Washington University in St. Louis Sam Fox School of Visual Art and Design

Advisors
John Sarra
Denise Ward-Brown
Monika Weiss
Adrian Cox

4/16/2014

Figure A
The Best Part

“You know what the best part about painting is?  
When you’re painting.”  
-Sopearb Touche.

The ritualized studio practice is a state of mind, a way of living, and a formation of habits. The studio can be a four wall physical structure. The studio can also be transported to the street by mobilizing it in a van or on a bicycle. The definition of the studio can also be confined to the available materials in any given situation.

When engaged in my daily routines I occupy myself with internal thought and introspection. My memories, dreams, aspirations, anxieties, paranoia and fantasies form a milieu of past experiences, the current moment, and an uncertain future. My work requires labor and it is often repetitive. The monotony of this busy work allows my mind to drift. A sort of mantra of motion and mindlessness will deliver; color relationships, solutions to games or puzzles, semantic puns and ploys, jokes, perversions, images, situations, recipes. There is a sense of positive idleness of mind that can be achieved through continual industry. While the work of the practice is being executed the mind can enter into the complexities of the context, content and compositions of forthcoming work.
Fuck Art or Folk Art?

An existence "yonder," which refers to a determinate realm of events and things, is not the only dimension to be acknowledged. Experience itself involves dimensions of a 'beyond,' both spatial and temporal. ‘Beyond’ is a more alluring term than ‘yonder,’ suggesting deliverance from limitations, or a place for the fulfillment of desires. In many cases 'beyond the finite' would then mean repose in the infinite. But the infinite involves passing every assignable limit, and always there is more. Would that necessarily be reassuring? Those seeking ulterior ends must read into the conception of a ‘beyond’ what they wish it to mean. ‘Yonder’ on the other hand, involves determining the reference of experience, which may be concrete and definable in terms of known region of experience, or vacuous, in the sense of being inaccessible and inexpressible (“noumenal”). The element of determinateness prevents the concrete reference from having the degree of appeal possessed by the ‘beyond.’ The ‘beyond’ could hopefully be a heaven, or, still hopefully, an indeterminate conception: ‘yonder’ could be a grave. This helps explain why ‘freedom’ may become ‘transcendent’ for philosophers under the heel of a dictator.” – Marvin Farber

It is from the controversy of my experiences in academia that I came to the ritualized process of what I have named FULK ART(f.A). Throughout my tutelage in the academy I have become increasingly aware of the distinctions provided by post production criticism and the subsequent consequences of the segmenting nature of the “art world” or “art worlds”. Most of my early investment in making was in functional pottery. I derived a great deal of satisfaction out of producing vessels on the potter’s wheel and committed myself to excel, to take my skills “beyond”. The source of this compulsion was idiopathic and free from constraints. The summer of 1996 I enrolled in a summer college preparatory course for the visual arts at Rhode Island School of Design. That summer was the first time I was exposed to the notion of “fine” art. My educators were graduate students who biased against the idea of functional pottery as “craft”. It was a huge blow to my presumptions
about art, and to be honest was a hurtful experience. The cruelty and subjective nature of the censorship became a controversy that I committed myself to disrupting.

The distinctions and segmentations of various forms of making has always been an integral part of what I have been compelled to question. Instead of worshipping this knowledge and finding the appropriate methods to comply, I have continually questioned this presumed knowledge and worked against it.

FULK ART is the “third side” of the coin resolving the dualities and constraints of constructed narratives of “art worlds”. I originally deployed it as a semantic device to confuse the observer to the point of questioning which phrase I am detourning. Is it a reference to “fuck art” or “folk art”? Both terms are inherently abrasive but for two different reasons. The esteemed critic that deems the worth of the art object as crucial and requiring promotion would be turned away by the ideation of “fuck art” while also expressing disdain for the presence of “folk art”. It is through this process of making that the objects of aesthetic nature reflect the biases and tastes of “fine art” while utilizing the strategies often relegated to “folk art”.

FULK ART is not confined to formalist methods of material construction. Compositions executed in time based medium, digital format, situationist performance, relational aesthetics and game theory have all been orchestrated under the banner of FULK ART (F.B). Rules can be strictly obeyed, loosely adhered too or even discarded. An example is the grid, although primary in application, is not set to any certain paraxial or liminal alterations. Rectangular, parallelogram, trapezoidal and lengths of strata, analogous and organic shapes are all integrated into compositional elements. The
mundane and repetitive segments of construction allow my mind to explore the orientations, allegories, purpose of continued explorations and executions of the FULK ART process. In the studio (F.L.C) I am immersed within a deluge of materials, executed objects, objects being made, tests, mixing stations, spilled coffee, open drawers and working studies. FULK ART is a “way” of making, focused on diffusing the separation purported by the institutions of art. This diffusion of the separation is grounded in willfully engaging in a discourse that involves both sides, setting in motion a dynamism of completeness.

When I first came to FULK ART (f.s.1-4) I imagined myself arranging gird-like pallets. These pallets are then dissected and rearranged into compositions. At first the project was about color relationships, materiality, formalism, ease of construction, retaining a high level of craftsmanship, strictly adhering to an equal length square grid. Ultimately I wanted handmade qualities, painted surfaces, construction grade materials and approachability by a wide audience.

The process is segmented into several modes of construction, dissection, application, reorganization, further dissection, further application and increased levels of dissection. The material that isn’t immediately utilized in the featured composition is not discarded but spread out amongst an ever active and growing pile of detritus. I am in a metaphorical way “composting” the refuse and discarded material of my own studio practice. The activity of discarding the material by orienting it for future use situates it in a perpetual state of “forever”. Segmentation of the compositions can be observed as portions of a prior time, performance, choice, and moment. Past compositions
situated in these segments, represent the purpose, orientation, exhibition, and construction of the prior. These segments are buttressed by further examination, application and dissection at subsequent constructions. Continually sheered again, used, discarded, reoriented, sheered...a.i.

Foreign materials are introduced at the buttressing portions of the segmented alterations. I speak of them as foreign because the material may not necessarily be recently purchased, or obtained from a dumpster, but it comes from an intentional place, foreign to the composition. Some compositions are a milieu of materials that are composite facsimiles in respective ratios of the heap I found the materials in. Other compositions are made entirely with exclusive materials obtained and organized to accomplish a determined end or specific alteration to the basic rubric of the FULK ART process.

The acquisition of materials is often a mix of: scouring, positioning for charity, excess, and spending money in the capitalist consumption cycle. The choice of materials is dependent on a large rubric of multiple variables: appearance, use, weight and scale, transportability, storability, allegorical meaning, applicability to larger contexts and compositional choices. Some materials are stashed away or relegated to refuse piles. This material is later rediscovered and utilized.
Art Will Never Abandon You

“There is not a word about music, painting, sculpture, literature, or to any other department of that education of the senses and refinement of the imagination without which the inevitable division of a life’s activity into work and play, or business and pleasure, means nothing but its division between compulsory necessary money-making and voluntary intemperance in eating, drinking and sexual sensuality. The appalling fact that nobody in this country seems to know that intellect is a passion for solving problems, and that its exercise produces happiness, satisfaction, and a desirable quality of life, shows that we do not yet know even our crude bodily appetites in their higher aspects as passions; passion being, I take it, an overwhelming impulse towards a more abundant life. We all have to admit that the greatest poets and dramatists, though great because of their philosophic power and biologic instinct, have been artists. But we talk of professional philosophers as if they were only half men, having brains without eyes or ears or souls. Yet the philosophers who have most deeply moved the world, whether for good or evil, are those who have been artist philosophers...” -George Bernard Shaw

Early developments in my life lead to the conclusion that a life invested in the pursuit of disruption and controversy, is a life of fulfillment and purpose. It was during a studio visit from Clarence Morgan, a prominent American painter and educator that I experienced a revelation that permanently concreted in my mind and soul the loci of my compulsions. He said to me “art will never abandon you, so why would you abandon it?”. Like a ton of bricks everything I thought I understood about my art practice came crashing down. Up until this moment I had always believed that art was a means to an end, rather than a reason for existing. All of those things that were once material aspirations, and ways in which I could justify my actions in a material world transitioned
from reasoning with my existence into a way of transcending “reality” for the sake of existence. Up to that point art was an escape from reality, a means in which to justify my disruptions. I had learned that the profession of artist afforded it the distinction of “disruptor” the creator of “controversy”. From that point I realized that art was a force, just like gravity is a force, and that there was no way for me to switch it on or switch it off.

My personally defined outcomes as a maker transitioned from dealing with the external world, to a point of self-reverence. These outcomes reflect an inner selfish desire to acknowledge my own existence. My industry, that is to say those things necessary to maintain the industry of making, share common practical components with other forms of life sustaining industry. It is necessary for me to eat, escape exposure to nature, and find comfort in other humans, my own survival requires a form of equitable exchange for obtaining these basic necessities. With enough industry focused on self-preservation I could acquire these basic resources and be done with the day, living a life of balance between labor and leisure. I find it impossible to simply earn a living and be complicit to society. I must “make” and like the moment of “forever” will always be a place I want to eternally exist, so “making” is an industry of controversy and disruption necessary to achieve “forever”. Transcendence is the only option, what else is there? I must serve those things that define me.
My First Nature

“The most important thing was what happened during work - revealing the well-trodden paths on which we function. Then when someone comes who knocks us off these paths, not strongly enough to go against the law, there are no arguments in favor of turning down and not doing something. Because.... You know what interests me the most? The emotions. No one needs to see my stuffed animals any more. It’s enough that a rumor is going around Warsaw that someone has killed something and stuffed it. The work itself ceases to be important. It works mentally, fuck it. Everything is fucked up in their heads.” – Katarzyna Kozyra

It was my first nature to make a mess out of order and order out of chaos. As far as I could remember I have been digging holes, building forts, drawing images, acting out, performing and demanding attention for my objects and myself. The line that delineated my sanctioned and unsanctioned behaviors and outputs had always been a source of consternation and a dilemma in my upbringing, my education and my self-discovery. I have always had a means of justifying my actions despite the overt disobedience or adherence to the rules. My ability to deliberate within my own conscience the purpose of my actions...
spawned from a delight found in the reward cycle of my activities. To say that I was a risk and had the potential for risk is an understatement. Much like the spinning coin, I was unable to decide for myself if I would become a product of voluntary conformity, loyal to the larger systems or stubbornly reject authority and determine, regardless of earthly material consequence, the paths of my own journey.

Katarzyna Kozyra delved into this very paradigm during her academic thesis. In doing so she was able to wrought out some of the distinguishing moments of controversial art and it’s reception.

"Pyramid of Animals" (f.6) has a vertical orientation suggesting a hierarchy of animals in comparison to there over all size. Beginning with the horse, the first step serves as a wide foundation upon which the rest of the animals can rest. Second in order from the bottom a dog stands on the middle of the horses back. A drastic shift in size between the horse and the dog establishes the diminishing breadth of the vertical column, determining a pyramidal shape. Set on the haunches of the dog is a cat. Both the linearity and overall size of the cat fulfills the triangular order of a pyramid. Finally at the top a rooster perches on the back of the cat completing the capstone of the constructed shape.

Kozyra said "The material, which I used, was a given, that is the animals: a horse, a dog, a cat, and a rooster. Then the problem arose - where could I get the material for the monument. I began my preparations from the basics, that is I chose the live animals. They were not selected from museum collections of trophies, but were found and selected according to a set of criteria. Hence there was conscious selection which was the result of the prepared composition."4
She was highly ridiculed for being cruel, for having a horse slaughtered in the name of art. Kozyra's response was one of deep consideration for the mechanized detachment of the consumer culture. "Annihilation is the tool of being, it is the condition for the existence of comfort for the consideration of existential problems, it allows for the luxury of the philosophy. That is what I wanted to check, I wanted to see the lowest level - killing. The fact that you have to get your hands dirty, that it stinks, that you're stirring around in the guts. I wanted to separate the levels of reality and to see each one separately." To her she could see no difference between wearing leather shoes and eating packaged meat. The execution of the sculpture that demanded her to kill in order to create was one that
required a protagonist. "Let's take the furniture as an example - if I wanted to make it myself I would have to run around the woods with an axe [she taps the kitchen dresser] and kill the plants. It's all destruction. If you had to do it yourself you'd go mad."

It was for the first time and with such a public impact, that an artist's approach was to be confronted, the approach that puts these stereotypes functioning in the public consciousness to a test. Indeed Kozyra, by indicating that she has a right to kill an animal in order to create a work of art, violates the Franciscan-ecological model of morality and the norm, which says that killing is not allowed unless there is a "necessary need". With that she triggered off the discussion whether the actions by an artist in the sphere of moral values are part of necessary needs, or whether the necessary needs are limited to meeting the consumption needs, to the sphere of physiological needs, which are in fact the needs of an animal.

The coercive forces of society on material acquisition and the economic and political regulation of accessibility to life sustaining material, focuses me according to my selfish desire to exist. Inside the influence of these forces I become a creature of consumption, political ideation, defined by laws and complacent to the status quo. Outside the influence of these forces I become animalistic, dependent on instinct, trusting of humanity, rebellious to ideas, and the scourge of the collective. I believe that there exists a neutral point between these two places of influence. I also believe that by activating my own practice and willfully engaging in "reality" that I play an important part in an uncertain future. An idealist may be able to depart from the larger requisition of participation, but the departure will always be accounted for by the presence or absence of the oppositional forces. One's own autonomy is always defined by a ratio of engagement or disengagement from the cit of nature. Man made institutions divide up reality into measurable things; society, politics, economies and agreed upon definitions.
I consider myself a "surveyor" of this balancing point between a measured and ordered reality and the complete liberty and freedom expressed through the harnessing of disorder. No matter the value prior to the engagement, that which remains after the controversy is what I am interested in promoting.

One major contributor to this urge toward disruption in all its forms and manifestations was the revelation to me at age 7 of my father's suicide. My father took his life when I was 2 years old. I was consciously unaware of my father's fate and the psychological impact it made on me and continues to make on me. I still work toward an incomplete understanding of all the implicating aspects this act still has on my daily life. I say incomplete because in one aspect of my view there is no completeness in anything. Even my father's passing is incomplete in that as an act of selfishness it continues to alter the lives and passions of his friends and family. The passing of time has not terminated the original act, there has been no completion to something that was intended to do so.

My years spent in the mandatory public education system reinforced my aptitude for controversy and questioning of knowledge rather than worshipping it. At school I had no choice, no escape, no rights. I was bored, restless, loud and disturbed by a disjointed reality. I was especially aware of injustices, inaccuracies and misguided benevolence perpetrated by my educators and the pantheon of sycophants that authority demands. I was angst fueled, intelligent and creative. It was easy for me to find an escape in my mind, my creations and my disruptions. As a youth I can't say I was particularly in tune with the reasoning behind my willingness to inject myself into controversy other than controversy was a spectacle and I extracted attention from it.
This forced me at a young age to deploy strategies of survival and impunity that is a reflection of the deeper trauma. This trauma, the one that affects my priorities, my self worth, and my willingness to participate in any system, is a perpetual and unending force. The removal from my father because of horrible circumstances has always given me the advantage of being able to detach myself from anything, sometimes for my benefit and other times my demise. Because of this, the way I see the world is not as much a concern to me as much as how much I can alter the world to be seen. I have my opinions, biases, and tastes but it is essential for me to disparage myself of a dominant ontology and gain access to all forms and levels of discourse. The urge to worship knowledge has been replaced by the necessity to question it. My journey through the halls of academia has been a personal challenge of my own beliefs and formed biases. It has been revealed to me over and over that despite my competency the very nature of disruption continues to create controversy.
The "Third Side"

Everything depends upon the facts involved. There is merit in finding that there is one 'kind' of existence basically—physical existence—out of which all varieties of existence are constituted. The answer has also been proposed in terms of a monism of spirit. The proposed 'unity' of existence does not preclude 'diversity' of the types of organization. There is 'unity' if the adequacy of the language of physics is the answer. There is 'diversity' if an unlimited number of types of events and organizations of events is allowed for. The danger of the monistic view is oversimplification. The pluralistic view incurs the danger of overlooking patterns of unity, or systems of organization. Both dangers may be avoided by careful inquiry, by watching for dogmas and inattention to the nature of the subject matter. A fundamental ontological monism goes along with a pluralism of selected subject matters and types of organization, so that the peculiar properties of human experience and behavior are recognized." —Marvin Farber

The coin with two sides can be used to describe this notion of, me as "surveyor", set to find a self reverent, and specified existence of my own composition, my own liking, my own tastes, sharpened by the tacit knowledge acquired from the furnace of disruption. The side of the coin that rests face down is concealed and obstructed from view, this side represents a particular regime, thought or opinion that is not viable to the task at hand, not popular, or not accounted for. The side of the coin that remains face up represents the expressed opinion, the marketable, successful elements of all the composite parts necessary for me to obtain existence. Although each side represents each end of the total spectrum they are not exclusive to each other. Together, both sides comprise the whole coin, suggesting that without the subtle, concealed, or obscured there cannot be the legible, apparent, and promoted strategies of 'reality' or at least the 'reality' I am surveying and ultimately representing.
On a superficial examination this allegory can be used to survey many things contingent to duality, but like most things superficial it is inadequate. As a functioning model to scale infinitely complicated issues two sides are not enough. From here a succession of sides can be introduced to elaborate on the complexity of issues to be acknowledged. Three sides infers a triangle rather than a coin, four sides a square, with the addition of basic geometric shapes the issues can be pushed into space revealing the sides as representations of physical existence, protruding from the surface of the survey. Pyramids, cubes, cylinders can all be injected into a discourse of multifaceted problems and representations of existence. To complete the survey one crucial element has to be pointed out and it starts again with the two-sided coin.

A coin that is activated on the “third side” can be sent into motion as a rolling wheel, it can be spun in place like a top, and with diligent effort can be balanced, made to stand up. It is important to recognize that the added element of dynamism integrates the two sides into one. By exerting force and engaging in the industry of balance the coin transcends and optimizes the original potential into something new, something comprised completely of all the original parts but representing much more than just two sides. It is this position of dynamic action that I employ in my relationship with productivity and it’s outcomes. The coin in a dynamic state represents what I “can do” and how art as a practice ultimately serves my selfish desires. Rather than a static approach where I am relegated to what I “did do” and how those things in the past continue to represent my choices. The constraints of represented past choices become
stumbling blocks, pools and eddies in the river of expression flowing from the original spring of productivity. A spinning coin becomes the image representing the "beyond", progress, the plus outré. Not accepting the resting notions and working toward the dynamic action is the controversial questioning of knowledge.

Figure 8
Borrowing from the “trickster intelligence,” I cross boundaries that are governed by hierarchical structures within society. Through the manipulation of meaning as dictated by such structures, I rearticulate and challenge notions such as wealth and deprivation, honorable and shameful, man and animal. In so doing, I blur societal divisions dictated by wealth, class and race. I use such elements to confront and disrupt disparities faced by the excluded and marginalized poorer-class blacks in the ghetto.

Within my role of artist as trickster, I find it important to both mark and violate the boundaries of society. I rearticulate power structures both in the mainstream and the ghetto. My ability to simultaneously occupy and articulate both the mainstream and the ghetto helps to bridge the gap of understanding and tolerance of both sectors of society. It is important that I am able to straddle between both polarities, claiming neither.

The issues I present are intended to leave all who encounter my work in a contemplative state, where questions posed by the works result in questions posed to self. By upsetting the old and/or familiar, I create opportunities for new ways of thinking about the current world we live in. – Lavar Munroe

*Techne* is the greek word that describes the act of making. The word was ascribed to shipbuilders, sculptures, stone cutters, potters, weavers, etc. The word is used for the fundamental act of production. Within the context of the greek civilization there was no discernible language or written account of “art” other than the use of the word “techne” to position the “maker” as a purposeful, industrial and self sufficient citizen. Art for art’s sake, fine art, folk art, high art, low art was not conceptualized or recognized within the orders of labor or consumption.
As "maker" my life's work is a reflection of a more streamlined, reversion to the Greek way of describing my industry, lifestyle, and existence. The techne is a ritual of production. I employ untrained outsider strategies mixed with applied theory, raw inspiration, phenomena such as time, cultural stratification, and an aesthetic acuity that is a product of both disruption and compliance to education and authority. Techne occupies me in industry, industry turns toward idle positive thought, this idle positive thought allows me to imagine and manifest new projects. This in part is a self-serving system, a cycle of habits, formed into patterns of behavior and objects of physical existence.

The physical objects produced as a result of this creative and performative ritual of techne are distinct and separate in purpose from the action of making. The making itself is the primary function of my practice. I hold the actions of industry, acquisition of materials and thoughts that spring from these investments as a daily ritual. This ritual is a life spring from which I can place existence. The river that flows from this life spring is the channel through which my expressions obtain meaning and reflect back to me a place from which I stand.

My ritualized techne has always been idiopathic, in that it can only be described as a disease or condition the cause of which is not known or that arises spontaneously. I describe it as a disease not to portray it in a positive or negative light. To me the disease aspect of the behavior has more to do with the consequences of my disruptive nature. There is no escape from the perpetual diagnosis and prognosis of authority in my life. Like doctors concerned with diagnosing a disease and giving a prognosis toward elimination, so I feel authority has acted in my life in regards to my chosen forms of expression. As
much as art and art making comes from an idiopathic origin so does the inverse nature of other human beings to inject their opinions and voice into the naming of the behaviors, and the subsequent encouragement or discouragement to suit the authority’s will to bend me. Some of this engagement with others has been at the whim of my public demonstrations or as calculated as my enrollment in academic institutions. For me the issue of the idiopathic nature of my rituals is a balance of self-awareness and being a participant in a larger community. I choose to engage the general community with the disease or I choose to contain it in an act of quarantine.
...of a mystery transcending such human orders and categories as meaning and being, in connection with the question of a first cause. What is called 'the restlessness of our existence-in-the-world' is held to drive us 'beyond any fixed form or pattern' and to work as 'a first creative ferment within our human history'; and that is taken to be the fact from the start. The 'strange anxiety' ascribed to man should be confirmed as present in all particular men, to ascertain the extent to which it is actually present. Wild approves the judgment 'that man is never what he 'is' but is always 'beyond' himself, his patterns, and his ideas.' It is evident that he is not concerned with the concrete facts and problems of human history, but rather with broad generalizations that must in turn be tested by facts. This applies to his vision of the course of 'restlessness,' which consists of moving away from 'passive dependence towards active independence, from sluggish repetition towards creative originality, from fixed determinateness towards perfect indeterminacy... from a servile dependence towards a self-determining freedom." - Marvin Farber

As a youth I was very rebellious, precocious and engaged in the creative fields. I skateboarded, which carried with it a stigma of criminality, but was paramount in forming my relationship with space as substrate for physical expression. I was a dramatist and very active in the theatre, which was a rebellion against the orders of math, science and systems, but it also provided a sanctuary of artistic expression and self worth. I was politically charged with the fervor of revolution as a means of self-determination, but I also sought to work within the establishment by expanding my knowledge of the past, honing my writing skills and developing a propensity for rhetoric and public speaking. I was also very curious about war, its methods, its science, its inventions and the human administration of logistics and tactics. Tying all of this together was an insatiable
thirst to make things, to create worlds, and to edit, alter and detourn the ‘reality’ I lived in. I was a risk because of an attraction to controversy coupled with the thrill of surviving it.

Skateboarding is a major access point for the formation of many of my personal views. It is an avenue of self-expression, self-discipline, and provides companionship amongst other self-interested, but controversial personalities. At the time I came to skateboarding I saw it as a lifestyle instead of a leisurely pastime. I was immersed in the awkward and daunting rituals of teenage existence. I could say that skateboarding revealed to me in real world encounters the harshness of reality, it’s rules, it’s constructs, it’s politics and it’s special organization. Simultaneously while exposing me to harsh truths of the world at large it also turned my focus inside, allowing me to foster inner strengths, passions and means to rise above and transcend those harsh realities. The performance of skateboarding is entrenched in style and individuality. From no-where else but inside yourself can these expressions be authenticated. The community of skateboarding services itself through praise of personal growth and self authentication. There are no rules to skateboarding other than do it, be it, live it. Skateboarding gave me the first credible reasoning behind the “act of making” instead of the “product of making”, in other words it was all about what I “can do” rather than what I “did do”. The nature of skateboarding is directly connected with propelling oneself in a controversy of speed interacting with the brunt and hard reality of physical truths. The coin comes into play in that without the “third side” of dynamism a skateboard becomes a basic object resting in a hard-edged and
preformed physical world. When the skateboard is activated both the object and the context it finds itself in becomes disrupted and reformed. (fgs.10-13)

The completed skateboard “stunt” happens at the blink of an eye. It requires a controversy of the performing action interacting with physical reality to become something “beyond”, something abstract and new, but complete and whole, representing all sides of a once multisided concept. For the person who performed the “stunt” and those interested onlookers it becomes everything worth doing... “forever”.

Within skateboarding I was able to obtain this phenomena of “forever” and even more than that, as a means to learn the benefits of the resolution of controversy it continues to push me to engage in disruptive behavior. “Forever” experienced for a slice of time is unparalleled to all other experiences and can be a reflection of other irresolvable acts, such as suicide, or the creation of art objects. Obviously, the nature of these acts are either positive or negative based on the consequences of the controversy, but the process and how it is fundamental to creation is apparent. It is a place of existence that can only be found within the confines of a select number of activities and it has been my personal journey to immerse myself continuously, both physically and spiritually in this place of existence. Escape from the harshness of societies expectations, fellowship with other misfits and rebels, sanctuary from abusive homes, and a platitude of reliable sectarian alliances. The rebellious nature of skateboarding has a community that revolves around antiestablishment ideals. It appeals to me, it gives me hope and in many ways gives me tangible and hard lessons in how to navigate the world at large.

Childs 26
Of course like the two-sided coin skateboarding has it’s obscured side and it’s promoted side. That which was gained from the positive endeavor of skating for self-expression, was countered by authority and authority’s will to force compliance. Most everywhere skateboarding activities are considered a delinquent and criminal act. So for every hour spent expressing myself it was also spent navigating the uncertainty of apprehension, ticketing, abuse and confinement by the criminal justice system. Strangers, mayors, business owners and other figures of authority were hell bent on censuring the activity as a criminal behavior.

I believe skateboarding carries inherent traits that can be crossed over into other fields of human endeavors. One of which is spatial problem solving or solution oriented endurance. Solution oriented endurance refers to the commitment required to endure the pain of learning the most basic of maneuvers on a skateboard. At first obstacles can be overwhelming, daunting, and unachievable. As time progresses and the experiences of failure are gathered, one can cleave off or sheer away these experiences of failure to accrue the only tangible forms of success. This diligence then gets wired to the brain and applied in other areas of problem solving. The physical processes that were at one time foreign and unachievable become reality by exercising and departing from the wrong forms. Even in the sociopolitical realm, skateboarding can be applied to make an argument for this theory.

The problem presented by burning carbon fuels is mitigated through burning calories. Walking, running, bicycling are all considered viable forms of alternative
transportation while at the same time skateboarding, even for merely commuting purposes, was an outright criminal act. Despite this controversy the skateboarding community persistently engaged the streets and focused their energies in the most available venue -- concrete laden urban environments. This urban environment is a theatre where the automobile is in direct competition with walking, running, bicycling and skateboarding. Despite the authorities attempt to grind down the community of skateboarders through violence, intimidation and ticketing the skateboarding community persisted, in my opinion, because of the core lesson of solution oriented endurance, controversy and a hard wired tacit knowledge of the benefits.
The Stratigraphic Penticularity

"-Dear and Devine Dali,
Maybe, and without any maybes about it, the historic moment which opened the Atlantic vastnesses to modern scientific progress was the one in which that sublime Emperor Charles V changed the inscription on the Pillars of Hercules from non plus ultra to plus outré. Which, if we are to believe in allegory of the period, meant: going from good to better. Like Dali. For, in the last of finalities, the Devine Dali is a pig. And he is, quite specifically, that pig which, in the aforesaid allegory, appeared at the foot of the two pillars of Hercules, the supreme symbol of him who always goes rushing headlong on, Jesuitically veering aside when he so desires, but never retreating, thanks to his potent means advancing always further ahead, slithering from good to better, from excellent on to the very most excellent." – Salvador Dali

The Stratigraphic Penticualrity (f.23) is the latest rendition of FULK ART. It is an art object that stands as an allegory for the tension between the ritual of art making and the superficial reflection the art object represents. In detail it is a five sided shack that stands 8 feet tall, has an interior and exterior, five hewn stumps that serve as legs, an aperture through which the viewer can gain access to the interior as well as manifest the appearance of “man as deity”, it is a time machine, the glass elevator, a space ship, an affront, it is “beyond”, it is a guillotine, it is a trap, it is “made”.

From the exterior the Penticularity (fgs.19-22) is faced with four paintings and an opening. Each of these five sides is part of an integrated narrative, allegory, and representation of the superficial image of my “made” objects. While the interior of the Penticularity (fgs. 15-18) has five sides as well, the space confines and immerses the viewer within the visual metaphor that is my studio ritual, manifest. The inside is the ritual, the techne, the idiopathy, the exterior is a form, not contingent on it a meaning, left to be relegated to post-production criticism. The legs represent the origin of all things, nature.

Childs 30
Each exterior face of the Penticularity is a superficial representation of my “hands busy, idle mind” way of making. I constructed the four images simultaneously while conducting a mantra of psychedelic persuasion. I relied heavily on the daily ritual of making in order to flush out the sequences of meaning and layers of representation for all four images. I compressed these meanings and representations by working with a unified color palette, a grid-like stratigraphy, reliance on symbolism, implementation of anecdotal codification, and repetition.

One side "RIP RADICAL ROB" (f.19) depicts snakes in a bed of grass protecting their eggs. The snakes represent the notion of time and the passing of moments within the universe. The mouth and tail are the beginnings and ends of these moments. The image is an allegory for the ideal state of productivity, companionship, reproduction and leisure. One snake coiled and content, is the mother, the domestic, stability. The stretched out snake is on a journey, the uncertain future, seeking the plus outré. The kinked snake represents the flurry of anxiety, the dispossessed, the unresolved past. The eggs are a symbol for the children. The method by which each of us constructs a shell to protect what is most vulnerable and most important.

The side that has “White Male Protestant Bastard Need Not Apply” (f.20) as the most prominent feature shares a commonality found in the snake metaphor. In this image the snakes are once again representations of time and the passing of moments within the universe. Only in this context they are in a group of fifty, all turned in the same direction to represent group think and mob mentality. Each snake is a distinct placeholder within the lexicon of popular media regimes and the way in which groups of humans can be
manipulated into one coercive and violent force. The words stand as a protest to the most benign and destructive media regime that affects my daily routines. It is still a matter of discourse for the viewer to determine whether the white male need not apply for a candidacy, the white male need not apply himself in an industry at all or any of the subsequent constructs that can be denoted, connoted, inferred or abstracted.

“Lead Baby Bibs” (f.21) is the side that represents the dystopian horror I wake up to every day. The “una udda” symbolism is a metaphor for the grotesque representations of genitalia and the specified roles implicated by a consequence of birth. The child, free from the womb, is dependent on the nature of a mother’s compulsion to nurse or expose. The image as a whole is a representation of the systematic weaning of man from the nourishing tit of nature and replacing it with the automated, contrived and false orders of digital media, industrial segmentation and reliance on institutions of man. This composition stands as science fiction treaty in concept art. I am depicting the “hardware” necessary to mitigate a digital “dream” scape for androids and other artificial intelligence. It is the circuit board of chaos.

“There Will Be Gnashing of Teeth” (f.22) is the side that depicts an earthly hell. Four sets of teeth in varying degrees of hygiene are representations of the competitive nature inherent to vanity. The degrees in which superficial representations get to the core of sexual attraction. By showing four states of vanity the composition forces the viewer to determine for themselves those things that most reflect their personal taste. The ladders are a metaphor for the internalized escape and sanctuary of consumption. Laced around the
entire composition is an infinitely long penis, sewn into and penetrating the fabric of constructed narratives of maleness.

The Stratigraphic Penticularity (f.23) is set on five “legs” that elevate the entire structure. The legs are a metaphor for nature as the origin of creative impulse, materials and inspiration. The legs have been painted bloody to show a traumatic dismemberment. The elevation is a vehicle of promotion and foundation. With the entire Penticularity standing on top of the dismembered nature of these legs I am emphasizing the inherent controversy in making objects from materials that are entwined to a larger tapestry of consumption ethics.

The open side of the Penticularity is a “portal” to the interior visual framework of my process and studio practices. This portal is also a passage delineating a boundary between what I “can do” in opposition with what I “did”. The portal is a mechanical device for the viewer to participate in a processional ritual for themselves, passing from the outside to the inside the viewer manifests the transcendent qualities of visual objects, architectural spaces, and the divine. Mounted on the interior of the Penticularity is a halo, situated at just a point that while the viewer exits from the shack they can be perceived as “The Virgin of Guadalupe, Empress of the America’s” or any other deification that best suits the viewer.

The interior of the Penticualrity (figs.15-18) is adorned with a milieu of detritus that I have accumulated in my studio over the last two years. Immersive and encompassing the grid-like stratigraphic orientation of the detritus reflects a sense of urbanity, pixilation, and placement. While inside the Penticularity the viewer is overwhelmed with a disorienting,
visually dense environment. Exploration of the nooks and crannies of the interior drives the eye to wander from detail to detail and bounce back and forth from a peripheral baptism of virtuality. Rewards await for the focused and determined search for an image. There is no significant disparity between the four existing faces they all stand as one multilayered and segmented “surface” upon which each viewer can plod their own well travelled paths of “seeing”. While experiencing the open face from within the Penticularity the viewer is offered a new perspective of the “outside world”. An adornment takes place, the moment the viewer recognizes that they are passing from this interior to the exterior they become coroneted a noble, deified by the symbol of the heavens positioned above their heads. This ritual procession that takes place is a performance of the object. The coronation gives the image of the Penticularity ceremonial purpose, elevating it to functional.

In conclusion the question of form over function becomes a point of contention. Interior and exterior infers functionality as an architectural space. The participatory processional aspect of the viewer engaging the object is a question of ceremonial function. To me the Stratigraphic Penticularity is neither an object of function or form it is FULK ART, what is important isn’t what the object represents, what is important is that it was made. The ritualized studio practice is a state of mind, a way of living, and a formation of habits and is now represented by the object. The studio can be a five wall physical structure. The studio can also be elevated to ceremonial relic. The definition of the studio is controversial and disruptive.
End Notes


(6) Munroe, Lavar artist statement http://lavar-munroe.com/home.html


Bibliography


Kozyra, Katarzyna *Pyramid of Animals* - artist statement [link]

Munroe, Lavar *artist statement* [link]


Image List

Figure A) FULK SKILLIT: cooked eggs * acrylic, enamel, wood * 12in x 26in 2011

Figure B) we all know what is going to happen to him * mixed media * Installation 2013

Figure C) Studio 2013

Figure 1) GO SULK YOURSELF * acrylic, enamel, wood * 36in x 36in 2011

Figure 2) FULK FETALE * lumber * 48in x 48in 2012

Figure 3) MONOCHROMATIC FULK WHITE * acrylic, enamel, wood * 48in x 48in 2012

Figure 4) SULK OFF * acrylic, enamel, wood * 16in x 16in 2011

Figure 5) Studio 2013

Figure 6) Pyramid of Animals * Katarzyna Kozyra http://wydarzenia.o.pl/wp-content/il/2010/12/katarzyna-kozyra-casting-wernisaz-zacheta-

Figure 7) Studio 2012

Figure 8) Studio 2013

Figure 9) Studio 2013

Figure 10) HELDKAPTIVE PIANOSK8 * piano, wood, paint * 2013

Figure 11) HELDKAPTIVE PIANOSK8 * piano, wood, paint * 2013

Figure 12) Studio 2013

Figure 13) Studio 2012

Figure 14) Studio 2013

Figure 15-18) Stratigraphic Penticularity (interior) * mixed media * 6ft x 3.5ft 2014

Figure 19) RIP RAD ROB * oil, enamel, acrylic, mixed media * 6ft x 3.5ft 2014

Figure 20) WHITE MALE PROTESTANT BASTARD NEED NOT APPLY * oil, enamel, acrylic, mixed media * 6ft x 3.5ft 2014

Figure 21) LEAD BABY BIBS * oil, enamel, acrylic, mixed media * 6ft x 3.5ft 2014

Figure 22) GNASHING * oil, enamel, acrylic, mixed media * 6ft x 3.5ft 2014

Figure 23) Stratigraphic Penticularity * mixed media * 2014

Childs 40