

I am the Art (you are the Art)

A Supporting Paper

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Tension

Is it possible to stop time?

Of course not.

Is it possible to capture a moment?

Yes.

Follow me on this journey.

Do you feel that? It is your heart beating faster? Do you realize why?

Because there is energy in the air.

Do you want me to tell you my life story? I could, but I won't. I'll summarize. My life is about the same as anyone else's from middle class America. Public school, married parents, one brother, tons of cousins. Went to an all-girls private college, got depressed, developed anxiety, had a mental breakdown, left school, worked at a shipping company, went back to school, fell in love with a Scottish girl, traveled, got my heart broken, got a worthless degree, worked some more, new relationship, felt a little better, applied to grad school, got in! Uncle passed away, brother tried to commit suicide, three times, dad in hospital, uncle in hospital, cousin in hospital, me in hospital, twice, bad breakup, have to move, brother arrested, brother in jail, brother tries to commit suicide again, brother in mental ward, brother arrested again, mother assaulted by police,

intense hate, me in hospital again, new girlfriend, finally something good, grandpa passes away, guilt, falling behind in classes, more guilt.

So that's me in a nutshell. Fairly normal.

If you could tell all this by my art, I would be impressed. Some of it may be obvious by my aesthetic; great amounts of tension, stress, and damage to all my objects. But really, this isn't all about me. It's about you.

Take this journey.



Journey and Dare (installation), 2014

I created *Journey* and *Dare* to elicit strong visceral responses from the viewers. These works are nine feet tall half cylinders made of cement and fiberglass. These columns are then hung cantilever off the gallery walls from chain for *Dare*, and braided fishing line for *Journey*. These two works interact as one in this exhibition. When the audience first views the space they see *Dare*, two columns leaning off the wall in a slightly precarious, but not too precarious, manner. As the viewer is drawn in to view these objects they then notice the rest of the hallway-like room encasing *Journey*; five more half columns leaning at much more extreme angles and precarious positions that are held only by thread. It is my intention to create strong sensations within the viewers. These emotions may vary but are likely to be dread, nausea, awe, anxiety, or foreboding. These emotions are an important part of the artwork.

Without viewers there is no art. The viewer is as much a part of the work as the physical objects themselves. The placement of one's body in relation to the work is strongly considered. One is obliged to walk partially underneath the columns to continue on this journey. There is always the option to take a different path, but most are willing to tempt fate, or put their trust in the artist. Is this trust deserved?

Being aware of one's body is essential to the work. Your self-worth is determined while standing in front of an object you feel could severely harm you.

The work sits on the brink between structure and destruction. This push and pull is captured, embracing this moment, embracing the tension and anticipation held within it. The viewer is pulled into this moment and shares the tension with the objects, in this way they connect. It is

not necessary for the viewer to feel connected to me, as the artist. But through the exchanging of these energies and emotions the viewer becomes part of the art.

The audience has multiple parts of their lives that come together when in front of artwork. When faced with the possibility of harm all parts of oneself converge. There is no room left for culturally produced masks and worry over social stigmas. All that is left is one's true, natural, visceral self.

Viewers are initially drawn to the work by the lure of scale, physics, and disbelief. They are then connected to the work via biomorphic shapes, emotions, and the feeling of selfhood held in the object. Individuals experience primitive responses and form a connection with the work and with themselves through this response. My work asks the audience to accept their own mortality through the dauntingly hung concrete and fiberglass. But the work is not about death, nor harm. The response and the self-awareness that comes with being shocked, scared, amazed, or confused is the work. I expect individuals to become grounded in the moment by whatever response they may be having, and because of this grounding they are free to live in the moment and discover what that moment means to them.

I feel more connected to these objects after living with them, partially destroying them, and dropping them. They have been visibly altered by my presence as well as by the forces that I am making them defy. I transfer my tension, frustrations, and anxiety to the forms.

Are you afraid? You should be.

The authenticity of the materials, the history, the scars, the story, are the language that express purpose and significance to viewers. Creating a fake history through manipulation does not interest me. I find there is far less meaning derived from a material that has a 'history' forced upon it. Although I prefer not to, if I need to buy some wood, a screw, or concrete from a hardware store there is no shame in this. The materials will develop their voice over time. This is just a beginning stage in the material's ever changing life cycle.

My work is not an isolated incident, but is something temporary that becomes part of a larger whole. The life span seen through the manipulations of materials becomes evidence of this totality. Common industrial and found materials are used, and reused, to build my artworks. The idea of an object being reconceived and transformed intrigues me; thinking of inanimate objects having life spans makes me consider my life, my worth, and my own mortality. An object, a piece of concrete for example, can go from being useful as part of a sidewalk, to trash when that sidewalk is torn apart, to my studio where it collects debris from my other works, to a gallery where it has holes drilled through it, to another gallery where it hangs. I love the progression of simple materials. They have their own life but every time their current life cycle is over, they have the opportunity to be reborn. The material retains scars from its past experiences just any living creature would. The piece of concrete has a history that can be seen in its present form. This history is what gives meaning to these ordinary, perhaps dirty and degraded materials. The specific history of an object does not matter; rather the presence of history in general is important because it allows the audience to speculate about the piece's past as well as their own.

Potential energy.

Materials will do what they want every time, trying to force change is futile. Working with the language and limitations of the materials is something that drives me. There is always a sense of predictable unpredictability. I can try to control the outcome as much as is possible, but in the end nothing is certain. Because I have used trial and error for so long, I have discovered a great appreciation for mistakes. Or perhaps not mistakes; but instead, letting the instinct of the material to show through. Materials are quite beautiful in their original form, even if the materials are not organic. There was a time in every inorganic material's life when some person had to decide how to shape it, construct it or manipulate it. There was great thought put into all of these things and this is just another part of the life of the object. I work with this life and try my best not to disrupt it, but to showcase it for all it is worth.

I let the materials do what they want to do. Although I may have a plan the materials will always tell me what they want to do, whether or not I approve. Working with the flaws, dirt, mess, and uniqueness of my materials is what makes my works successful. I learned that once I stopped fighting and let the materials have their say, everything works out. I do, however, enjoy pushing my materials to their limits, and occasionally past their breaking points. This is not fighting with the materials, merely letting them reach the fullest of their potential.

The materials I enjoy working with the most have had a chance to develop a language already. The iron I use, for example, has been through many stages. I meet it when it is donated in radiator form to the art department. Before this it lived and served the purpose of heating a building or someone's home for a very long time; where it lived prior to this I can only guess. Once donated, the iron lives outside collecting debris until it is chosen to be broken by sledge hammers and melted in a fiery performance into the shape I provide for it. This iron's life is

disrupted again by hammers when I break it out of the mold. Once retrieved, the material undergoes multiple treatments until it is deemed ready for presentation.

The process of all these dealings leaves marks on and in the iron. If one is adept at reading materials one can see the history speaking. It is this dialogue that intrigues me the most about castings. Once I learned the language of casting I could converse with artworks worldwide. While visiting the Forbidden City in Beijing I had a conversation with a cast bronze turtle. It shared with me the discomfort of being in a mold and the struggles of being birthed and manipulated. This conversation can happen with any artistic technique if one is willing to listen and learn.

History in materials is important to me because it lends a certain human quality to the objects. Although the materials I use are often industrial scraps they can be related to personally because of the visible history. I expect the materials, the language, and the responses involved in my work to be very interrelated. Valuing the materials for what they are allows me to project intention through their placement. The intention that is projected reflects itself in the responses of the viewers.

The ambiguity of the forms assists in the capturing of emotions. The gesture and capturing of a moment become the most important parts of the work since there is no definitive purpose to the objects. The room for speculation allows viewers to bring their own history to the art.

The sculptures I create have become primarily self-portraits. But I expect others to be able to put themselves in my place. These artworks are my questions to the audience. Does the weight surprise them? Do they even know how heavy the pieces really are? Do others feel as empty as my aluminum tree? Can they feel the weight of the steel sinking, and pulling on the cable?

Although I consider most of my work to be self-portraits, I often find myself portrayed in the emotions elicited from the objects rather than the objects representing me directly. I do not feel I am a weighty column, rather the space underneath. The negative space, where interactions between materials and viewers take place, is where my portrait lies.

There is always a sense of vulnerability present, not only in the work but within the viewer and myself. If you feel small next to this, or anxious, or fearful, ask yourself why. Why should you feel nervous? Why should you feel brave?

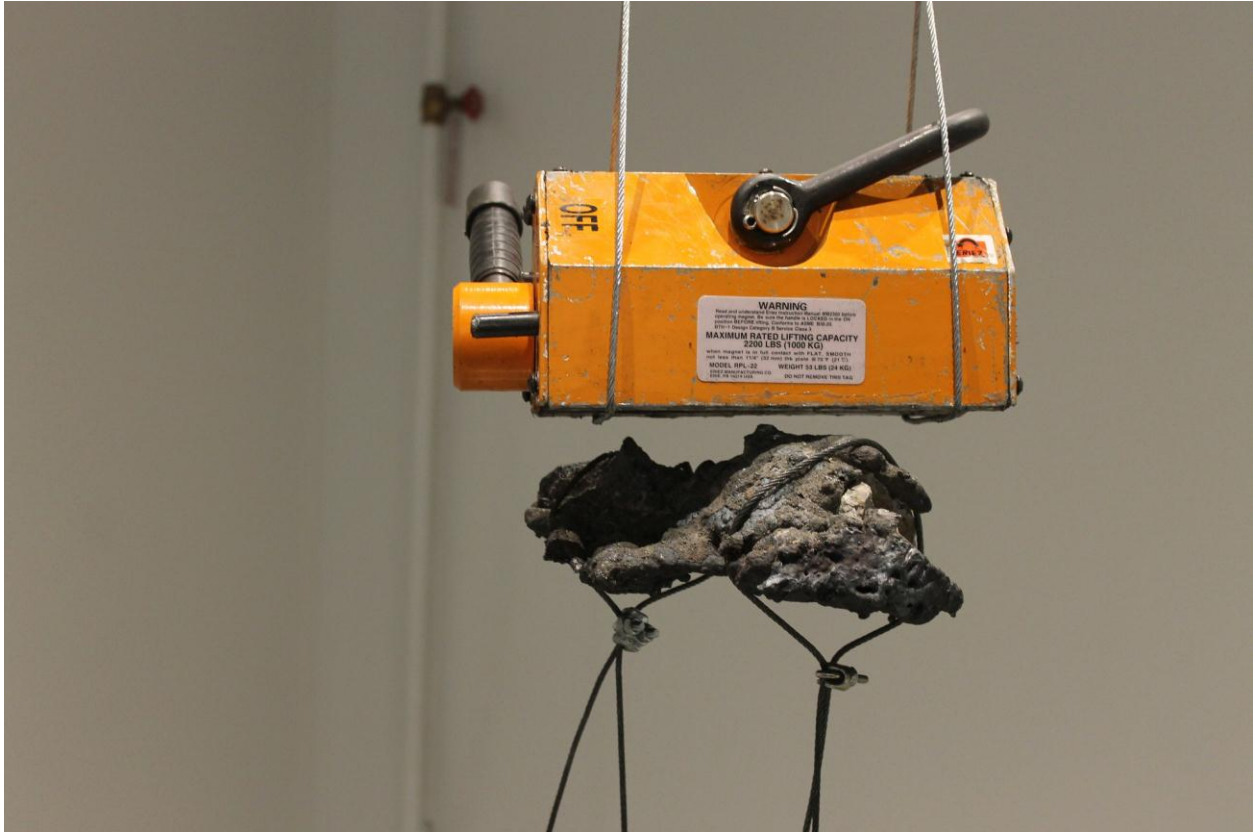
The sense of instability I express lends itself to feelings of vulnerability. My work is often held together by ephemeral means. There is no way of truly knowing when a column will fall, but it will eventually. The vulnerability is present because there are no illusions in how I have constructed my objects.

Nothing I make is about illusions, magic, or tricking the viewer. Everything I create is assembled in a way that the viewer can see. Nothing is hidden. I don't want to deceive the audience; I want them to see what these materials are capable of under their own power. I want them to see physics at work. Physics are a natural phenomena and I attempt to display it as much as possible. Individuals do not appreciate what is all around them until it is gone. Would we, as terrestrial beings, appreciate the awesomeness of earthly gravity more were we on the moon?

By allowing the audience to see every angle, by not hiding or tricking them, I allow them to view a sense of wonder that can be found everywhere if one is just willing to look for it. The materials I use take the everydayness of common materials out of the equation and ask individuals to see what is truly possible in their world.

Physics.

Most people understand and use magnets in their everyday lives. But no one notices the wonder of this natural phenomenon. Nothing should be able to defy gravity; it is a universal law of physics. But utilizing one magnet, I can make a fifteen pound piece of steel float. This makes me feel a child-like awe. It is this sense of wonder that draws me to this material. I have work frequently with tension derived from gravity, always downward. But magnets allow me to achieve an upward pull and create tension on opposing sides of an object.



Self Portrait (detail), 2014

Can you feel yourself being pulled?

I have a simplified aesthetic. Showing forms in an elemental style allows viewers to project their own experiences onto the piece while still seeing that there is a history to the materials. I respect the Mono-ha tradition of simplicity, and I find myself drawn to their style of work. Mono-ha (school of things) was an artistic “phenomenon centered in Tokyo from 1968 through early 1970s that featured a growing tendency by artists to present transient arrangements of raw and untreated natural and industrial materials... often laid directly on the floor or ground to interact with their architectural spaces or outdoor site.” (Yoshitake, Mika)

Artists involved in Mono-ha do not create objects, rather they displace that which already exists. Taking an object out of its intended context gives new richness to the materials and allows

viewers to contemplate their own place in the world. Instead of just displacing objects I create arrangements that demonstrate the strength, flexibility and possibilities hiding inside the materials. My aesthetic involves juxtaposing industrial waste and simplistic refinement. The lines used to suspend objects are deliberately placed. The large columns hung are done so in a clean, strategic manner. Although these materials originated from clutter and often times disaster, they are arranged with care. The organization gives these ordinary objects a dignity that would not be afforded to them anywhere else. Just because something is broken, beaten, or dirty does not mean it is not beautiful or important. Through the arrangements of my works I hope to elicit contemplation not only of the viewer's place in the world, but also their place within themselves.

“This aesthetic of relationship should be praised for its engagement with unpredictable nature and indeterminate space as well as its new discovery of the body, which makes this engagement possible. An awareness of the ambiguous, mediated existence and role of the body, which belongs to me but is also connected to the outside world, gives art a position between internality and externality.” (Ufan, Lee)

Strive, Senesce, and Remember are moments captured from a life. Perhaps my life, perhaps your life. There is no better way to envision time than through the rings of a tree.



Remember, 2014



Strive, 2013



Senesce, 2014

I found a cut down tree. I took two sections of the trunk. I cut the centers out of the pieces. I packed one in resin bonded sand. I took the tree section out of the hardened sand leaving a cavity. I filled this cavity with molten aluminum. I removed the hardened aluminum from the sand. I cut off the extra metal. I placed this aluminum piece next to the original sections of the tree. Each one of these steps gave this tree a new and different life. A common theme throughout my work is transition. I use one found material and transform it into a separate material and continue transforming it until the work has completed a cycle. If closely observed, each step of the process can be seen in the final work. Without each transition the work would not be what it is now, or what it will become in the future.

By forcibly removing the center of a section of a tree trunk I have detached the time from it. I have made the moment more important than the way in which we decipher the moment. *Strive* is young, ambitious and trying to make its way in the world. *Senesce* is aging, worn, and weary from the effects of time. *Remember* is a memorial to the life that once was. Although separate works, these three speak to each other, relating the tale of a life lived. Each moment has different concerns and affects. Which object one relates to the most may depend on the individual's life experiences and current position.

Danger

I consider my work largely self-influenced, but it would be naïve to think no one out there is doing anything similar, or that no artist has had an impact on me.

I think it is obvious that Richard Serra has influenced me. I admire the way his large corten steel works loom over the audience. The weight of the work is palpable. I have attempted to portray a similar heaviness throughout my show. I have intentionally hung the heaviest pieces off the same wall in order to embody this weight. The chosen wall does not reach the ceiling which lends an added vulnerability to the space, of which I take advantage.

Serra's large works also change the way in which people interact with space. I have created two forms for this exhibition in direct relation to the space and the way in which viewer walk through it.

Firstly, I built a wall to separate sections of my space. This wall is designed to look similar to a standard gallery wall. The wall causes viewers to take a certain path as they walk through the space. This path adds to the uncertainty evoked by *Journey*. This wall is also suspended from the ceiling causes the bottom to be three inches above the ground. I chose to hang this wall as a response to the space in relation to my artworks in it. I have taken the rest of the space into consideration, so I should do the same with the walls. The wall should not be any more stable than the rest of the show. The wall sways gently after people walk by or graze it. This causes the entire space to appear less constant.

Secondly, I created an arched wall off of an existing wall. Serra's work is so large that it does not need anything extra to feel as though it is falling or looming over the viewers. I want to manipulate the space to feel as though it is both funneling the audience through it and looming over them. The simple plywood and whitewash appearance add to the uncertainty of the structural integrity. For those who look closely, they will notice each piece is only held up by two or three screws. I want to give the viewers who investigate works closely something to find.

Little touches such as three inches of space between the floor and the wall, and three screws supporting weight are something that distinguishes me from Serra. The large gesture and feeling of weight are important to us both, but I consider the human element, in the materials and in the bodies of the viewers to also be essential.



Untitled, 2014

I respond to the works of Michael Sailstorfer, and his use of containing precariousness. In Sailstorfer's work, *Time Is No Highway*, a car tire rotates endlessly against a gallery wall, slowly wearing away. His tire may run non-stop against a wall, and no one knows for certain when it will stop or blow, but it is going to happen sooner or later. The contraption holding the tire will prevent it from actually running off through the gallery, but the possibility and the tires will to do so is still very present. I relate this to my hanging columns and magnet works. They have a very strong will to fall. They will eventually fall if precautions are not taken, and this sense of impending action is palpable. The line I use to restrain the columns will hold these pillars in place, but the delicacy of the lines leads to uncertainty and therefore the chance that this material will fulfill its desire to drop. The containment of this precariousness leads to great tension, a trapped potential energy, which is the feeling I hope consumes the viewers.

Sailstorfer's "projection *Lohma* depicts a corrugated-iron building, expanding and contracting as to evoke a slow and steady breath. This movement is reinforced by a strong noise, which seems to animate the house. The short loop records in fact the seconds right before the destruction of the building due to the explosives placed inside by the artist. The aggressiveness of such gesture, however, remains only latent, as this imminent destruction is merely hinted but never reaches its actual fulfillment." (Contemporary Art Daily)

Sailstorfer's *Lohma* portrays the concept of potential energy perfectly. Although the building in the video appears to be breathing, the viewers are holding their breaths in anticipation. We all know that an explosion could happen, but we never get to see it. In that same vein, potential energy is present throughout my work. There is always the potential for the objects to fall or snap. This energy is transformed into apprehension within myself and the viewer, you.

There is no ending to this work. Time did not stop, the future will continue. We merely captured a moment.

Continue your journey.

The art is about me. The art is about you.

The art is me. The art is you.

I am the Art. You are the Art.

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