

ARTS + REVIEWS

Jasmine Reimer's delightfully absurd harder softer side

BY ALEX J MACPHERSON

In 1917, the French artist Marcel Duchamp caused a scandal by submitting a urinal — purchased new and crudely signed "R. Mutt" — to an exhibition in New York. The art world was horrified, but Duchamp's avant-garde installation paved the way for other artists to experiment with found and manufactured objects. What was once outrageous has become an accepted means of making art.

Jasmine Reimer, who is completing the final year of her MFA at the University of Guelph, was heavily influenced by Duchamp and his successors, like the American artist Rachel Harrison. Reimer's latest body of work, the harder softer side, uses found materials to break down and disrupt the way we think about the world. The exhibition consists of sculptures built from common materials. There are plastic crates and ironing boards, stepladders and kitschy decorations. After assembling the items in squat heaps and ungainly towers, Reimer coated them in Apoxie Sculpt, a polymer that appears "gooey" even though it has cured into impenetrable plastic.

By assembling otherwise unremarkable objects into sculptures, and then complicating matters with gobs of Apoxie Sculpt, Reimer strips away context and defies expectations. The works in the harder softer side are familiar, and not familiar at all. "I put them together in ways that negate their function, and that re-function them according to my own purpose and my own interest in absurdity," she said. "I think that, through absurdity, we can construct new meaning and significance."

In this sense, Reimer has transformed objects into negations. Manufactured goods cease to be cold

share

and sterile. Tools are no longer merely means to an end. Domestic items loom much larger than we think they should. Reimer is not merely interested in the absurdity produced by the absence of context, however; she is interested in the effect of that absurdity. Freed from the shackles of expectation and assumption, viewers are able to examine those parameters. In the harder softer side, Reimer targets the gulf between old and new, manufactured and handmade, public and private.

"Even though I think that I'm beyond it, I still very much work within a set of binaries," she says. "Soft and hard is one, inside and outside is another. Old and new, handmade and found. What ends up happening is I take the two extremes, and then I kind of bounce around in the grey area."

The grey area she describes is murky and indistinct. A world without binaries is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine. Reimer doesn't necessarily have all the answers. Neither did Duchamp when he "made" his urinal. But she understands that objects are not just objects — they are vessels for people, who are full of emotions and ideas. "Being able to push your mind into something that you think is unfathomable," she says, "might just be the greatest way to progress, to advance." V

Jasmine Reimer: the harder softer side

Through November 26 @ Dunlop Art Gallery

(Sherwood Branch)

Speaking in Tongues at the Tide

Allow me to begin in a spirit of full disclosure when I say: I don't get sculpture. I mean, I've spent plenty of time thinking about it; I can analyze it, break it down into its historical references and trajectories; I can consider the language of materials and the rhythm of scale; I can discern intent and make convincing arguments about how technologies enable or influence given production methods, or why socially conditioned narratives and performativities discourage others.

But sculpture is nevertheless a secondary language to me; I can survive in its country, read the signs and order a meal, even carry on a pleasant conversation or engage in some level of debate, but it doesn't come to me as a mother tongue. My eyes, despite my best efforts, remain the perpetually clumsy translators of the work of other people's hands (and, in turn, or perhaps causally, my hands remain the clumsy translators of my own ideas).

To use yet another analogue: it's like knowing how to swim but not being able to breathe underwater. And indeed, it is such a sense of being a foreigner set adrift that strikes me first when encountering Jasmine Reimer's constructions. There is recognition, of course, whenever objects from daily life are repurposed and reconfigured into alien assemblages; I know the words, but struggle with the syntax.

Such recognizable objects, therefore, are my refuge when trying to interpret meaning, to pull a sense of cohesion and purpose from the configurations... actual objects (actual ironing board, actual stepladder), readymade things, are characters we recognize instantly despite their having been interfered with. They generate a brief flutter of familiarity, of there being something there onto which to *hold*, to grab, to anchor ourselves in our explorations. They hover between domesticity and labour, between familial contexts and productive purposes. Perhaps this suggests that such a division between the spaces of home-ness and of work-ness is an arbitrary and misguided one--Marx, I like to point out, never saw the Middle Class coming. Or perhaps we should consider these objects as sitting within the art historical tradition of the *vanitas* still life, gathering that they disclose more about their owner's priorities, status, and context than about a specific symbolic relationship. Through such a lens, they gesture towards the social context of their maker-artist to point to the inevitable disappearance of her body and her possessions (*vanitas* being, after all, a particularly mopey genre).

Whether relics resigned to emptiness and futility or monuments of personal, socio-economic positionality, the objects are not left whole; they have been *pervorted*, which is to say distorted or corrupted. In some sense, this is true of the earliest Duchampian readymades as well, as the urinal rotated and institutionalized by the museum is no longer a "real" (i.e. functional, behavioural) urinal... but that is a socio-cultural distortion, and such an object could still in theory be (to continue the rhetorical device of perversion perhaps beyond polite conversation) *redeemed*: flipped back around, installed in a wall, hooked up to the plumbing, and pissed in.

By contrast, Reimer's perversions of her readymades are like irreparable traumas. A soupy, gelatinous, muddy *mess* has attached itself to her found objects, like a parasite that burrows into its host. If the recognizable object is our ship's port in the storm of meaning-making, then the plastic, malleable goo seeping over it is the influenza virus that spreads through our crew. And although we could extricate the one from the other in an attempt to undo their interaction, neither would really ever be the same again. They are already dripping with funk.

Consider, for instance, *Flatiron 2*, a metal, seafoam-green ironing board, stripped of its fabric covering and with small lumps protruding through its holes... Hung on a wall, the distended shape of the board becomes like a phalanxer's shield, pierced throughout by hardened lumps of chemical magic... *Flatiron 3* is similarly but even more thoroughly infested, and *Flatiron 1* has been almost entirely colonized. Contrary to a process of corrosion, these works do not depict the board's inevitable, entropic slide, eventually rusting away into a pile of iron dust... No, these processes of breakdown (and here the departure from a tradition of *vanitas* becomes evident) are externally imposed as an incompatible *other-thing* permeates that which we, fellow meaning-makers, clung to from the outset as familiar.

So, the question with which we are left is, is this really such a disaster? Is the integrity of the object to be prized above all? Of course not; all art is distortive, from the flattening of the world onto canvas to the melodrama of performance. So what, then, is gained or wrought by Reimer's perversions? What's remarkable about these configurations--which I have alternately read through the somewhat doom-and-gloom metaphors of viral infection, colonization, drowning, and corruption--is just how damned *funny* they are. We might well feel some level of pathos toward the poor, unfortunate stepladder as it is devoured by clam and muddy goop alike, and we may even feel some level of revulsion at its sweaty, pseudo-organic contours... but our next realization must surely be how totally absurd that sentence is.

And really, this could be the only truly useful and productive way of dealing with trauma--to dramatize, satirize, cartoon, or exaggerate our horror to the point of farce; to reclaim it as subject to our humour and whim. All comedy is, after all, violence, and all jokes craft a world only to tear it asunder; that is, they give us something familiar, predictable, expected, and then they punish us for that expectation.

In Freudian terms, all jokes ask us to play peek-a-boo with our parents in order to be prepared for their deaths.

Lee Henderson
July, 2014

BEATROUTE

SCULPTING THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Monday 14th, January 2013 / 13:10

in • [Art](#), • [British Columbia](#)

THE WORK OF JASMINE REIMER

Whenever I feel nervous in a conversation, I notice myself rhythmically flicking my middle finger against the inside of my thumb. This quirk is particular to me, but in general, everybody has one. Each person has at least one weird bodily ritual or mental process they use to guard themselves in situations that make them feel awkward, uncomfortable, or lost. This is a universal trait that binds us as much as it reinforces our uniqueness—and it's a precise type of peculiar interconnectedness that fascinates Jasmine Reimer.

Jasmine Reimer makes sculptures about this aspect of the human experience. "I go through my daily life observing and analyzing all the time," she says on a snowy Saturday morning at her studio off Commercial Drive. "I'm very tuned into human behaviour and interaction, so I unconsciously pick up on things that are pattern based—habitual things that somehow seem a little odd to me. I notice the objects that are inherently connected to those topics and take them back to my studio."

In Reimer's studio, one finds a whole array of what would typically be simple, everyday objects. Bits of a fence lean up against a wall; a stack of rice cakes lie on a table; heads of cauliflower are bunched together. However, Reimer takes these regular objects and embodies them with an inexplicable heaviness and hints of the human. The bits of fence are pierced by a cast finger, each board gently invaded and stripped of its strength; the stack of rice cakes is hidden as a secret underneath a plain table, disrupting and slightly shaking the person who notices; the cauliflower heads are pushed uncomfortably tight together in-between a V-shape of wooden planks. The cauliflower in particular boldly displays Reimer's skill as an artist: she has taken something as unremarkable as a vegetable and has somehow made it embody the brittle aspects of human nature with a unique poignancy. "The clusters of cauliflower emphasize our mass grouping," she tells me. "I was interested in clusters of people and their need for visual similarity. [Visual similarity] is about acceptance, reinforcement, confidence; this is where people get their strength from." Looking at the cauliflower, one immediately senses these themes, but not without an underlying darkness. Jasmine makes the cauliflower out of plain Hydrostone, giving each

head an elegant creaminess. By doing this, she emphasizes the inherent beauty of the simple cauliflower, yet also its similarity to the human head. She chooses to control these beautiful, innocent forms by placing them in between dominating, unsympathetic wooden planks. The cauliflower are helpless to the larger social forces at hand and forced to clump together, much like we humans are, too. The darkness of the cauliflower piece comes through in the rest of Jasmine's work. Curiously, though, Jasmine herself doesn't initially see the darkness until others point it out. "I would describe it as more of a sadness. There's always a sense of struggle and conflict in my work because I think that's inherent in life. People are always pushing to get somewhere, to go some place; there's always this movement against the struggle. So the cauliflower are huddled together, secured, and touching."

The gravity of touch and what it means for us humans is also a primary source of motivation for Jasmine. "When you brush up against somebody you have this energy," she explains. "You could have a very intimate conversation with somebody and never touch their hand, and it's not the same. There's a meaningful physicality to having someone near you." This fascination with touch is especially prominent in some of her older work. Up until recently, Jasmine made bulging, overlapping forms out of various fabrics. Each was a structure collapsing onto itself and its many layers—heavy, unapologetic, and blunt in its honesty. "I was exploring this need to pacify via a bodily indulgence. Eating, drinking, smoking; doing something in excess. Why do we need to take things to excess in order to feel the comfort?"

Jasmine is still quite fresh out of school: she graduated Emily Carr in 2009 after spending a year studying exclusively under Liz Magor and Ruth Beer, whom she credits with clarifying her sculptural practice. Currently, she is working on a city-commissioned sculpture project with high school students in Surrey, preparing for an upcoming show at The Commons Gallery as well as a show at Regina's Dunlop Art Gallery, and applying for grad schools abroad. Considering a very prominent change may soon be in place, does Jasmine feel the need for a thematic change in her work, too? Not quite. "As a human, I am looking for a sense of connection and belonging. I get a sense of that by exploring it through my work," she says. Just like the rest of us, Jasmine is searching for human comfort and interconnectedness. Although there are no definite answers, Jasmine is on the right path: by making work about these topics, she brings us all closer to understanding the vulnerabilities of being human.

Visit [Jasmine Reimer's website](#) for upcoming exhibit dates, including one group exhibition coming very soon at [The Commons Gallery](#) called *Anatomize Obfuscation* (opening reception on Jan. 16).

By Polina Bachlakova, presented by The Cheaper Show. The Cheaper Show is an annual art show showcasing emerging talent and affordable art.

Photo: Courtesy JasmineReimer.com

Who – me (what – this)? | by Tobin Gibson

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| Guadalupe Martinez

| Jasmine Reimer

\ Anna Wood

When has abstraction ever been outside of our motivations, gestures or bodies?

The decidedly precarious meeting place of the materials in *Anatomize Obfuscation* are points of convergence that we can relate to as easily as the vernacular objects, and contexts we engage with while walking home from our nearest grocer. Our appreciation for formal and aesthetic relationships come from that same place: It comes from the rear - from relationships that we can move from and remember: the colloquial aesthetic experience. The expanded definition of this phrase discusses the aesthetic conversations directed towards the mundane and ubiquitous. Be they objects, materials or gestures they lie in the realm of charged everyday.

The Commons is proud to present *Anatomize Obfuscation*, an exhibition of three female artists, based in Vancouver BC, whose works showcase a diverse array of “liberating” gestures for the mundane through performance, sculpture, collage and painting. Setup initially as a living system, this exhibition hopes to expose aesthetics at ground level while maintaining performative elements that reverse strict formal preoccupations. The activation of certain work, or sites, ignites an intimacy with the given materials through juxtaposition and reordering. Guadalupe Martinez and Jasmine Reimer leave objects exposed – panting and stressed – where they reintegrate into common systems of organization used for standardized materials. Stacked or leaning pieces of wood, cinderblocks, and foam of all varieties act as base material for their sculptures in order for this vernacular language to be outlined and expanded. Anna Wood engages with this kind of colloquial experimentation through surface. She renders with paint, collage and other two-dimensional mark makers. All three artists articulate a kind of deconstruction of the everyday through their interplay with material use value, form and

colour.

Can life be viewed as an aesthetic experience (like that of a video game or construction site)? Anatomize Obfuscation organizes the spaces that the employed materials occupy in ways that are as vernacular, and beautiful, as an early cup of Joe or successful birth. Martinez, Reimer and Wood use ostensibly banal materials to speak of the common object as being charged with aesthetic and social potential, aligning their humble nature within society through their formal gesture.

Anatomize Obfuscation opens up to the work of Guadalupe Martinez where, through its transformation over the duration of the exhibition, her installation seems to cycle through moments of expiration. Martinez involves herself with re-ordering a series of cinderblocks while weaving gold fabric through and around this structural material, alluding to the modular nature of her compositions. She employs objects that allude to participatory and cooperative action, or reaction, and fosters this through the possible prerogative of her installations whether they resemble a construction site, banner or blockade. Martinez's ostensibly impenetrable structures are quite illusive. Forms of social and physical architecture remain attached to her materials, whereby the interruption of space facilitates an object-ground relationship as illustrated through Study for a Compound Sentence (2013). The way in which Martinez employs materials and moments of suspended activity calls upon the uncanny, bringing the anxious and flux body back into the work.

Similarly, Jasmine Reimer uses surrealist gestures that seem to emerge from the very edges of her sculptures. These externally located objects are not embedded, but adorned in a way that seems closer to sensation. The body knows when it is spoken to. They emerge from pieces of foam, wood or found objects, as in Finger Fence (2012), pulling elements of the mundane from the body, the domestic and urban space into her sculptures. The works frame each other as they wipe away or meld into the architecture of the gallery. Reimer's sculptures seem to mutually reference a presumptive knowledge surrounding the everyday object, but this knowledge becomes

negated through the qualities that formalism brings to the mundane. Her quiet sculptures highlight minute relationships between objects and speak volumes of their material tensions as well as their overall placement across the series of work.

Wood plays on the unadulterated space of the canvas, using methods of cutting and pasting common maps alongside paint and ink. Their compositional interplay is perhaps best described to be at “street level”. Not that they fit into street-arts but their forms and materials reference a given site as well as their external world. These marks come from our surrounding architecture as well as what we have felt through the last half century of painting. Wood’s Untitled series asks for the same level of engagement as when we walk through a city that has been fabricated before our arrival or inevitable contribution, imposing standardized marks of abstraction.

These three artists present the everyday in a state between beginning and completing: a space of emergence – of process – of coming into being. Disciplines, ideologies and materials cross-fertilize in Anatomize Obfuscation to form a re-interpretation of these now reified objects. Looking at the exhibition space as a collaborative template, it oscillates between moments of construction and deconstruction as the everyday becomes aesthetic information to manipulate. Not only does the nature of collaboration as well as Martinez’s installation speak of the animate figure, Anatomize Obfuscation also cements the space of abstraction as being made by and for the body. This aesthetic tendency is of the vernacular and remains to be a latent motivation for architecture, design and art. The enigmatic tendencies of the surreal and uncanny manifest just as graphic lines and formal materials work alongside our bodies.

Tobin Gibson

Office Space

Jasmine Reimer's Dysfunctional Chairs

Oh, oh, and I almost forgot. Ahhh, I'm also gonna need you to go ahead and come in on Sunday too ...

– from the 1999 Mike Judge movie *Office Space*

What object or image could better sum up the whole experience of being employed as an office worker than the lowly and usually uncomfortable office chair? This notion has piqued the interest of Vancouver-based artist Jasmine Reimer in her response to our *Dysfunctional Chairs* series. The poor cramped, constricted, colonized body – victim of the tyranny of the wheeled chair on which one is required to remain seated for hours on end – certainly this would add up to be some people's version of hell. In Reimer's installation, however, she delves into the situation with an eye to its complexities. Is the chair really the problem, or is it a symptom of a larger dysfunction within society, encapsulating the plight of office clerks as drones, selling their productivity to their employer, but at the expense of their health?

The soft, stuffed, fabric components in Reimer's individual pieces read like so much bulging flesh, contained by really tight clothing, and seem to almost overpower the busted fragments of the office chairs into which they have been packed. Certainly the overweight office worker is a character that Reimer has observed in her real life, employed recently as she was at an ergonomic chair company in Vancouver for two years. Turning what some might see as a McJob into fodder for her art, Reimer began ruminating on the relationship between chair and body in the real world, not the rarified design studio. Is it due to their sedentary jobs that some people become overweight and then have problems sitting all day in their sedentary jobs? Reimer wrote that "... more often than not, alliance between body and chair is at best a compromise, as bodies are usually forced to perform in unnatural positions for extended periods of time in order to properly utilize an office chair."

Her exploration of the body with chair was a fairly natural segue from the artist's usual recent three-dimensional practice, in which she has been using fabric, at times contrasted with other tougher materials, to create enigmatic *objets* that tantalize a viewer's capacity for meaning making. We can also make connections to other artists' work, some of whom were inspirational to her in her student years, for example, Lynda Benglis's pioneering of new approaches and media for art from the 1970s. Another 1970s artist who comes to mind is Eva Hesse, with her revolutionary use of odd materials and exploration of psychologically redolent form. Louise Bourgeois has been a model for Reimer, as well as Brazil's Ernesto Neto, both of whom have explored sculpture in a non-modernist idiom.

Surely all viewers will bring their own interpretations to Reimer's *Dysfunctional Chair* works, including their personal memories or associations with their current circumstances. This will be reinforced by the size of the works, which is kept to human scale due to the real chair parts being used. By extrapolation, some might be able to imagine further aspects of the bland and impersonal office environment, which, with its cubicles and office park neighbourhoods, does form the context of working life for many individuals. One thing is sure, there is no feeling of judgment on the artist's part, either toward the obese bodies she alludes to in her soft, sand-filled forms, nor the industrially produced chairs, which she represents with pieces of discarded chairs scavenged from the garbage. Using subtle and slight visual humour, Reimer's work rather functions as an opening gambit, an invitation to look, and to consider.

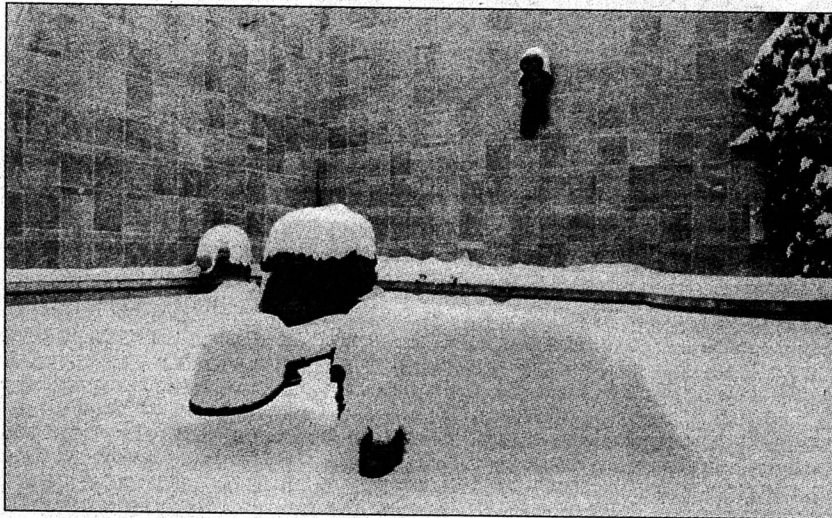
– Liz Wylie, Curator, Kelowna Art Gallery.

ENTERTAINMENT

▼ KELOWNA ART GALLERY

Reimer's take on Dysfunctional Chairs

The Kelowna Art Gallery's series of temporary, changing installations of contemporary art along the theme of a dysfunctional chair is now in its sixth incarnation.

ON
VIEW

CONTRIBUTED

JASMINE REIMER'S interpretation for the Kelowna Art Galleries on-going series, *Dysfunctional Chairs*, pictured here covered in snow.

world, whether under the capitalist economic system or another. Something of her reverie is reflected in the zany, improbable look to her pieces.

Her installation's title, 1000 lbs, 3 Days, refers to her back-breaking process of creating the works here, on site, back in December's frosty temperatures.

The Dysfunction-

al Chairs series has given the Kelowna Art Gallery the opportunity to work with artists interested in producing work a little removed from their general practices.

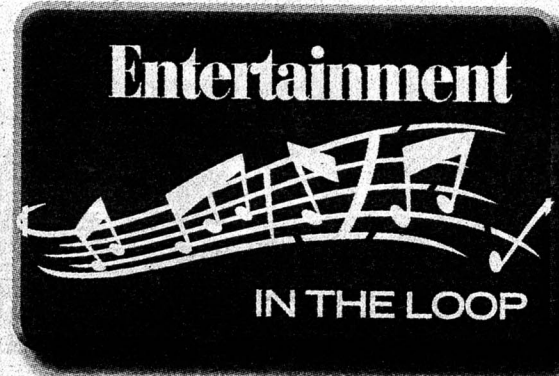
Each show runs for six months, and is accompanied by a black-and-white folder-style catalogue which is free to the public.

The series helps us further fulfill our mandate

of promoting and supporting the work of contemporary Canadian artists. Come and take a look sometime if we get another snowy day, when Reimer's works look a bit like frozen cartoons.

The show runs until June 12, so there will be ample time for a warm-weather visit as well.

Liz Wylie is the Kelowna Art Gallery curator.
250-762-2226



ARTIST IN HOUSE

Destanne Norris 7 pm Feb 24 @ Lake Country Art Gallery, 10356A Bottom Wood Lake.

Daphne Odjig 1-3 pm Feb 26 @ Hambleton Galleries, 1290 Ellis.

Bitter Girl dark comic romp 7:30 pm Feb 24-26. selectyourtickets.com or 250-717-5304

Carlos Del Junco March 12

COMMUNITY THEATRE Okanagan Art Awards Feb 23 selectyourtickets.com

Royal Winnipeg Ballet 1:30 & 7:30 pm March 22. Ticketmaster.ca

KELOWNA CLUBS

Elite Force & Rico Tubbs Feb 24 @ Sapphire, 238 Leon

ROTARY CENTRE

KELOWNA ACTOR'S STUDIO
Brighton Beach
Memoirs to Feb 27.

CREEKSIDE THEATRE
Music of the Louisiana Hayride Feb 26 250-766-9309

EMMANUEL CHURCH

Art Is {Hope} 7 pm Feb 25 @ 2600 Hebert Rd West Kelowna. www.globalcitizenkelowna.org/2011-events/art

FUNDRAISER

ARTS Council of the Central Okanagan, Mad Hatter Extreme Tea Party March 4, 6:30-9:30 pm @ 1864 Harvey Ave. 250-861-4123 or info@artsco.ca.

WRITER IN HOUSE

Patrick Lane, Witness: Selected Poems 7 pm Feb 24 @ Kelowna Library, 1380 Ellis.

EXPERIENCE THE ORIGINAL!

that seem designed to injure us?

Reimer's practice was and still is centred around producing soft sculptural works, using fabric a great deal of the time. She combined this penchant with some scavenged and purchased chair parts and other hardware to make the four works currently on view in the Kelowna Art Gallery's Rotary Courtyard space.

Recumbent and bulging forms droop listlessly as they protrude from or over pieces of chairs. These elements look like fancy, wheeled animal traps.

Although they appear lightweight, Reimer's pleasantly plump shapes were made by packing pounds and pounds of dense sand into her sewn fabric cases. This made for a waterproof medium, important in this case, as the Rotary Courtyard space is exposed to the elements.

Viewers are free to make up their own minds about the social issues being presented by the imagery in this work. Reimer is not proselytizing and does not stand in judgment over either chair designers or office workers. She does seem to be wondering in an open-ended kind of way, however, about the cultural values of the work-a-day

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True Art Lies

Lesley Anderson on Jasmine Reimer *Slump* Exhibition at 304 Days Gallery, Vancouver BC
Oct 16th, 2010

In the Frontage of 304 days, a cool, florescent light flickered from below, lighting a long horizontal shelf in the window. It served as support for four subjects arranged in an asymmetrical fashion along the length of it. These four soft-bodied objects sagged and rested on the shelf, resembling slugs in a garden. The creature in the middle dangled an appendage over the edge, while the one the far right teetered there threatening to fall, yet remained perfectly balanced. Their colours were soft pastels: pink, rose, mauve, cream, clashing somewhat with the dramatic lighting and the slug-like shapes. The shelf, on which these forms rested, on closer inspection, was a piece in its own right. Light bounced off a polished black surface that snaked along the wall and a plush looking pink underbelly hung below this rigid surface. The word 'Slump', written in sans-serif capitals, greeted the visitor from the window. Beneath the title, the name 'Jasmine Reimer' read between the ominous bars that guarded the entrance.

On entering the space, I encountered a wash of white walls and bright track lights. My eye came to rest first on an eye-level sculpture across the room that was jutting from a dividing wall. But before I could give this piece my full attention my eyes were pulled upward by a flash of colour to meet an object hanging above the door to the left. A very long shelf reached across the room from wall to wall crossing overtop of the viewer. The piece was perched there and one sensed the weight of it by the way the supporting shelf bowed beneath it. The piece, *Pile*, is a 'dog pile' of beanbag forms, in the same Easter-like palette as the work seen from outside. On the bottom of the heap is a fleshy pink form, with ribbons of bright pink swirling across its ribbed texture like ice cream. The imprint of a seam or elastic mark is visible; a crease that follows the bulge and curve of the work. As I stepped left to see more, I noticed how the piece folded itself over its display, not just resting on it, but also curling under and hooking onto the shelf. A yellow form flopped over the pink one with many creases pinching where it folded, then a purple form, then green, then more

purple. A flash of blue nestled between the pinks and yellows. The effect of their colour was cheerful. The shapes appeared soft, yielding and pliable.

I returned to the piece that I had temporarily put on hold, *Bundle*, jutting from the wall. Three forms appeared to have collapsed in exhaustion. The first is flesh tone, draping off the edge and gathering in puckers on the top. The second is light yellow, butted up against the pink from behind with a knot reaching from one side. The third form is light green, flopping somewhat seductively over the other. They look like pillows, but not quite. They look like organs, but not really. They look anthropomorphic, but lifeless.

Reimer's work is self-described as relating to the body. In the interview for the show with 304 days, the artist talks of interest in fabric in that it lies next to the skin, man-made sacks that imitate the body. Her inspiration drawn from how ones flesh fills containments. *Slump* embodied all these discomforts of the body in clothing: tight elastics, bulges that threaten to burst and rolling masses that spill over.

What may be startling to the viewer is how the soft, drooping, sagging sculptures created are in fact not soft or pliable at all. They are solid, cast from hydrostone and plaster. Once the material hardens in the mold, the form is fixed. Reimer sews her own shaped sacks, filling them with plaster and, in her words, "letting them become whatever they become"¹. Once the material has hardened, the mold must be removed. In a violent kind of birth the mold is torn away, sometimes leaving soft cotton fibers clinging to the finished work. The marvel of this process is the amount of detail that is retained in the finished piece, the crisscross of fabric threads, ribbing, seams, elastics, creases, that gather, bulge and bunch.

Back at the exhibition, in the right corner of the room was a piece titled *Partition*. It was composed of a plank of wood, painted white, standing vertically with its edge tucked into the corner. The effect divided the corner in half. At the bottom of this divider, scrunched down to the floor, was a sack like form, bunched at the edges of the plank, hugging the bottom of it like a sock. A pinching in the middle divided the sock piece into a bulbous lower half, and a smaller upper. Beneath a thin coat of creamy yellow the piece was blue. The thinness of the

topcoat allowed the blue to show through in areas, the effect becoming that of a sickly greenish hue.

I turned to move toward the second half of the exhibition, but not before confronting a heap on the floor that leaned against the wall: *Seize*. Two arms reached upward, pinned to a narrow strip of wood, installed diagonally on the wall very close to the floor. The work appeared as though it were trapped in shackles and pinned to the wall. The sallow lump of folds drew thoughts of uncooked chicken to mind, visions of translucent and pimpled skin. To the left, just beyond the dividing wall, lay a somewhat matching counterpart. This piece, *Hoard*, sat on the floor like the previous work, *Seize*, with a cherry stained piece of wood lying parallel to the wall. Two fatigued blue arms draped over this piece of wood with the rest of its blue shape sinking behind; sandwiched between the wall and the wood. Perched atop the blue, was a green organ-like shape sitting upright. It reached up against the wall squishing the blue form beneath its weight.

Past the partition wall on wheels, in the second half of the exhibition, I could see that the eye-level shelf, supporting the piece *Bundle*, continued beyond the wall and into space on the other side. Dangling from this other side was *Knoll*, pink and floppy. Two arm like projections flopped over the sides hugging a corner between them, reaching under and hanging on. Again we have ribbing, seams and gathering on the top of the work.

To the right and on the floor was a strange sight. Just off the floor and running along the wall to the corner was another long white shelf and huddled there in the bottom left corner was a dark little creature, *Easy 1*. Looking fuzzy, it wrapped itself around something black and shiny in its clutches – a caster wheel. It seemed to have its back to the viewer as it sulked there and appeared unwilling to turn around.

On the back wall at chest height a short bare wood shelf sat in space. Sitting atop this shelf and leaning back against the wall rested a blue, fuzzy-looking ball: *Easy 2*. An upward fold in its shape from beneath gave the piece the look of a tooth, or two stubby legs. The ‘blue tooth’ wore a grey-blue hat that was rumpled. An unexpected feature in the display was the circular hole drilled through the shelf directly below the tooth. A stark shadow was cast

below the shelf by the bright track lights above, and in this shadow is a crescent shaped peek of light, shining from between the legs of the tooth and the hole of the shelf.

Returning to the floor, my eyes examined the work in the lower right hand corner of the room: *Division*. A piece of wood painted white, roughly 2 by 3 feet, sat squarely in the corner. Starting from the floor, moving up from the bottom edge crept a fluid shape. On the floor it flowed like pink clay and there were two black wheels on the bottom that were enveloped in the fleshy drape. As the clay inched upward its form began to change and break apart, from a distance it began to look vaguely like fire. The colour, however, was nothing like fire, closer to the colour of salmon or fiberglass insulation. Just to the right of this at roughly chest height hung: *Easy 5*. I saw another shiny black caster wheel protruding from the wall. A leathery looking green sack rested across it, its weight falling off to either side of the wheel and resting underneath. The seams of the sack created two diagonal lines leading up to the dark eye of the wheel. Along the seams, the leather gathered and puckered.

In Reimer's work, the sagging sacks that droop under the tug of gravity rely on trial and error and artistic intuition to be realized. The process and exploration of materials becomes so significant to the results. This type of process calls to mind the work of Eva Hesse, who utilized unconventional, malleable materials such as latex and rubber to create her sculptures. In comparing Reimer to Hesse, many parallels can be drawn formally and thematically. Hesse used memory, sexuality, self-awareness and humour as inspiration for her work; allowing forms to emerge from the interaction of the processes inherent in her materials, as well as natural forces of gravity. Reimer's work employs these things to great affect in her own work. Many of her bodily forms slouch somewhat comically, oozing with sexuality and ruminations on the body. Hesse's creations sag and nod toward the floor, the pendulous shapes provoking associations with gestation, growth and sex. Her emotionally loaded themes were ones that minimalists set-aside during a period of dominant reductivism². Like Hesse, Reimer's work is a refusal to shy away from loaded themes.



Eva Hesse is not the only relation that comes to mind when considering Reimer's work and I would like to draw the link to another sculptor that used the power of gravity to create sagging forms in space. The work of Claes Oldenburg is reflected in Reimer's approach. In his soft sculpture works such as *Floor Cake* or *Soft Toilet*, his flaccid and pathetic looking forms have all the vulnerability of human flesh. Oldenburg's work followed a self-proclaimed doctrine that art should literally be made out the ordinary world. "Its space should be our space, its time our time, its objects our ordinary objects, the reality of art will replace reality"². The use of an everyday object, the caster wheel, is a repeated element in Reimer's work. This tiny object brings to mind a place of work, such as an office and the reality of the daily grind. It's incorporated into the work surrounded in folds, creating visions of flesh engulfing them entirely. The work exudes anxieties about the degradation of the body in the office environment. Oldenburg described his practice as "the detached examination of human beings through form". Reimer's practice could be described as an examination of human beings through form, as well as the form of human beings.



In every sculpture the viewer's eyes move along the sags and curves of Reimer's creations knowing that they are rock hard and impenetrable. It is in these contrasts that we find the charge of the work: Soft/Hard, Comedic/Tragic, Attraction/Repulsion, Public/Private. What is perceived as soft, saggy and plush is in reality rigid and unyielding. These colourful pieces that sometimes read as playful and toy-like, can equally be perceived as grotesque. There is humour in the way they flop and stack on top of one another, silliness intertwined with the pathetic and cuddly with disgusting. These qualities create an attraction/repulsion conflict within the viewer.

The most fascinating binary of Reimer's work is the private/public. In the interview for *Slump*, Reimer spoke about the divide between her private and public self, revealing a very personal theme in the show: that the private is a sacred thing to her, not to be shared easily or with just anyone - it must be hard won. In the layout of the *Slump* there was a dividing wall that severed the exhibition space into two halves. The partition served as a symbol for a division of the private and public sectors of Reimer's life. One recalls that the pieces *Bundle*

and *Knoll* existed on a plane that intersected the two rooms. This signals the partitions defeat, that the division of the self is an unsuccessful attempt and that no such segregation of self can be complete without cross contamination.

In speaking about this kind of ‘bi-life’¹, Jasmine touches on guarding the private and the hazards of secrecy. It can lead to a gloomy daily prison and a tenuous environment that is impossible to maintain. The title of the show, *Slump*, is a perfect title, loaded with implications. Linked to the body and weight, the word ‘slump’ can also be used to describe a period of deterioration or decline: personal or professional. Her work proclaims that the bi-life leads to alienation and ultimately collapses.

Reimer’s sculptures are strangely sad and sweet, charming in their vulnerability, as are the themes for the show. But with what was said on concealing her true self from the public, I was left with a lingering skepticism on whether or not her work could be genuine. I believe now that Reimer’s work is as honest as it can be. Artistically Reimer is dealing with the difficult task of defining her own boundaries and I could argue that we all struggle with this burden. Personal limits are unknowable until one steps too far and must come back again. I feel that the work is brave, brimming with the tension of navigating the self. As a result, the work flips the viewer back and forth between its extremes. On the one hand, her work is very sexy, yet on the other it is self-conscious and anxious. Simultaneously it can be funny and sad. In this way it is exciting and exhausting as the viewer, being emotionally lead down so many paths at once (yet another contrast). However, Reimer knows there can be no alternative. She must reveal to test her limits and we are happy to look on. The show is ultimately performative, and in this act of self-exhibition the true art lies.

¹ Artist Interview with 304 days

² Arnason, H.H. History of Modern Art. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 2003, pp. 492, 606-608