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Internal rotation

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The University of Montana

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INTERNAL ROTATION

by

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presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Date
I express my world view. The body has two aspects: physical (viscera, muscles, etc.) and spiritual (emotion, instinct, etc.). These are two aspects of one life force energy. To express this view, I use organs, tissue, and bones as inspiration for created forms. Primarily, these are three-dimensional forms constructed with clay and secondarily two-dimensional illustrations. I make an effort to compose individual creature life forms each of which expresses its own spirit. I employ variations of color, scale, and juxtaposition to achieve this effect. The creatures' world is viewed. Tools imply a creator. Names and meanings imply a language. I develop the life cycle of the creatures from inception through maturity. I use shadow to describe a parallel spiritual life cycle. I include illustrations of works discussed, and I acknowledge inspirations and influences on my work.
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World View

I see the internal structure of the body as being comprised of two main aspects. These are the physical internal and the sacred internal. The first is that which is material. Included within this are the viscera, organs, bones, tissue, and cells from macro to micro. The second is that which is the intangible essence within. This includes the spirit: emotion, intellect, intuition, and instinct are a part of this realm.

I believe that the sacred internal and the physical internal are interconnected and are made of the same energy. This force is that which makes up the being. It is as possible to feel emotion through the physical body as it is to feel emotion through the mental and psychic body because material and immaterial are one and are made of the same life essence.

In the process of making work, I have come to the realization that I work facilitating my intuition. It is more important to me to feel both visually and viscerally satisfied with a work than to direct the viewer to my exact original intentions. Although I wish to impart a general sense to the viewer of my above stated notions of the internal, I do not want to feed them exact specifications. I want to make accessible my ideas without full confrontation.
I see sincerity as an important element within my work. To emphasize this, I care to communicate in archetypes of the self. Hints at body imagery allow for familiarity with my subject matter and accessibility to the viewer. I make the assumption that although we are less familiar with our internal body structures, it is innate within humanity to have an understanding of the physical, physiological and spirit selves. I want my audience to explore my work, becoming invested because it resonates within them at a “gut” level. They may be repulsed and attracted simultaneously and this becomes one bona fide feeling.

View Expressed

In my work, inner layers of the self are the inspiration for the external tangible forms I create. My work expands upon my notions of our interior using form, scale, color, and surface to evoke the energy within both the physical and the sacred. The forms exist outside the body in their own space. They become individuals unto themselves, exuding their own life force, while relating to my concepts of the layers of the internal body.

I see my small ceramic forms as living beings, brought into existence through texture, color, and form relating to anatomical aspects of the self and referencing the metaphysical. I do not wish the viewer to
decipher a specific organ or body part within a life form. Instead, I hope to convey an overall sense of life force.

I incorporate ceramic works, drawings, and mixed media into my installations. In this manner, my “life forms” are grounded in two-dimensional and three-dimensional spaces. For my three-dimensional forms, I find that clay is often my medium of choice. I believe that this is because of its adaptability to form, and its innate organic presence. Similar to that of our internal selves, both literally and metaphorically, clay is raw and malleable.

Methods Used

I find that working with scale allows for the physical-material properties to be emphasized. Internal structures of the self are of varying sizes. In my three-dimensional works, I hope to reference this and simultaneously move away from the standard dimensions towards a different individual size. An organ-like form may be blown up or sized down compared to norms in the material body. This takes the work towards an otherworldly quality and orientates the viewer outside the physical body.

Many of my ceramic forms are diminutive in scale. The intimate relationship devised between these works and the viewer invites
scrupulous aesthetic investigation. By contrast, larger works draw an audience into an installation and serve as an overall dialogue on the nature of spirit and life form as well as on our inner organs and masses.

Because of the adaptability of ceramics, I can achieve a wide range of texture and color dependent upon glaze and firing processes. Currently, I incorporate a wide range of colors and surface textures, often bright and varied, with subtle allusion to medical texts, pop culture, candy, and the natural and organic, using solely the oxidation firing process. Pieces often go through many firings starting with cone 6 temperatures (around 2300°F) to lower temperature firings and ending with non fired surfaces when appropriate.

As with my ceramic work, many of my drawings and mixed media works utilize vivid color. This bridges works of various scale and media through a visual correlation. Viewers can navigate, mapping color clues for reference between works.

Using bright colors with body matter imagery tends toward an interesting visual juxtaposition. I am interested in the investigation of beauty in relation to the traditionally grotesque. I believe that my play between color, shape, form, and content moves in the direction of the fine line between pulchritude and repulse while remaining sincere.
without outward sarcasm. I find that both gorgeous and gore are intertwined and inseparable in a way parallel to my notions of the entwining layers of the self.

To balance out the influx of penetrating color, I incorporate flat gray display units. These are painted the same color as actual shadows on the wall in the gallery. I find that these gray shelf and pedestal units keep each small ceramic form from appearing too much like a specimen and protect it from visually disappearing into the wall.

I also use muted tones in certain drawings and wall pieces to continue a visual balance. In the two-dimensional aspects of my installations, as well as in certain three-dimensional works, I present the idea of a shadow self in relation to life cycle. I incorporate quasi wall shadows in works in an attempt to mimic and transform the expected. Scale and shape are varied to define a life form’s path. Sequencing varies from a timeline format to a non-linear approach. Although the genesis for a piece may come from aspects of a life cycle, the finished work may or may not impart to the viewer an explicit narrative leading from left to right.

In formal terms, I have set up the installation with the intention of creating spatial illusion. The viewer meets with forms as they move
back from him in space. The negative space between forms is activated so that the viewer is tentatively invited to step forward into the work. Texture, form, and color are subtlety repeated to further unify the work in content and visual cohesion.

Environment

My creatures live outside the body in a world of their own. In large framed drawings, glimpses of the world in which they live are shown to the viewer. Their world is made of organic imagery from the internal structures of the body just as the creatures are.

I do not implicitly narrate for my audience why or how my creatures have a corresponding glossary (see illustration J). It could be an imposed set of words and definitions that humans have created to help explain these anomalies. It could be a portion of a language developed by the creatures themselves to describe life and its meaning. I allow the viewer to establish her or his own story in relation to the glossary. In any case, it becomes further framework within which the body of work can be assessed.

A set of tools are arranged within the gallery space. A viewer might not readily recognize these objects as such without referring to the glossary. These pieces titled *piddock oguc* (sentient tool), are the makers of the
life forms. Without these, the creatures and their world would not exist. They reference the same organic material as the creatures but exist as tools used to create rather than as their product, living beings. They bridge the large component parts of the installation with the small creatures. They imply a creative designing force in the creatures' world. Who uses the tools? Who made the tools?

Present Exhibition

The concept for a large scale installation titled _helial gee hadusx_ (see illustration A), revolves around the idea that larger elements make up smaller beings. The individual pieces include the following: tiny white bones in the corner on the floor; tiny red bones in a vertical line up the wall; three nine foot lengths, each of five standardized white bones hanging from the ceiling; a large fleshy slab form; and boney forms laid out on the floor in front. The large hanging bones are stylized in an almost comic way. They are shaped in my idea of bone rather than as actual bone. They are then symbols for bone. They are uniform in form and color and are the archetypal notion of bone. On another level, they symbolize the sacred. Bones are manifest in ceremonial ritual across cultural boundaries. They are a visual icon for spirit. The slab form equals all that is not bone within the macro corporeal body, be it flesh or viscera. The boney forms on the floor contrast against the large bone
symbols. They are varied in size and shape and are referential to bone forms although not directly rendered from a model.

These large items are components that are the building blocks that make a small being. I have reversed the scale to show that a creature is greater in its intangible self than in its physical self. The large bones and the fleshy slab are the material life substance from which these creatures are birthed. They represent both the tangible and the sacred material from which the new life forms spring.

One of my smaller pieces, titled faryumi oosh (see illustration B), plays off the larger installation as well as off a large drawing (illustration C). This ceramic piece shows small bones coming out from a cavity. The subject matter is similar to that of these other works. Bones spring forth from a mother fleshy form. The diminutive scale offers an intimate version of the larger installation. Spatial illusion is employed.

In one large wall piece, titled manuch di quo vitrium (see illustration D), small ceramic forms go through the life cycle from birth to death, with elements of each being hinted at in the other. This shows that the process of life is continuous. Behind these forms are painted shadows that do not correspond in size or shape to their ceramic counterparts. This denotes the shadow as the immaterial self realized by the physical
being. The shadow symbolizes a higher self. It may also represent that which the physical self aspires to be. I draw a parallel between shadow and sacred self. A shadow can be seen but not felt. It exists only in relation to something else. It is not a tangible, physical entity. The spirit cannot be seen but it is felt. It is immaterial but exists in relation to the physical. A shadow self follows each creature through its continuous and never-ending life cycle.

The color palette for the two-dimensional aspect of *manuch di quo vitrium* relates to the surrounding shadow shelves. By matching an exact shadow in the gallery, the idea of shadow is furthered and works become visually connected through color. Color is then directly related to content.

Linear life cycle is depicted in other pieces. In the large charcoal drawing titled, *modiis kalaeg* (see illustration C) an amorphic mother form becomes a boney mass that then transforms itself into a creature. In the background, the same cycle moves in the opposite direction but in silhouettes that characterize shadow, showing that the process is never-ending. This piece directly plays off of the above mentioned installation, *helial gee haduxx*. Boney forms are found in both works. Similar color palettes also help to connect the work and its narrative.
In another piece, titled *phileal icinae* (see illustration E), a life form moves from birth through death. It begins as a very small white form and ends as a tiny brown form. In between it develops in size, becomes fleshy, then withers. Beauty remains throughout. For this piece, I chose colors loosely based on the primary color palette found in certain medical texts. This piece further illustrates process in relation to birth, life, decay, death, and rebirth.

There are four ceramic shelf pieces in my show. One of these, titled *helial ocinae* (see illustration F), is a rectilinear wall piece with corresponding creatures. It is a vignette depicting three-dimensional creatures in their two-dimensional space. This shelf allows for clay to become a drawing surface and integrates my forms with elements of a flat surface.

Three other ceramic shelf pieces in my show are organically shaped. I reference organs in their shape, form, and color. One of these, titled *phileal ocinae* (see illustration G), is a wall piece. On the side facing the wall, the outside of an organ is described. On the side facing the viewer, the imagined inside workings of the organ are revealed. Two other ceramic shelf pieces are attached to bases. They are free standing. One of these, titled *shanamoe flud hadusx* (see illustration H), has a flat drawing surface on one side. The organ imagery drawn here
parallels the creatures and their environment on the reverse side. The other, titled *yoch pidock phileal* (see illustration I), shows the inside of an imagined organ on the outside form of its organ shape. On the reverse side, two creature forms interact with shadow drawn onto a flat surface. In this piece, shadow again plays its part, suggesting that a smaller form has a larger spirit or shadow than an adjacent counterpart.

Thus, upon entering the gallery viewers are presented with large hanging bones and a flesh like disk which entice them into the space. They then become aware of a long wall drawing that resonates with the hanging bones. Medium sized pieces on pedestals and rods lead them further into the space. Upon turning, they become aware of shelves on the walls which invite closer inspection. The viewers’ perceptions of scale shift with the smaller pieces. They become aware of fine details that could be overlooked with a cursory glance. Some viewers appreciated the attention to detail not only in the works themselves but also in the presentation of the show which left some pieces unlit and shadowed others. Some people chose to use the glossary provided to further understand names of pieces and the artist’s intention. Others were satisfied to absorb the show without supplemental text.

In sum, my work explores layers of the self in relation to life cycles. Internal structures of the body, both physical and non-physical are
abstracted, becoming life forms unto themselves. I allow my intuition to guide me through certain aesthetic choices while remaining true to certain parameters such as content, form, and color palette.

Explorations of scale and proximity through relationship become a part of the greater installation. A shadow self is revealed through implicit narrative and a species evolves within its inner terrestrial surroundings.
B. faryumi oosh
C. modiis kalaeg
D. manuch di quo vitrium
E. phileal icinae
F helial ocinae
G. phileal ocinae
H. shanamoe flud hadusx (and I.)
1. yoch paddock phileal
phyllum ubermlodis

Alex Kraft

glossary:

aconcon (eikounkoun) n. harvest 1 the gathering of ripe crops or fodder 2 the result of action or behavior 3 the outcome of effort
angeo (ndacou) n. heart 1 a hollow muscle 2 organ which by rhythmic contraction and expansion, forces fluid through an organic system
bellagi (seclougui) adj. healthful promoting good state of fitness, body, mind, or soul
ce (sei) adj. dis, away, apart, as under
cha (cla) v. quench 1 to put out, extinguish 2 to slake thirst 3 to cool
chi (tch) adj. dilate. Reduced in strength or concentration or quality or purity. V 1 Lessen the strength or flavor of a solution or mixture 2 Corrupt, debase, or make impure by adding a foreign or inferior substance; often by replacing valuable ingredients with inferior ones
ciprial (sipriael) adj. strange 1 not within one’s previous experience/ unusual 2 arousing wonder and astonishment
darium (derriam) n. relativity the state or quality of being in reference to something else
di (di) v. of expressing cause, originating or coming from
dominu (domminu) adj. malleable 1 to have its shape changed 2 easily affected or formed by external influences
eeculei (tc:i:eli) n. tension 1 a force tending to cause extension of the body or the force tending to restore the shape 2 of an extended elastic object 3 the force tending to minimize the surface of a fluid
eilegossinxal (iiliidoujael) n. tracheid 1 an elongate tapering firm walled cell, serves in conduction, storage, and support
estoma (estouma) n. gasstrea hypothetical gastrula like animal consisting of two layers of cells
faladae n. faladae 1 a physical or mental disorder 2 pretty
falax (faelo) adj. lurid, gaudy, sensational / fascinatingly repulsive
fanamome (faenamoumei) adj. autonomic 1 the philosophical theory that what one thinks or feels or wills is determined by physical changes in one’s body 2 an action or event in the mind or body over which one has no control
farylumi (farjumi) adj. intrinsic inherent, especially of certain muscles contained completely within an organ or part of fluid (fi:da) adj. internal 1 of or on the inside/ inside the body 2 involving the mind, soul, conscience, etc 3 essential nature of a thing
forne (f’me) adj. duplex allowing communication in both directions at once
gee (dai:n) birth 1 a coming into existence
hadux (haed) n. environ to surround
halodam (helaoudaem) adj. beautiful 1 lovely morally intellectually or physically 2 delighting the senses and exalting the mind
heilai (hi:lai) adj. corporeal 1 of the body 2 material, physical 3 tangible, palpable
icinai (i:sinei) adj. self 1 by or for oneself 2 independent
kaeg (keik) v. relate 1 make a logical or causal connection. 2 Be about; have to do with; be relevant to; refer, pertain, or relate to 3 Give an account of 4 be in a relationship with 5 Have a relationship to. 6 Bring into relation with.
kalaeg (kaeleik) n. endeavor 1 a purposeful or industrious undertaking (especially one that requires effort or boldness); 2. Earnest and conscientious activity intended to do or accomplish something v. 1 Attempt by employing effort
ma (m) n. cell the smallest structural unit of living tissue capable of functioning as an independent entity
manuch (manu) n. fruit 1 the enlarged or developed reproductive body of a seed 2 dry or fresh 3 the result of effort
mastis (meistis) n. map a representation in scale and surface
misarne (mesei) n. ease 1 physical comfort relaxaton 2 freedom from difficulty
molotis (molotis) n. sense 1 a general conscious awareness; “a sense of self” 2 The meaning of a word or expression; the way in which a word or expression or situation can be interpreted. The faculty through which the external world is apprehended. 5 natural appreciation or ability. v. 1 perceive by a physical sensation, e.g., coming from the skin or muscles
modiis (mouti) adj. sensual. Of the appetites and passions of the body
napryyn (naeripsiin) n. predecessor 1 One who precedes you in time
nas (neis) adj. mass 1 Occurring widely 2 Gathered or tending to gather into a whole n. 1 The property of a body that causes it to have weight 2 (often followed by ‘of’) a large number or amount or extent 3 An ill-structured collection of similar things (objects or people). 4 A body of matter without definite shape
nasami (nasamii) n. nasami 1 A rigid covering that envelopes an object; 6 The housing or outer covering of something? a hard largely calcareous covering
orbecue (orbiiku) adj. cognitive the holding of ideas, knowing
ordinae n. vital 1 Manifesting or characteristic of life; 2 Performing an essential function in the living body 3 Full of spirit; “this whole lively world” 4 urgently needed; absolutely necessary
oshke (ouskei) adj. languid without vitality, lacking in activity
phileal (fil:al) n. shadow 1 a region of relative darkness 2 A mere semblance 3 An inseparable companion
phyllum (fil:ami) n. phylum 1 linguistics a large group of languages that are historically related. 2 (biology) the major taxonomic group of animals and plants; contains classes
picornavirut (pikaurnaevirt) n. energy 1 the unifying concept of all physical sciences that associate within any system a capacity for work as a result of motion or mass
piddock (pido) adj. sentient 1 capable of feeling 2 having the power of sense perception
qui (qui) adv. the by that; by how much; by so much; on that account; -- used before comparatives; as, the longer we continue in sin, the more difficult it is to reform. Define article A word placed before nouns to limit or individualize their meaning.
quo (quoi) adj. possessive 1 of or pertaining to or done to thee
shaluni (sheluni) adj. delicate 1 A fine-figured model very fragile needing careful handling 2 requiring of great tact and reflection 3 easily bruised or made ill 4 exquisitely considerate 5 to baffle, disconcert, perplex
shanamoe (jmeinou) adj. veritable real, genuine, authentic
shatits (santi) adj. visceral of an inner part of the body or the internal organs of the body
shatropie (trendropi) adj. flummos to baffle, disconcert, perplex
uber (u:brin) n. life the state of an organism characterized by certain processes or abilities that include metabolism, growth, reproduction, and response
ubluhi (hi:n) organ 1 a structure of an animal or plant adapted for some specific and usually essential function 2 a medium of communication of opinion or information
uraeus (jrein) n. dissonance inconsistency between words, thoughts, actions, and beliefs
valianuse (vaenusei) adj. bulbous growing from, having or like a bulb
vilaminial (vil:amaile) n. mutagen any substance that causes changes in the genetic structure in subsequent generations
vitrium (vitriu) n. womb 1 place of origin and early development 2 the mammalian uterus
vkun (boun) n. bone 1 Rigid connective tissue 2 The porous calcified substance v. 1 Study intensively
vkunege (bounae) adj. boney Having bones especially many or prominent bones
ya (yooa) adj. prostrate. 1. Stretched out and lying at full length along the ground; “found himself lying flat on the floor”. 2. Lying face downward
yoch (yoak) adj. fellow 1 Being associated as a companion or associate
Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the varied influences and inspirations for my work. Several sources stimulated my interest in human anatomy. I studied medical textbooks and woodcut drawings from the late 1800’s to early 1900’s of anatomical dissections and visual descriptions of both the healthful and the diseased. My color palette in some works is associated with the primary color scheme seen in texts such as Gray’s Anatomy. I am currently interested in taratomas as I find fascinating the inception of exterior in the interior body cavity. Within these tumors, hair, teeth, and other external body parts grow inside of the body. The external and internal are flip flopped. As of yet, I have made a point not to look at actual human viscera. I feel it is important that I create an imposed distance from actual anatomy by looking only at images of my subject matter. This provides an implanted abstraction before I begin to create a piece.

Ralph Netter was a medical illustrator in the mid twentieth century. Although I much prefer his work, in some ways he was the Norman Rockwell of the genre. His drawings are highly detailed and referential, being meant for the purposes of science. Yet, there is a quirky escapism in some that intimately attracts me to the subject matter.
Joel Pieter Witkin makes photos and photo-collages that skew historical reality. He often depicts humans and other beings with imagined skeletal and anatomical features, in unexpected narrative contexts. His work can be gently alarming without abrasion.

For inspiration outside of the human body I look at patterns and textures found in nature. For example, dried plant material, the root structure of a fallen tree, or cow tongue and other items at a meat market in Spain may all become subconscious or conscious reference material for a specific piece.

The drawings of Ernst Haekel are timeless in their stylized portrayals of biological forms and textures. I have looked directly at his work when problem solving in terms of texture and patterns to be incorporated into a piece.

I recently went to Boston and came across an extensive collection of hand blown glass flowers at the natural history museum at Harvard that completely mimicked nature while playing with scale and proportion. Some were dissected parts that were blown up. Others were to the exact scale of the specimen. These pieces were created for the purpose of scientific study by Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka from 1890 to 1900. I was greatly interested in the forms presented and fascinated by the
exactness of the replicas. Although never deemed art, I found these to be vastly more complex than work I saw elsewhere in the city.

Other artists’ works resonate with me formally. Their use of texture, form, color, and scale parallel my own aesthetic.

Carla Potter is a ceramic artist whose work references sea life along the northwest coast. Her use of color and texture compliment the forms she creates. Often, her work is within an intimate scale. The organic forms she creates invoke a life essence similar to that which I desire to create.

Kathy Butterly makes diminutive ceramic sculptures with the vessel as a departure point for further investigation. They exude bright candy like color and intricate detail. I respond positively to her work as I see similarities in our processes and aesthetic interests.

Hieronymus Bosch has been my muse for a long time. The mystery associated with his work continues to elude me. Parallels drawn between his supposed connection to alchemy and his work further intrigues me. His work has validity in contemporary art. Some of my drawings have a similar aesthetic attitude to that of the Northern Renaissance painters such as Bosch, Brueghel, and Jan van Eyck in that their highly detailed compositions employ multiple vantage points and a non-linear perspective.
Jotto Seibold’s children’s book *Alice in Pop-Up Wonderland* is a work of art, accessible to all. In it, I see post post-modern escapism and genuine devotion to the absurd. In it, the artist values sincerity through humor. The color palette and graphic sense reminds me of the aforementioned Northern Renaissance aesthetic.

Jenny Saville’s early paintings of the human form indicate emotion on the exterior of the body. The flesh is multi tonal and expressive. Her work speaks outside itself. Later works include photographs in which she pushes her own body to extremes against plexi glass. Although these works appeal to me less, they do speak of body in relation to emotive prowess.

Kiki Smith describes body in such a precise yet transcendental way. Her work lives between that which is known and that which we cannot quite perceive. Through her sculptures, installations, prints, and drawings, she evaluates existence through personal experience.

The above influences come to mind most readily. I am sure there are other inspirations of which I am not aware.