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This body of work investigates abstraction, process, and the construction of psychological spaces. This paper will define specific works from the overall body of work, the formal processes of drawing and collage, and the visual abstraction of the drawings and their origins within my personal history.

RE-ASSEMBLEGE OF FORMS

By

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

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## RE-ASSEMBLAGE OF FORMS

This body of work investigates abstraction, process, and the construction of psychological spaces. This paper will define specific works from the overall body of work, the formal processes of drawing and collage, and the visual abstraction of the drawings and their origins within my personal history.

The first work of art I will discuss is *The Ninth Circle, Round One*, a large 7 ft X 7ft drawing/ collage on paper. The drawing consists of abstracted organic forms that twist, cluster, and knot throughout space. The piece consists of two large pieces of Reeves BFK heavy weight paper that are seamed vertically down the center. There are elements of drawing, collage, and Xerox transfers throughout. The drawing was created with graphite pencil, watercolor, and graphite washes (which is powdered graphite combined with water). The use of graphite conveys an overall range of gray tones. These drawings concentrate on abstract forms that are visceral and that resemble organic structures. They also deal predominately with line and form. Some aspects of the drawing merge indistinguishably with the original digital print. Then there is the use of collage and Xerox transfers throughout. The collaged pieces are cut outs from other line drawings or swatches of digitally printed material. They are inserted and woven throughout the drawing in a way that merges and reconnects shapes within the composition, creating topography of the surface layers. The use of collage was beneficial

in making the center seam less noticeable and breaking the vertical line it created. The Xerox transfers supplied an element of dark saturation and patterning to the drawing. Xerox transfers are created by taking a freshly printed Xerox image and transferring the image by rubbing acetone and burnishing the back of it until there is a reversed image on the paper of choice. The transfers are the darkest tones within the drawing and visually move the viewer through the composition. The transfers serve in creating an ambiguity between form and space.

The second group of drawings within this body of work is smaller in size, ranging no more than 32 in. X 32in. There are two drawings in particular that are on Reeves BFK, *The Ninth Circle, Round 1, #1* and *The Ninth Circle, Round 1, #2*. They are square in composition, and utilize graphite pencil, powdered graphite washes, matte medium, Xerox transfers, and collage. Both drawings incorporate many of the same abstracted organic shapes from the larger drawing, but also bring forth areas of more representational forms, such as a rib cage or gestural figures. These drawings show more immediacy and gestural marks than the larger 7ft X 7ft drawing. This immediacy creates tension and a sense of chaos, setting the mood of the drawing. Also a higher level of contrast is used in describing the forms within space. There are layers of graphite washes that create an atmospheric effect, which are melancholy in a way.

The third group of drawings in this body of work are no larger than 10 in. X 10 in., also square in composition, titled *Organic Spaces of the Psyche 1-16*. With this series of smaller drawings I concentrated on creating a specific space, one that is condensed, intertwining with an attention to light source. These drawings explore masses of shapes

that are combined and react to collaged material such as tracing paper and Xerox transfers of lace and spotted patterns. In many cases the Xerox transfers and collaged materials are laid down first and the drawn masses of shapes react accordingly. There is also experimentation with mark making and value shifts, such as the light grey edge of a massed shape next to a saturated black and pinkish transfer of selected pattern. The Xerox transfers help with defining the edges of the masses.

Through each group of drawings I have learned more about my process and have worked on defining what process means personally to my art practice. I began this entire body of work based on a digital printout of a graphite drawing I worked on earlier in the fall semester. This digital printout became a matrix and I reconstructed masses of organic forms in a number of different combinations using graphite pencil and graphite washes. Repetition became an important aspect of the drawing process. The belief I held was that somehow by repeating the slightly visceral forms over and over again I would defuse their traumatic references by making them gentle and beautiful instead of slightly grotesque, which is the way that I viewed them initially. Each drawing started at a set point on the paper and then expanded the forms in multiple directions as I navigated my way across the paper.

The 7 ft by 7 ft drawing is my first attempt at working on a large scale. The task was daunting and I had a lot to learn. The piece was worked through by trial and error. I started with drawing the abstracted bodily forms over and over in a twisting and turning composition, but realized that I was not creating the space that I saw in my head. A space that feels inescapable and multifaceted. I then began to incorporate Xerox transfers



throughout. The transfers were cut into sections and applied with acetone. The patterns on the Xeroxes were a simple black and white spotted pattern. I enlarged and shrunk the pattern many times and then applied it in the interstices of my drawing throughout the work. From each of these transferred areas I would then draw out additional forms in a flesh toned watercolor. The color allowed me to relate the work back to the body and also helped connect one set of forms to another. This created another way to visually work through the composition. The lack of cohesiveness among the different elements of the drawing became my biggest challenge. Once I began to approach the drawing as a whole and not in multiple parts, the different sections began to work together more harmoniously.

Collage has become an important aspect of my process. It has given me a way of editing my work. If I over work an area of the drawing, I can simply cut it out and insert something else that can work better in its place. In this process I started to notice patterns within the shapes I was cutting out. If the shapes I cut out originally did not work in the composition in that set spot then maybe they would work elsewhere in the composition. The collage gave me a sense of malleability in which I could alter the work to fit whatever needs came forth. This began my first steps of working and reworking the composition, surface, and materials. Along with inserting different drawing segments into the large drawing I began to treat the transfers like collage, because they were an approach to the surface different from the graphite drawings.

With the smaller drawings I worked on constructing a concrete process. I would lay down graphite washes and transfers and then would approach the drawings in reaction

to what was there. They became very similar to automatic drawings, which are drawings that embrace chance and mishap as part of the process. Having points on the paper to react to helps facilitate a greater sense of movement and spontaneity, which comes across in the condensed compositions. The smaller drawings aim at creating a definite psychological space. The construction of psychological spaces is very important to the conceptual aspect of the work in order to facilitate self-explorations through process and materials.

The formal aspects of my work are available to the viewer but other aspects, drawn from my personal history, remain inaccessible. The spaces that I aim to create in these drawings involve imagery arising from certain traumatic childhood memories. My intent is not to illustrate or explain these particular memories but to create a visual experience based on them. My process of drawing and collage affords me an outlet for my psychic energies. I am not sure if this body of work facilitates a process of redemption or resolution. The drive to define something as aesthetic, cohesive, and beautiful through repetition parallels the transformation of personal anguish into emotional strength and resiliency.

I take inspiration from the process-oriented works of artists Louis Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, and Tara Donovan. They make brilliant and redemptive use of repetition, often deemed “obsessive” in the critical literature. Artist Jackie Windsor said in an interview about Eva Hesse that she “felt there was a quality in the color and texture of the surface of her work that carried an emotional pitch that was very poetic and haunting (Siegel 75). I am after that same effect, which is to find a poetic gentleness

or beauty within the use of borderline grotesque forms. Tara Donovan, a contemporary artist whose work has come to prominence in the last decade, is deeply engaged with materials and processes made up of systems and rules. Her use of repetition is similar to Eva Hesse's (Smith). I am intrigued by Tara Donovan's *Untitled, 2003*, ink on paper. It is a drawing made up of repeated circular marks. These marks create an organic undulating form that optically pulsates. I am interested in the exploration of the psyche that Louis Bourgeois alludes to in her sculptures. Childhood memories are embedded in her works. Louise Bourgeois is said to stage a "vivid psychodynamic of viewing"(Potts 39). Everything in Bourgeois work is about the relationship of the viewer to the work itself rather than the meaning she gives to it (Potts 39). Although my work is deeply intertwined with my childhood memories and enacts the emotional and visual struggle with traumatic memories, its dynamic presentation of the knotting, clustering, and interweaving of insistently imposing organic masses operates at a formal level that transcends the specific autobiographic details of my life.

This body of work investigates and explores my processes of drawing and collage combined with attempts to dismantle and reassemble discomfoting forms from memory through a history of marks and interweaving of forms that opens up a space for psychic reflection.

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- Smith, Roberta. "Art in Review: Tara Donovan." *New York Times*. New York Times 11 Apr. 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/11/arts/art-in-review-tara-donovan.html>. 17 Apr. 2010.

## CATALOGUE

1.) The Ninth Circle, Round 1

graphite pencil, powdered graphite wash, watercolor, Xerox transfers, wax, and collage  
73 in. X 73 in.

2.) The Ninth Circle, Round 1, #1

graphite pencil, powdered graphite wash, watercolor, collage, matte medium, and Xerox transfers  
31 ½ in. X 31 ¾ in.

3.) The Ninth Circle, Round 1, #2

graphite pencil, powdered graphite wash, watercolor, collage, matte medium, and Xerox transfers  
23 ½ in. X 23 ¾ in.

4.) Organic Spaces of the Psyche, #1-12

graphite pencil, powdered graphite wash, Xerox transfers, watercolor, and collage  
approximately 10 in. X 10 in.