TENSION IN SPACE

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TENSION IN SPACE

Tension in Space demonstrates the formal ideas of translation, tension, and material shifts within the work, through the use of glass, concrete, and steel. Through utilizing natural tension with multiples, and how the sculptures interact and occupy space, this work will help to guide the viewer. Close interaction with the work allows the individual a moment of reflection into the sculpture, as the work is absorbed. Through Using the vacuum tube as an initial translation, a somewhat out of date piece of technology from radios and television sets, I'm able to build a starting reference point from where all designs diverge. Throughout this show the top point of a vacuum tube, so simple and sleek, is translated through all the sculptures, providing the formal element that connects all the work cohesively. Through continually pushing symmetry, through repetition, scale and material shifts, this body of work will provide the viewer a moment to embrace the idea of form over function.

Experiences like the running of the bulls in Pamplona and the walks along the Rhine river in Dusseldorf observing and taking in the architectural wonders of Frank Gehry[1] have helped to form and influence my own aesthetic material choices in this show. The foundations of my work are cement, metal and glass; the visual language of industrial progress and development. It is these functional materials common to our daily lives that

[1] Simone Brott. "Modernity's Opiate, Or, the Crisis of Iconic Architecture." Log 26 (2012): 49-59. accesssed April 1, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41765759.

surround us and become part of our everyday that we walk, see through and drive on. Although these materials are used for structural reinforcement common to modern construction, their artistic potential is vast. My decision to use these materials in their raw or processed state accentuates the idea of form over function. This is a contradiction to the general idea of how we interact with objects and possessions in our daily life, as generally function is more important, with form becoming an aesthetic choice that is a reaction to the function. I choose to emphasize the idea form/function through leaving my materials in their raw processed state and pushing their concept and form. Henry Moore introduced the concept of *Truth to Material*[2]*,* the idea that every material and medium has its own individual qualities, these qualities then in turn should not be falsified. Within this thought process lies the foundation for my show, highlighting and emphasizing the natural qualities of the material rather than covering or denying the true beauty of the material.

The sculptures, *Kiss, The Opposites*[3]*,* and *Obscuring the Line*[4] directly reference vacuum tubes. Each of the sculptural works were designed for multiples and focus on the physical resting place, and the tension that is generated between the components. *Kiss, The Opposites* stands 16 inches tall and 15 inches wide, the black and white composition allows each layer to

[2] David P. Corbett. "Review of Henry Moore: Critical Essays." Journal of British Studies 44 (2005): 646-47. accessed April 1, 2016, doi:10.1086/432217.
[3] Fig. 1
[4] Fig. 2

stand out. Black and white sheet glass seamlessly joined to the blown glass top section, provides a tonal shift and layer to adhere to the cast hydrostone gypsum cement section. Color additive was used to generate two distinct tones on opposite ends of the grey scale, providing a strong visual change that reinforces the color shift in the sheet glass. This only reinforces the visual and physical connection between the two forms, simplifying the focus ultimately back to the interaction of negative space.

Kiss, The Opposites is a simplified reduction of form to represent the essence of the vacuum tube through simple material choices. The juxtaposition of the two forms leads to a degree of anticipation and tension as the two objects in proximity to one another almost clash, yet are denied the physical interaction of touch. The focus moves from the objects and redirects to the negative space, indefinitely denied the consummation of their merging into one another. The absence of any interior vessel allows the light to bounce into the form and illuminate out, yielding a glow around the glass section.

Obscuring the Line creates physical tension through a gentle tilt of three objects, which ascend in scale from left to right. The largest component is 15 inches tall, and the entire grouping is 42 inches wide. All pitched slightly, these three sculptures begin to allude to the notion of machined parts for function. Each sculptural piece is a scaled version of the previous one. The forms again reference the vacuum tube motif, and are

capped with cast glass. The transparent steel blue cast glass allows light to permeate into and through the form, but casts a darker tonal shift to the internal structure. The cast hydrostone gypsum cement base with half dome impression offers a dense visual opacity, its light color absorbing and bouncing the light back up and out of the form, thus stopping the light before it reflects back out of the glass. This method of layering starts to hint at function or allude to internalized meaning, by obscuring the internal reflection, and denying the inherent sheen and nature of glass. Structurally we see this layering effect of tones and material shifts as common in architecture and technology; here in this series the emphasis is layering with the intent to add key bits of information into the work. Architect Frank Gehry's designs often transcend the idea of function, becoming its own sculptural work of art in space[5]. Material shifts within his Dusseldorf building initially caught my attention, Gehry's material and aesthetic shifts between glass, metal and concrete merge seamlessly to the naked eye.

In the sculpture *Walker*[6], suggesting motion or to convey the notion the sculpture is paused in motion is the root of the reference. The tension builds up as a result of the inability to continue its perceived natural motion. *Walker*, is 48 inches tall by 19 inches wide, it was created based on the idea of double joints and motion, common to all species adapted to bipedalism. The physical split in the cast hydrostone gypsum cement used here to

[5] Brott, "Modernity's Opiate, Or, the Crisis of Iconic Architecture," 49-56.
[6] Fig. 5

reinforce motion through referencing the lower torso and bipedalism is subtle but generates two distinct angles for the metal legs to follow. The material shifts of cast grey cement and cast transparent steel blue glass emulates a torso and lower body shift, but diverge away from anatomical form enough so that the connection is still made by the viewer.

DK Stack[7] offers a clear and simple story and language through which dialect or age do not present a barrier, as the practice of rock stacking is found throughout the world. *DK Stack* is directly pulling reference from these occurrences and accentuates the nuances of material shifts through stacking, while reducing the overall contextual implication of the work. Physically, there are three forms stacked 6'' high, each a scaled version of one another; resting on the preceding piece. This sculpture offers a moment of clarity or peace of mind, a complete encompassed idea, a work that generates a feeling of ease over the need for introspection into context.

The sculpture, *DK Stack*, creates a small footprint of only 10 inches long by 7 inches wide, and the focus becomes not on the objects but the representation and the essence of rock stacking. Neutrality of color and simplicity of form are both conscious decisions used to reinforce and focus on the idea of scale. Allowing the sculpture to emphasize the moment or action of rock stacking, the success of this sculpture came through the simplification of both the forms and the concept.

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[7] Fig. 3

The converging peaks of a mountain range or the the vertical spires of a building, *Twins Void*[8] uses a visual language common to nature and industry. *Twins Void* at 12 inches high by 11 inches wide, the transparent green tint glass is illuminated overhead, resting upon its cast hydrostone gypsum cement counterpart. Here the cement starts to reference to the dual tip shape, through a physical dip into the cement pattern. This pattern starts to emulate the rolling hill landscapes common throughout the world. *Twins void* utilized the simplification of design, the essence of the comparison, to draw attention through the form to the negative space created between the tips and dip of the cement as well as the material and tonal shift. The moment of reference is subtle, and aesthetically simple, generating a calming feeling as the viewer is drawn back and forth between the two apexes. The visual weight of this piece allows the sculpture a natural resting point, a natural tilt to the work, a common theme across the sculptures.

In *Indulgence of the Void*[9] two sculptures sit fixed in place on two 56 inch long steel sheets, mounted flush to the wall with a 1 inch gap separating the two sheets. The entire sculpture exists in a corner of the wall, 4 ½ feet off the ground, allowing for the interaction of negative space and shadows. The two interchangeable forms, approximately 11 inches and 13 inches tall

[8] Fig. 5

[9] Fig. 6 and 7

by 4 ½ feet wide, sit side by side, slotting down onto the nearly 5-foot steel sheets almost seamlessly, through two slots cut into the bottom cast cement section. The blown glass and cast cement are adhered, then sandblasted to obscure the steel ball centered internally in the glass, adding the visual layer and a bit of information.

Continuing the focus of tension and material shifts, this sculpture presented an opportunity to direct the focus of the sculpture to the moment of connection between the glass, cement and steel. The original reference from the vacuum tube has evolved with a focus on mounting that enhances the work. I was inspired by structural aesthetics and moments in modern architecture where raw materials are utilized for their beauty and strength and allowed to simply be glass or be concrete, without needing a veneer or patina to hide them. Modern architect Frank Gehry[10], whose use of materials and aesthetic decisions all tie into reinforcing the natural properties of materials used in the design is at the core of my personal aesthetics and helped to lay the visual framework to many aspects of my show. The sculpture *Indulgence of the Void* is also providing interaction to the negative space and the void created by the installation of the sculpture.

Resting Arch[11] established an environment within the show where the sculpture encourages the viewer to develop introspection and exploration of the works. Commanding the largest physical space in the show, *Resting*

[10] Brott, "Modernity's Opiate, Or, the Crisis of Iconic Architecture," 49-56.
[11] Fig. 8

Arch stretches out across the gallery floor into the viewer's physical space. The installation of *Resisting Arch* provides a moment in which the viewer is absorbed by the work and able to fully release their mind of outside thoughts, allowing for a moment of clarity through observation. *Resting Arch* represents the accumulation of the entirety of *Tension in Space* by the re-application of previous thoughts, designs and material choices. Stretching out to over 7 feet long and 36 inches wide, and 24 inches off the floor, this sculpture demands a 360-degree viewpoint. This piece is the fulcrum to the show and provides the turning point of all previous work, forcing my own aesthetic break from past work, providing the groundwork for my future sculptural art.

Resting Arch represents the strongest reference to tension in space, as the entire weight of the sculpture rests upon the very apex of the aluminum points, roughly 1/32nd of an inch at the points, generating tension between the aluminum tips to the floor, as well as the weight of the piece to the aluminum tips. Similar to the sculptures of Howard Ben Tre[12], you see the evidence of visually weighted materials, self-supporting, and generating its own language through the interaction of materials and parts. As stated in previous sections in regards to sculptural forms, material selection is critical to the formulation of my work. When Henry Moore spoke about Truth to

[12] William Wilson, "The World Fusion of Howard Ben Tre," *LA Times*, January 21, 2000. Accessed April 1, 2016.

Material in the 1930's, it established a foundation for the material to speak and have its own voice.[13] Here the glass, cement and metal are all left at their processed state, allowing the individual qualities of the material to speak. The stainless steel tubing used to form the "Y" structure is the same raw material used in glassblowing pipes and the glass community across the world. The material used to create all the blown glass parts for my thesis is a modern industrial material, just as the steel in modern cars, the cement in bridges, etcetera. The crossover in materials is critical, all the materials used in my show are common to the everyday.

In a society with mass produced goods at every turn, new industries in every corner, civilization developed the dependence on refined materials and industry. Allowing the truth of the materials to speak, we are able to relinquish preconceived notions about the materials, absorbing the form over referencing back to function. Material choices and how the materials are given life through the design and translation, *Tension in Space* focuses on the story or connotation based around emphasizing the natural characteristics of the materials, weight, opacity, luster. Throughout the evolution of this show the premise remained consistent, continually simplifying, omitting colors and continuing to focus on the composition and raw material choices, speaking to form over function. The natural and often rawest state of materials forces the viewer to accept the work for its design

[13] Corbett, "Review of Henry Moore: Critical Essays." 646-47.

and its material choices rendered, pure aesthetics and functional value are of little concern to the context of my work. Assimilating many of the designs and ideas together, I see a strong place for my art moving forward in the contemporary art world, as the language of my work speaks universally.

Figure 1. *Kiss, The Opposites*

Blown Glass/Sheet Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement

16’’H x 16’’W x 8’’D

Figure 2. *Obscuring the Line*

Blown Glass/Cast Glass/Mirrored Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement

15’’H x 36’’W x 8’’D

Figure 3. *Walker*

Cast Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement/Stainless Steel

48’’H x 19’’W x 19’’D

Figure 4. *DK Stack*

Cast Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement

6’’H x 7’’W x 10’’D

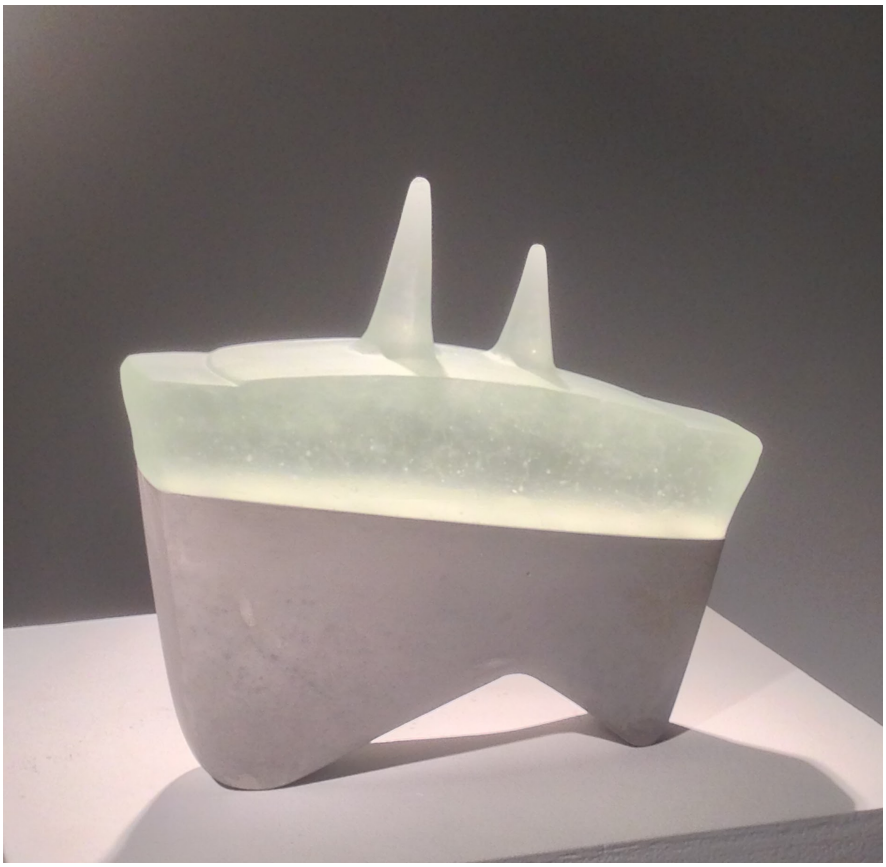

Figure 5. *Twins Void*

Cast Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement

12’’H x 11’’W x 4’’D

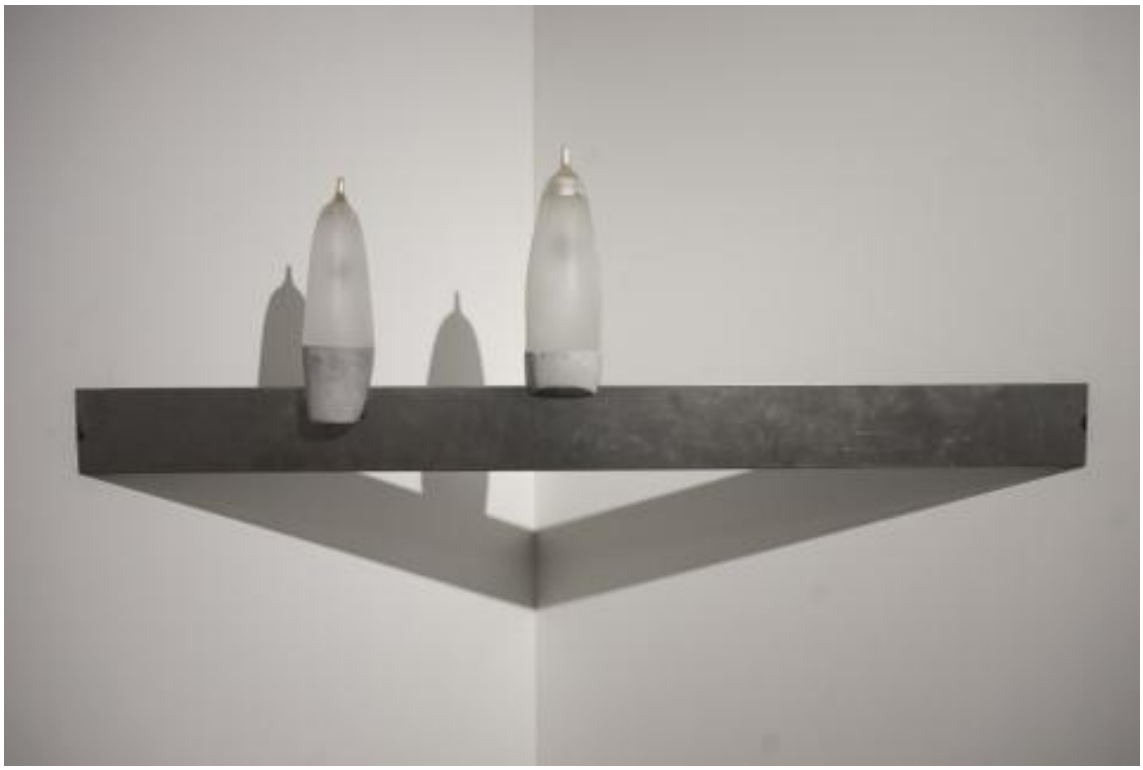

Figure 6. Indulgence of the Void

Blown Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement/Silver/Steel

4 ½’ H x 48’’W x 5’’D

Figure 7. Indulgence of the Void

Blown Glass/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement/Silver/Steel

4 ½’ H x 48’’W x 5’’D

Figure 8. Resting Arch

Blown Glass/Stainless Steel/Cast Hydrostone Gypsum Cement/Aluminum

22’’H x 84’’L x 34’’W

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