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WOFFORD, JOHN ALBERT. Reality of Form - Form of Reality. (1974)
Directed by: Walter Barker. Pp. 3.

This thesis consists of an exhibition of cast aluminum and
fired clay sculpture

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REALITY OF FORM - FORM OF REALITY
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by

John Albert Wofford
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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
1974

Approved by

James Barker

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of
the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina
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December 12, 1974
Date of Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to my thesis committee, Mr. Walter Barker, Dr. Joan Gregory, Mr. Andrew Martin, and Mr. Joseph Crivy for their help. I would also like to thank Mr. Herk Van Tongeren and Mr. Dexter Benedict for their encouragement, and my family and friends for their support.

CATALOGUE

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DIMENSIONS</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>
1. Breast Series No. 1	9 1/2" x 8 3/4" x 4 1/2"	Cast aluminum
2. Breast Series No. 2	8" x 5 3/4" x 8 1/2"	Cast aluminum
3. Breast Series No. 3	9 1/2" x 8 3/4" x 5 1/2"	Cast aluminum
4. Breast Series No. 4	7 3/4" x 5 3/4" x 8 3/4"	Cast aluminum
5. Front Series No. 2	19" x 16" x 4 1/2"	Cast aluminum
6. Front Series No. 3	18 3/4" x 13 1/2" x 5 1/2"	Fired clay
7. Front Series No. 4	16 1/2" x 13 3/4" x 6"	Cast aluminum
8. Back Series No. 2	23 1/2" x 11 1/2" x 4 3/4"	Cast aluminum
9. Back Series No. 3	18 1/2" x 13" x 5 1/2"	Fired clay
10. Back Series No. 4	18 3/4" x 15 1/2" x 7"	Cast aluminum

This thesis results from an exploration of the human form and from the challenge of proposing new and different approaches in working with the figure. Using the figure, then, as a point of departure, this body of sculpture concerns itself with the alteration of reality and the ambiguity of form. The naturalistic forms, in reference to the figure, are obscured in some way or, at least, are not immediately discernible. This situation is brought about by employing several methods, which exist collectively in various combinations and, to different degrees, within each piece.

Sections of the figure are separated at a point suggested by the juncture or crease resulting from where the volumes of flesh meet and fold into one another. These divided sections are rejoined at different angles, producing a rearrangement of the usual relationship of one part to another. As a result, the forms within, while remaining natural as parts, assume a new formal identity due to this modification. Some parts of the body are edited so that the customary flow of the form is abruptly halted and replaced with space. The point at which the piece is edited is determined in part with regard to the resulting silhouette of the side of the work and the relationship to its corresponding forms. This cross-sectioning provides an inside depth view producing a more concise sense of volume and mass. The deletion of part of the figure interferes with the viewer's inclination to favor complete as opposed to partial information and may disappoint certain predetermined intellectual and aesthetic ideals of wholeness. Other sections of the figure are extended, allowing a suggested flow to continue along a plane beyond its normal conclusion. Though the technique of extension is directly opposite that

of deletion, the effects are much the same in that they both contradict the viewer's understanding of the unimpeded roundness and curved progression of the figure.

The sculptures exist within a squared, sharp-edged framing element which was chosen as a means of imposing conceptual limitations on the work. This further separates it from the arbitrarily broken edge and accidental nature of the fragmentary figural part. The framework suggests a selection out of a larger continuum and not a complete form contained within itself. The amount of information provided about the forms is determined, in part, by the extent to which the frame focuses in on the figure. The hard-edged, geometric outline bordering the biomorphic forms also provides a contrast as the organic topography of the forms confronts its edge. The confrontation between these conflicting components and divergent forms aids in setting up a tension within the work. The contrast in volume, line, and plane is emphasized by this juxtaposition of the organic and the geometric.

Utilizing the partial figure allows for the opportunity of working life-size, but in more simplified and concentrated terms. Working on this true-to-life scale causes the work to have the same presence as, and exist on an equal level with, the viewer. The partial figure serves as a half-step between naturalism and abstraction, working with elements of both experiences. The isolation of sections of the figure permits concentration upon an analytical study of the body's surface planes. Keys or clues to the figurative identity are sometimes erased and the distinguishing features subdued. This leads to simplified forms which in turn lend themselves to forming analogies within the body itself.

The semi-abstract, biomorphic forms create a biological suggestiveness with ambivalent shapes that simultaneously evoke different images.

The use of body casts proved to be the best method of achieving the desired results for this particular body of work and does not constitute a rejection of modeling. As there was an involvement with the distortion of, or departure from, reality, it seemed more direct to begin with the most realistic form possible rather than a transposed form achieved through modeling. As there was not an interest in the gesture of the hand and the expressive qualities of manipulative materials, a relatively undisturbed, impersonal surface was chosen so as not to interrupt the flow of line. The polished metallic surface is more reflective of light than is the clay, which tends to be more absorbent. The light involves itself with the metal in such a way that it moves along the surface in pronounced gradations, offering more stark contrasts within the piece. The light in relation to the clay pieces, on the other hand, is gradually dispersed in more subtle transitions in and around the forms.

The process is begun by taking a mold from the model who is placed in a straightforward, neutral position. The initial cast was sometimes unsatisfactory as the weight of the plaster mold suppressed the fullness of the softer parts of the body. Wax was then painted into the plaster mold to attain the positive form and was shaped to restore the volumes. The freedom allowed by the pliable wax sections provided a wide range of possibilities for experimentation with form. The wax figural parts were used in conjunction with clay to achieve the desired effect and another mold was taken of the resulting form. A wax impression could then be obtained from the plaster mold and cast into metal, or a pressed clay impression taken and later fired.