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What happens when we are able to distinguish between a house and a home? As a child, I was confronted with the disappearance of people and things. As an artist, I attempt to figure out what to make as everyday I am left with the residue of reality in the form of memory.

HOUSES AND HOME

by

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HOUSES AND HOME

I received my undergraduate degree in painting and drawing. My work was mostly on the wall. The significant pieces were large, aggressively painted, irregularly shaped collage paintings. The pieces usually contained recognizable figures that appeared and disappeared like vapor. In truth, I was mostly interested in the areas surrounding my figures. The fragments and decorations framing those bodies were the foundation from which those bodies emerged.

Though I tried to eradicate many aspects of my previous work, in graduate school I reengaged the body as the main motif in my work. Most importantly to my Spring 2011 thesis body of work, I worked on a series of self-portraits based primarily on fantastical genitalia. These little rectangular drawings and paintings were about the size of baseball cards. Each one was based in a series of visual motifs -- including eyes so that each body in the series can look back, words so that each body can message in response, and weapons for protection in the event of an attack. The images stated my intentions but the literalness ruined the seduction. There was nothing to lure an audience. I switched the painting material to watercolor, and I was able to find seduction in the materiality. The blurring of the penile and vulvar-vaginal forms -- the shaft forming lips, a glans blending with a clitoris, and the pubic hair either being maintained meticulously

or running wild or non-existent allowed me to meditate on my gender identity through invented genitalia and reinvented genitalia.

Since the start of the graduate school, I've questioned my materials, my tools, and my stance as a maker. Early on most of my materials were found paper, metal, plastic, acrylic or latex, and a substrate such as paper or plaster. Always crucial was the ability of paint to change the look of a thing meant to be throwaway or garbage. The tools I used the most were used for application of paint. Other than brushes, I used sticks, palette knives, paint rollers, fingers, cardboard, pouring, and spraying. I used brushes and water to change, refine, obscure, and move paint under, on top, and around the added found materials and the substrates. My stance as a maker was to figure out why these materials and tools were important to my studio practice and where and how did they acquire.

During my second semester my work turned towards abstraction, and I abandoned the use of the full body completely. Intrigued by surface, decoration, and the materiality of paint, I started work on a series of polymorphous objects painted on index cards. I became fascinated with the *Moby Dick* series by Frank Stella, the presentations of genitalia in particular works by Elizabeth Murray, and the use of a limited palette in the works of Phillip Guston. I questioned the idea of the body through painting as I became more perplexed by my own sexuality, personally moving from bisexual to polysexual.

During the search I became nostalgic and looked towards my parents and my childhood home for answers. My parents bought our house in the late sixties for five thousand dollars. The house was bare bones and smaller than what I remember. I remember going to friends' houses and not finding much similarity other than like places to enter, cook, eat, entertain, freshen up, and sleep. Those things are typical of many houses, but a home is much more intimate and personal. A series of changes to my house, both structural and familial, affected my perception of home.

In 1994 my home underwent some structural changes, but before that extension, I lived in a three-bedroom house with one bathroom, a kitchen and dining room, and a living room. There were four trees around my house. My mom, dad, and great grandma planted three of those trees. The fourth and most remarkable, was a pine tree planted by my dad for my rope swing. I would swing for hours on this synthetic rope tied tightly at the top and haphazardly bundled into a knot at the bottom for sitting. The same branch and rope held my weight until I was a teenager.

Before the extension, I remember the house and home being structurally secure. My mom was often reading or figuring out what to do with things she bought from yard sales. She taught me how to paint on white t-shirts and how to melt crayon shavings between wax paper with an iron. My dad made things visually interesting around the home. He would often fix plumbing himself. My

dad had a particular way of fixing holes, walls, or anything not related to plumbing. He would find the least expensive item for such a job, position it in place, secure it to his fitting, and allow my mom to mask over it with latex paint bought from the clearance or mistake section. My great grandma spent her time crocheting or watching wrestling while I sat on the floor playing with building blocks or assembling a flat puzzle.

After the 1994 extension, the house gained a dining room and a den. Mentally, I associate many upsetting memories with this extension. The four trees ceased to exist. My rope swing vanished, my great grandma passed away, and my oldest brother was diagnosed with a life threatening disease. More specifically, the physical possibility and the real instance of losing people and things is the condition I associate with home life after my home physically changed.

Though my work is a meditation on my memories of my childhood home, acting as a time capsule for the past, it is still embedded with my subjective voice and the rethinking of my own imagined home.

This analysis continued into the summer of graduate school. I had a lot of time to think, to make, and to experiment. I started cutting out my wall collages so that the images were more object-like. The actual move to something more sculptural happened when, for instance, the surface I wanted from a roll of paper met a cardboard tube. I turned the cardboard tube into a “V” shape or a more

acute swoop curve that I was using as my motif. I was using yarn as a mark-making tool in the wall collages, and I decided to keep working with it as well as plaster for an alternate substrate instead to paper. The “V” shape was the only shape I was working towards.

I had no idea what to do but enjoyed the mind space, as I knew I was working towards something visually exciting. I looked at the polymorphous paintings I made during my second semester. My initial attempts at producing form were heavily entrenched in the memories of my mom painting over haphazard walls and my grandma pulling out yarn as she prepared to crochet and watch wrestling.

My current work takes my father into consideration by the addition of architectural elements. Specifically, the physical structure of each piece is derived from my memory of materials he used, how he used the materials, and the characteristics of the constructions. In every piece made during my last year of study, there is something that is paint, something that lends itself to textile, and something architectural. In these pieces, the materiality and memories of my past and present coalesce to express the visual importance of family and inheritance. As an artist working as an adult, I am confronted with my past to provide my present and future with understanding, remembrance, and resolution.

CATALOGUE OF IMAGES

Cum Butch Cum Slum, 2011, mixed materials, 24"x24"x15"

Hair Corrupt, 2011, mixed materials, 72"x20"x30"

Hair Corrupt (detail), 2011, mixed materials, 72"x20"x30"

Humps, 2011, mixed materials, 50"x18"x25"

Humps (detail), 2011, mixed materials, 50"x18"x25"

Transbananametal, 2011, mixed materials, 25"x30"x14"