

One, And The Same

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In partial fulfillment  
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by  
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## ABSTRACT

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by

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This thesis supports the Master of Fine Arts exhibition at the B. Carroll Reece Museum, East Tennessee State University, from March 18<sup>th</sup> through May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The exhibition is comprised of fourteen sculptures, which are presented on pedestals or mounted on the wall. The exhibition presents the artist's experimentation and exploration into a variety of different materials, namely wood, steel, paper, linen thread, and milk paint. Topics discussed are the influences, techniques, and methods directly relating to the work. Included are preliminary and detail images as well as a complete catalogue of the thesis exhibit.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Calvin Seerveld defines art as a “sensuous metaphor, a human act – with or without words – harnessed to tell a story in sight-or-sound imagery that asks to be understood in kind, as a sensuous metaphor” (10). It is with this role in mind that I have attempted to capture in my sculpture an insinuation of a narrative, story, parable, or metaphor. I echo Martin Puryear concerning the “value of the referential quality of art, the fact that a work can allude to things or states of being without in any way representing them” (“Martin Puryear” 2).

To aid in the suggestive quality that I desire my work to evoke, I have altered, combined, and presented common materials (wood, steel, paper, thread) into a format that, hopefully, stirs a certain sense of familiarity, either to the materials themselves, or to the alluded content.

The stories, or metaphors, that are the catalysts to my work are not necessarily directly personal or autobiographical. I have realized that the content at the core of this work is an attempted focus on the natural and inborn traits and attributes of each individual, the “everyman”, and the human condition. This idea has been in the forefront of my mind recently due to the fact that my wife is with child and is due in less than a month with our firstborn. I eagerly await the arrival of our child and anticipate the personal uniqueness. At the same time I am compelled by and reminded of the universal similarities that he or she will also own: memory, desire (appetite), shame, belief, conscience, grief, hope, joy, sensitivity, and fear. I view these intrinsic features as transcending the confines of gender, race, or age. This view was the catalyst for the title of my thesis exhibition.

This thesis discusses the inspiration, method, technique, education, and, above all, the precedence I place upon the work itself and the work of the hand.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FOUNDATIONS

While studying sculpture at Yale, Martin Puryear observed what he called “two philosophical camps: the white-collar and the blue-collar artists.” He stated that the white-collar artists were essentially the Conceptualists and the Minimalists. Their work, developing from an idea, would later be fabricated by someone else. They were ‘hands off’. Puryear, who considered himself to be a blue-collar artist, was interested in working with his hands and learning his craft as an artist (Auping 59).

This approach, to work with ones hands while using a well-crafted skill, is what I am striving to apply to my own work. I greatly enjoy the work of the hand and the process and act of creating. Manipulating and combining materials to present a tangible object that can not only be seen and touched, but can simultaneously occupy and activate space, satisfies a certain desire and need to do so.

However, to create work that stands solely on the perfection of its execution or to be a “professional craftsman that makes an object for the sake of showing of his skills” (Auping 70) is a difficult and daunting task. In this case, craftsmanship alone, aside from content, is the sole subject of scrutiny. Neal Benezra states that “Although Puryear retained great respect for the craft tradition that [James] Krenow personified, he also concluded that the perfection of one’s hand was not enough; once a level of manual accomplishment was reached, the heart and mind must press the hand to another level of making which might involve ideas” (17).

My work begins on the conceptual level and is driven by an idea, thought, image, or statement that I try to convey in a tangible, concrete way. The most difficult and demanding aspect of my work is putting this imagery or idea into that tangible format. I attempt to make

work that not only subtly suggests and hints at the concept behind the piece, but that also may be appreciated for its aesthetic characteristics, formal qualities, and workmanship. I attempt to find a balance between the object itself, the act of making, and the conceptual aspect of the piece. In an effort to delicately indicate the idea behind each piece, I have used symbols, both traditional (birds, wings, eggs, bees, honeycomb) and contemporary (bullets, bombs). Coupled with appropriate materials and titles, my desire is to give an implication of intent.

Work that appears to be created effortlessly is a byproduct of diligent patience, practice, and commitment. A dedicated devotion can produce a sort of muscle memory in which the hand, eye, and mind, although functioning as a cohesive whole, are reacting independently of each other. With that in mind, I strive to make work that uses craftsmanship as a tool to help me present clearly, without distraction of the evidence of construction or manipulation of materials, a fresh platform for aesthetic appreciation and conceptual intrigue.

This approach to my work is evident in my desire for repetition, not only in certain elements of the work itself, but also in my actions and movements: the strike of the chisel with the mallet, the passing of a file on a piece of steel, the drilling of holes, the tearing of paper, the stitching of thread. There is something very rhythmic and soothing about repeating an action over and over. This point in which I am no longer thinking arduously over my actions, but rather the finishing piece, and where my thought processes do not consciously interfere with the muscle movements and memory of my hands is quite liberating. This idea is not too dissimilar to a potter making functional vessels on a wheel or a chair maker pulling a drawknife across a spindle. David Pye addresses this idea by stating:

“Certainly, however, there can be a certain pleasure in finding that one’s judgment is being exercised only half consciously and in letting the

process continue. I suppose that in many trades where the workmanship of risk prevails, any competent workman does much of his work like that. One can, for instance, do a great deal of sawing and chopping without quite knowing how one has arrived at the result correctly. The hands appear to do it on their own, without referring to the head” (124).

To repeat an action, or reproduce an idea, continuously until bordering on the ridiculous or the absurd is something that, for some reason, I can appreciate and admire. I find the art of Tom Friedman and Do-Ho Suh commendable for, if nothing else, the amount of work and effort that is included in many of their pieces. For example, Tom Friedman wrote “all the words in the English language on a large sheet of paper” in *Everything* (Hainley 35). In another work (*Untitled*), Friedman signed his name repeatedly in a circle until his pen ran out of ink. Similarly, Do-Ho Suh has employed thousands of multiples (dog tags, signatures, plastic figures) to create his sculpture.

However, this attempt to demand highly refined work and the learned craft comes the risk to stifle spontaneity and mask the creativity inherent in a piece. Vince Pitelka, juror of East Tennessee State University’s *Positive/Negative* show of 2006, wrote in his juror’s statement:

“A classical craftsman’s approach mandating tightly defined fit and finish can kill expressive potential in sculpture and painting. In art, craftsmanship involves the skilled and effective use of tools and media to serve the artist’s intent.”

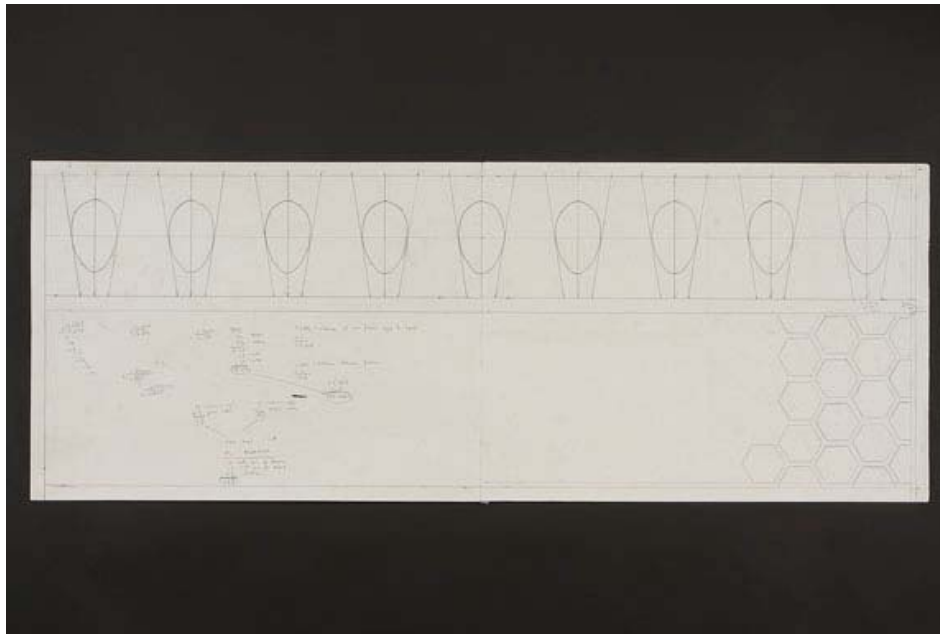
Additionally, sculptor Henry Moore states:

“Craftsmanship in sculpture is just common sense—anyone can learn it. It’s certainly easier than in painting, I’d say. The mental grasp is difficult,

and the three-dimensional conception, but the workmanship, which people like Eric Gill thought so important, can degenerate into a most awful mental laziness, like knitting or polishing the silver...What counts really is the vision it [sculpture] expresses...that is, it's the quality of the mind revealed behind it, rather than the way it's done..." (James 135).

An unforced, not an overworked, approach can combat the possible stiffness that craftsmanship can, but not exclusively, produce. To prevent the mundane drudgery that Moore talks of, I try to keep the creative process fresh and exciting by pushing or altering an idea or a technique with each piece, growing and expounding upon previous experience and the exposure to my materials.

With craftsmanship in mind, a certain level of planning is necessary when mapping out each piece. Some pieces require more preparatory work than others, but overall, I work slowly and methodically.



**Figure 1: Preliminary Drawing for "As If We Are Only Mouths To Feed."  
Graphite on Paper, 21" x 49" x 6". 2007**

My wall pieces are drawn out in full-scale orthographic drawings before I start (Figure 1). These drawings assist me in accurately planning and executing the construction of these

wall sculptures. This drawing shows the steel hexagon stock to be used in the lower two-thirds of the piece and includes some mathematical calculations to aid me in the construction. Initially



**Figure 2: “As If We Are Only Mouths To Feed” (Detail). Poplar, Steel, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint, 21” x 49” x 6”. 2007**

depicted are nine egg-like shapes that would later be recreated out of paper and bound like a book. After completing the nine egg shaped books, I decided to stop after installing the first one, and omit the other eight. This decision was made mostly for aesthetic reasons, but I also realized that the final piece was also more conceptually accurate with only one book mounted (Figure 2).

My three-dimensional sculpture, being more time and labor intensive, is approached in a different manner. Having a certain idea or concept in mind, and with some preliminary drawings and rough

maquettes made, I begin the actual piece. The pieces are more complex and irregular, not only in the construction but also the forms themselves, so my efforts are to maintain a balance between the original idea and a certain level of improvisation as I work.

Making numerous prototypes, calculations, paint tests, jigs, and other tooling to ensure proper construction of my work, I often spend more time preparing for a piece or a certain procedure than I do on the actual piece. I suppose that if I am going to make a mistake, at the

very least, I am going to make the mistake slowly. Despite all the planning that goes in to each piece, I attempt to keep an open mind to changing, when necessary, my initial plans for aesthetic reasons or practical purposes.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MEANING IN WORK

One sculptor who has inspired my approach is Martin Puryear. For over thirty years Puryear has been creating sculptural works, predominately in wood, that speak of this “balance between the effortless appearance of workmanship, materials, and art in the abstract form” (Koplos 75). The obvious workmanship that each of Puryear’s pieces entails is quickly noticeable. However, at the same time, the work is not overpowered by the subtle sensibilities of the hand but is complemented by this human touch. I was able to observe this fact directly in December 2007, when I had the great opportunity to see a career spanning retrospective of more than forty of Puryear’s works at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Upon close examination, one can detect the faint traces and evidences of the processes Puryear took in constructing his work: staple holes, pencil lines, and spoke-shave marks. Puryear “deftly negotiates between craft and fine art. Central to [Puryear’s] work is the idea that labor is meaningful and pleasurable. Puryear appreciates the anonymity of the craftsman but leverages it to build unique works of art” (Kirshner 58).

The idea that labor is meaningful and pleasurable is essential to the development of my work. I respect “the belief that the manner of doing anything has a certain aesthetic importance of its own independent of the importance of what is done” (Pye 127). I enjoy the process as much as the finished piece. If the process is not enjoyed, the work and the workmanship become laboriously tedious and tiresome. To create with the direct contact and intimate interaction of my hands with the materials gives me great satisfaction.

Similarly, the Shakers also held the conviction that work is worthwhile and significant. The Shakers “were nineteenth-century America’s largest and best-known communal utopian

society” (Sprigg and Larkin 20), with one of the most noticeable attributes of their work being the attempt for simplicity and perfection. Regardless of the object being made, the Shakers devoted the same careful attention and workmanship to everything they created. “The humblest, most mundane objects—a coat hanger, a clothesbrush, a wheelbarrow—reveal a concern for excellence and grace” (Sprigg and Larkin 115). The attention and conviction the Shakers possessed for craftsmanship in all aspects of their lives is commendable. “Their work is optimistic. Those who would lavish care on such simple, everyday objects clearly believe that life is worthwhile. And the use of every material—iron, wood, silk, tin, wool, stone—reveals the same grace”(Sprigg 22). When looking at Shaker work, the mastery of skill, technique, and craftsmanship is quite noticeable. They seamlessly joined “ tools, materials, processes, ...and experience in patience” (Sprigg and Larkin 17), which is something that I highly value and am striving to accomplish in my own work.

## CHAPTER 4

### TRUTH TO MATERIAL

Since my start as a graduate student, I have almost exclusively used wood or steel, or a combination of them both, in all my pieces. When wood and steel are coupled, both materials react in a way that exaggerates the inherent qualities of the opposing medium. Steel brings out the warm soft glow and vibrancy of wood. Wood compliments the cold hardness and visual weighty qualities of steel. David Pye, has quoted David Thompson as “summarizing that the idea [of truth to material] ‘in its simplest form means that the sculptor feels obliged to respect his medium to the extent of bringing out in every way he can the stoniness of stone, the metallic quality of metal, the grain and growth and organic properties in wood’” (86).

In addition, I appreciate the combination of the natural characteristics of wood with the mechanical and industrial traits of the steel. With my sculptural pieces, I am attempting to combine together both these “anthropomorphic”, or visceral, and “mechanomorphic” (Smith, Elizabeth 174) elements, not unlike what was being said about Lee Bontecou’s welded sculpture of the 1960s that “combined biological with mathematical-mechanical form to produce a type of organic machine” (Hadler 206).

I begin my sculpture with carving and refining the wood with a range of chisels and mallets, rasps, files, and other abrasives. I enjoy the slow process of revealing the form from the original block with the use of these hand tools. Essentially, the wood becomes the main visual element of my pieces, a type of “carrier” for the steel and other components. Although not physically working on both at the same time, I attempt to simultaneously develop and plan for the steel aspect of the piece while working on the wood.

During the drying and curing process of the wood that I use, “checks” or cracks and splits can develop in the wood. These scars and imperfections are an anticipated occurrence I use to enhance the surface of the wooden forms. As a low-tech type of inlay that I learned while



**Figure 3: A Glorious Ruin (Detail). Heart Pine, Steel, 30” x 13” x 11”. 2006”**

treatment that can develop when these blemishes are accented.

Once the wood has been refined and finished, I start the actual physical development of the steel. In undergraduate school, I had the opportunity to work in a weld shop, fabricating mostly fences, railings, and banisters. Although I have a great appreciation and respect for blacksmithing and forge work, I have not had the occasion to experiment at length with that aspect of manipulating steel. By working steel from a fabrication background, I feel I can produce precise, sharp, stiff, cold, steel components that compliment and contrast the more organic natural forms of the wood. I generally use steel plate and stock to fabricate my own components. If found objects are used, I attempt to construct, manipulate, and combine them in a way that draws attention, not so much to the objects themselves, but to their role as a simple

studying with Mike Moser in Danville, PA, I use tapered shims and dowels of contrasting wood to draw emphasis to these gaps in the surface (Figure 3). I appreciate the arbitrary compositions of line and shape that take place and the additional layer of surface

design element. This approach can be seen in *The Breath, The Burden*, in which I used four pick axe heads in the sculpture (Figure 4). I altered and arranged these found objects to, hopefully, accent the design and rhythmic gesture they create, as opposed to the fact that they are pick axe heads. Additionally, the large steel arc on the right side of the image is a piece of tooling from a screw machine. I found this piece of steel to compliment nicely the corresponding curvature already established in the wood.



**Figure 4:** *The Breath, The Burden*. Ash, Steel, 20" x 20" x 17". 2008

## CHAPTER 5

### THE UNIQUENESS IN INDUSTRY

Recently, the effects and influences of the industrial revolution have played a direct role in my art making. The industrial revolution has been defined as this:

“Stripped to its bare bones, the industrial revolution consisted of the application of new sources of power to the production process, achieved with transmission equipment necessary to apply this power to manufacturing.... The industrial revolution progressively replaced humans and animals as the power sources of production with motors powered by fossil fuels (supplemented by water power and, very recently, by nuclear power)” (Stearns 5).

The industrial revolution made it possible to mass-produce a product in a fashion that previously was not possible. “The two central features of industrialization—revolutions in technology and in the organization of production—yielded one clear result: a great increase in the total output of goods and in individual worker output” (Stearns 6).

In many cases, the machinery and technology that has been the direct by product of the industrial revolution has replaced the necessity for manual labor and the human touch. In response, David Pye wrote *The Nature And Art Of Workmanship*, which expresses the necessity for the hand made object in an age of mechanical reproduction. Pye reduces the conflict between two key terms: “the workmanship of risk and the workmanship of certainty” (86). Kelsey prefaces Pye’s book by stating:

“The phrase “workmanship of risk” means that at any moment, whether through inattention, or inexperience, or accident, the workman is liable to

ruin the job. It is in opposition to the “workmanship of certainty,” in which the quality of the result is predetermined and beyond the control of the operative.... And as David Pye points out, ‘...all the works of men which have been most admired since the beginning of our history have been made by the workmanship of risk, the last three or four generations only excepted’” (9).

I fully appreciate Pye’s case for the restorative importance of the handmade object, and echo with Robert Storr on the need to “recover the creative possibilities...that have been marginalized by industrial society, or simply lost to it” (Elderfield 27).

At the same time, I find significant possibilities in the benefits provided by the industrial revolution. These possibilities were made known to me during the summer of 2007 when I met Jon Bowers while he was enrolled in a summer class at East Tennessee State University. Jon has managed a very sizable screw machine shop for the past twenty-five years. Screw machines “mass produce, in an automated fashion, turned components and function much like a lathe” (“Screw Machines”). These machines can cut, drill, bore, tap, taper, and flute a variety of metals (steel, aluminum, brass), and vary in size, depending on the function and size of the stock being machined. Screw machines can also perform a number of separate functions in which either the stock or the machining indexes, or rotates, to align the material for the sequential operations.

The machine shop also includes preliminary and secondary machinery such as lathes, milling machines, drill presses, band saws, shears, grinders, and tappers to produce proper tooling, parts, and jigs necessary to run and operate the shop. The shop does not contain a single CNC, or computer numerical control, run machine. All of the machinery is from the World War II era, and is manually controlled, operated, and set-up skillfully with the proper arrangement of

stops, cams, sprockets, and gears. I greatly appreciate the fact that all the machinery is mechanically driven and manually operated.

After becoming acquainted with my work, Jon saw the potential benefits of my incorporation and employment of both his knowledge and know how, and the machinery and tooling at his disposal. Since September, Jon has been teaching me how to perform operations and techniques on machinery, of which I had no previous knowledge.

All of my most recent work (*Or False*, “*As If We Are Only Mouths To Feed*”, *The*



**Figure 5: Jig used for *The Breath, The Burden***

*Private Nuisance, The Breath, The Burden, The Cradle Welcomes*) either contains parts or implemented tooling and jigs made directly at the machine shop. The tooling and jigs allow me to perform functions, such as drilling holes at proper angles, and holding certain objects at a set distance, that I would not have been able to do otherwise. The jig shown in Figure 5 was fastened temporarily to *The Breathe, The Burden* to drill holes

into the wood which would later house the steel round stock that hold the pickaxe heads in place.

This advancement of industry and technology allows me to use “mass-produced” components and parts, or at the very least, employ the machines intended to do so. By acquiring applicable knowledge and techniques grounded in the industrial revolution, I have attempted to

create single-edition works that simultaneously straddle the unique hand made object with the productive and innate qualities of industry.

Although using machinery with very high tolerances that allow me to perform operations otherwise not possible, I have found that throughout the creative process, a certain amount of risk is always at hand. From the conception of an idea onward, choices being made, whether aesthetically or technically, result in the success or failure of the work. This inherent risk keeps the creative process fresh and exciting.

## CHAPTER 6

### INSINUATING THE STORY

Two main influences lead me to start incorporating paper and stitching into my wood and steel sculptures. They are Lee Bontecou and her choice of materials and The Quilts of Gee's Bend and the stories they insinuated.

Bontecou's wall sculptures of the 1960s incorporated stitched canvas material into the negative spaces of welded steel armatures. "Her canvas and steel works often incorporated Nazi helmets and gas masks", in addition to saw blades, grommets, and other steel components, creating quiet threatening and ominous results (Hadler 208). "Born in 1931 and coming of age during World War II and the postwar era," Bontecou undoubtedly experienced the perils and anxiety of the time (Hadler 204). With her choice of materials, she instantly combined softness and a sense of fragility with hardness, resilience, and strength in her work. "Bontecou feels that this mixture of materials reflects the dualities in society" (Hadler 209). The tension and apprehension present in her work because of the juxtaposition of such contrasting materials is clear and something that I desire to accomplish in my own work.

In the spring of 2006, I had the opportunity to see an exhibit of the Quilts of Gee's Bend at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. The quilts I responded to most were the quilts that were "referred to as 'work-clothes quilts' or 'britches quilts' which were made from reused denim overalls, trousers, cotton and flannel work shirts, and other assorted materials" (Wardlaw 15). Although the other quilts, which were made from household linens or purchased textiles, were just as beautifully stunning, the "work-clothes" quilts possessed and provided an immediate historical and personal context. These quilts narrated a personal story of a "history of wear and time and hard effort" (Wardlaw 15).



**Figure 6: *Train Of Thought* (Detail). Heart Pine, Steel, Mixed Media, 27" x 15" x 12". 2006**

With these impressions on my mind, I desired to start using different materials (paper, stitching, and elements of books) to insinuate a type of narrative into my sculptures. Having just recently finished my first work that included paper

with wood and steel, *Train of Thought*, (Figure 6), I wanted to explore, in a more depth manner, the possibilities of combining basic bookbinding techniques with other sculptural elements.

Having never learned these basics skills, I enrolled in a Book Arts class in the spring of 2006. In this first class, taught by Deborah Bryan, I was introduced to a wide range of stitching methods and paper construction.

After making a wide range of books in that class, I wanted to start incorporating bookbinding elements into my sculpture. I started rather conservatively, making a series of small scale, straightforward, and somewhat minimal sculptures (*The Dunce, For in Doing So, You Will Heap Burning Coals Upon His (War)Head, Phylactarian*). My main focus was experimenting not only with the combination of these new materials but also the different formats to present them in. Soon after, I began to explore the possibilities of the wall pieces. I appreciate the relative immediacy of these works compared with my other sculptural pieces and enjoy making work for the wall once again.

The paper I have been using in these pieces comes from an array of books I have collected and gathered and is conceptually appropriate to each individual piece. Books are the tangible format of an idea, thought, concept, or philosophy. When we are involved in the act of reading, we interact with the book in a predominately two-dimensional manner. We read flat words on a flat page. However, what we happen to be reading at a specific time directly shapes and influences our interaction with our world in a very real manner. I have attempted to take something we tend to interact with in a two-dimensional way and transform it into a form that the viewer is encouraged and persuaded to interact with in a more three-dimensional manner.

Coupled with books and bookbinding is the immediate association with text. All the paper I have used in these works contains text from the books they were taken from. Text can be an effective tool in the initial attraction of attention and has been a very powerful conceptual catalyst in art. Text, and words, surrounds us. Whether we consciously choose to or not, if we see words, we have trained and programmed ourselves to read those words.

When words are seen, a desire is aroused to read and understand what is being presented. Text suggests that the transmission of information is being presented or relayed. It is with this tool of communication that I attempt to hint or subtly suggest the idea or concept behind the piece. "Books are inherently optimistic; they express the belief that communication will be received later and elsewhere, a time-released epistle to an eager reader somewhere, sometime" (Drucker 16).

The materiality of the paper and stitching, when combined with the more resilient qualities of wood and steel, adds a sense of fragility and delicateness to my work. I first noticed this in *Once The Machinery Has Started* (Figure 7). After spending months on carving the wood and fabricating the steel for this piece, the last step was to stitch the waxed linen thread between



**Figure 7: *Once The Machinery Has Started* (Detail). Beech, Cheery, Walnut, Steel, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint, 24" x 18" x 18". 2007**

the wood and the scythe blades. I expected the piece to transform into an even more menacing structure with mechanical features and suggested movement with the use of the newly included “tendons”. I was surprised to observe

the contrary, in which the piece possessed a sense of fragility and tension. Coupling sharp blades directly next to vulnerable thread gave the piece a certain angst and anxiousness that was not present before.

Additionally, the materiality of paper and books has a certain draw in that they are such common items in everyday life. Sculptor Jae Ko primarily uses paper in her work and has stated, “Paper is always with you. Anywhere you go, you have paper, you see paper” (Tanguy 58). When seen, paper accompanies a certain contextual immediacy. For example, Korean born sculptor Kwang-Young Chun recalls the many functions and applications mulberry paper possessed in daily life. Mulberry paper was found in books, newspapers, and stationary, and was

used as wall coverings, insulation, and wrappings for items such as edibles, medicinal herbs, and stainless steel utensils. As a result, Chun has used this same paper in much of his work (Morgan 23). The specifically and appropriately chosen mulberry paper presents an immediate cultural reference point.

And it is with this in mind, this commonality of material substance and reaction to the printed word, that I have presented a manipulation of the book that alters, skews, and challenges the traditional expectations of a book.

## CHAPTER 7

### BACK TO COLOR

I enrolled as an art student in undergraduate school, having a concentration in painting. However, I desired to experience my materials on a more tactile and intimate level. Manipulating paint at the end of a brush did not satisfy that need. After my first three-dimensional art class, this desire was more fully realized and I changed my concentration. Although in a slightly different context, I have just recently begun to use paint again in my work.

I was introduced to milk paint while taking a bookbinding class from Daniel Essig. Milk paint is a combination of milk protein, lime, clays, and earth pigments and predates all other commercially made paints. Milk paint, with its soft and natural hues, gives me an opportunity to gently incorporate color into my work. Having an incredibly strong bond, (milk paint cannot be stripped with any conventional removers or thinners) milk paint can be applied in thin layers that allow the wood grain to show through the opaquely painted surface, giving the surface a very natural appearance. Different colors can be applied on top of each other. By sanding away a certain amount of milk paint, all the subsequent colors can be revealed, giving the surface a great amount of visual depth. This milk paint and specific application can be seen on all my wall pieces for this exhibition, the three small scale sculptures, and on certain sections of *Once The Machinery Has Started* and *Or False*.

## CHAPTER 8

### INSIDE OUTSIDE

Formally, my work is influenced by the abstract sculpture of Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Constantin Brancusi. These three sculptors, with their simple and seemingly effortless combination of materials and brilliant form activate, engagingly occupy, and energize space. With anthropomorphically suggestive shapes, these sculptors insinuate a deeper dialogue of emotion and sensitivity. Moore has stated:

“One is a sculptor because one has a special kind of sensibility for shapes and forms, in their solid physical actuality. I feel that I can best express myself, that I can best give outward form to certain inward feelings or ambitions by the manipulation of solid materials—wood, stone, or metal” (James 84).

On this subject of interior and exterior space, Martin Puryear, who similarly finds inspiration in this theme, says:

“Interior space is often the secret space of sculpture, certainly in traditional sculpture, which is monolithic. I feel that Henry Moore, and Barbara Hepworth were the first modernist carvers to put holes through sculpture, and in Hepworth’s case the openings through some of her works became hollow voids, interior volumes with shapes of their own. I think of interior space as a world with enormous conceptual potential, an important aspect of sculpture” (Powell 108).

These sculptors have created work that emphasizes the spatial relationships between physical, actual interiors and exteriors, as seen in Hepworth’s *Pierced Form* and Moore’s *Reclining*

*Figure.* Additionally, the work subtly indicates an inner existence beneath the surface creating a tension between what is revealed and what is implied. Whether it is the “visceral or bone-like structures suggested in Moore’s forms” (James 25), or the serene emotion evoked by Brancusi’s *Sleeping Muse*, a familiarity is somehow portrayed.

Although these sculptors stressed the materiality and physicality of the pieces they were creating, their simultaneous implication of an underlining internal “feeling or ambition” reverberates in my personal intent as an artist. Although conceptually driven, my work is predominately about the exploration and experimentation of materials and the study of form.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE HOPE IN DESPAIR

My intention is to present work that embodies an austere and unsettling presence. I appreciate the melancholy and the despondent state. This implies that there is something unsatisfactory with present conditions and a hope for a potential reprieve. Bruce Herman, in his forward to *A Broken Beauty*, begins by stating that:

“One thing that nearly all good stories have in common is that they often begin with a seemingly intractable problem. A forbidden piece of fruit is eaten and paradise is lost. A boy tries to best his father in a flying competition by building a lighter pair of wings; he soars too high, too close to the sun, only to plummet to his death in the sea when his wax wings melt. We know something is wrong with our world and ourselves, and so we tell our stories in an effort to right it – or at least to honorably set forth the problem” (vii).

And I suppose this is something I cannot ignore, this brokenness, and this problem. It is apparent that there is something not quite right with our world. How else would one explain the pain, sorrow, war, sickness, demise, decay, and destruction that surrounds us? Although as unpleasant a subject matter as it is, I do think that this is something we need not nor must not ignore. It is a real issue each and every person in society must at some point experience. In that, and this is the basis from which the book stands, one can experience hope in searching and longing for the return and recovery of beauty along with the return and recovery of peace. All is not lost. We hold our breath in earnest anticipation for a respite from sorrow and the arrival of this sought after beauty. I believe that this is why I have been drawn to artists like Kathe Kollwitz, Leonard

Baskin, Stephen De Staebler, and Ernst Barlach, and why I have not viewed their work, although thoroughly dismal, as entirely depressing.

Leonard Baskin finds abundance in this same emphasis of hope through sorrow.

“Like John Donne, whose fierce love for the human body was inextricably webbed with his obsession with death, Leonard Baskin has found in the human figure and death the double theme—the physical-metaphysical reality—through which he has discovered the awe of life’s constant renewal... embedded in the notion of atonement” (Jaffe 73).

Baskin’s work often centers on the evil and sinister, the catalyst from which this loss of perfection stems. At the same time, however, Baskin portrays these ministers of ominosity to be plagued with the same sorrow their subjects possess. This may lead to the viewer’s hopefulness that death itself may also become susceptible to decay, and with this end of death comes a new life.

Similarly, Stephen De Staebler’s tormented figurative work seems to resonate with this suggestion of reparation. I feel his work falls into the same realm of Kollwitz, Barlach, and Baskin. However, his work does not necessarily deal directly with a specific story or a happening (i.e. Baskin’s *Prometheus Bound* or *Daedalus*, or Kollwitz’ *Outbreak*) but rather embodies the sorrow, the heaviness in “everyman”. By portraying his “society” as blemished and disfigured outwardly, the viewer must experience the internal struggle his pieces possess.

“The incompleteness, the missing limbs, and the scarring of the human form, as well as the agglomeration of rude, geological masses onto De Staebler’s figures, are all devices that underscore our creaturely

imperfection and finitude. Eschewing ideal form, they evoke our sense of compassion for the reality of our existence” (Presscott 96).

These pieces were constructed this way from the onset, and not as a marring afterthought. This incompleteness is something they cannot control. He portrays his work in a way that forces them to cope with their existence. They do not have the essential or fundamental power in and of themselves to fix their present state of torment. They stretch upward from their heavy groundings “in quest for spiritual lightness, for a transcendent peace” (Van Proyen 138). With these tools, De Staebler forces the reaction inside the viewer to echo with his work for a coming hope of change.

## CHAPTER 10

### SUMMARY

In the end, I am striving to create work that has been executed with careful attention in all respects. I have a lot to learn, a great deal of experience to yet develop, and much practice to perform. Whether it be the steel fabrication, the woodwork, the bookbinding, the allusion to metaphor, or whatever else my future labors may encounter, my desire is to accomplish work that has been done well. I am not there yet. However, this is my goal. Charles Sheeler expressed the Shaker's work ethic as such:

“[The Shakers] recognized no justifiable difference in the quality of workmanship for any object, no gradations in the importance of the task. All must be done equally well. Whether it was the laying of a stone floor in the cellar, the making of closet doors in the attic, or the building of a meeting house, the work required nothing less than all the skill of the workmen” (Sprigg 10).

I endeavor to resonate with the Shakers in this respect. However, the challenge is set against my own natural tendencies, and “unfortunately, we do not desire to be such as the Shaker was; we do not propose to ‘work as though we had a thousand years to live, and as though we were to die tomorrow’” (Berry 111). It is this challenge, to create work, and to create work well, to master my materials and the skills of my hands, that keeps the creative process so fresh and invigorating. As an aid in this endeavor, I am reminded and prodded by Wendell Berry's stirring encouragement: “To use gifts less than well is to dishonor them and their Giver. There is no material or subject in Creation that in using, we are excused from using well; there is no work in which we are excused from being able and responsible artists” (Berry, 113).

APPENDIX:  
CATOLOGUE OF EXHIBITION



*Once The Machinery Has Started*

Beech, Cheery, Walnut, Steel, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

24" x 18" x 18"

2007

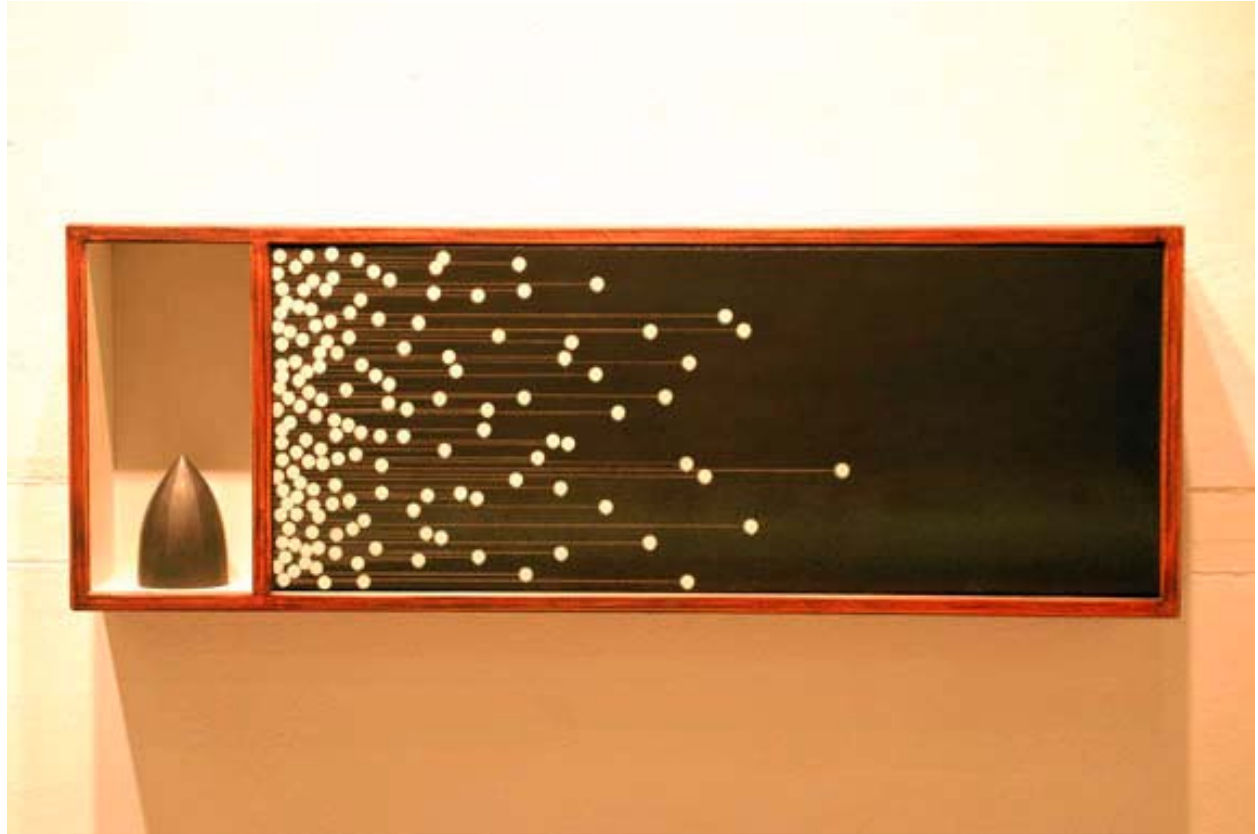


***The Cradle Welcomes***

Poplar, Cheery, Steel, Milk Paint

14" x 40" x 6"

2008



***For In Doing So, You Will Heap Burning Coals Upon His (War)Head***

Wood, Steel, Paper, Milk Paint

6" x 3" x 3"

2006



*Train Of Thought*

Heart Pine, Steel, Mixed Media

27" x 15" x 12"

2006



***The Private Nuisance***

Poplar, Steel, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

38" x 18" x 7"

2007



*A Glorious Ruin*

Heart Pine, Steel

30" x 13" x 11"

2006



***Phylactarian***

Wood, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

5" x 3" x 3"

2006



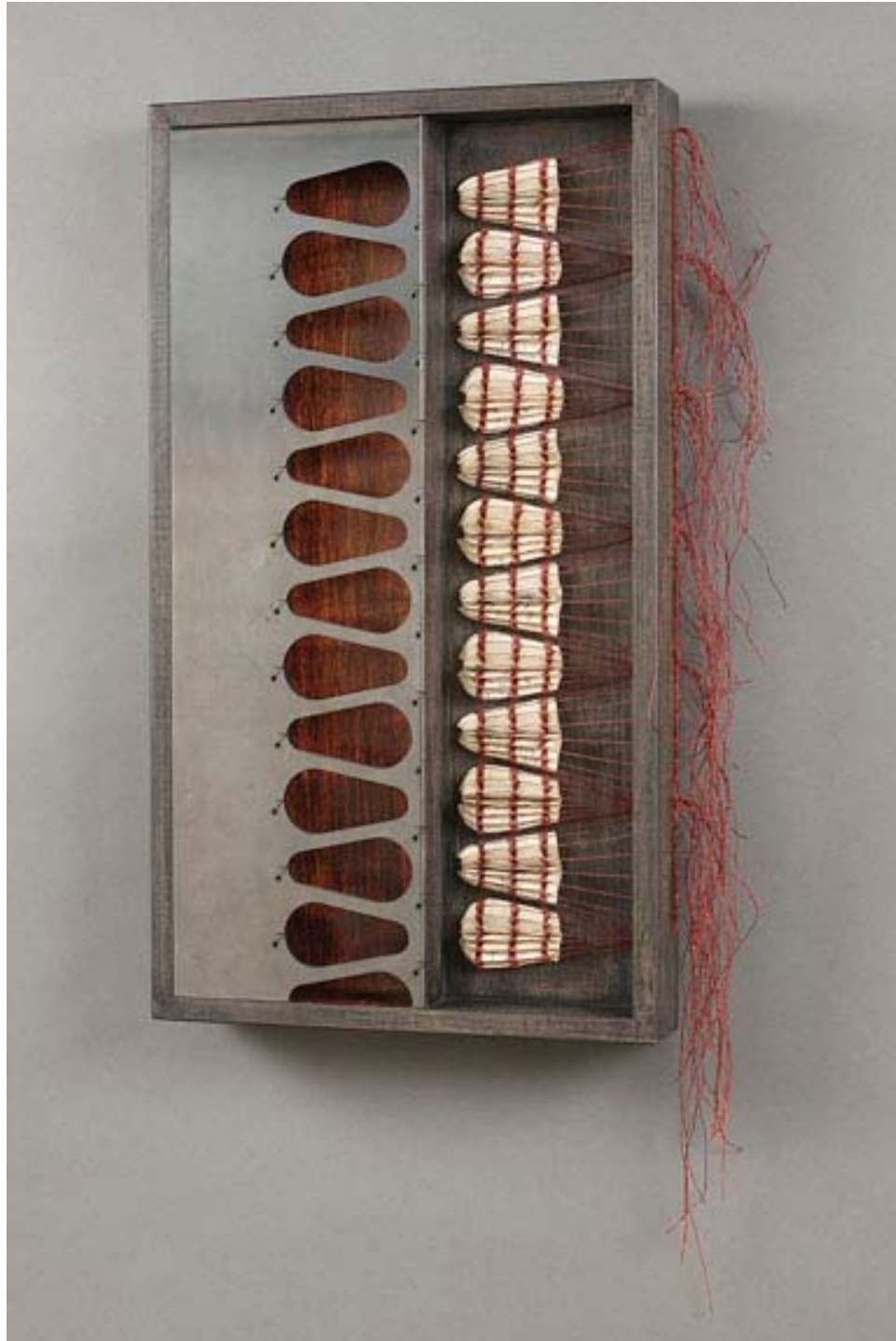
***“Invisible As Steel”***

--William Cowper

Maple, Steel, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

28” x 17” x 4”

2007



***“...And The Birds Of Appetite”***

-- Thomas Merton

Walnut, Cypress, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

24” x 13” x 4”

2007



***“My Heart Is The Long Stairs”***

-- Modest Mouse

Poplar, Heart Pine, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

36” x 17” x 6”

2007



***The Dunce***

Wood, Steel, Paper, Milk Paint

9" x 3" x 3"

2006



***“As If We Are Only Mouths To Feed”***

-- The Arcade Fire

Poplar, Steel, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint

21” x 49” x 6”

2007



***Or False***

Maple, Cheery, Steel, Paper, Waxed Linen Thread, Milk Paint, Concrete

72" x 24" x 24"

2008



*The Breath, The Burden*

Ash, Steel  
20" x 20" x 17"  
2008



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East Tennessee State University  
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ARTA 1110: Two Dimensional Design, 2007
- Workshop Instructor  
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- Research Assistant, Sculpture Area  
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Publications:

*Mockingbird 2008: ETSU's Award Winning Art and Literary Magazine.* First Place Artwork

*Vision.* Issue #5. "Artist Profile: Daniel Marinelli" Johnson City, Tennessee, 2007

*Mockingbird 2007: ETSU's Award Winning Art and Literary Magazine.* Second Place Artwork

*Mockingbird 2006: ETSU's Award Winning Art and Literary Magazine.* Honorable Mention Artwork

500 Pitchers: Contemporary Explorations of a Timeless Design.  
A Lark Ceramics Book Publication

Exhibitions:

"One, And The Same" Reece Museum, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2008

"Marks: A Graduate Student Exhibition" Reece Museum, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2008

"Adjunxtaposition" Slocumb Galleries, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2007

"The Artists' Book: The Exhibition" Slocumb Galleries, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2007

"Third Annual Instructors' Exhibit" Hayloft Gallery in the Jacksonville Center, Floyd, Virginia, 2007

"National Council on the Education for the Ceramic Arts Regional Student Juried Exhibit" Allan R. Hite Institute Gallery, Louisville, Kentucky, 2007

"An Exhibition of Contemporary Ceramic Art" Gallery 411, Greenville, Tennessee, 2006

“An Exhibition of New Work by ETSU Art and Design Graduate Students” Reece Museum, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2006

“Sculpture 2005: An Exhibition of Sculpture by ETSU Students” Nelson’s Fine Art Gallery, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2005

“Redefining Space: Tri-State Sculptors Annual Conference Student Exhibition” Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, 2005

“Seize the Clay IV: An Exhibition of Ceramic Work by ETSU Students” Nelson’s Fine Art Gallery, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2005

“27<sup>th</sup> Annual Johnson City Area Arts Council Art Show” Reece Museum, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2005

“Mute: An Exhibition of Work by ETSU Graduate Students” Reece Museum, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2005

“An Exhibition of Work by Current Odyssey Residents” Asheville Area Arts Council, Asheville, North Carolina, 2003

Awards:

*Niche Student Awards Winner*. Mixed and Miscellaneous Mediums, 2008

Tri State Sculptors Student Representative, 2006 – 2008

Tri State Sculptors Memorial Scholarship, 2006

Work Study Scholarship. Penland School of Crafts, Penland, North Carolina, 2005

Tuition Scholarship. East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2005

Professional Organizations:

College Art Association  
International Sculpture Organization  
American Craft Council  
Tri-State Sculptors