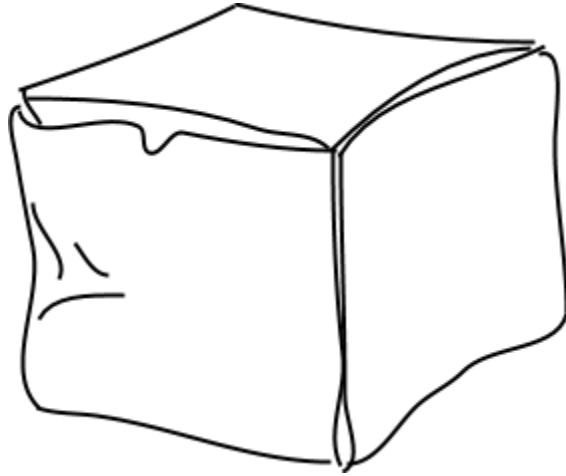


MANUAL:
A CATALOG OF WORK AND PLAY

A Supporting Paper
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Art
University of Minnesota
By Chris Groth

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Fine Arts Degree
2015

Committee:
Thomas Rose, Chair
Chris Larson
Ilene Dawn Alexander



Tupá-Siĥe

“...nothing is more useful than to fix in the mind a few figures that will serve as milestones to give quick comparative judgement of material characteristics.”¹

¹ George Brady, *Materials Handbook* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1956), ix.

A FOREWORD FOR THE USER

Manual is an account of work and play. It is crafted, in form, as a catalog of encyclopedic entries meant to illustrate the facets of an artistic practice. It functions as a tool to illuminate the spirit of work and play without attempting to construct distinct hypotheses for investigation. *MANUAL* does not employ the scientific method as much a speculative mentality and an embracing of failure. These entries are elaborations on and digressions from titles, tools, theories, processes, and pieces of my practice meant to be used as a companion and reference. The following entries vary from factual descriptions of materials, to fictional stories, to playful digressions from theories. Here is established a language of work and play.

While it is important to note distinctions between work and play, the two are not exclusionary concepts. At the root of both are elements of action, process, and purpose which form a sense of their existence. Within these elements of work and play, each are littered with contradictions and conundrums. Scattered throughout *MANUAL* are bits of nonsense and redundancy.

Work is the means for production. A set of rules or tasks are established in an organized or predetermined manner. It is process. It is making. It is craft. Work is found in traces within the material; i.e., marks on the surface, buildup of residue, and means of assemblage. Work refers to labor, sweat, and monotony. Work is the idea of manipulation.

Play is a method for developing situation. Play permits the making of rules and the freedom to break them. Play allows attribution of equal weight to the extraordinary and the mundane. Play encourages failure. According to Piaget's Cognitive Theory, play encourages accommodation as a mode of experience and development.

Accommodation instigates an "attempt to imitate and interact physically with the environment"². Though imitation is obvious in the behavior of children, it does not end with development. We are constantly imitating our observations.

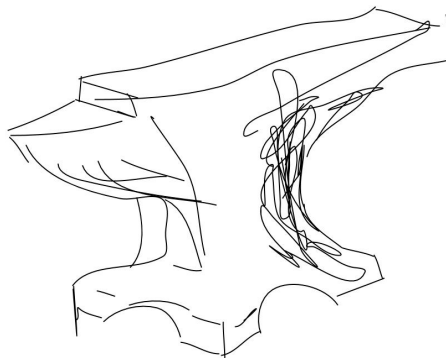
² <http://www.csun.edu/~sb4310/theoriesplay.htm>

absence

I wandered the woods on the edge of a rural Wisconsin town. On my adventure I collected mysterious bits of discarded debris. I discovered a half empty bottle of “Yoo-hoo”. I threw the bottle at a granite boulder. The explosion of the bottle was louder than a firecracker. I felt it in my chest. The scattering of glass, the splattering of “Yoo-hoo”, and the echoing of sound was mesmerizing. I revisited this place, hoping to rediscover my experience, but the echoes were gone.

anvil

A 16” x 8” x 5” piece of steel, work hardened by a locomotive, used in metalsmithing. Anvils are often mounted to a stand approximately raising its face to the height of a metalsmith’s knuckles. Softer metal is then hammered upon its surface to alter its size, shape, dimensions, etc. The most basic of anvils are composed of a base, a face, and a horn. More elaborate anvils have a step and a pair of holes called hardy and pritchel. Each variety of anvil is designed to accommodate a particular process.



“In the old days the anvil was used on holidays such as the Fourth of July, or Christmas Day in the South, for a purpose far removed from

blacksmithing. Men still alive today can remember as boys the excitement of “blowing” the anvil in the street in front of the blacksmith shop on a gala day. Two anvils were needed for this operation. One was laid on the street face down, and the cavity in its base was filled with black powder. Another anvil was placed rightside up on the base of the first so that the cavities of the two coincided. A fuse was then placed between the two and was lit while the expectant boys and men, standing at a good distance, watched with eager anticipation as the small cloud of smoke indicated the progress of the fire through the fuse. Then suddenly there was a roar, a flash of orange flame, and a cloud of white, odoriferous smoke. Ringing merrily the upper anvil was thrown several feet into the air before falling to the ground. The whole exciting business was then repeated as long as the supply of black powder lasted.”³

bundle

A set of objects are tied into a group by a piece of material with malleable characteristics similar to

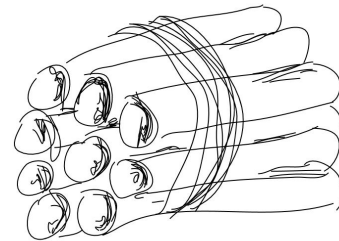
lead. To bundle is to gather some things for

purpose. Most often, bundling is a means for

organization, transportation, or unification. A bundle is a group and operates as such.

There are parts and there is a whole. In the words of Robert Morris a form with a strong

gestalt achieves “a maximum resistance to perceptual separation”.⁴ Bundles do not



³ Alex Bealer, *The Art of Blacksmithing*(New York: Funk and Wagnalls 1969), 72-73.

⁴ Robert Morris, *Notes on Sculpture 1-3*, ed. Harrison and Wood, *Art In Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*(Oxford:Blackwell 2006), 828-830.

function as a form with a particularly strong gestalt. Bundles vibrate somewhere between the perception of parts and a gestalt.

catalog

A visual record of things used over a period of time. One example of a catalog is the work by Morna E. Gregory and Sian James. Their work, *Toilets of the World*, begins to establish a record of cultural and environmental variation within a universal space.

copper

She took two drags on the cigarette. I was still standing facing the lamp, when suddenly I kept looking at her. I looked her up and down and she was still copper; no longer hard and cold metal, but yellow, soft, malleable copper. "I'd like to touch you," I said again. And she said; "You'll ruin everything." I said: "It doesn't matter now. All We have to do is turn the pillow over in order to meet again." And I held my hand out over the lamp. She didn't move. "You'll ruin everything," she said again before I could touch her. "Maybe, if you come around behind the lamp, we'd wake up frightened in who knows what part of the world." But I insisted: "It doesn't matter." And she said: "if we turned over the pillow, we'd meet again. But when you wake up you'll have forgotten."⁵

⁵ Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog* (New York, Harper Collins 1984), 56.

extrusion

An extrusion can be seen as the output in a system of manufacturing. For instance a two by four inches extrusion of earthenware clay (in varying lengths) will be made by forcing the clay through an aluminum die with a two by four inch opening. The extruded clay is proportionate to the force exerted on the clay while in the extruder. Upon firing the clay, the dimension of the extrusion will shrink and the final product will be one and one half by three and one half inches. Of course a tolerance of +/- .035" must be allowed.

failure

Obtaining an outcome different than expected or desired is often accompanied by an emphasis of negative connotations, but failure also brings humor, humility, and surprise. It is in failure we learn, develop, and adjust. Thomas J. Glover, compiler of *Pocket Ref*, acknowledges in his preface the inevitability of failure.⁶ It is noteworthy a book meant to be a reference for facts, figures, and instructions would expressly acknowledge the existence of failure as a human. It is a conundrum to expect error in a place looked to for specific accurate figures.

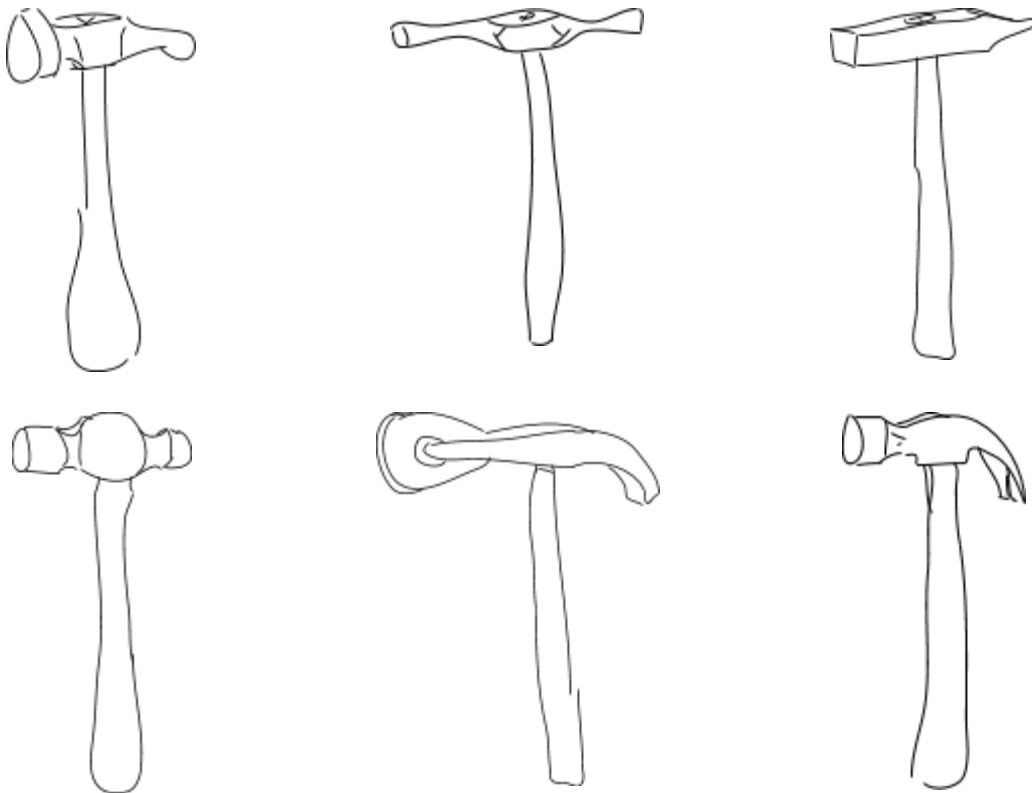
felt

While traditionally made for clothing and ancient fabrics, felt is used in a multitude of applications. Fibers or hairs are tangled in chaos to create a larger form. Wool is the

⁶ Thomas Glover, *Pocket Ref* (Colorado: Sequoia 2005), 4.

most apt material for felting and can be mixed with up to eighty percent of another material to achieve various properties. For example cotton or rayon is blended with wool for most clothing to prevent voids.⁷ Felt is a symbol for labor, for work. As Karl Marx posits, there is value in the nature of the thing; worth that is tied to the resources and labour within it.⁸

hammer



⁷ George Brady, *Materials Handbook*(New York: McGraw-Hill 1956), ix.

⁸Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1*,<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm>.

hangman

An image or symbol drawn in a particular manner:

1. gallows (base to top)
2. right hemisphere of head
3. left hemisphere of head
4. right side of torso
5. bottom
6. left side of torso
7. right arm
8. right leg
9. left leg
10. left arm



The Hangman serves to represent play. Its roots are in games played on school bus rides for forty-five minutes straight. It must be drawn in a particular manner or the game is unfair/invalid. Its fruition implies failure; the inability to accomplish the word puzzle.

hung

The old tire swing hung on the maple tree in the front yard. Bodies hung from arms, from wrists, from fingers, wrapped around the branches of the maple tree. Clothes hung from the line with pins pinching tight, strung to the maple tree. Orange, brown, and red hung from branches as whole, as patches, as one.

iron

الحديد, željezo, желязо, ferro, 铁, 鐵, željezo, železo, jern, ijzer, iron, raud, Silitysrauta, fer, Eisen, σιδήρου, an fè, ברזל, लौह, hlau, vas, besi, ferro, 鉄, Sut HabmoHwl', 철, dzelzs, geležies, besi, ħadid, hierro, jern, hierro, آهن, Żelazko, ferro, fier, Утюг, гвожђе, gvoždě, železo, železa, hierro, järn, เหล็ก, demir, залізо, آهنی, sáit, haearn

mold

Derived from greek, the word enantiomorph in english means opposite form. The creation of molds or opposite forms has been around for longer than humans. Fossils, craters, and river beds in their very creation and existence are enantiomorphs. The water of the Mississippi flows the path of least resistance. The earth shapes the form of the river. This relationship is most dynamic as the river also shapes the earth. One is constantly forming the other. Another captivating mold found in nature relates closely to the molds created in modern foundries. Lava spit from the earth gathers on trees, building up layer by layer. Eventually the heat and restriction of the hardened lava kills the tree and what is left is a whole which has captured even the most delicate of tree bark patterns.

peg board

Flats planes float just in front of another larger plane. The small holes methodically fall through the foreground backwards, a pattern which could be extrapolated infinitely. The holes are one of function. Their purpose: for filling, for holding, for organizing space. Empty, it is a void, a question mark.

process sheet

A set of instructions is helpful to accomplish the task at hand. These instructions set the expectations of an input, an effort, and an output. A process sheet pertains to one small section of a series of processes. Every process sheet is preceded and followed with a series of processes. Often instructions are compiled with pictures of proper execution in order to provide visual indication of completion. In the inevitable case of irregularities, a tolerance or deviance from the norm is established to allow for variance in results. Images of failures commonly associated with a particular process are helpful when included at the end of a process sheet.

putt-putt

A 1989 4 cylinder truck(red) with bed dimensions measuring 77" x 64". It is a versatile piece of machinery most commonly used to haul scavenged goods from place to place. Its bed space also functions as a motor home on trips and at Iron casting events.

rack

A rigid system for hanging and organising tools and materials hung on the wall. The most versatile and commonly occurring rack system is pegboard. Its ability to be adjusted by the operator provides a seemingly infinite number of possible configurations, making pegboard applicable in nearly every place where a rack is needed.

repousse

In order to hammer sheet metal into a desired form, one must first select the material from which the form will be made. Sheets of copper are most desirable due to its material characteristics. Copper affords the ability to be annealed into a very soft state and work hardened into a stiff and rigid state. Anvils, mandrels, and swage blocks are tools vital for tradition repousse work. Forms are made by gradually hammering the copper into, onto, and around the tools previously mentioned. The hammers used to create the varying types of forms are specific to a particular task. Much like working with fabric, paper patterns are helpful in the process of determining edges and changes in a repousse design.

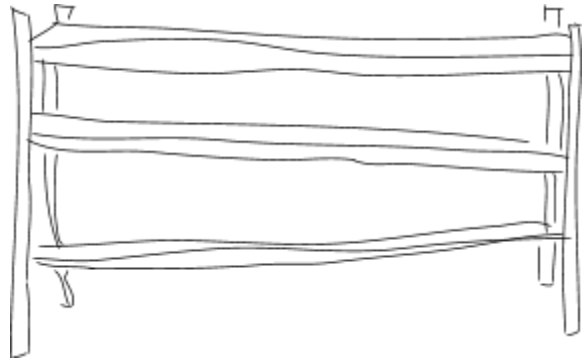
sew

Here is an idea of a right and a wrong side. Here is the creation of a form; of inner and outer. Here is a consideration of edge, seam, and pattern. Here are manifestations of

mark making, surface, and texture. Here are cultures of environment, expression, and community.

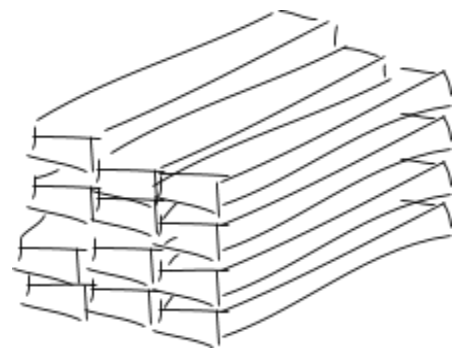
shelf

Artist Laura Feldberga (among others) has used shelves to collect, gather, and display work. The shelf provides a context for the objects organized upon it. Also, its function is literally one of storage, display, and organization.



stack

A set of objects are placed one form on another. Often in line with gravity, a stack is made vertically. Repetition creates rhythm. A stack is a form made by infants, made by industry, and made with folded clothes. Stacks are a gathering of objects and begin to form a gestalt. However without the act wrapping or binding the individual parts together, the gestalt is not as strong as a bundle. Stacks are useful in applications where building, modeling, storing, and organizing are necessary.



swage

A block of material whose perimeter is in the shape of a skinned animal hide. There are multiple negative spaces located around the swage varying in size, shape, and dimension. The combination of the perimeter and the negative spaces create a versatile array of both positive and negative spaces upon which one can form any number of materials.



tool

Here is the concept of something useful. A hammer, for example, is used by a philosopher in thought experiments on thingness, a blacksmith in the manipulation of steel, and a pianist playing a sonata. In each case the tool is a way to extend one's body and mind. The tool becomes part of the the user as much as their eyes or hands.

traces

Is it possible the absence of something can be felt as much as its presence? Are there always traces of the thing and these traces are what is felt? Can the enantiomorph (re mold) be the absence of something materialized? A mold is a conundrum. It is a question, a void, while simultaneously existing as material as the thing to be cast within.

tube

Here is an idea of something useful. A hollow cylinder is extruded from clay. Its ends are torn and open. The surface of a tube is rough and reveals evidence of its composition and creation. Its form and material are suggestive but not specific.



wool

Most commonly the hair of sheep, wool is covered in cuticles which act much like the popular hook and loop material (trade name Velcro). As the fibers are worked together with a combination of heat, moisture, and friction, the fibers are worked into a tighter cohesive group.

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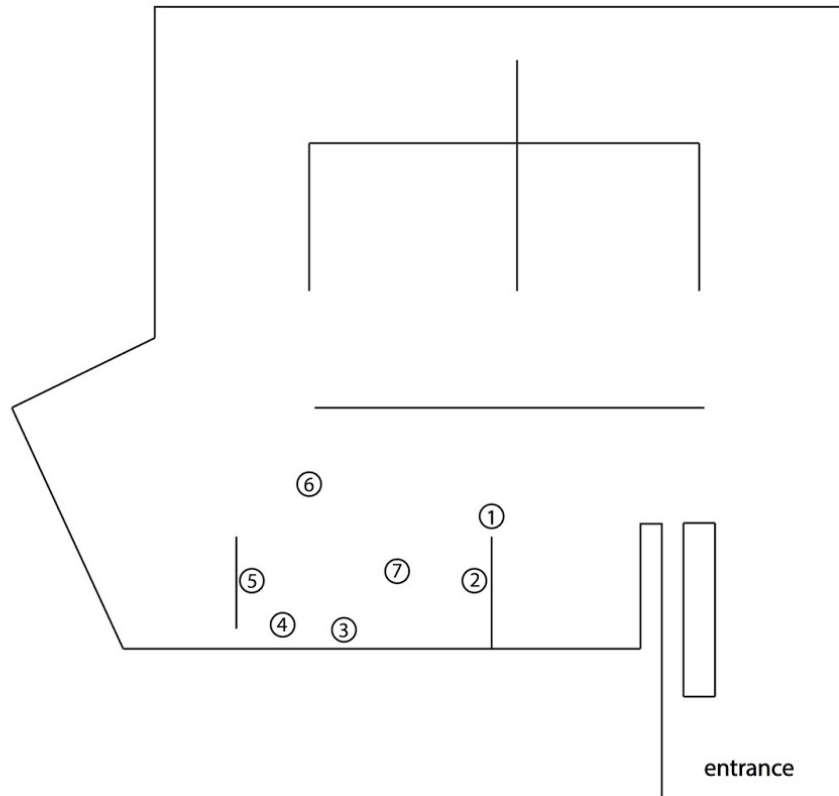
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1. ladder.
rabbit skin glue, cast aluminum.
2015.

2. bench vice.
iron and steel bench vice
ground to dust.
2015.

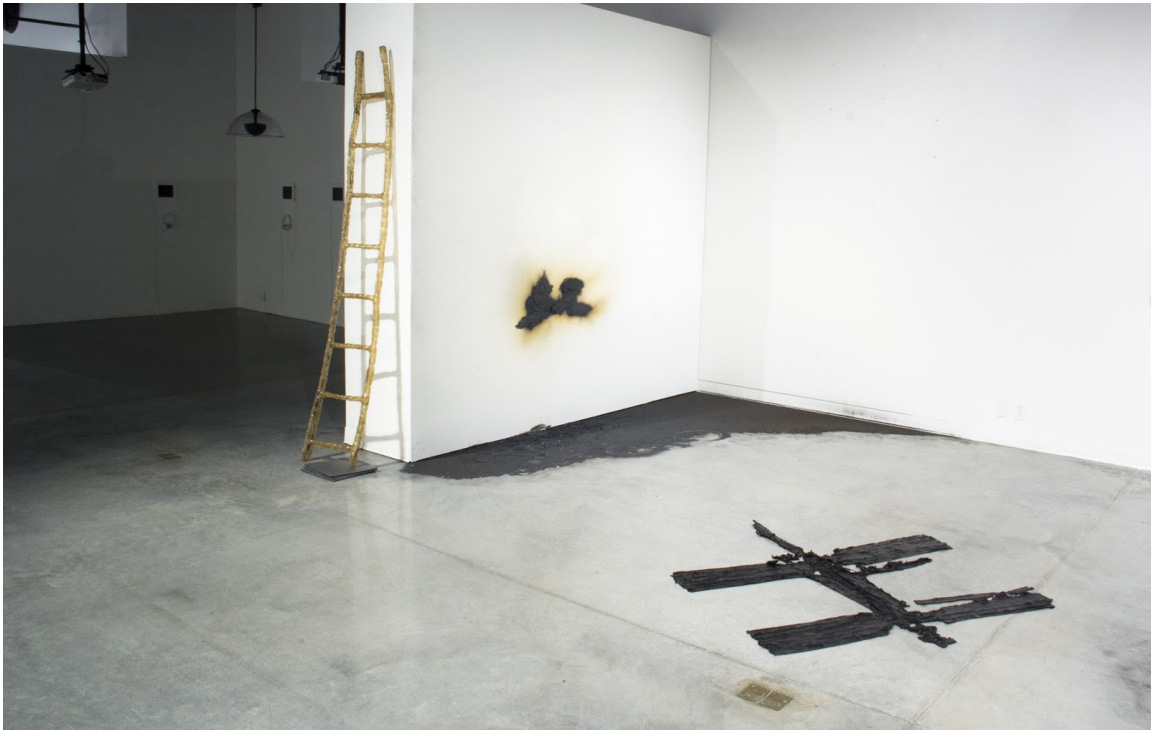
3. pegboard.
cast aluminum.
2015.

4. stool.
rabbit skin glue.
2015.

5. rack.
cast aluminum, aluminum rod.
2015.

6. light.
rabbit skin glue, cast aluminum, steel.
2015.

7. saw horse.
acrylic paint.
2014.





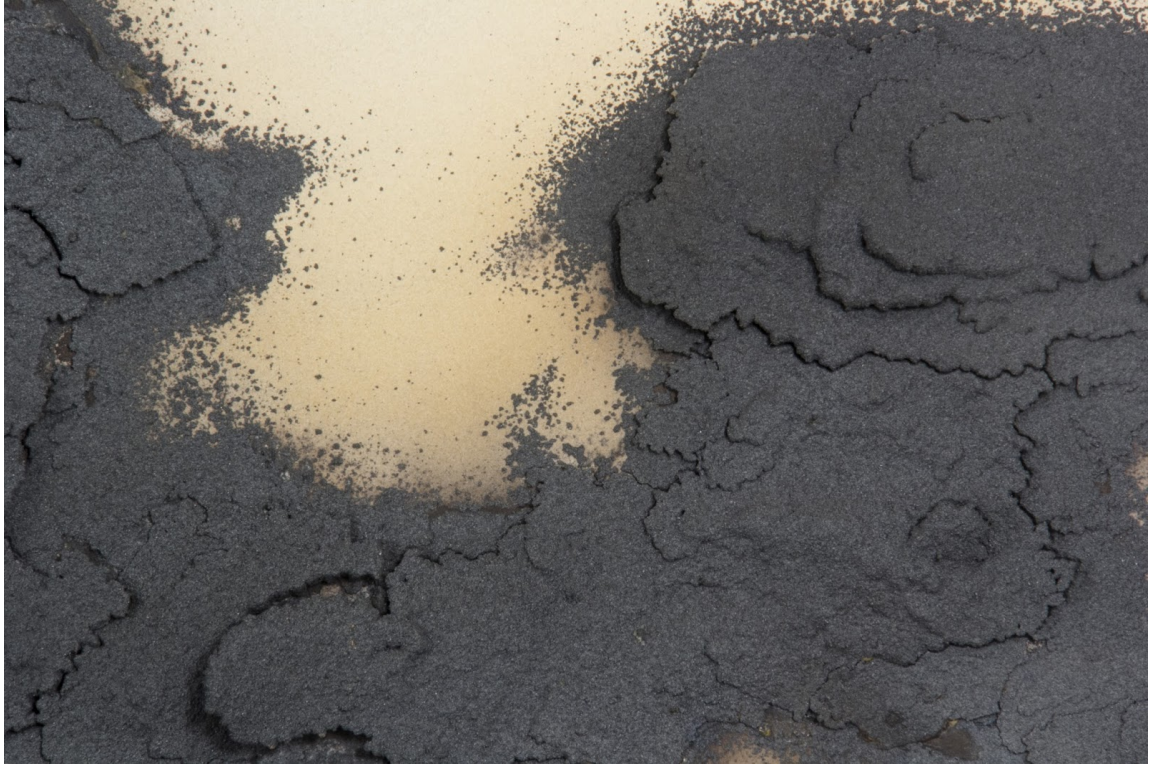
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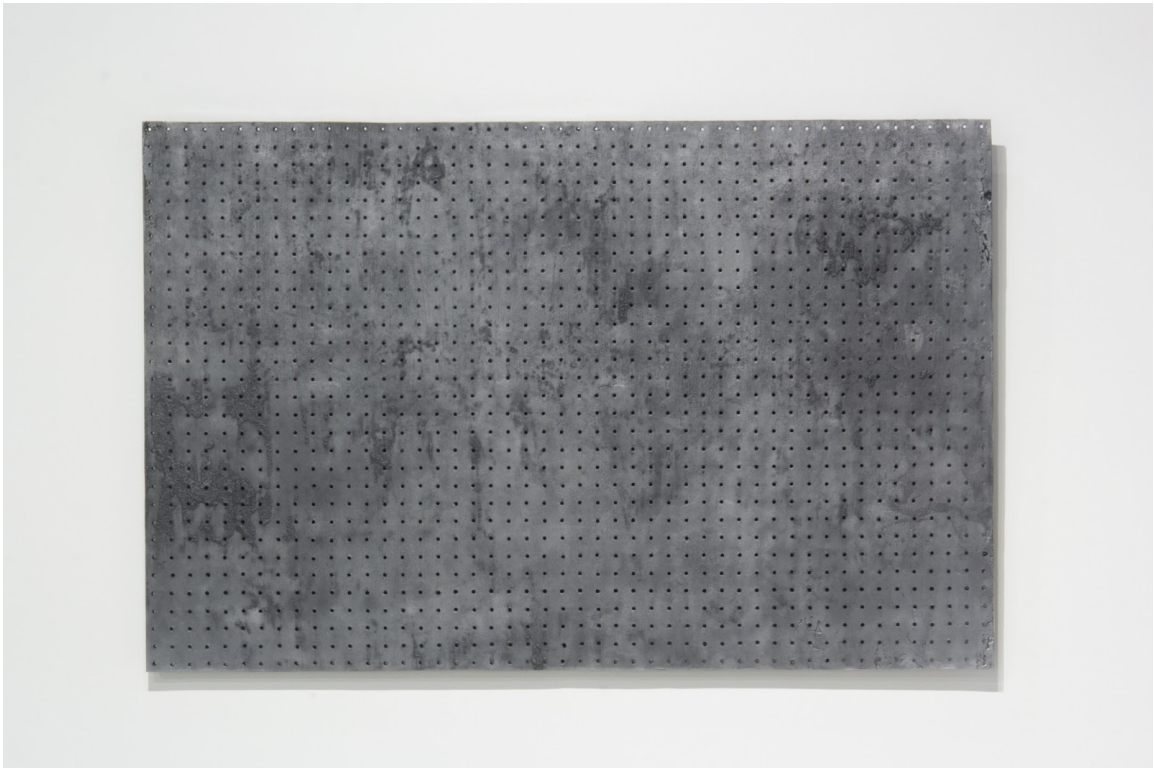


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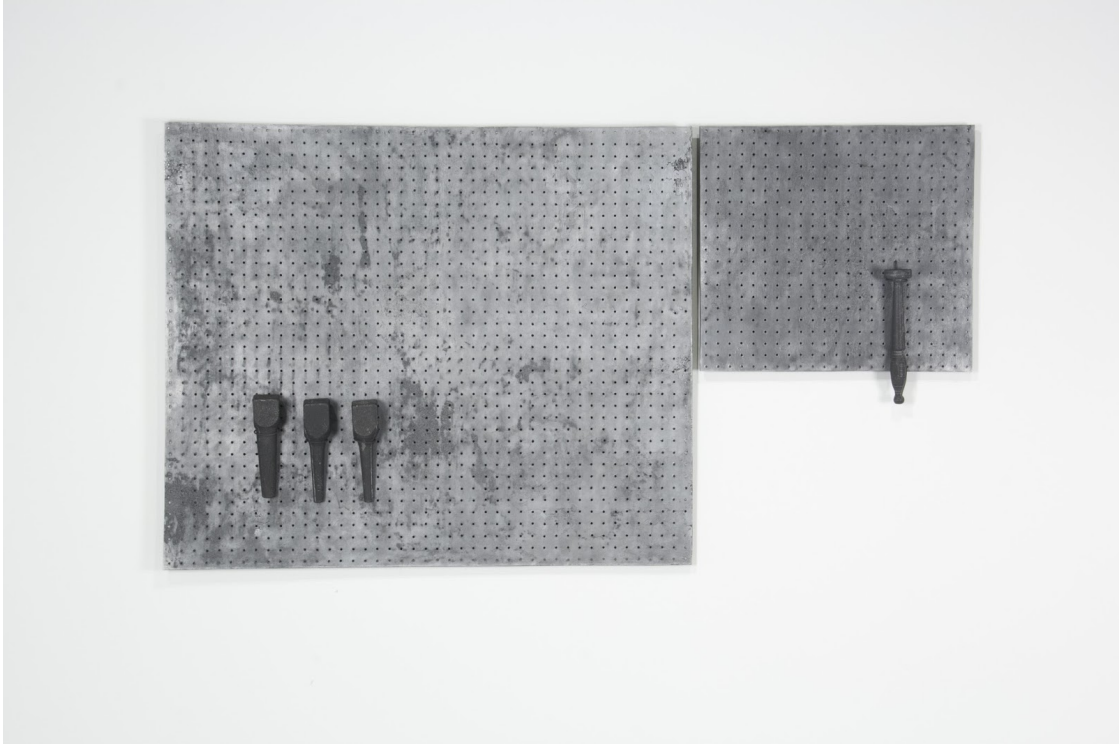


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C.V.

CHRISTOPHER M. GROTH

3514 14th Ave S. #108
Minneapolis, Mn 55407
United States of America
920.915.5426
christopher.m.groth@gmail.com
chrisgroth.com

EDUCATION

- 2015 MFA with Certificate in Higher Education University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN(Expected May 2015)
- 2009 BA *Cum Laude with Distinction in Studio Arts* and Management Minor Saint Olaf College, Northfield, MN

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

TEACHING

- 2015 Instructor of Record University of Minnesota Minneapolis, MN (Intro Sculpture)
- 2013-2015 Teaching Assistant University of Minnesota Minneapolis, MN (Intermediate and Advanced Foundry[Co-Instructed Spring 2014])
- 2012-2015 Teaching Assistant University of Minnesota Minneapolis, MN (Introduction to Sculpture)
- 2012-2015 Leonardo's Basement, Course Developer and Instructor, Minneapolis, MN
- 2014 Metal Casting Workshop Instructor, Anoka Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids, MN
- 2012 Teaching Assistant University of Minnesota Minneapolis, MN (Concepts in Art)
- 2010-2011 Northfield Public Schools Education Assistant, Northfield, MN (Low-Incidence)
- 2009-2010 Saint Olaf College Art Apprentice, Northfield, MN

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

- 2014 Artist Lecture, College of St. Benedict and St. John's University, St. Joseph, MN
- 2014 Production Assistant, George Beasley, *Basket Furnace*, Pedvale Open Air Museum, Sabile, Latvia

- 2014 Production Assistant, Matt Toole, *Master/Acolyte*, Pedvale Open Air Museum, Sabile, Latvia
- 2014 Demonstration Assistant, Wayne Potratz, Pedvale Open Air Museum, Sabile, Latvia
- 2014 Artist Lecture and BA Critiques, St. Catherine University, St. Paul, MN
- 2013-2014 Production Assistant, Andrea Stanislav, Minneapolis, MN

EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Stool Sample, The Midnight Brigade, Minneapolis, MN
- 2015 Underlined Action, Katherine E. Nash Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2015 *National Conference on Cast Iron Art* Juried Exhibition, Sloss Furnaces, Birmingham, AL
- 2014 *For A Limited Time Only*, Quarter Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2014 *Blinking Fresh*, Quarter Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2014 **International Exhibition**, Suitcase Exhibition, ICCCIA, Sabile, Latvia
- 2014 *Objects For Consideration*, SooVAC, Minneapolis, MN
- 2014 **Solo Exhibition**, Gallery Hangman, Minneapolis, MN
- 2013 *Fresh Laundry*, Quarter Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2013 *National Conference on Cast Iron Art Exhibition*, Sloss Furnaces, Birmingham, AL
- 2013 *He(art)*, Friction Collective, Minneapolis, MN
- 2012 *Mirror Museum*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
- 2012 *Minty Fresh*, Quarter Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2011 *An Evening of Art For All*, 210 Pine, Waupaca, WI
- 2011 **Featured Exhibition:** *Waupaca Fine Art Show*, Waupaca, WI
- 2011 *A+ Art Club Show*, Northfield Arts Guild, Northfield, MN
- 2010 *A Collection Of Works By Emerging Artists*, Northfield Arts Guild, Northfield, MN
- 2010 *Waupaca Fine Art Show*, Waupaca, WI
- 2010 *Can we just throw some gears and rocks into this thing to make it different?*
Flatten Art Museum, Northfield, MN
- 2009 *Senior Art Show*, Groot Gallery, Northfield, MN
- 2009 *Waupaca Fine Arts Show*, Waupaca, WI
- 2008 *Text and Image*, Groot Gallery, Northfield, MN
- 2008 *Juried Exhibition*, Groot Gallery, Northfield, MN
- 2008 **Solo Exhibition:** *Experiencing Our Earth*, Depot Gallery, Red Wing, MN
- 2007 *Juried Exhibition*, Groot Gallery, Northfield, MN

EXHIBITIONS CURATED

- 2015 Stool Sample, The Midnight Brigade, Minneapolis, MN
- 2013-2015 Gallery Hangman (Founder and Curator)
- 2014 *Curbside Umibo*zu Midnight Brigade, Minneapolis, MN

Artist Statement and Biography

As children, we mimic work by stacking, organizing, and deconstructing. We are constantly changing our point of view and revising the methods we use to manipulate the materials around us. In a similar manner, I give myself simple tasks to accomplish; grind a piece of metal, peel the paint off a wooden chair. I play while I work and I work while I play. I give great weight to simple details while making bold gestures which stray from the original vision. These digressions are the impetus of my practice. It is here I find something human, something whole.

I wandered the woods on the edge of a rural Wisconsin town. On my adventure I collected mysterious bits of discarded debris. I discovered a half empty bottle of “Yoo-hoo”. I threw the bottle at a granite boulder. The explosion of the bottle was louder than a firecracker. I felt it in my chest. The scattering of glass, the splattering of “Yoo-hoo”, and the echoing of sound was mesmerizing. I revisited this place, hoping to rediscover my experience, but the echoes were gone.