Lost Horizon: Domestic, cartographic and imaginary space

Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis describes and analyzes four bodies of work that demonstrate how the domestic economy of my home growing up sparked an abiding interest in the relationship between objects, information, and space which culminated in the project known as Sorting. I will describe how my studio methods evolved to include chance and more intuitive ways of working in response to how the work functioned materially and conceptually. I will also describe how some work wasn't successful but ultimately led to Sorting, which more directly and clearly demonstrated my interest in understanding two-dimensional information through the fabrication of three-dimensional objects.
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Introduction

The studio research I've pursued has focused on visual schemas that represent the organization of information: illustrated taxonomies and charts found in popular nature and science books, maps, and paintings dating from the renaissance. Each of the four series of works I will describe and analyze represents my efforts to understand the deep attachment I’ve long felt to such imagery. During the last two years I’ve developed a methodology that reveals the importance of organization and order, while also revealing my struggle to sublimate the strong impulse to create formal balance and order within my work. I’ve come to realize that this curiosity about the nature of order, and perhaps also in notions of formal balance is in part a direct result of my parents’ socio-economic class and how they organized the space within our home. My relationship to objects and their use is also directly influenced by the relationships my mother and father had with objects in each of their daily lives.

My father was a stonemason, and his workday consisted of repetitive physical motions and a tactile involvement with raw materials. The accretion of modules (bricks or concrete blocks) resulted in a much larger and imposing object – a wall, and then an entire building. His additive process, many small scale components gathered to make a whole, has certainly affected the modular nature of my current works. The scale of the brick is also the scale of much of my work. This allows a certain flexibility; I can choose
to take up very little space with these works or, when they are combined, occupy an entire wall. The collection of parts can expand or contract. The individual elements can be transported and gathered according to the context encountered or the specificity of the site to be occupied. My mother, who didn’t work with her hands, was determined to keep our home as free of non-utilitarian objects as possible. If something was not useful, it was thrown away. Thrift store shopping was out of the question. As a result of her revulsion for chaos, our home was very austere. One motivation for this austerity was, I believe, a hatred for cleaning and the time it took to perform that labor. Too many objects packed tightly together on any wall or surface would require elaborate and frequent dusting. Also, my parents’ lack of resources ensured that decorative or art objects were not present.

The opportunity to create one’s identity through the acquisition of objects and artworks was not available, so much so that I exoticized these kinds of objects and what I thought they represented. As a result, I was driven at an early age to manufacture my own art works and form my own collections. I sometimes covertly collected refuse; gum wrappers, bottle caps, and other flotsam – but these trinkets were contained carefully within shoeboxes or dresser drawers. I was permitted to collect small animal figurines (Hagen Renaker purchased at Hallmark stores), but was restricted in where they could be displayed and how much space they could occupy. The space allotted to me in our home’s common areas was aggressively circumscribed by my mother’s idea of how
domestic geography should be apportioned. No one individual’s belongings could take up too much space in the shared areas, such as the living room or kitchen. My bedroom, which I saw as belonging to me, was also monitored closely for clutter that threatened to become unmanageable.

Much of my artistic production as an adult has been influenced by the furtive character of my collecting as a child, and the anxiety surrounding the value and placement of non-utilitarian objects in the home. Purposeful sorting, arranging, gathering and sometimes hiding of objects according to a long ago developed notion of object hierarchies is evident in the four bodies of work described in this document. In my work, I strive to exhibit the tension I feel subject to while working in the studio; the desire to contain space and promote order and the equally strong impulse to transgress those inclinations.

Source material and the gouache/collage works on paper

Although my childhood home was bereft of collectibles and other objects, evidence of travel, exploration, and culture was always at hand via books, magazines, and frequent trips to museums and to the outdoors. Images found in National Geographic magazine and in the Time Life nature series of books were, and still are, especially tantalizing. The maps that were included with our National Geographic subscription were treasured and kept. These images have always seemed to take on a precious quality,
almost like the memory of an actual experience. As objects, they were cheap and acceptable to own according to the entrenched ideas I inherited. As carriers of information, maps appeal to me because they represent a very large expanse in a small, portable, compartmentalized object. Contained within them is not only geography, but also our contact with and organization of this geography. As I got older, I became interested in paintings, specifically dating from the renaissance. Their crisply graphic, diagrammatic space was a thrilling example of balanced, deliberate placement and simultaneous actions within the confined space of a frame. They shared these qualities with the taxonomic charts illustrated within the pages of the Time Life books; images confined by the scale of a page.

This comfort with working with paper and other two dimensional media led to what I consider to be a foundational body of work - the twenty or so gouache paintings with collage elements that were completed in the winter of 2009. For these gouaches, I drew shapes based on photographs of birds I found in my collection of Time Life nature books. The drawings were made by creating stylized bird silhouettes out of heavy paper and tracing around them to ensure the drawings used the same four bird forms. None of the silhouettes exceeded the size of a page in the Time Life nature books. I was attracted to the aesthetic quality of birds’ forms when rendered as silhouettes, not necessarily in the content they could potentially contribute to the work. Not only formally attractive, the mechanics of camouflage in the animal kingdom could serve as analogous to my behavior in the studio. Artists routinely rely on sleight-of-hand, misdirection, conceptual slipperiness; my work’s camouflage lay in manipulating genres, surfaces and dimensions.

The silhouettes’ recognizable contours clash with the illogical juxtaposition of imagery in their interiors. The exterior shapes are the frames that enclose any number of abutting image fragments; a photo of a stuffed polar bear from a natural history museum diorama, a postcard of a Dubuffet painting, etc. What is used within the interiors of the gouache/collages represented an assortment of things that have always interested me, primarily pictures of taxidermied animals, illustrated evolutionary family trees found in books, reproductions of familiar historic paintings, etc. It is a hodgepodge of my
personal image stockpile. The seemingly random content within the frame is corralled neatly by a recognizable outline representing a familiar image. The chaotic interiors are prevented from spreading into areas that are outside the unifying, unbroken line that indicates the form of a bird. The gouache and collaged works are the first evidence of my desire to accumulate visual information in tandem with the impulse to organize it.

I refer to the first body of work in clay to come from the gouache and collage works as Mapping. I began by making clay models of the silhouetted bird shapes I’d used in the collages. The clay positives were nearly flat, about an inch high, and of the same scale as the works in paper. I was attempting to produce effects similar to those found in the works on paper that preceded them. Like paper, their surfaces lacked
texture and were uniformly smooth and unbroken. At this juncture, I began what was to become a series of reductions in the forms I was working with. While the paper silhouettes used for the gouaches represented the whole and recognizable bodies of birds, the clay models were denied their signifying extremities, such as heads and feet.

Their lack of articulated extremities seemed not to indicate an aggressive removal of these details but rather a stunting or preventing of inevitable completion. I planned to use the individual clay elements as modules that would be cut apart and recombined to form larger, unexpected hybrid forms that no longer made direct reference to the source material used. The tension present in the paper works lies in the friction between the recognizable exterior and the illogical collaged interior, while the indeterminate and truncated edges of the clay works left room for new growth and new meaning. The lack of articulation gave me the opportunity to anticipate a relationship between the original source material and my interest in the scale relationships and point of view found in specific paintings and in maps. The point of view in both renaissance painting and maps presumes or implies distance. Individual details are not the primary focus, but rather the scope of information included in the frame. This distance assures that the maker can visualize many components simultaneously in order to control and present a longer period of time, and therefore an evolution of forms and actions.

By zooming out, so to speak, I was able to imagine more possibilities within each piece and for the body of work as a whole. It was during this period - after the paper
works were finished but before the work in clay was completely realized - that I became interested in challenging formal components in my work that indicated containment and familiarity; that differentiated between the interior and exterior of a form. The clay components of *Mapping*, because of their low profile and lack of detail, began to resemble platforms or bases. It became clear to me that flattening forms enabled me to understand them. Low relief allowed me to evoke the original two dimensional source materials.

Ill. 4, Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*; Ill. 5, image of globe manufacturing
I made five different “birds” and made plaster molds of them in order to produce slip cast positives. Before I made the models, I scanned the original silhouettes I’d used in the collages and either stretched or compressed their proportions in order to interfere with their recognizability. I’d been looking at original drawings by Winsor McCay, and was interested in the way he frequently stretched or distorted his characters, signifying their presence in a dream world. I thought of how continents are represented on a globe versus how they appear on a flat map; the proportions are stretched when shapes meant to be on a round surface are flattened. Through the physical manipulation of these forms, I
strove to demonstrate my control over their proportions. Distortion is the inevitable by-product of shifting from three dimensions to two, as the globe/map example indicates. I needed to emphasize their belonging to a place not actual, but mediated by an artificial and external pressure. Although the forms were barely dimensional, about an inch tall, their flatness could be perceived as expansion – albeit in one dimension instead of three. The frontal orientation of the individual components of Mapping guarantees they are experienced from one side; all information is encountered on one expanded plane with no details left out of view or out of focus. The result of Mapping became two-fold; the expanded and flattened space allowed me to reveal a larger but compressed surface area subject to my perusal and control, and it allowed me to test what occurs when shapes are abstracted, truncated, or distorted beyond recognition. The individual pieces were then forced to rely on one another to work, and their stunted heads and feet would have the opportunity to evolve in a different or unanticipated way. I looked forward to how the pieces would change, having been liberated from specific signifying details that denoted their relationship to the forms of birds, and to content I wasn’t interested in incorporating. Each vaguely-rendered extremity represented an unobstructed path to the next series of decisions.

I produced many of the bird shapes in porcelain, and began splicing and attaching them in different arrangements. I would remove the tail from one casting and attach it to another casting, giving the new piece two tails instead of one. The new hybrid shapes
began to reference not only the original source material, but also puzzle pieces and continents or islands. Their edges are sharp and geometric, much like the paper silhouettes they were modeled after. They are each approximately one inch high, resembling a portion of a topographical map. The individual elements of the piece are of a similar scale, and this choice was both intentional and practical. In order for the installation to be portable and installable in a variety of spaces, I made each piece fairly small – about the size of my hand – not unlike bricks or any other small uniform building component. Similarly to bricks, their height doesn’t vary from end to end. The flexibility of their scale as a group echoes the shifting scale and dynamic action of a flock of birds, which can gather and disperse in the span of a few seconds. The body of works’ covert and nomad-like character prevents it from being easily identified or understood within a single context and allows for multiple readings.

Although I began Mapping using exclusively the cast forms that came directly from the molds I’d fabricated, I began salvaging and using in combination with my molds a variety of commercial molds that were donated to our department. The forms I used most often were cast from molds of actual fruits - specifically lemons, bananas, and oranges - whose previous use was for the fabrication of kitsch decorative objects. Because the bird forms lacked detail, texture, and articulation, and because they had begun to resemble platforms or bases that seemed to require forms to support, I began dividing the cast fruits into sections and attaching them to the surfaces of the cast birds.
In a sense, I was replacing the missing appendages and completing the forms using the small pieces of cast fruits. The scrap or peel-like fruit fragments appeared to be either growing from the bird forms or, depending on the way they were connected, melting into the areas they are attached to. The fruits appear to be integrated with the abstracted bird forms because of these smooth connection points, and also because the glaze texture and color unify them.

This process of removing/reducing and in turn replacing, grafting, or mending with unexpected additions mirrors the collage process in the earlier gouaches, and evokes cartography’s tendency toward abstraction and guesswork. The decision to use commercial molds was driven by chance; had they not been readily available, I would not have used them. This process of sourcing form and content from an available pool reflects my consistent reliance on collage to inform my process. Synthesizing new and surprising content from a fixed assortment of disparate images and forms provides me with one reliable constraint at the onset of any project. The scale of the finished object - a hybrid of fruit, continent, and bird - confounds or confuses the acceptable scale relationships usually found within a map but echoed the illustrated didactic diagrams I had initially collected and used as source material at the inception of the project. This strange combination of differently scaled objects led me to consider the growing influence of different types of source material as Mapping grew to include more individual pieces.
The hybridity in scale and form that was occurring in the work was the catalyst to think more about maps made by explorers of the new world, examples of which I was already familiar with. The earliest maps made by new world explorers had pictures and descriptive words in place of topography in areas where very little was known or where no one had been. I’ve seen maps that have words like “savages” or drawings of what elephants were thought to look like in areas that had not yet been visited. As more areas were charted, the images and words that functioned as placeholders were relegated to the edges of continents and became more
decorative. The placement of the fruit fragments, usually on the edges of the bird forms, was a reference to the movement over time of these illustrative components. The differing scale within the individual elements also led me to consider the influence modern souvenir maps were contributing. Souvenir maps are primarily illustrative, absurdly scaled maps that help one navigate a theme park or zoo, for example.

In the early stages of *Mapping*, I chose to replicate the subtle coloration found on an old and worn out Rand-McNally road map I once had. The most important feature of road maps is the visibility of the roads – not the color of the landscape around them. Because of this visual hierarchy, the colors used for road maps are usually muted and bleed into one another without abrupt or overt gradations. As the forms of the work began to resemble fragments of geographic area using the visual language of road maps, I chose to emphasize this quality by glazing them with soft, somewhat out of focus tones and color transitions.

There was a distinct shift, particularly in coloration, after I began to look more at souvenir maps rather than at highway maps used for navigation. The fruit fragments lent an antic quality to the work, and coupled with the nonsensical scale juxtapositions they seemed to call for a dramatic change in color and saturation. I chose to emphasize their cartoonish character by glazing them with a distinctly tropical palette, as unnatural as I could imagine. The brightness of this palette caused the work to strongly resemble not only souvenir maps, but actual cheap, mass-produced ceramic souvenirs one would
purchase while traveling. The work began to look undeniably “ceramic” – specifically referencing souvenirs I’d received from relatives who’d been to Florida and Hawaii. The glaze application helped the work fit within a camp context; I had chosen to airbrush and spray the glaze onto their surfaces, as opposed to brushing or dunking, which would reference historical or fine ceramics. This shift in meaning was suggested from within the work itself. A pattern was emerging in my process; as the work took on physical form, it seemed to recall or refer back to aspects of the collection of objects/images I used as source material for all of the work I’d done to date, in all media. It seemed to predict what its next evolution would require, in a continuously self-referential and cyclical pattern. Although I had not been actively looking at kitsch ceramic souvenirs, there had been a time when I was more familiar with them - notably during my childhood when I collected the Hagen Renaker miniatures and received precious (at least to me) souvenirs bought during other peoples’ vacations. I had, as a child, experienced narratives of travel second hand, and now was making work by
salvaging and recombining fragments of cast off molds and collaging of found images.

**Souvenirs from the Moon**

By acknowledging my process was somewhat intuitive rather than analytical, I was able to recognize the work as a close but fickle reflection of my memory. The most notable function of the work was no longer the investigation of containment, but rather how spontaneous changes in the work affected what references it could make as a result. As the work began to manifest as a kind of mirror or dream of interactions I'd had with very specific objects, I abandoned the bird molds and settled on a shape that could potentially communicate a sense of the vague boundlessness of dreams. Responding to the sharply delineated contours of the elements in *Mapping*, I began to doubt whether modular forms could adequately convey boundlessness. Birds as continents, having acquired growths, became less about borders and boundaries – two-dimensional shapes – and more about platforms – aircraft carriers of fragments. I sought a larger, implicitly boundless carrier – the globe rather than the island.

The space I began to think about was boundless, indeterminate and in flux. I'm interested in the subjectivity found in all maps to some degree – the difference between what is actually on the ground and the potentially skewed version circulated by the mapmaker, and see kinship between subjective cartography and my own practice. There
is a physical, social and epistemological divide between the mapmaker and her country, opening a space for hearsay, fantasy and wish fulfillment. I began to think that moon forms could bring that gap to light. The moon appears to be flat to us because we can't perceive its dimensions. It's an image and an object, as is a map. Its image does not correspond with its materiality. Looking at a photograph of the moon is as unreal as looking at it in the sky. This failure of recognition, this cognitive/representational lapse is similar to the distance between the mapmaker and his maps.

I began to make approximations of the moon by creating a convex positive and making a plaster mold. The molds used to make the moons result in what is basically a shallow bowl. The “bowl” is then turned around so that we view the back, not the interior. Attached to the surfaces of the discs are the same cast fruit “peels” that I used on the bird forms. The points of attachment are also similar to what can be found on the birds – they are relatively seamless and the fruits are integrated with the surfaces through color and texture. Some of the fruit sections have small appendages made from even smaller sections of other fruits; a cast orange on one of the discs has two wing-like protuberances made from a cast of a lemon. Landscape associations are easy to make, as the fragments resemble a kind of natural growth from a ground-like surface; they punctuate the surface and have different coloration than the area around them in some cases – just like trees appear to us from an airplane window. As with some of the later pieces of Mapping, the color palette is very bright and tropical; colors we associate with
island vacations, or with souvenirs purchased on island vacations, or with rare birds and flowers. The glazes are applied with an airbrush, uniformly. There are no abrupt edges to any of the fields of color; they fade into one another with a fuzzy edge, or fade out before another color appears close by, similar to the aforementioned Rand McNally road map, and the hazy edges of dreams or memories.

Ill. 9, *Souvenirs from the Moon*, 2010
The circular contours of the moonscapes indicate the infinite or unknown borders of a fantasy or unreal landscape. They are idealized destinations, as Shangri-La exists in the Frank Capra film Lost Horizon, or as a negative ideal exists in the final scenes of Andrei Tarkovsky's film Solaris. They are increments of imagined space, with no beginning or end. The fragments I've attached to their surfaces are usually at the edges of the moons, as if they are sliding off, or as if only the shore of the object is known, and the rest of the moon-form is a wasteland. In contrast to the rational order of modern maps, no
information here has been confirmed; the empty centers of the moons appear to be anticipating form, and the edges retain a frame-like rigidity. While the centers of the moons are devoid of form, they convey atmosphere with subtle color application and gradations. The color-saturated and diffuse quality of the environment on the moons is the strongest indication of their impossibility. Light and color in deep space has a hazy, particulate and stretched aspect similar to the way sprayed color appears on the work.

Ill. 11, Still image from Solaris, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972.

The desire to organize information, as in the bird forms that preceded them, sometimes results in a void – a truncation or prevention of growth in one dimension while attention is paid to another. My fascination for what occurs at the edges of forms
prevents me from devising a way to organize the center, which inevitably remains blank. The scarcity of information lends a feeling of unease, of incompleteness. The empty centers suggest a memory, but not of a specific geographic place. The gentle curvature of the moon works is not something that would be represented on a paper map. The actual horizon seems flat when we view our landscape from a distance; the curve of the Earth isn't obviously apparent. The works thus suggest a compression of our visual experience, or a microcosm of a landscape view where the curve of the Earth is apparent. When we focus on one aspect of the landscape, we can only see one detail at a time. Our eyes cannot focus on everything in our field of vision. The few “fruit” details on the individual moons are sharply rendered, and this suggests that everything is present simultaneously, to be considered equally – a quality found in paintings, maps and the diagrammatic space in the illustrated taxonomies found in the Time Life nature books.

My interest in taxonomic illustrations and the visualized evolutionary timelines of animals and plants is still present in Souvenirs from the Moon. The hybrid fruit fragments can be seen as imaginary plants, just emerging from the surface. If the fruit arrangements are specimens, they indicate displacement or fracture by default. None of them represents a whole fruit, but rather odd pieced together fruit-like approximations. Oranges and bananas aren't monumental in real life; they are ubiquitous, available, and fit in your hand. There is nothing disarming or surreal about their scale. They feel monumental when placed on the surfaces of the moons, as they begin to resemble other kinds of plants
or topographical features. Their scale seems to increase when they are framed within the confines of the moon surface. They lose their identity when taken out of context. Remade in ceramic, they become more valuable as objects, non-perishable and permanent. Their geographic character is emphasized by the material they are now made of; a geologic material of inarguable permanence. The character of their fragility is changed; their perishability has transmuted to breakability.

The moons are meant to be installed in a seemingly random arrangement on the wall. I wanted to emphasize the initial celestial influence on my thinking at the inception of this body of work. Though this arrangement reinforces their otherworldliness, the totally unreachable thus immaterial place they occupy, the moons are hung on the wall much like domestic objects – calendars, mirrors, clocks. How do we bring the world into the home? It is miniaturized, like in a Victorian cabinet, it is functional, it hangs on the wall, and it is contained in books. As Souvenirs from the Moon evolved, I thought more about the placement of art objects in the context of the home, remembering the strict way objects were organized according to their importance or function in my home as a child. By fabricating work of a similar portable scale – a domestic scale – they have the potential to exist side by side with more mundane objects, thereby remaining discreet and unobtrusive.
The final body of work to come from the early investigations of containment, boundaries vs. boundlessness, point of view, figure/base relationships, and camouflage I refer to as *Sorting*. The expansiveness I imagined the moons suggested instead began to reference generalities I didn’t anticipate. By abandoning the bird forms I had used, I had inadvertently discarded content that remained important - namely camouflage and its symbolic meaning in my process. The camp appearance of the moons too strongly referenced a connection to the history of decorative objects and to kitsch – subject matter that interests me, but peripherally. The seductive, bright and saturated coloration of the moons was too abrupt a departure from the content found in the early gouaches and in *Mapping*. The subdued and subtle surfaces of those works directly communicated my preoccupation with containment and intimacy, and relationships that occur on a miniature or portable scale. I found that by returning to the bird molds I could effectively broach my concerns without using a generalized shape, as I had tried with the moons.

Unsatisfied by the specific, rigid contours of the cast bird shapes, I devised a series of actions to interfere with their apprehension as only “continent” or “island” forms. I made paper silhouettes of birds similar to the models I used to make the early gouaches. I avoided the recognizability that I’d found problematic in the first paper silhouettes by truncating the birds’ bodies – specifically depriving them of heads and feet.
Although flat and made of paper, they looked very similar to the bird molds I used to fabricate *Mapping* – abstracted and lacking extremities. Using a pair of scissors, I began to snip perpendicularly into the edges of the paper forms. The fringed edge now became more dynamic; subject to humidity, to bending, to tearing. The edges thus began to appear organic, referencing both plant and simple animal forms. The two-dimensional plane the paper form occupied was expanded to include three dimensions by performing the simple action of cutting into the edge. The distance I cut into the form affected the physical stability of the center, sometimes threatening to fracture the form entirely. The new dynamism of the edges lent a suggestion of growth to the entire form and in turn implied boundlessness. The process of repeatedly cutting into their borders undermined the specificity of their shapes and the related associations that could be made.

Ill. 12, Fringed silhouettes, 2010
The interiors of the fringed paper forms were a collaged assortment of images from the Time Life nature series books. With pattern and camouflage in mind, I chose images of birds, fish, and taxonomy illustrations. Instead of abruptly juxtaposing seemingly random images, I sought to fabricate a hybrid yet plausible surface composed of two or more animal patterns. The images I chose – because they are copies of photographs from the books – represent how animals are found in nature - distinct from the moons and their tropical, campy seductiveness and decorative ceramic references.

After several of the cut paper silhouettes were made, I began to cast from the bird molds used for Mapping in order to experiment with cutting edges of clay forms. In order to concentrate the action on the form alone, I chose to avoid color and any pictorial information on their surfaces or in their interiors. This reduction of formal variables allowed me to focus on what happened when a hollow, geometric, and rigid form made of clay was interrupted at its edge. The resultant forms are gracefully slumping, white porcelain versions of the individual elements of Mapping. Cutting into their edges allowed the centers of the forms to sink inward slightly during the firing process, calling attention to the fragility and physical instability of the sliced boundaries.
Manipulating the edges mechanically was one way to change the stability and challenge the tyranny of the hard edge – of the conventional frame or boundary. In addition to representing a triumph over the edge, slicing the boundaries caused them to look feathered, which reinforced the avian associations while avoiding obvious illustrative rendering.

Although *Souvenirs from the Moon* represented a divergence from the primary focus of the works that came before them, their generous amount of convex surface area allowed me to imagine them as bases or terrain for collections or families of other forms. Following that precedent, I developed larger abstracted bird forms and fabricated molds in order to cast multiple platforms to experiment upon. The two forms that result are approximately the size of large serving platters. Both are similar to the components of *Mapping* in that they are abstracted, distorted shapes modeled on examples of birds. They are longer, wider, and deeper than the components of *Mapping*, and gently shift in depth from head to tail and from top to bottom. The reference to conventional sculpture bases and landscape topography is blatant, and this allowed me to imagine populating their geography with additional objects. Their dimensional yet flat silhouette positions them as hybrids of map and globe, painting and object, diagram and diorama.

I began to use the commercial fruit molds much in the same way I had used them before – to fabricate small sections or peels that would then attach to the surfaces of the larger forms, adding them in greater number than I had in *Mapping*. The fragile and torn
skin-like fragments densely wind around the perimeter of the larger forms as if they are traveling or growing. This density obliterates the bird forms’ thresholds and extends their borders into the surrounding space. Although it appears as though the appendages act according to some internal impetus or prompt, it is unclear what they are – wings, leaves, injuries, or new growth. They are similar in scale, and mimic the way some varieties of fungi emerge from tree trunks. The glaze palette is much different from the tropical, kitsch-like hues of *Souvenirs from the Moon*. I chose to echo the coloration found in nature and present in the images I borrowed from the Time Life books used to make the works on paper that preceded the re-visitation of the bird shapes. This somber, non-reflective and subtly textured surface more clearly communicates the visceral actions, humidity, and change living things are subject to. On some of the bird forms, the glaze remembers its molten stage and remains pocked with small craters and concentrated into blackened crusts. The scorched and impenetrable blanket of glaze arrests the motion or growth of the sprouting appendages. The groupings of fragments are ordered much like information on an evolutionary diagram or chart would be – neatly, reasonably - but the more “biological” treatment of the objects’ surfaces confuses how the object can be perceived. The large forms with their rows of delicate appendages become both the subject and its representation simultaneously. The density of the shard/wings causes the
Ill. 14, Sorting. 2010

Ill. 15, Sorting. 2010
site they occupy on the base to be one of increased motion, intimacy, and focus. The viewer is curious about their implied function and eventual purpose, and this encourages a closer, empathetic examination of these areas.

From a distance, the surfaces’ monochromatic glazes render the smaller cast forms invisible. In this way, at a distance, information is obscured or generalized; it lives in the space of the diagram. The objects’ textures, however, lead us to narrow our field of vision; this information lives in the space of the parlor.

Conclusion

The series of works that comprise Sorting are a culmination of all the processes and works that proceeded them. The information in the original archive of source material, all of which was two dimensional, was translated to three dimensions – charts, maps, organizational schemas, and paintings transformed into cast ceramic island-like forms in low relief. The tension between the different meanings I’ve attributed to bounded and unbounded space was broached in several ways – through mechanical actions like slicing, through expansion and distortion of scale, and through the treatment of surface. The work that results from these explorations demonstrates my interest in the movement and dissolution of the edges of objects, and how this movement can reveal personal history and the reasons for my attraction to particular images representing the organization of things.
Works Consulted


