

SOPER, RICHELLE E., M.F.A. *The Body Shop* (2016)
Directed by Nikki Blair. 8pp

The Body Shop is a body of work made up of reinterpreted machines and products used to pursue our ideal self. My sculptures, including *Moist-Erratic*, *All-in-Wall*, *The Body Bits Variety Pack*, *Snares Hair-Care*, and others are all available for an individual's usage at *The Body Shop*.

For a maker to create a handmade object in a time where so many things are mass-produced motivates me to think of something new and novel. Upon this foundation, the danger lies in narcissism: 'I am a want to be inventor that creates new and exciting products; and also an artist by virtue of my creations.' I absorb contemporary cultural products through the lens of a maker; it is how I ration what is important and what is fluff. In the act of making, I experience similar satisfaction to that of owning and using a new product.

THE BODY SHOP

by

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
2016

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APPROVAL PAGE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nikki Blair, Mariam Stephan, Heather Holian, Felicia Dean and Andy Dunnill: thank you for your time, constructive criticism, moral support, and shared laughs. To anyone and everyone who lifted, held, looked, wiggled, moved, listened, challenged and taught me-I appreciate every single one of you. And I want to thank Nikki Blair one more time; thank you for being just like me but smarter.

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THE BODY SHOP

The process of making is the most important part of my work and I thrive on it. My workspace is typically organized, but my mind moves sporadically. Each decision inspires another decision, which in turn inspires the last decision. I learn through the act of doing. In my mind, the resolution of a piece reveals itself in the middle of my process. I tinker with wood. I futz with hair. I compose with rubber bands. I massage clay. I conceal glue. Through my use of repetition I am able to achieve clarity and innovation. A form is dictated by its function. Form and function are in service to scale. Scale seduces. Construction is easy; courtship is hard. This thought process is at the core of my studio practice, regardless of material.

In humor, I find both comfort and confrontation. Humor serves not only as a gateway to acknowledging and embracing ordinary realities and routine, but also as a way to amplify the absurdity of these processes. A cosmetic tool has one purpose- to impose superficial and cultural restrictions upon a person's body. Cosmetic tools can: conceal, massage, moisturize, pick, pull, shave, and trim; these processes exploit fantastical possibilities and trump the truth. The conception of my thesis entitled *The Body Shop* satirizes a culture obsessed with personal care. I offer my specific solutions to society's insecurities in referencing the seemingly useless gizmos and gadgets of the cosmetic industry.

The Body Shop is a space invented from reinterpreted machines and fantastic products that we use to enhance our perception of our ideal, self-image. My sculptures, including *Moist-Erratic*, *All-in-Wall*, *The Body Bits Variety Pack*, *Snares Hair-Care*, and others are all available for an individual's apprehensive usage at *The Body Shop*. These larger than life impotent machines amplify the absurdity of the products that we buy and use on ourselves in order to satisfy the desire that has been imposed on us by a western societal beauty standard. The objects are meant to make a person laugh while simultaneously questioning whether or not it might already exist.

'I am a want to be inventor that creates new and exciting products; and also an artist by virtue of my creations.' Upon this foundation, the danger lies in narcissism: As a maker, creating a handmade object in a time where so many of our things are mass-produced, motivates me to think of something new and novel. I absorb contemporary cultural products through the lens of a maker; it is how I rationalize what is important and what is fluff. In the act of making, I experience similar satisfaction to that of owning and using a new product.

My studio practice is a large part of my daily routine, when I am not with it I am thinking about it. If I cannot make it I feel as though I am missing something. In comparison, a disturbance to my daily routine goes unnoticed; I'm completely un-phased because there is no actual weight or bearing of these habits for me. It further exposes the absurdity of the routine task itself. Routine is evident in my process as well as being present in the finished product. By making changes quickly, I am capable of pushing the limits of a material. The course of my work was greatly influenced by a visit to *Archer*

Advanced Rubber Components, a local rubber factory in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Every machine in the factory is designed to perform down to a fraction of a centimeter in order to produce a distinct type of rubber for an even more specific function. Whether a gasket for an oil pump, or a wire protectant tube, every piece of rubber product produced has a purpose. Because of the specificity of its function, if the machine even slightly malfunctions, the resulting rubber is considered trash. This abundance of material has allowed me to construct without hesitation. It is not precious because it was free. The rubber that I received is extruded. It is malleable. It does not readily adhere to anything other than itself. It comes in specific colors and specific shapes.

In the same way that the *Textile Factory* in Germany influenced artist Eva Hesse's work, the rubber factory has influenced mine. Explore, collect, arrange. We are what we live with. Often we try to separate ourselves out from our surroundings in a vain attempt to create a sense of self, when often the opposite is true. It is the spaces we are borne in to, and immersed in that have the greatest influence.

Eva Hesse exposed an essence of navigation through the new machines from the *Textile Factory* that she lived with. Hesse's work was spacious in composition, but rigid in line. To her, the machines do not make sense; she has no prior experience with factory work or machines found in factories. Her reaction is to make nonsensical drawings. However, with a strong visible mechanical reference, the viewer may wonder: where does this device live and how does it function? Does the machine even function? I became infatuated with Eva Hesse's *Mechanical Drawings Series* from 1964 as soon as I saw them. I had not known that this series existed before this year, but I now find

constant inspiration in Hesse's interpretations of the machines that she lived with. I have translated her curious approach to the things around me that are unfamiliar into my own work through my own humorous lens.

Last summer, I had the opportunity to attend the Venice Biennale in Italy where I was introduced to Mika Rottenberg's installation *No, Knows, Nose* which was inspired by pearl harvesting. The installation starts with the viewer walking through a bright, fluorescent construction of a pearl shop then into another small room where a video was projected. The video was something that I've never seen before. How is it that Rottenberg can make something so sad, so pretty and absurd? Rottenberg's work analyzes the impact of the media on our society, work and labor. Her work has inspired me to reconsider how we use technology and how it is used. Is it necessary to have a patented product that scrapes the dead skin off of the bottom of your feet called a "Ped-Egg"? I question the objects we surround ourselves with and how truly innovative and brilliant these products actually are. The fact that such an item exists alludes to the excess of mechanical production to create instruments with luxurious or redundant functions.

When I am working, I have two or three trigger words to guide my decision-making. Typically, they originate from an object's function. For example, *Moist-Erratic* simulates an industrial ventilation machine. Its intended purpose is to suck, clean, and move air from one place to another. The insular system represents my trigger words "replenishing & cleansing". I then think about what a 'replenishing' or 'cleansing' material would visually feel like. Is it soft? Is it round? Does it wiggle? Mika Rottenbergsaid, "It's not just visual; it's energetic. It's about trying to locate feeling that

has no shape. The whole thing is meant to fail on some level because you can't give shape to abstract emotions, sensations, memories, and smells" (Hudson). In the act of making, I often refer back to this ideology. In regards to *Moist-Erratic*, I was questioning how moisturizing could visually translate into a feeling, an energy, or a presence.

The *Body Bits Variety Pack* references a dremel tool which can be used for cutting, grinding, sanding, buffing, and shaping materials such as wood, laminate, ceramic, and metal. This led me to consider what sort of tools we use on ourselves that emulate the cutting, grinding, sanding, buffing, and shaping action of the dremel bits. I connected the similarities of the actions of a dremel tool to personalized dead skin removal tools. What if I were to blow up both the scale and the context of these tools? How does that change our relationship with them? By altering bits and pieces of actual machines, I seek to question the integrity and importance of the product's function that is being made.

Snares Hair-Care's implied purpose is to transform undesired and discarded hair into desired hairpieces. As Rottenberg states: "I am interested in the limitations and expansiveness of one's own body (...). The subject-object relationship of hair and person. It really is a byproduct of a person, a surplus" (Hudson). We seek to rid ourselves of the excess. Through the juxtaposition of hair classifications, I expose the comical relationship between how an individual may present his or her natural/true self from the 'other' self. Conveyor belts act as a mediator; they transport from one step to the next. *Snares Hair-Care* is a distorted conveyor belt, on top of which lies wax strips that appear used.

All-in-Wall is a contraption under construction. It is the ultimate ‘get-ready-station.’ It is a collection of the explorations and findings of the products and machines that were made prior to it. *All-in-Wall* consists of two 9’ x 4’ x 1 ½’ walls that stand approximately two feet apart from one another. The surfaces of the walls are covered in different kinds of rubber, styrofoam, aluminum tubing, plastic, wood, pegboard, and motors. Their surfaces have been accessorized with the same sensibility that I would have when conducting my morning routine. There is an order and the process isn’t evident. This is the only mechanism in *The Body Shop* that has any actual movement, whereas the rest merely suggest implied movement or function.

The *Tool-Wall* is an arrangement of hand held tools that one can use in *The Body Shop*. The products are displayed on pegboard pegs to imply use to be used and put back mimicking that of a tool benches purpose. Tools such as: a finger “elongate-r”, a wax impounder, a blush brush, a comb, and two hard loofas (for two-handed maximum efficiency), expose the ridiculousness of what lives in my bathroom. There is essentially no surface space because the make-up, cotton balls, Q-tips, mirrors, brushes, shampoo etc., is left out for easy access and daily use. While the *Tool-Wall* is hung up and out of the way, *Lube-Up* occupies floor space. *Lube-Up* is a designated area that provides the user with a variety of lubricating devices, but lacks any actual lubricant. Without the lubricant, or any of the tools looking wet or used, one could wonder what these objects are and if they are actually meant to function at all. *The Body Shop* is a physical manifestation of my interpretation of what we choose to surround ourselves with and what we do with those things. Creating *The Body Shop* has allowed me to explore the

excess and absurdities of our consumerist cosmetic culture. It is a physical manifestation of what we choose to use on our bodies and the absurdity within that. The products are a tangible byproduct of my fascination and awe. I find absurdity in the mundane and humor in the ordinary.

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