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CATHERINE



C: To start, I would like to propose that our sharing of images is an act of what I call shape throwing. A term I can thank Sarah Dziedzic and Suzanne Li Puma for helping me realize. To briefly describe – throwing shapes, or shape throwing – is a methodology of talking with others about ideas that does not necessitate or result in one person’s authoritative assertions, but instead is a means to work through interesting concepts, where each person throws ideas as if they were shapes – for a respondent to catch, mold, and throw back. A continuum that starts as one thing and ends as another. A dialogic process that is about mutual intellectual interest instead of authoritative point proving. With our images, I feel a similar impulse. Additionally, it is a way for us to continue our artistic and personal intimacy across the geographic divide that now separates us, to keep seeing and feeling each other as solid objects. We are, quite literally, throwing shapes at each other.

I wanted to share a quote with you from Walter Benjamin – which relates to our current impulses as well as to our general interests in how we negotiate with things in the world:

The interior is the asylum where art takes refuge. The collector proves to be the true resident of the interior. He makes his concern the idealization of objects. To him falls the Sisyphean task of divesting things of their commodity character by taking possession of them. But he can bestow on them only connoisseur value, rather than use value. The collector delights in evoking a world that is not just distant and long gone but also better – a world in which, to be sure, human beings are no better provided with what they need than in the real world, but in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful.

N: I am all for a non-authoritative discussion! This idea of shape throwing is especially appropriate given the way we have shared images. The photographs with which you responded to mine didn’t seem to be definitive comparisons. First, I saw parallels in regards to texture and materials—rough, shiny, scratched, soft; forms—holes, curves, points, links, pairs, hooks, folds, shaped planes; function—tools, implements, artifacts, parts of a missing whole. With some photos I was less able to directly identify a connection point which forced me to look at the whole image—was it the lamp in the background you responded to with the photograph of the crudely etched stone? I don’t feel I need that question answered, I appreciate that more mysterious connections exist. I had unconsciously been developing fixed ideas about these photographed objects’ roles in my vocabulary of forms and functions, and your additions delightfully disrupted that in some cases.

The first thing I noticed when I read the Benjamin quote was his use of the word “asylum” which brought up ideas of safety as well as of contained delusions. As a woman making sculptures out of cardboard, fabric and various other inexpensive materials (many of which like fabric are related to the domestic), I am acutely aware of the interior realm as a simultaneously freeing and stifling space. In addition to the psychological and political aspects of the interior, I also think about the metaphysical aspects—there’s something both active and dormant about an interior, hints of life behind stillness which attract me to objects that have potential for other purposes. Secondly, I love the line about things being “freed from the drudgery of being useful”. These things are the kinds of things I look for when I take pictures, but they’re also the kinds of things I’m trying to make in the studio. I have been defining these types of objects for myself as “recognizable but not identifiable”, and therefore open to being useful in undefined ways.

“Free from the drudgery of being useful” also brings to mind a freeing of the spirit, a passing from one physical state to another. You wrote about objects as stand-ins for the dead. Though of course technically an object can’t “die”, the kinds of unidentifiable objects I am attracted to may be closest to defying death. Something on the cusp, as you put it, of being discarded or useful or recognized. There’s a deluded hope in the collecting of these things, a “Sisyphean task” as Benjamin put it, to bring them back from the dead, or the edge of death, or to create them new.

C: This quote by Roger Caillois is from an essay I was recently working on – and really gets us to an interesting point regarding what constitutes death:

Stones possess a kind of gravitas, something ultimate and unchanging, something that will never perish or has already done so.

Objects don’t seem to die because they are not living. They don’t appear to have the same death that beings we ascribe life to do. Instead, in a material sense, they are subject to ‘state changes’ – breaking, transformations, rearrangements, re-contextualizations, and dissipations. It also makes me think about how we tend to obscure the fact that many objects are dead matter. Leather, wood, even stone which is sometimes very old dead matter, ossified over time. I would say that this is central to my current studio practice as well, that intriguing line we seem to create between living material and dead material, found objects vs. raw materials, and even to some degree that which we categorize as natural vs. cultural. These dichotomies are ones that intellectually stump humans,

seemingly throughout history. We can’t seem to escape a desire to categorize and order, as it helps us think about what is the same and what is different about things in the world.

The descriptions you give of texture are amazing – and bring to my mind this question of intimacy with objects and the material world (something that Georges Bataille speaks about). Possibly, our best attempt at intimacy with that which appears non-living is empirical, observance based – thinking through things by giving them attention, paying notice to form and texture – and the sensation they provide us when in our hands. This gets to possession, but that is a whole other topic – so maybe we skip it for now.

This thing you say about metaphysics and the domestic is important how we negotiate with objects in quotidian terms. That which we live with and touch everyday, the things we pass (and or touch) on frequent and habitual basis – sometimes demand our attention more than other things, while alternately, potentially, being more ignored items because they are so present. This speaks to the concept of loss I was talking about in the text – as sometimes objects of little meaning become meaningful through the associations we develop between them and life or the living. When you say ‘hints of life behind stillness’, it also makes me think of how Norman Bryson talks about the still-life, that it is both a record of the domestic, the sometimes ignored – while also speaking to deeper, materialist and metaphysical dimensions. This still life aspect of the object is definitely part of the fascination, it both hints at life and resists it – an incredible conundrum philosophically speaking. He also talks about the genderedness of some of these spaces of still life. I’ve recently been thinking about the woman before capitalism, before the domestic bourgeois homemaker – say, witches. Not necessarily in a mystical sense, but more pragmatically – the woman who had control over her own body and the materials she chose to negotiate with. Though there were recent achievements in the realm of the social and cultural regarding women’s roles, we still inherit associations of the home with woman, certain materials with woman. Etc. I think it is compelling to think about these associations beyond the visible dynamics of politics, into metaphysics, into considering deeply what is the space of the everyday, what is life and living. Deep time questions.

The ‘drudgery of being useful’ that Benjamin talks about, is also this rupture the Surrealists sought in their dealings with objects categorized as art. Art, even though sometimes seen as culturally useful, has the potential to question ‘use value’ as the dominant way by which we value things or objects. The idea of something existing or being valuable without having an economic or social use is very difficult. This folds back into the ideas of the metaphysics of the quotidian. Daily, habitual, constant aspects of life and objects that both continue and are ruptured by larger political and chaotic natural events. This also comes back full circle to the duality of stone. Seemingly lasting forever, and simultaneously very fragile.

I was thinking back over your images and still am struck by the variety of objects, and how they are in this cusp space, the cusp of usefulness, the cusp of trash or valued thing. I think this is one of the most interesting things about our exchange – is that we are elaborating the cusp, investigating the deeper reasons for why certain objects (and images of objects) seem to call out to us – even in their stillness and silence. Where your initiating images might be said to be cusp objects, my response objects are as well – though I think they are also cusp materials that are less clear in terms of use or function, or they are remnants and pieces that as a collection, are very uneasy in terms of categorization.

I have much more to say about the idea of still life, having just read two excellent essays about Chardin – around the same time as seeing several of his paintings at the Louvre. But, maybe we can pick up that thread again later if it sticks. This seems like a good point to shape throw back to you.

N: You wrote about objects not dying because they aren’t living, being subject to ‘state changes’. On that note, I’d like to share a poem by Jimmie Durham that I came across (maybe you know it), from 1964:

*It must have been an odd object to begin with.
Now the ghosts of its uses
Whisper around my head, tickle the tips of my fingers. Weeds
Reclaim with quick silence the beams, pillars,
Doorways. Places change, and a small object
Stands defiant in its placelessness.
Durable because it contains intensely meanings
Which it can no longer pour out.*

I like thinking about the quality of durability in an object resulting from its lost use-value. How the slipperiness of meaning that results is tied to some kind of everlasting objectness.

Switching to another thrown shape that I feel compelled to return, thank you for bringing up witches. I often think of a character who parallels my work in the studio. She exists in another, non-specific time, and she lives alone (interiority), working with the materials she has on hand to populate her home with objects of questionable function (still life). While it’s true that women in our culture are no longer as a rule relegated to the home, statistics speak to the persistence of unequal divisions of household labor even when both partners are educated and work outside the home. I grew up watching my mom in the role of homemaker for several years, where she found a creative outlet in sewing and decoration. By taking away the ‘use value’ of these efforts and instead making art, there’s an attempt at freedom from this holding pattern, but also the potential for transformation in a deeper sense—the “state changes” you mention. I think this is why I’m so interested in emptiness in “cusp objects”. Emptiness signals a thing ignored, undervalued, not in use. Since nothing is really empty (space, air), emptiness becomes more of an invitation. I see this in your sculpture as well, where there are at times inviting cavities, and sometimes you are even filling the empty spaces with matter yourself.

I’d like to throw you the subject of humor in a loose way—if it sticks I’d love to hear your thoughts on it—maybe this goes with your mention of the Surrealists and also the “unease” of our images. I often consider the absurdity of art making. The sad abandoned object is also a darkly funny one. How do you think about humor with regards to objects and your work?

And of course I’d also like to hear more about still life if that’s what’s motivating you!

C: On humor. Of course! I’ll throw another Benjamin quote out for you – since he is clearly, very presently, on my mind. I wrote an entire paper about this quote awhile back, because it is such a compelling small paragraph – addressing ‘misunderstanding’ (in the joke) as a potential space for opening up. Here is the great kick he provides in terms of duality: ‘political materialism and physical creatureliness’ shared within one person. Humor, is then potentially the agent for revealing divides, the divides between chaos and order, as well as the divides within a single subjectivity. A rupturing agent, capable of altering the staid security of the everyday, the supposed simplicity of anything.

The jokes he tells will be better for it. And he will tell them better. For in the joke, too, in invective, in misunderstanding, in all cases where an action puts forth its own image and exists, absorbing and consuming it, where nearness looks with its own eyes, the long-sought image space is opened, the world if universal and integral actuality, where the ‘best room’ is missing – the space, in a word, in which political materialism and physical creatureliness share the inner man, the psyche, the individual, or whatever else we wish to throw to them, with dialectical justice, so that no limb remains untorn.

There is quite a bit to unpack in this quote – but I’ll focus on this thing about humor, the self-effacing aspect that particularly works towards the idea of the negative, or underside of humor. Though jokes are notoriously difficult to translate across languages and time – humor is almost always a convulsion of subjectivity. The joke, or humor speaks to the sort of failure we feel as subjects. Humor is, as Benjamin points out, dialectical – the sad becomes funny and reverse – when things reach a state of total hopelessness, laughter is sort of this seizure that emanates from us at the brink of chaos. I’m thinking concretely here of when one feels danger – say, like when I recently I rode a bike for the first time in 15-20 years, I didn’t really know how to stop properly and was going to fast. When I managed to stop – I came off the bike



laughing and crying simultaneously – it was this extreme cusp moment, terrifying and joyous. Laughter in the face of absurdity, in the face of death, reminds us that we are alive, but might not always be. This means in humor, the negative is contained within the positive, the possibility of death and failure. This is further complicated, as the joke also might fail to be funny. This negation is what Benjamin gets to in terms of subjectivity as well, the containment of complex matrices in one form. In terms of the object – the funny, pathetic, nonsensical object gives our subjectivity a convulsion, an uneasy one. Sort of that joke you don't know why you are laughing at, but feel compelled to laugh until you fall into a crumpled mass on the floor. You become the nonsensical crumpled object yourself.

I tend to like objects that seem silly, that seem to look pathetic or sad, or somehow have this failure built in. Nonsense objects, sort of you could say – Samuel Beckett-ish objects. This is really what the Surrealists were onto, that I think we inherit today – via a lineage of making and or arranging objects (whether artists like to admit 'historical influence' or not). They had this interest in exploring thingness – not only the deeper, atavistic, weird nature of thingness – but the absurdity and dizzying nature of the commodity, as well as the foreclosure of the material negotiations of feminine and or indigenous subjects. Even our terms for how to talk about the commodity have this link to foreclosure, for they are always haunted fetishes.

I remember when you and I had that two-person show in my empty apartment (NP-CZ in 2012), we kept arranging things, then convulsing into laughter at what we had to show each other. Not only was it a shape throwing activity as it was so easy to work with together – I think we both realized how absurd it was for two women in their 30s to be arranging matter in this way, how it ran counter to dominant artistic or cultural practices, and or logical ways to deal with materials. It also felt like we had an extreme form of agency, doing as we pleased with the materials – this is where the witches sneak back in. I think I've sent it to you before, but there is this incredible book by Witold Gombrowicz where he describes this woman, the maid for a banker's family who runs a boarding house. The characters in the book begin to fear her because she deals with materials in strange, seemingly nonsensical ways:

*A needle driven into a tabletop.
A pen nib driven into a lemon rind.
A nail file driven into a box.
A safety pin driven into a piece of cardboard.
A nail driven into the wall, right above the floor.*

In following intuition, in following the absurdity of the 'thingness' of the items we were using in that show (all the leftover remnants from my apartment before I moved), it really felt like we got to this deeper place with the things – not through explaining them in language, but just from living and playing with them – seeing the absurdity of the everyday items, that when re-framed take on very different attitudes. I say attitudes purposely, as the objects became very anthropomorphic. The pillow cases, shoes, candles, weights – things that touch bodies and are used as tools or domestic things – took on this anthropomorphic character because of the relation to the body – doubled because when the object changes contexts, it becomes a thing in and of itself – taking on a second, uneasy, double-body-ness that is its own. (This happens to be, one of the larger frameworks or arcs of what I'm trying to write a dissertation about.)

On Durham. Perfect timing at throwing his shape at me – as I'm just finishing a thesis on him. He is one of my frequent inspirations for thinking about these cusps of humor and the object / subject divide, in his writing and artistic practice. He gets to the question of 'utility' in the poem you transcribed – the 'ghosts of uses'. This is so compelling, as mentioned before we can't seem to escape this idea of *use value*. There is much more in Benjamin about this – which I won't add here as that would be a book in itself – but basically, he strikes this relationship between the technological-scientific imperative to see 'use' as the most logical and practical means by which

things can be in the world, and this problem of the circulation of objects as commodities of 'value'. This is the great failure and success of the artist, as we are always oscillating in terms of use and value – but through that failure, ask philosophically deep questions. The ghost is wonderful, the haunting of an object by a former use. Everything is haunted you could say, haunted by some form of history. Humans can engage this history through language, a history that is not always directly accessible for us or for the objects we are interested in – making for the haunting aspect. And what if the object is 'completely useless'? (Something that Durham talks about in other writing). This is hard to parse, as some argue that everything has intrinsic value, even trash – as eventually it could be 'used' say – by an artist as material.

What always strikes me about Durham, is that even his so-called 'projects' defy the imperative to make project based art. Something I think you and I also have an interesting resistance to. Though we both conduct some form of research, neither of us are very interested in posing a question, elucidating that question with authority – and thereby providing an answer for an audience. We work pretty intuitively with materials. Even when we engage in language together, I think we are interested in the slippery divides rather than the sureness of answers. Slimy patinas.

Durham thinks with the materials, not against them, and reacts to this uneasy divide between subjects / objects (and nature / culture). He sees the absurdity of it all. He also brings up an important question around dominant imperatives and inclusion – as though Surrealism was, to some degree, impressive for opening up the possibility of alternative aesthetic practices, non-male / non-white / non-european / non-wealthy – it is still an 'ism' that particularly benefited those at the most privileged position on the apex (the white, male, wealthy, euro subject). There is always this tension in art, via the gesture that is anti-imperialist, anti-productive, anti-dominant as a critique. Who wields that gesture and how seriously it is taken – and its subsequent acceptance into mainstream visual culture, frequently has to do with entering into some matrix of privilege. This comes back to the witches, as not only is the history of witches a history of closing out the 'non-compliant' woman in Europe during the middle ages, it's also part of an ideology that gets launched towards other cultures during colonial encounters (see Silvia Federici). How one deals with materials, becomes the premise of relegating some subjects to a status of 'underdeveloped', or less reasoning. This leads to the double bind of the avant-garde, as so much that is seen as avant-garde, that which produced a 'rupture' in the 20th century – is a type of material use and artistic production gleaned from cultures being foreclosed upon by colonialism – meaning that the thing they saw as a rupture, was not always a rupture coming from the originating context. It was possibly a 'low plane' thing (Norman Bryson), a normal part of daily life wherever it originated from. Say for example, what are called 'nail fetishes' coming from the Congolese Republic – which are actually complex 'negotiating' aides that are run by owner-operators to solve disputes between parties, or advocate for the health of an ill person. Europeans saw these things as strange, saw these as things as incorrect ways of dealing with and in material – challenging the systems of order devised by Christianity and science, the dualisms of mind and body. Artists then took up the 'aesthetics' of these objects as a means by which to 'rupture' the aesthetics of European art. This is why I always feel deeply dubious about this idea of the avant-garde, this idea of rupture. While rupture is an incredible tool, frequently what we see as 'strange' or as a 'rupture' is only the unfamiliar everyday from another context. This is also something Benjamin talks about, that the strangest strange is actually the everyday. It is then an ebb and flow between the everyday and the rupture that keeps humans perpetually intellectually curious. Being non-compliant, while also being aware of your complicity is a potential means to investigate these questions of power, truth, the everyday, etc. Even here, entering into language – we are entering into a space of power. English being a dominant language and language itself being a means by which to establish authority through explanation. I hope that we complicate this power through our conversation,

through our interest in words as slimy patinas upon the objects we engage with.

Additionally, I think you and I are both interested in this tension between what is persistent and what is new and or old, this idea of re-contextualization of both so called 'raw' materials and found objects. A tension that comes up when we touch the things with our hands. You and I both know very well that we are haunted, as is everything we touch. Witch haunts. Everything we do with material as humans is a negotiation, an attempt to deal with the chaotic forces of nature – the absurdity, chance, etc. We (as humans) will always try to order that which we don't understand to keep the fear of the unknown at bay, and art is this great zone where the frequent impossibility of the imperative to order reveals itself. Especially when the object refuses to hear or laugh at our jokes, refuses to answer us, refuses to engage in our human problems. The object is then, sort of the straight man in our long cosmic stand up routine.

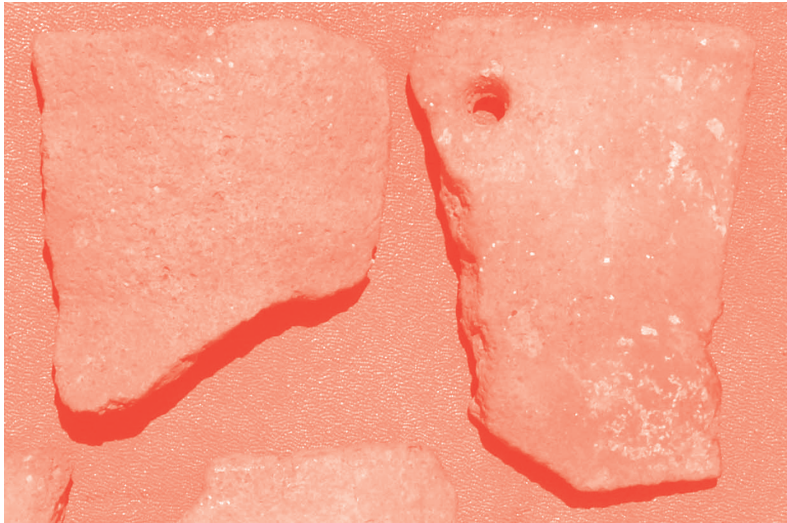
Additionally, I've been thinking about how this conversation is correspondence – which, Tim Ingold talks about as an act of intertwining, either with other subjectivities or with objects. He uses the metaphor of old fashioned letter writing, elucidating how when you receive a letter from someone you are thinking along with them in their mental space as you read their writing and the act of writing by hand somehow inscribes thought in a particular way. So, in essence, life is an act of correspondence or intertwining, on all levels, subject to object and back again.

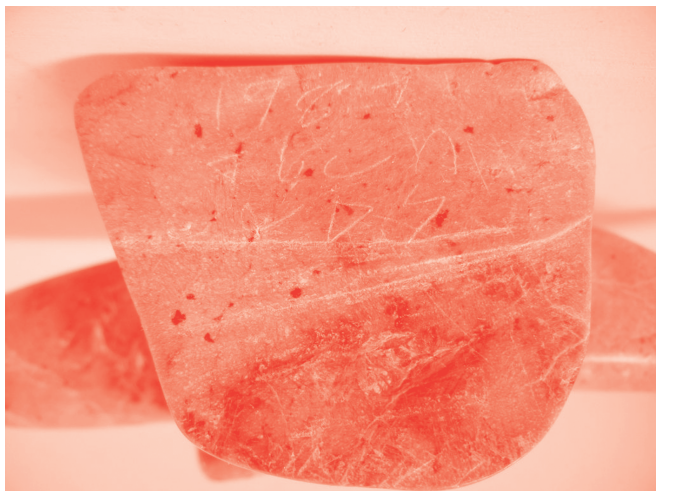
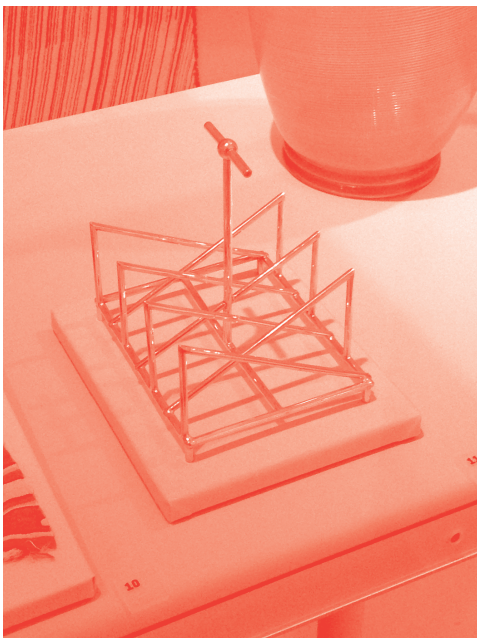
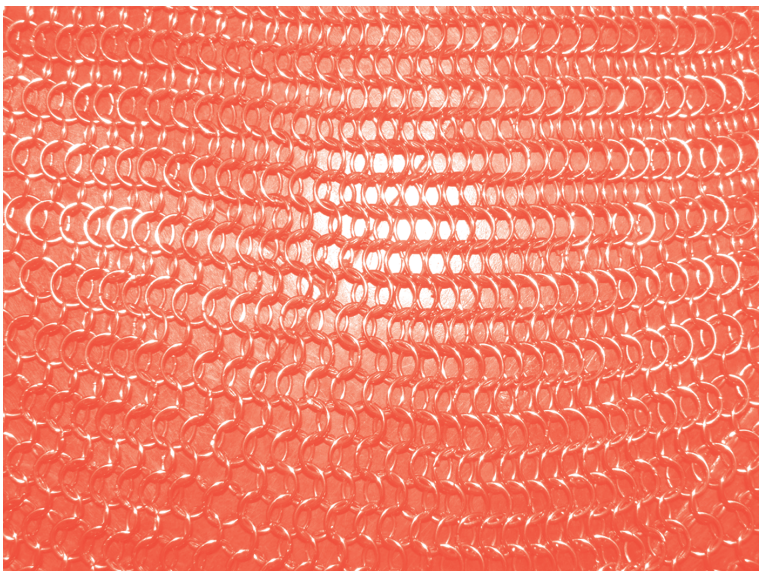
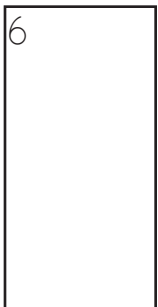
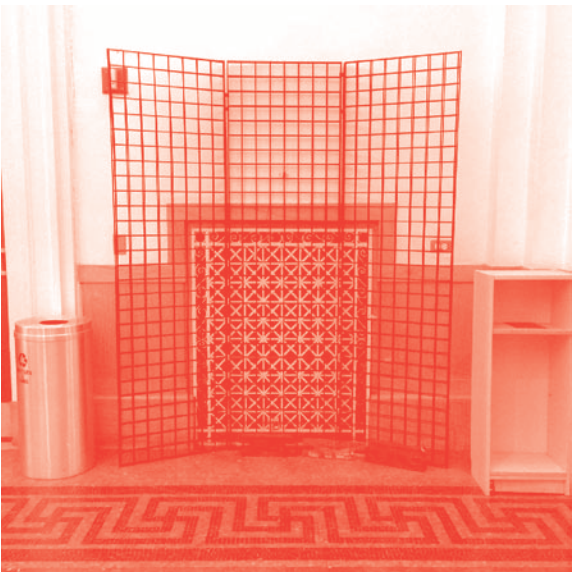
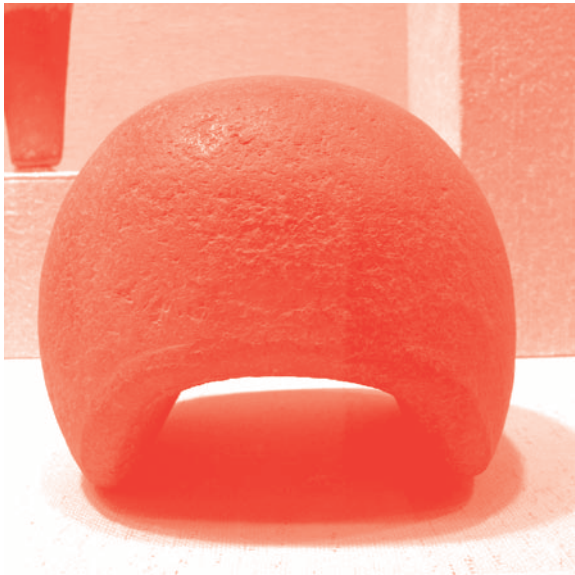
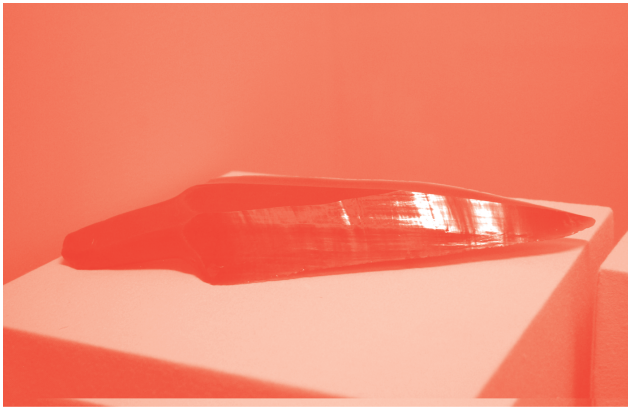
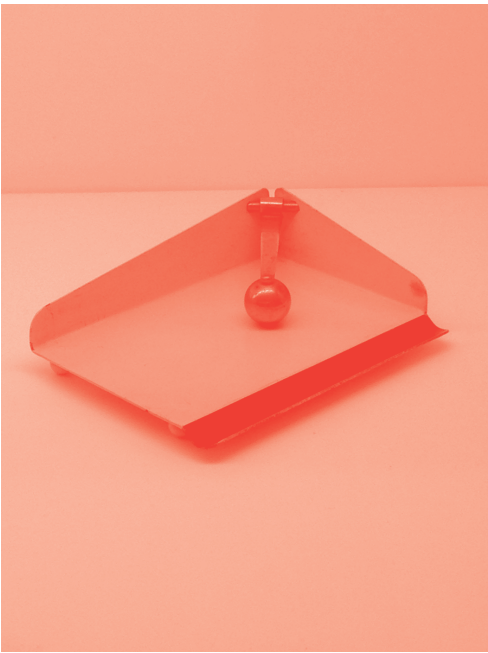
We are now deeply into many shapes. The two of us, facing each other – neck deep – in one of those children's play rooms filled with multi-colored balls is the imagery that comes to mind. Both exhilarating and overwhelming, with that sense of floating and moving incredibly slowly. Like we are sinking into the primordial goo of plastic balls constituted by intellectual ideas. I think at this point any shape you go with is going to lead somewhere interesting, in our primordial-plastic-ball-goo shape state.

N: I had no idea you were writing about Durham. I love that even though we now live on opposite coasts with very different day-to-day experiences there's still a silent intuitive connection, something that all of this correspondence can approach but not fully describe. I am also reminded of our apartment show of 2012. It was the only time I've ever made art in that way—actually putting sculptures together with another person. I remember going a little insane inside your apartment (again, the interior and psychosis). I felt like I had been there forever even though I think it was just two straight days. I actually spent the night, something I hadn't done at a friend's house since I was a teenager. At first I felt self-conscious, as if exposing my artistic decision making to another person would lead to a revelation that I wasn't actually an artist. And although I don't remember them specifically, I'm sure there were misunderstandings and quiet evaluations of one another's impulses. What a relief the laughter was, and to know that I wasn't the only one putting materials together in that way, that is to say intuitively, with an open mind. We went out to the local hardware store with purpose and bought one thin dowel, some eye hooks and perhaps a shower curtain that ended up in that brilliant hanging sculpture. Was it my imagination or did the guy at the hardware store give us a funny look? Witches indeed. (I love the quote from the book about the maid's actions because it so closely relates to our negotiations with materials in the studio.)

What you say about neither of us being so invested in project-based or didactic modes rings true. I'm always trying to get materials to reveal something to me, rather than forcing them into a particular position to make a point. If a negotiation with a set of materials begins to feel really arduous in the sense of trying several moves that aren't working, my instinct is to back off and try something else. At the end I like to be a little surprised—I want to recognize something I haven't seen before but that is also somehow familiar. Like a member of one's family one meets for the first time as an adult (imagine feeling fear, a vague recognition, then perhaps laughter followed by a feeling of connectedness). Here I am comparing finishing a sculpture to meeting a human being, so obviously the reference to anthropomorphism is appropriate. I'm still working out my own thoughts on the relationship between my art and my body, but I definitely see the connection between these things I make and my body's inevitable failure. It's haunting and also totally absurd.

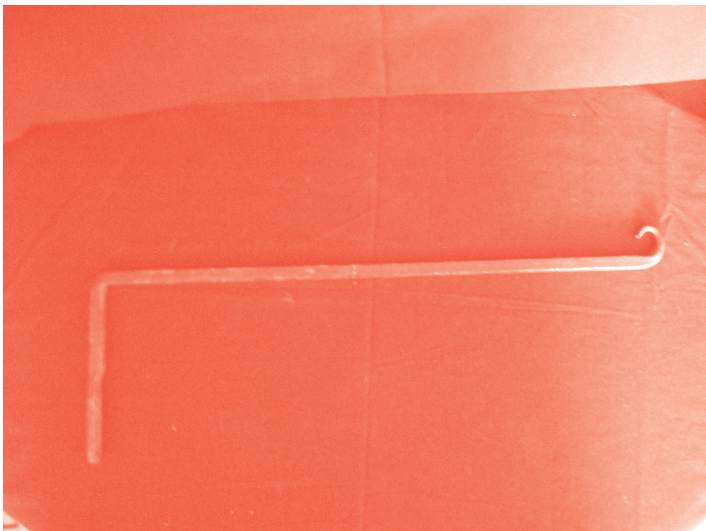
Your reference to Benjamin and the strangeness of the everyday corresponds to our collecting of images. Recently I was in San Francisco for a day. While I walked around the city I was fascinated by and began to photograph all of the vents and grates built into sides of houses and garages. While I'm sure there's a very ordinary, boring explanation for the existence of these architectural elements, to me they were these uncanny breathing apparatuses for the houses. Something about the hiddenness of the inside being referenced by the outside. Haunted houses. At the same time there was humor in my attempt to animate these dead structures, and also in the repetition of the attempt—after hours of walking around the city, I began to laugh at finding another tiny, embedded circular vent that I felt compelled to photograph. Later the idea of vents may end up in a sculpture, what you call the re-contextualization of raw materials and found objects. The photographs and the eventual sculptures they inspire, are, as you say, an attempt at ordering the unknown. I love your description of the object as the straight man in our stand-up routine, a performance in which we cry and laugh on repeat.







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8



rust-colored rocky slabs resting on textured gray linoleum, one purposeful hole

Askew slabs. Matching curved indents, two pieces like friendship necklaces – destined for union, and destined to separate. Grass takeover, brick layover.

sharp shining carved implement resting on pedestal (onyx)

Weight. Heavy suspension resting on raised metallic. Suggestion of movement, suggestion of activity. Rising and dropping, a surface for vibrations.

stone ring with double circle imprint, balanced upright

Convex form, pseudo-helmet. The head is the seat of power. Stone depth, seeming imperviousness. Solid object. Curve to let the eyes out. Textured by an onslaught of other surfaces, interstellar texturing – large bodies colliding and chipping away pieces, particles.

two metal skewers with patinated tips floating on blank background

Suspended pattern shape. Pressing itself into the space, handles like curves and squares like densities.

Seurat noise. All the pixels confuse background with object, object that defies one side to the next. Like a sentence one can't remember the beginning of when reaching the end. Geometric sureness follows a line to a geometric uncertainty.

empty white metal stand with curved hooks sits on city sidewalk, bookended by wheeled bin 1987. From behind and beneath. Scratching symbols, Twombly non-language language. Stone, again with its presence. Stone that can be scratched, its chalky composure – reveals its potential fragility.

chrome holder with zig-zag parts

Serial connections. Proliferation of connections to make a whole, a whole with gaps glimmering upon a solid surface. Circled web.

grated tri-fold overlapping decorative vent, links abound

Sad sack. Fuzzy interior. External belts and hooks, a covering.

heavy wrapped tube on leafy concrete. every layer visible.



9

Minting, melting, forms to be unformed. Solid and malleable, deep time objects – deep time signs that exchange for other signs, equated to the most malleable of signs. Sans standard – they are wild cards.

street vendor's stand wrapped in floral cloth, obscuring wares

Sneaking body form. Sneaking up on the soft surface of ill color. Sneaking towards the surface, an uneven rectangle – quilted, potential fold. Edge rim, containing one form. Resistant.

wooden slab with peeling patterned paper cover

Multiple shards. Uneven edges, grey shrunken background. Flat forms, one small circular cut hole. Signs of age, signs of time, surface textured by white uneven dots.

twin arch concrete molds, askew in overgrown field

Exaggerated tool for violence. Glassy depths. Suspended, in glass cases – to keep out the porous bodies with their grease and breath that decays all things, ages all things. Deep black and infinitely reflective, clear and endless surface.

You can choose what is an object.

(meaning – you decide what is real).

–Adrienne Garbini

meaning: we choose what to make real in the world, to give truth status to, even the shadow on the cave wall (Plato). Apocryphal continuations.

The matter around us can easily be conceived of as solid objects, but philosophically speaking – concepts and invisible matter can be objects as well if one gives them weight, density, meaning, history, futurity, purpose. There are objects and there are OBJECTS. Slimy patina concepts over impenetrable surfaces.

Even the most solid surface is porous. The dichotomy of solid and porous might be more of a spectrum, or a lie we tell ourselves to feel better about being penetrated by outside forces – a lie to hide the truth of our own materiality.

The monad is a neat fantasy. Round impenetrable ball filled with folds and shadows. Projections, folds and shadows (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz). Metaphor for mental space, a baroque logic of constructing what is real and what is image. The Baroque isn't just about projections, it's also about allegory – how history plays out once a subject is addressing that which is inaccessible to it through time. An allegory produced by a social structure no longer present – sends a message from the past to the subject of the present through the residue of aesthetic production (Walter Benjamin). This message has noise, the noise created by the distance of time and space. The reception of messages is neither constant nor perfect.

It is always about the shadows, even when the rhetoric deviates to another subject. The reality factor of the thing encountered, the image of the thing encountered, and the words we place uneasily upon encountered things.

What circulates is the 'archive' / the shadow on the cave wall becomes solid when it enters into public record as an object.

The real is approached when photographed in the immediacy of encounter – though in image it becomes a secondary other. It becomes yet another other still when responded to by found archives accessed through cloud technology. Calls and responses, subjective echoes. Reaching across the gulf of space with images – encounters, friendships, intimacy – negotiating the abyss of the mediated forms in an attempt to wrap oneself around the things, in the things. Preferably, avoiding dominant forms of 'ordering' in the process. With these objects we solidify.

The objects are always, irrevocably tied to subjects. They become stand-ins for the dead, and metaphors for death in their silence, the silence of stone (Roger Caillois). Anything can become sentimental if it references a subject no longer accessible (Virginia Woolf). This is why the abandoned object appears sad, it once had currency in human life, importance, but now it sits still. Cusp objects can also be sad, on the edge of being thrown out – on the edge of use and value. Intrinsic value runs counter to this, as it is about a deeper metaphysical love for shining things, the cosmos and alternately at the reverse end – the metals beneath the earth at the core (Michel Foucault).

Dichotomies break down. We are all made of the same dust. Comfort comes in the knowledge that it is all, always has been, and always will be – dust.

Humans can't seem to appreciate the deep architecture, yet they still are fascinated by the effulgences created by it. We might try to

ignore deep time, but evidence of it is everywhere – embedded in the things of the world (Roger Caillois). If the object is sad, we are sad too.

Flatten it, render it same. Problematic universalism, but then again we live in a universe. Elements, particles, distances and proximities. Objects orbit elliptically as do subjects. Zones of potential encounter.

As images continue proliferating, their logic seems to disappear. Their unwieldy and untethered existence makes them difficult to order, harder and harder to place in terms of value or sentimentality. In aesthetic philosophy, the stakes are gauged between subjective and objective ways of 'experiencing' – yet it is especially the space between these opposing terms that belies the messy human desire for truth concepts (Theodor W. Adorno).

Broken part things, abandoned things, things of unclear origin or use value. Things upon things. Possible value, possible intimacy, possible histories that we watch accumulate as we are thrown backwards into the future with no capability of altering the past (Walter Benjamin). Piles we build to reach the apex sun, piles to keep the system of consuming necessary to life continuing (Georges Bataille). Elements and attributes of consumption.

The objects cast shadows, as do the subjects. Concepts might cast shadows as well, shadows over the subjects and objects at play. The shadows keep obscuring, tethering all of the matter and all of the consciousness to each other.

We continue to play, with our electricity, with the matter, with the concepts, with the words like shiny patinas – a game that we would like to see ourselves in control of, as agents – yet a game that is deeply, fundamentally – up to the cosmic.

– Catherine Czacki / 2015



flat receptacle with chrome latch/weight, curved gutter

Circular ring with eyes. The gaping center is the universal mouth. Circles and holes, cosmic centers and destabilizing devices for negotiating chaos. Mottled surface, suspended in a timeless gradation.

helmet-like form of metal or stone casting round shadow underneath

Double points. Glimmering uneasy pair, not uniform – almost twinning. Metallic rainbow tip, affinity.

metal form, u-shaped, flat and sharp, held by stand at an angle

L-bracket with curved end-flourish resting on creased fabric

Empty grasping forms, not quite claws – but expectant. Holding on to the ground with its curves, sitting next to receptacles and rows.

jade-colored dappled stone with etched numbers and letters, blurry stones in background

Lifting, turning, positioning. Slots and angles. Holding, suspending, keeping. Metal order form.

flashing linked metal chain, wood underneath, never-ending pattern

Transparent blocking device, space, light, sound, it is all permeating. Smaller transparent blocking device, less visibility, still permeable – porous blockers.

folded and wrinkled blue fabric with white trim and buckles. hint of interior softness.

Infinite tube of potential unraveling.

precious metal arrangement of blocks, coins, animals and implements

Bro: her squareness resists your language. Her square floral solidity, defying your linguistic truncation. Not her, it. Solid rectangular floral explosion. Rows of funnels to catch the sun. Rows of sheaths to block prying eyes.

silver creased shade-form propped against wall in carpeted domestic interior

Peeling pastels. Revealing the beneath, the support.

NATALIE BEALL

(b. 1981, Atlanta, GA)
makes minimal, mixed-media sculptures based on forms observed in found objects. She earned her BFA from the University of Georgia in 2004 and her MFA from Columbia University in 2009 where she was an Andrew Fisher Fellow. Her work has been exhibited at venues throughout New York, including 47 Thames, chashama, Garden Party Arts and Scaramouche Gallery. Her 2013 artist's book titled *Guest Room* can be found at retailers in New York and Europe. Recent residencies include the Lighthouse Works on Fishers Island, NY (2014) and the Cooper Union, NY, NY (2015). She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Lower East Side Printshop in New York. She lives and works in Brooklyn.

CATHERINE CZACKI

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received her BFA in New Genres from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2003. In 2004 she traveled to Poland, where she continued her artistic endeavors with the Rector Scholarship for Independent Research at the University of Warsaw. Catherine graduated from Columbia University with her MFA in May 2008 where she was the recipient of the D'Arcy Hayman, Kosciuszko Foundation, and Leopold Schepp Foundation scholarship awards. Her work has been exhibited at DREI Raum für Gegenwartskunst in Köln, Germany, Art in General in New York, Present Company in Brooklyn, Favorite Goods and Office Hours in Los Angeles, and The Range in Saguache, Colorado, among others. Most recently Czacki was included in Sculpture Center's annual *In Practice* exhibition titled *Under Foundations*. She currently lives and works in San Diego, California, where she is a PhD student in the Art History, Theory and Criticism program with a Concentration in Art Practice, at the University of California, San Diego.

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