Constants

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"Constants"

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CONSTANTS
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INTRODUCTION.
I am interested in making defined objects that flicker between meaning and meaninglessness. Objects that have visual and conceptual weight but a lack of understanding as to where that weight is coming from or why it exists. I have no real intention towards the final image or look of what I want to make. Through a process of constant rearrangement a sculpture emerges without a preconceived notion of what it was going to be. The final form is important, but it doesn’t have to be pure or pristine to get its feeling across. Oftentimes my work will come out as crude or dirty. I stop at the point where the form has its own intention. My sculptures are made up of many separate components put together: sometimes they look like a pile, sometimes a stack, sometimes they look like something out of a packed garage or an overcrowded storage unit, maybe they’re the remnants of a hoarder or a madman. I try to evoke a sense of core-thought or inarticulate-thought that is very close to the subconscious.

If I told you that I know everything about my sculptures I would be lying. My work is the product of a series of causal actions that amass into something conceptually non-specific. I prefer to walk away from a sculpture having more questions than answers, and will go out of my way to make sure I keep myself wondering. The feelings that arise from an undefined strangeness are extremely important to me.

My process is iterative, seemingly aimless firsthand stories, which weave their ways in and out of my life, are a driving force for why I make work. Out of thin air I allow a constant mix of unassigned meaning to come from my everyday existence. I draw from happenstance to create art with feelings of awe and randomness. There is something both ephemeral and long lasting that manifests when I experience certain moments, especially in what appears to be useless, random, stupid or out of place.

Chance has a hidden prevalence for me with its lack of obvious design and its existence outside of my conscious decision making. I want to draw attention to a world outside of my
control.² Sometimes I see chance as a determining factor, like flipping a coin, systems of chance determine the trajectory for my next step.

As a child I loved puzzles, I was obsessed. Throughout this thesis, I will give you, the reader, pieces of a puzzle, which, if solved will help you learn just a little bit about how my brain works. There is no linear trajectory for what you will be reading and the chapters (even the paragraphs) can be read in any order. As a result you will gain insight towards the constants in my work. A constant is something that I consider to be present in everything I make. Each overarching constant exists as a clue which may help you come to a conclusion about why my work exists. I will address repetitive motion in regard to failure and how this parallels the ongoing endeavors of the alchemist. I will discuss the idea of meaning as it exists in the conflict between cleanliness and the mess. I will explain how Hollywood movie tropes can be used to create sculpture. Lastly, I will frame the theatrical vessel as a vehicle to make a story more significant than it is.
CHAPTER 1:

ALCHEMY.
I work in a way that metaphorically mirrors the critical dialogue directed towards alchemic philosophy. There is a polarity that exists between the conceptual purity of the practice and the imperfection of putting that practice into reality. An essay from an unknown author published on August 28, 1891 in a journal simply titled *Science* states:

> We are prone to look back upon this nebulous science with disdain as the product of an age that had full confidence in magic and sorcery[,]...yet the results of the labors and discoveries of the alchemists have been of great value to the world, even though the direct objects they sought forever eluded their grasp and left disappointment and despair to their votaries....[T]he art without art, whose beginning is to lie, the middle to toil, and the end to beg.

I both beautifully praise and endearingly mock the overarching theory that gold (deemed by alchemists to be the most perfect form of matter) can arise out of a transmutation of common and imperfect materials. And furthermore I place emphasis on the fact that this philosophy has amounted to failure in practice time and time again, yet inklings of hope exist in the shadows of the world to this day.

Throughout my life I have made contraptions. I never viewed them as art, and perhaps this is because they were closer to successful forms of alchemy. However, in order to make this statement true, I need to redefine alchemy on my own terms. Alchemy, in a reduced sense, is to execute a task and, as a result, extract something amazing. To determine what categorizes my new-alchemy I have created a loose set of guidelines as follows. It always succeeds in some way, even if original intentions are never met. It always contains both elements of imperfection and perfection. It can be taken as funny for what it is. It is a mess. It requires the use of materials that are abundant and common, this is not to say that materials should be void of unique qualities. It is about the outcome and everything that leads up to that outcome. It is about the totality of the apparatus, the finished product it creates, the feelings that manifest, and the new ideas that form. There is always an end product which yields an experience that stands out as drastically different from the totality of the parts which make it happen. Early designs which I would consider to be in line with my new
definition include using string and wire to rig the lights in my room to turn on whenever I would open the door, and a harness swung around the branch of a tree to hoist myself as high as I could.

The real art of alchemy is awe-inspiring in its endless dysfunctionality. The amount of time and effort put forward for a fruitless endeavor is an impactful reality in much of my life beyond acts of chemistry. Alchemists throughout history could be deemed disillusionists, others are laden with conspiracy based thoughts, and anyone who imposters the alchemist is a scoundrel and swindler. Those who disillusion leave themselves open for mockery, those who fall down the rabbit hole are misguided by happenstance and chance, and those who imposter allow for ridicule of the hopeless art form. Perhaps, in the mind of the true alchemist, an endless search triumphs over acceptance of failure. Whatever the case, I find all of these notions to be enjoyable when put beside my work.

By way of sculpture I am metaphorically depicting the attempt, and inevitable failure, to make gold from nothing. More importantly, I place value on this failed attempt. Like alchemy, my work has no solutions, it is a broken puzzle with pieces that will never fit together. Still the artwork is complete and coherent in addressing what it lacks. I will describe two sculptures that employ concepts of physical change and destruction. For each, the distance between the sculpture and its miscellaneous interpretations is quite large. This drastic change from material composition to idea formation is where the gold lies, if any.

*Mixed Mirror* (2020), a carnivalesque sculpture, reflects this ambition (Figure 1). It is a large apparatus that rotates two sheets of 4 x 8 foot silver mylar coated foam insulation side by side. The spiraling movement reflects light onto the gallery walls and floor, and a repetitive and ominous cadence reverberates from it. This sculpture is successful in its core function: the ability to rotate foam insulation. It contains elements of both perfection and imperfection, and it can be taken as funny for what it is. Therefore, it meets the criteria for my personal alchemic success.

The endless spinning ponders the qualities of an endless conflict. What’s interesting about this work is that the foam sheets slowly inch closer and closer to one another, and with time would
eventually crash and destroy each other, crumbling. The work is bound to fail and collapse into itself. To prevent this inevitable demise, every 20 minutes the work is stopped and reset to its original parameters. This lack of autonomy and the need for constant babysitting emphasizes the fact that this sculpture needs to be watched as opposed to simply looked at. Constantly resetting the mechanism indicates that failure is not an option. *Mixed Mirror* deceives the notion that it will not work.

The inescapable premonition of its cannibalistic quality is due to the imperfect nature of the pulley mechanism, which I made. The mechanism is ridiculous (Figure 2). It is clunky and crudely screwed together with exposed live wires. It has a half horsepower motor welded to a gear reducer from a windshield wiper motor which is welded to a small pulley that rotates the larger pulleys in front of it. An opposition exists between the cleanliness and purity of the dancing foam (presented in unmodified factory dimensions) and the junky mechanism. Duality between the pseudo-perfection and imperfection of *Mixed Mirror* constitutes the most important aspect of the work. The inevitable collision is a reflection of a perfect concept with a failed execution.

*Sifter* (2021) is also a direct homage to the absurdity of the alchemic process (Figure 3). It is a mess being made. Broken pieces of children’s toys and shattered test tubes are endlessly mixed with salt in a plastic kids pool by means of a homemade motorized metal apparatus resembling a rake. This is all proudly displayed on a weathered and water damaged formica covered table.

The sculpture contains 1 blue vacuum formed plastic children’s pool, 1 motor, steel, wood, 1 found and weathered square formica table with chrome legs, 12 decapitated collapsable animal figures, 12 defaced smily face stress balls, 144 crushed test tubes, 2 Glade air fresheners, 24 plastic darts, a lot of salt and 1 orange extension cord (Figure 4). In the way they are listed, these materials become ingredients in a potion.

A constant state of mixture mimics an endless endeavor. Small objects, with predetermined use, are reappropriated and put in a constant state of rearrangement. This soup of objects
contemplates a primordial nonsense. The individual plastic pieces become clues in solving a
problem, and the viewer is left to put the pieces together in their own design. If there is any gold
extracted from this sculpture, so to say, it is the thought it provokes.
CHAPTER 2:

MEANING.
An ever present constant is simple duality. This age old concept can be found in many simple pairings deemed polar. From an almost endless list: there is clean and dirty, good and bad, old and new, right and wrong, front and back, on and off, heads and tails, hero and villain, perfect and imperfect, and so on and so forth.

One artist who I feel depicts polarity by utilizing image and color is Hans Hofmann (Figure 5). I would not have any interest in his work if it were not for my interest in the artist Mike Kelley, who references the formalist push-pull aesthetic in his artist’s talk with art historian and critic John Welchman:

And what for me was really interesting was [that] Hofmann-esque practice is very much about [the] attention between [an] organic application, which in… American culture has to do with meaninglessness, the blob, slime, garbage, [and] geometry superimposed upon it which gives it order and balance…All the goop is the background and the geometry is the foreground.5

There is a smear and then there is order. Without the smear the order “has no meaning,” and without the order the smear “has no meaning.”6 The two aesthetic qualities provide meaning for one another, and thus a new and more complex meaning comes out concerning conflict, polarity, repression and freedom.

I think it is interesting that this dynamic between smear and order can be expressed as a defined conflict between two classifications of mind state. This is prevalent in The Odd Couple, originally a play from 1965 and subsequently a movie in 1968 followed by a sitcom running from 1970 to 1975 (Figure 6).7 This show has two characters who each resemble one of the two qualities in a Hofmann-esque painting. One is Oscar, he is the really messy guy. He is the smear. The other is Felix, he is a super clean guy. He is the order.8

To reiterate Kelley’s description of a Hofmann painting in different terms, I like to replace the words smear and order with Oscar and Felix. First there is Oscar who is free but a mess, he can be said to represent the background. Second there is Felix who provides order, he is the foreground. Yet intrinsically, based on the rules of Hoffman style formalist painting as interpreted
by Kelley, this means that Felix covers, or stands in front of, aspects of Oscar’s freedom. Oscar has the freedom to make a mess but Felix will regularly go out of his way to say it should be cleaned up. This means that Felix is conceptually in the foreground of society and Oscar is in the background. However, what they represent is not as important as the fact that this show has a conflict due to the presence of both Oscar and Felix together. Without Oscar’s mess Felix’s order would have no meaning, and, obviously enough, without Felix’s order Oscar’s mess would have no meaning.

To go further, this same dynamic is seen played out in real life between David Lynch and ABC when conflict arose concerning the TV networks desire to please viewers by revealing Laura Palmer’s killer in the second season of *Twin Peaks*. In an article from screenrant.com Michael Kennedy states:

> David Lynch has said that his intention was never to reveal who killed Laura Palmer, as he saw the ongoing mystery as the show’s dramatic hook, which was then used to keep viewers coming back and be further entertained by the weird goings on in *Twin Peaks* and the eccentric characters that inhabited the town. Unfortunately, ABC disagreed, pressuring Lynch to resolve the storyline, feeling that it was being drawn out too long and that audiences would tire of waiting to learn who did it. While the actual episode that revealed the killer’s identity as Leland Palmer - who killed Laura while possessed by supernatural villain BOB - was very well-received, afterward most feel season 2 ran out of creative steam.

For me it is extremely interesting to desire the answer to a mystery or a question because the answer will inevitably end the wondering. (The same could be said about a joke; what would it be without a punchline?) The answer creates an immense amount of closure and pleasure as a result, a sigh of relief perhaps. The closure allows for hindsight and after thought, it allows for determined acceptance or the lack thereof. In this instance, concerning *Twin Peaks*, the answer to the question was determined by someone else. For the viewer, this takes off all the pressure of coming to ones own conclusions. It takes away the nervousness in questioning the self, and it erases the need to trust ones own conclusion. I could surmise that this eases the mind of the viewer. However, it leaves my mind distressed as the answer feels like a forced complacency. The closure created by
revealing Laura Palmers killer reflects the order in Hofmann’s paintings. By un-masking the killer an answer is provided, this answer makes sense of the smear of chaos within the show and among its characters.\textsuperscript{11}

I find my work to ride the line between David Lynch and ABC. I want to write and direct the answers for my work, but I only want this to please others. In a proper sculpture as I see it, there are no conclusions, the work itself is enjoyable because it doesn’t provide any answers. I desire the ability to leave the questioning open, but sometimes, I will force answers into my work. Although I struggle in understanding the necessity for answers which can ease tension while sacrificing interest, there is an argument within myself: to avoid meaning or to allow for meaning.

\textit{Fountain} (2021), an assimilation of objects organized into a crude geometric structure, is important because of the complexities that arise when an attempt at meaning is defined (Figure 7). Here is a list of the materials used. On the bottom left is a turned on mini-fridge containing organized bottles of de-labeled Gatorade Zero. Stacked on top of that is a utility cart. On the bottom shelf of this cart are oranges presented in three ways: 4 oranges are stacked in a pyramid formation, one orange is rotating on a motorized turntable, and 8 oranges are sliced (the correct way) into 8 pieces each and then piled on a tray (Figure 8).\textsuperscript{11} On the top shelf is a destroyed sculpture topped with a 3D printed model of a waterslide (Figure 9). Next to the cart is a hexagonal tank filled with Strawberry-Kiwi Gatorade which is pumped through a tube and allowed to flow down the waterslide back into the tank creating a light trickling and splashing sound. Below the tank is a water damaged wooden compartment housing large clay chunks and and broken plaster pieces, each about the size of a head, which I consider to be existential objects (Figure 10). Lastly, to the the left of the tank are two factory sealed cases of Gatorade Zero on reserve. All of this is plugged into two wall outlets, one in front and one in back.\textsuperscript{13}

This piece is interesting to me because I see it as a failure. I put so much thought into each and every component but when all the pieces came together as a whole none of the original
concepts remained prevalent or important. What did become important was the grid-like structure formed by the totality of the parts, the assimilation of the mass, and its incoherent connections. I was interested in the elastic meaning in the mass, where the pieces as a coagulate become ambiguous enough to be left open to interpretation. It could be a pile of junk, a science experiment, an allegory, a metaphor, a brain, a shrine, or architecture.

The piled accumulation comes purely as the result of one initial criteria for making the sculpture which was successful and prevailed. This was that I wanted the overall composition and the feelings which manifest from the work to resemble the later paintings of Philip Guston. From 1970 on Guston’s canvas is dominated by pink. The paint is fleshy, thick, heavy, rough and chunky. For example, in his painting Evidence (Figure 11) the objects painted are imperfect in their geometry, yet they are organized and arranged in such a way that they form a loose grid. This grid implies order, and the pile gives the multitude of objects a sense of wholeness and meaning as a mass. For me this creates an order out of what would otherwise be a scattered assortment of bricks and body parts. I interpret this painting to be about the idea of trying to solve a problem, it depicts an attempt to find meaning. For Guston:

Painting revealed the elasticity of forms. He could begin painting a shoe, and its sole could turn into the moon. He might start painting the moon, and it would turn into a piece of bread….In one of his poetic responses to Guston’s work, Clark Coolidge played up the semantic ambiguity of this strategy: “A book like a brick loaf. How to/read it?” Three interpretations of the same object: book, brick, and loaf. Two different interpretations of Coolidge’s lines: Is he asking how we read the book or how we read the image? Of course, he is asking both at the same time and reenacts in words what Guston enacts in his work. Guston’s books did look like bricks, his buildings like books, and his heads like coffee cups.

Coolidge’s interpretation of Guston’s work solidifies my stance that each of my sculptures has multiple meanings which evolve beyond their original duality. Fountain has multiple meanings at once: it is a fountain, a pile of junk, a science experiment, an allegory, a metaphor, a brain, a shrine, and architecture.
CHAPTER 3:

STORY.
Sometimes I will watch a movie and realize I can make a piece of art in the same way a director constructs their story. Many times I have lounged around thinking about a movie I've watched, the techniques used to convey its story and how it captivates an audience. With time, these thoughts weave their way into my practice and eventually I make a work using methods inspired by what I observe. Here I will give a specific example of how I can take an observation from my everyday life and use it to create sculpture.

Contrary to the German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin in his belief that “the storyteller in [their] living immediacy is by no means a present force [and] [t]hey [have] already become something remote from us and something that is getting even more distant,” I believe that the storyteller is very present in trashy blockbuster films. However in agreement with Benjamin, I believe that these new storytellers are after something different than the “meaning of life” or the “moral of the story.” Rather they are more abundant in creating a spectacle. Still I see the movie as significant in the same way Benjamin writes about the novel:

[It] is significant, therefore, not because it presents someone else’s fate to us, perhaps didactically, but because this stranger’s fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields us the warmth which we never draw from our own fate.

The making of movies can be viewed allegorically in terms of making sculpture. Specifically, formulas exist in movie genres to create desired effects for the viewer. The tropes in an action movie are a good example: there are sudden gunshots, explosions, a hero in over their head overcoming impossible odds, and a witty one-liner to tie it all up. This combination creates a thrilling effect. For me, this all began with a frustrating fascination I had concerning the Marvel Universe (Figure 12). There were too many movies, and too many characters, one after the other after the other. I was overwhelmed yet genuinely curious in that these movies consistently rely on Hollywood tropes to garner attention. After all, these tropes work very well. A collection of
oddball and awesome heroes is desirable because it appeals to a wide variety of viewers. There is something for everybody.

In Compositional Study I aimed to sarcastically mimic this something-for-everybody quality by putting my sculptures in close proximity (Figure 13). This sculpture is an investigation into the composition of sculpture by means of the Hollywood entertainment trope mechanism. I wanted to make something complex in nature, yet captivating and entertaining to look at, similar in conceptual quality to a caper film like Oceans 11 (Figure 14). My goal was to create a sculpture based on an assembly of characters who interact through twists, turns, and mishaps in a way that paid homage to entourage movies.

I took it on myself to be the lead man in assembling a crew of sculptures that would work together to execute a grandiose goal. But instead of planning to rob a casino like in Oceans 11, I was making a sculpture. I sought out old and new works that would collaborate together to achieve this goal. I used components from Fountain as a starting point, added an early model of Untitled (Stage1), the table from Sifter, Black Cloud, and The Devils Ear to name a few. Each element was picked based on both its uniqueness as well as its ability to work with the others. I became the ring leader forming a team. Some sculptures were sought out, others happened to arrive, some were removed due to inadequacy, some intermingle more than others, some are seen and some are hidden, some require power, and each has their own lived experiences.

Every sculptural member had its own qualities that could be compared to personality traits or skill sets. The Black Cloud (2021), dark and ominous has a slight sheen, it is weathered and aged from being left out in the rain for months, it is wise (Figure 15). The Devils Ear (2020-2022), sleek, bold and prominent in its past is now missing pieces of what it used to be, it listens, but it has evil ulterior intentions (figure 16). They all operate and interact with each other in accordance with their unique personalities.
To tie everything together I made a long twisting and turning plaster path which I call the common thread. This path is entirely suspended with duct tape and weaves itself among and around the assembly to be a representation of a line of continuity. It is a story line. *Compositional Study* took on the essence of a movie from start to finish, but in the end the sculpture looks nothing like an entourage or a movie, it looks more like a mad man’s attempt to organize junk (Figures 17-19). However, with me, the artist sitting in front, it becomes an assembled model evoking feelings of having a master plan and I am the team leader (Figure 20).
CHAPTER 4:

VESSEL.
I’ve had for a while an interest in theater and storytelling in general including myths, fables, fairytales, and fantasies. I am interested in the way that these modes of entertainment and communication can arise from a transformation of moments that come out of the ordinary and everyday. For example, when I see that a play or a movie that is based on a true story, for me it has taken something from reality which is ordinary, and put it on the stage which makes it over the top, it adds meaning and makes the story extraordinary.

This method of adaptation to superimpose emphasis on the ordinary is a powerful tool when sculpting. Every object I use is removed from its reality and placed in the context of art, which elevates it in meaning and allows it to exist as something important. Taking something mundane out of its original context makes it grandiose and triumphant. A play that is very good at doing this is Edward Albee’s one-act play *The Zoo Story* from 1958. Within this play there are two characters; one is this really messy guy, named Jerry. The other is a super clean guy, a put together, family man, named Peter. Albee adds the conflict by giving Peter and Jerry something to argue about. They fight over a seat on a bench in Central Park. About halfway through the play is a monologue in which Jerry states:

> What I wanted to get at is the value difference between pornographic playing cards when you’re a kid, and pornographic playing cards when you’re older. It’s that when you’re a kid you use the cards as a substitute for the real experience, and when you’re older you use the real experience as a substitute for the fantasy.

If I can give my interpretation, or rather, misinterpretation, this is saying that in youth one plays in reality, and when one’s older they use that reality to play in a fantasy.

I believe that in some way the stage is meant to allow for a replication of life, and present to the public a fantasy adaptation of events from the real world. In Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov’s essay *Art and Social Life* he speaks about Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky’s opinion of the importance of art for the public:
In Chernyshevsky’s opinion,… art not only reproduces life but also explains it; and works of art often “have the significance of a judgement on the phenomena of life.”

With the monologue from *The Zoo Story* and theatrical interests in mind, I knew from the beginning that I was going to make a stage, which became *Untitled (Stage1)*, but I had no idea what to put on it (Figure 21). That’s kind of what a stage is for. I wanted a stage because it acts as an empty vessel to fill with meaning. Rarely did it seem that the stage is meant to avoid story, forward trajectory, meaning and liminal processes. It was definitely for me a way of making something more significant than it is.

And so I made a stage approximately 10 feet in diameter and 2 feet high (Figure 22-23). It acts as a head, it is the scull and the brain which holds an idea. This stage is a blank slate for a multitude of materials below, above and piercing through it. These include, hydrochloric acid in the form of 1 bottle of Klean Strip muriatic acid and 6 bottles of The Works toilet bowl cleaner. 6 sealed boxes of aluminum foil, 150 cubic feet in total. 6 bottles of LA’s Totally Awesome bleach. 3 bottles of Equate hydrogen peroxide. 1 factory sealed case containing 24 bottles of Ice Mountain bottled water. 1 factory sealed case containing 24 bottles of Nestle Pure Life bottled water. 1 red storage bin filled with trash. 1 cleanly cut and modified grey plastic Lifetime brand fold out table. 1 40 inch Toshiba Amazon Prime Ready TV monitor displaying a 5 minute video, on loop, of an anonymous backyard chemist using household materials to release hydrogen and oxygen gasses into a bottle which, through combustion, creates a minuscule amount of absolutely pure water. These materials in the video are the same materials I just listed that adorn the stage. And lastly there is 1, carved foam, towering figure, painted pink, and inspired by the works of Constantin Brâncuși, meant to represent a being of subconsciousness and higher power (Figures 24-27).

I could have put anything on it, but I became obsessed with a YouTube video of a high school chemistry teacher demonstrating how to make water through the combustion of hydrogen and oxygen, and he is using household materials (Figure 28-29). I found something about this
video to be very strange like alchemy. This chemist was using absurd means to create a small amount of something completely pure. This video became my inspiration, and so I recreated the video and filmed it. This recreation is the video on the monitor on the stage. This was the reality that I chose to reinterpret for the platform (Figures 30-36).

And so if I can reiterate in different words, *Untitled (Stage1)* is a combination of both a reality and a fantasy adaptation of that reality. The video is a depiction of events in reality as they happen and then I’ve taken those elements and the materials from the video and rearranged them and formalized them for the stage. The video evokes feelings of mess, disorientation, and anonymity. It is a smear and a glob. While the stage with the video becomes clean, arranged, defined and geometric. Similar to Peter and Jerry in Edward Albees *The Zoo Story*.

To experience this work is to take on the act of making a story to draw meaning from. To experience the mind state in-between reality and fantasy, an area of construction where something is in the process of transforming from something real to something unreal. A place where themes of moralization, liminal process, rights of passage, creation and power are being constructed. When viewing the work there is a conflict between seeing the materials separately for what they are and finding a reason to connect the pieces. I wanted the work to have multiple conclusions, but most of all I wanted it to be a depiction of an attempt to create meaning, and I wanted the viewer to “be free to look, understand, and judge for him or herself” in the same way that Ingrid Schaffner writes about the work of Jason Rhoades.\(^{24}\) It has the semblance of significance, without a necessary answer as to why. So if one was to look at the pink figure as a God mixing cleaning products, which would represent pre-primordial materials, to create water, labeled as Ice Mountains and Pure Life, which represents the world, then this sculpture could be seen as being about the creation myth. Someone else could look at it from a different angle and think this work is about making a bomb or meth. Someone else could interpret the anti-environmentalist materiality of the sculpture as saying...
something about environmentalism, while someone else could see the stock piles of unopened store bought materials as relating to doomsday prepping.

In the same way Constantin Brancusi’s *Endless Column* (1918) references the axis from the earth to the heavens, this infinite and obscured meaning parallels the multitude of conclusions a viewer can conspire when viewing *Untitled (Stage1)* (Figure 37). If I can steal from Brancusi:

What my work is aiming at is, above all, realism: I pursue the inner, hidden reality, the very essence of objects in their own intrinsic fundamental nature; this is my only deep preoccupation.\textsuperscript{25}

It is this same realism in the never ending axis of *Endless Column* which *Untitled (Stage1)* evokes through its never-ending conclusions. The sculpture becomes a representation of endless creation in the most fundamental sense.
CONCLUSION.
Above all, I hope that my work is interesting to look at, and furthermore that the work rewards looking, including both in-depth and on the surface looking. I believe that I am reflecting a sense of reality through my unconscious improvisation in making. I do what I say I'm going to do and I can't necessarily say why. I think this is very similar to the human condition and the need to keep moving, to keep thinking and working on the self as it exists in life. Of course not everybody is working on something, some people just sit there, but those people know more about sitting there than anybody else who has sat there less. I think my work has something to do with this. I want to expose what it means to know the most I can about something that is specifically that thing.

What can I say, the best I can do is clean up the mess I make, to contain what I've done in an organized system similar to storage or display. Ideas are crammed yet contained. Geometry is utilized to evoke a sense of care and attention. Semblance of functionality gives my work a reason to stay out of the trash. I use formal techniques involving size, color, material, and balance as well as conceptual techniques involving thematic associations and word play. Like a brain, it is contained and simple, yet random and complex.

Everything is entirely important to me, but what is most important can sometimes be hard to describe. I tend to push forward the idea of mass and surplus as meaning, and redact the meaning of individual components. Original ideas and intentions in my work become wallflowers. I make work that is difficult to understand because that's how I want it to be.
NOTES

1 There was a time when I was browsing the St. Louis Art Museum, and I came up behind two men making jokes and laughing as they walked through the gallery containing ancient artifacts. They were dumb in the most endearing sense, but smart to a world I have little knowledge of. Stained Harley Davidson style shirts, buzz cuts, one balding, and slightly larger bellies to say the least, with thick middle Missouri accents. I guess it was their giggles that got me. They were talking about how interesting it could be to walk through this particular section of the museum and to see, among these great works of art, a Hot Pocket in the display case. I couldn’t help but find this insanely interesting, because it is something that would never happen. In fact I can say without doubt that it will never happen. I don’t think anybody alive or in the future will ever see a Hot Pocket with ancient art. I thought how nice it would be to please these two men and grant their wish, to bring their joke into reality.

2 This is in opposition to a description of Jason Rhoades' position concerning dust and its relationship to the “patina of time.” For further reading see Ingrid Schaffner, “REVVING UP,” in Jason Rhoades, Four Roads (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2014), 27.


4 For more information about the various opinions on the alchemist practice including brief descriptions on scam artists who took advantage of peoples disbelief see “Alchemy.” 113-117.


6 Walker Art Center, “Mike Kelley with John Welchman.”

7 Mike Kelley also mentions The Odd Couple as an inspiration for a short one-act play he wrote for his Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction series. For more information see Walker Art Center, “Mike Kelley with John Welchman.”


9 David Keith Lynch is an American filmmaker, painter, visual artist, actor, musician, and writer.


11 As it turns out the entire Twin Peaks situation was an accident. The show was on its own trajectory developing and transmuting through improvisation as it was made. From the beginning its script and structure were loose. This loose production can be compared to the blob as such: During the filming of a scene in the pilot taking place in Laura's room, Frank Silva, a set dresser during the shootings but also an actor, accidentally trapped himself in the room prior to filming by inadvertently moving a dresser in front of the door. Lynch had an image of Silva stuck in the room and thought that it could fit into the series somewhere, and told Silva that he would like for him to be in the series. Lynch had Silva crouch at the foot of
Laura's bed and look through the bars of the footboard, as if he were "trapped" behind them, and filmed it, then had Silva leave the room and filmed the empty room; after reviewing the footage, Lynch liked the presence that Silva brought to the scene and decided that he would put him somewhere in the series.

Later that day, a scene was being filmed in which Palmer's mother experiences a vision which frightens her; at the time, the script did not indicate what Mrs. Palmer had seen to frighten her. Lynch was pleased with how the scene turned out, but a crew member informed him that it would have to be re-shot because a mirror in the scene had inadvertently picked up someone's reflection. When Lynch asked who it was, the crew member replied that it had been Silva. Lynch considered this a "happy accident," and decided at that point that the unnamed character to be played by Silva would be revealed as Palmer's true killer.27

12 Back in 2019 during my lunch break at work I was cutting an orange for myself. Suddenly my coworker exclaimed: "What?! That's not the right way to cut oranges!" I was confused and asked: "What's the right way?" He proceeded to slice the rest of the orange for me and said: "See, you're supposed to see the teeth, that way you can pull it apart more easily." I won't go too far into this bit, but basically what you see in figure 9 are oranges sliced in the correct way according to my coworker. I have never sliced oranges differently since.

13 I always had a fascination with the Trevi Fountain in Rome with its figures and piles of sculpted rocks, to me this fountain evokes the qualities of an entourage, and so I began to stack and pile material like the rocks and figures in this fountain. Without specific reference to any historic works, each of the components contained in Fountain can embody a character in a way that parallels sculptural work like the Trevi Fountain.

14 The word elastic is referencing an interview Philip Guston had about the Marlborough show in 1970. For further reading see David Kaufmann, “Sick of Purity,” in Telling Stories: Philip Guston's Later Works (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 15.


16 Clark Coolidge is an experimental poet and jazz drummer.


19 In reference to Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle.


26 Schaffner, “REVVING UP,” 27.


ILLUSTRATIONS.
Figure 1
Martin Lammert, *Mixed Mirror*, 2020
4 sheets of silver mylar coated foam insulation, wood, 3 CNC routed medium-density fibre board pulleys, steel pulley, green 25 foot extension cord, 2 bearings, 2 v-belts, old sculpture housing a 1/2 horse power motor, Bondo, chicken wire, expanding spray foam, wood, steel, spray paint, nuts, bolts, deck screws
120 x 96 x 96 in. (304.8 x 243.84 x 243.84 cm.) installation dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Des Lee Gallery
Figure 2
Martin Lammert, *Mixed Mirror* (detail), 2020
Courtesy of the artist and Des Lee Gallery
Figure 3
Martin Lammert, *Sifter*, 2021

Found formica table with chrome legs, vacuum formed plastic kids pool, DC motor, AC/DC converter, wire, 25 foot orange extension cord, welded steel, medium-density fibre board, salt, 2 delabeled Morton Salt containers, 12 decapitated plastic collapsable animal figures, 24 plastic darts, 12 defaced smiley face stress balls, 2 Glade air fresheners, 144 crushed test tubes, nuts, bolts

48 x 48 x 48 in. (121.92 x 121.92 x 121.92 cm.) installation dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist
Figure 4
Martin Lammert, *Sifter* (detail), 2021
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 5
Hans Hofmann, *Summer 1965*, 1965
Oil on canvas
72 x 48 in. (182.9 x 121.9 cm.)
Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Figure 7
Martin Lammert, *Fountain*, 2021

Turned on and opened black mini-fridge, 15 bottles of delabeled Gatorade Zero, found utility cart, cut insulation foam squares, 4 oranges stacked in a pyramid formation, 1 orange spinning, 8 oranges sliced the correct way into 8 pieces each and piled on a tray from the mini-fridge, DC motor, AC/DC converter, wire, destroyed *Whale/Overlook* sculpture, 3D printed model of a waterslide in the shape of a kowtowing figure, urethane rubber used to add gloss to halloween masks, broken motor, clear rubber tubing, black zip-ties, inside-out rubber octopus bathtub toy, wash cloth, fountain pump, found hexagonal fish tank, 10 gallons of Strawberry-Kiwi Gatorade, neon fish tank rocks, water damaged hexagonal wooden compartment with the door open, clay chunks, broken plaster pieces, Bondo, 2 factory sealed cases of containing 24 bottles of Gatorade Zero, 25 foot black and red extension cord

54 x 60 x 39 in. (137.16 x 152.4 x 99.06 cm.) installation dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist
Figure 8
Martin Lammert, *Fountain* (detail), 2021
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 9
Martin Lammert, *Fountain* (detail), 2021
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 10
Martin Lammert, *Fountain* (detail), 2021
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 11
Oil on canvas
75 ¼ x 114 ¼ in. (191.14 x 290.2 cm.)
Courtesy of SFMOMA
Figure 12
Digital image
Courtesy of Marvel Studios
Figure 13
Martin Lammert, *Compositional Study*, 2022

*The Devils Ear, Black Cloud, Black Nebula, Blue Nebula, Hand, Fountain reconfigured, Cone reconfigured, Sifter reconfigured, STOP/SOOP mock up, broken sculptures, found light fixtures, found stool, found chrome shelving, extension cords, pink paint, duct tape, electrical tape, wire, chicken wire, plaster, painters rags, dead plants from IKEA, steel vice, wood, plastic bag*

78 x 150 x 57 in. (198.12 x 381 x 144.78 cm.) installation dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist
Figure 14
Digital image
Courtesy of Warner Brothers
Figure 15
Martin Lammert, *Black Cloud*, 2021
Carved insulation foam, Pink Panther foam, expanding spray foam, plywood, plaster, Rust-oleum enamel paint, spray paint, 4 months of weather damage, dust, spider webs, dirt
38 x 60 x 44 in. (96.52 x 152.4 x 111.76 cm.)
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 16
Martin Lammert, *The Devil’s Ear (broken)*, 2020-2022
Insulation foam, plaster, Bondo, Rust-oleum spray paint, silver air-duct tape, broken from physical abuse
24 x 13 x 3 in. (60.96 x 33.02 x 7.62 cm.)
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 17
Martin Lammert, *Compositional Study* (detail), 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 18
Martin Lammert, *Compositional Study* (detail), 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 19
Martin Lammert, *Compositional Study* (detail), 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 20
Martin Lammert, *Compositional Study* (artist portrait), 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 21
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (in process)*, 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Parking garage, light from a Volvo station wagon's headlights, hydrochloric acid in the form of 1 bottle of Klean Strip muriatic acid and 6 bottles of The Works toilet bowl cleaner, 6 sealed boxes of aluminum foil adding up to 150 cubic feet in total, 6 bottles of LA's Totally Awesome bleach, 3 bottles of Equate hydrogen peroxide, 1 factory sealed case containing 24 bottles of Ice Mountain bottled water, 1 factory sealed case containing 24 bottles of Nestle Pure Life bottled water, 1 red storage bin filled with trash, 1 cleanly cut and modified grey plastic Lifetime brand fold out table, 1 blue bucket filled with water, one clear storage container with painters rags, 1 carved foam towering figure painted pink and inspired by the works of Constantin Brâncuși meant to represent a being of subconsciousness and higher power, wood, steel, nuts, bolts

132 x 120 x 120 in. (335.28 x 304.8 x 304.8 cm.) installation dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper art Museum
Figure 23

Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (fantasy)*, 2022
Hydrochloric acid in the form of 1 bottle of Klean Stri... 132 x 120 x 120 in. (335.28 x 304.8 x 304.8 cm.) installation dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Figure 24
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Figure 25
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Figure 26
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Figure 27
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Figure 28
Video still, 2013
Courtesy jcableman and YouTube
Figure 29
Video still, 2013
Courtesy jcaseleman and YouTube
Figure 30
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
Figure 31
Martin Lammert, Untitled (Stage1) (detail), 2022
Video still
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 32
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Video still
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 33
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Video still
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 34
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage 1) (detail)*, 2022
Video still
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 35
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Video still
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 36
Martin Lammert, *Untitled (Stage1) (detail)*, 2022
Video still
Courtesy of the artist
Figure 37
Constantin Brâncuși, *Endless Column (Coloana fără Sfârșit/Coloana Infinitului) or The Column of Gratitude*, 1938
Cast iron, steel
1154.72 x 35.43 x 35.43 in. (2933 x 90 x 90 cm.)
Courtesy of the city of Târgu Jiu, Romania