

LIANAS:
An Under the Sea Garden Heterotopia

A thesis submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of the Arts in
partial fulfillment of the requirements of

MASTER OF FINE ART

In the School of Art of the College of Art, Media and Design

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Master of Fine Arts Thesis

Studio Art Program

The University of the Arts

Philadelphia Pennsylvania

December 2013

BFA, Michigan State University 2010, Studio Art/Ceramics

BFA, Michigan State University, 2010, Art History/Classics

This document was produced in satisfaction of the thesis requirements for the Masters of Fine Arts
degree in Studio Art at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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(III. 1) *Lianas* Installation, Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, The University of the Arts

Lianas:

An Under – the – Sea Garden Heterotopia

1

What *Lianas* is about

The dynamic of this body of work is layered with several inter-related factors. They are, a relationship between artistic philosophies bridged by sensism that defines a personal voice which is inspired by nature and influenced by both current artists and art groups, where the reaction to beauty defines the experience. Presented independently they are. First, the relationship between formalism and Wabi - Sabi are at odds with one another as they are a western cultural philosophy vs. an eastern cultural philosophy respectively. Secondly, sensism bridges these two philosophies and helps to create a personal ideology specific to my artistic voice. In addition nature, in particular plant life and water, influence my inspiration. Finally, the London based art group the *Stuckists*, in addition to artists such as Simone Fraser, Louise Bourgeois, John Chamberlain, and Nathalie Djurberg contributed specific knowledge relatable to my work. I find support for my philosophy of merging artist ideologies in the conceptual underpinnings of the *Stuckist* group in Britain. All of these influences and philosophies merged to become the basis of this installation of decorated space that addresses notions of beauty in a transformative experiential presentation. The intention for *Lianas* an under - the - sea garden heterotopia is for the viewer be drawn into a happy and joyful experience by their sensory reaction to stimuli from the installed art work of color and decoration and be emotionally transformed.

2.

FORMALISM vs. WABI - SABI

Formalism is defined by the Oxford Dictionary of Art terms as: “An artistic and critical approach which stresses form over content in a work of art. According to the formalist doctrine, the qualities of line, colour, and shape are sufficient and other considerations—be they representational, moral, or social—are deemed redundant or secondary.”¹ The formalist principles of western art traditions relate to modernism. Western modernists want to control nature, to harness power, be an authority and dominate art, nature, or other people. This is in direct opposition to the qualities of Wabi-Sabi and Eastern traditions. These eastern traditions are defined as an “appreciation of transient beauty in the physical world that reflects the irreversible flow of life in the spiritual world.”² The principles of formalism and Wabi-Sabi exhibit commonalities and differences

The eastern term Wabi-Sabi is a combination of opposites that together compose the whole.

“The two dominant principles of Chinese and Japanese art and culture are Wabi and Sabi. Wabi refers to a philosophical construct, a sense of space, direction, or path, while Sabi is an aesthetic construct rooted in a given object and its features, plus the occupation of time, chronology, and objectivity. Though the terms are and should be referred to distinctly, they are usually combined as Wabi-Sabi, as both a working description and as a single aesthetic principle.”³

In the simplest terms it might be described as, Wabi is about the idea and Sabi is about the aesthetic.

As a formalist it is important for me to have a solid grasp on the elements of art and principles of design. The elements of art are line, form, composition, texture, and color. Aiding

¹ "Formalism." *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 12 Nov. 2013. <<http://0-www.oxfordartonline.com.catalog.library.uarts.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t4/e743>>.

² "Wabi and Sabi: the Aesthetics of Solitude – Articles – House of Solitude – Hermitary." Hermitary – the hermit, hermits, eremitism, solitude, silence, and simplicity. N.P., n.d. Web. 28 July 2012. <<http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/wabisabi.html>>

³ Ibid

the elements of art are the principles of design; unity, balance, rhythm, harmony, dominance, proportion/scale, emphasis/focus, and variety.

There are nine design principles of Wabi –Sabi: type, form, texture, beauty, color, simplicity, space, balance and sobriety. Wabi is about the idea and Sabi is about the aesthetic. Together they form the process of interpretation of transient beauty and beauty as a process. When we compare the eastern and western design principles there are commonalities. Form, texture, color, space and balance are on both lists. The design principles that are on the Wabi - Sabi list that are not on the western design list include; type, beauty, simplicity, and sobriety. These do not correspond to design principles of the west. They do not respond to permanence or grandeur of perfection which are western design concepts.⁴

Type, beauty, simplicity, and sobriety are the four elements of Wabi Sabi traditions that are different from formalist principles of modernism. The interpretation of what makes them different follows: Type, is a fairly general term which doesn't reflect a particular aesthetic. It is more of a place holder to signify classification. Beauty is a subjective term. Everything, it could be argued, is beautiful to one person and not to another. Simplicity: what are the characteristics of simplicity? They are lack of detail, pure in form, absence of elaborate decoration, somber, serious not humorous, witty or respectful. From the list of four elements we are left with two that really focus in on specific eastern aesthetic traits that are not found in western art principles as a rule. Those two principles are simplicity and sobriety. However; I feel it is the eastern aesthetic principles are simplicity, tranquility, naturalness, non-attachment, subtle profundity austere sublimity and asymmetry that help to define Wabi-Sabi. The eastern Wabi-Sabi elements in

⁴ "Wabi and Sabi: the Aesthetics of Solitude – Articles – House of Solitude – Hermitary." Hermitary – the hermit, hermits, eremitism, solitude, silence, and simplicity. N.p. Web. 28 July 2012. <<http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/wabisabi.html>

combination with eastern principles of design are that are different from western traditions are the components that determine a design are truly Wabi-Sabi.

From a western perspective, at times eastern Wabi-Sabi pottery is accused of lacking: lacking quality, lacking professionalism, lacking expertise, and having the appearance of being created by a novice. However, in these objections lie the principles of Wabi-Sabi. Stated in the on line article from the House of Solitude “The hallmark of a Chinese or Japanese masterpiece free of modern influence continues to be the naturalness and uncontrived, even ‘accidental’ appearance of the work. The artist works with and harmonizes nature and its universal accidents. These guiding principles are Wabi and Sabi. It is the place with the object. “It is an object in which one can dwell.”⁵ It is the moment that one exists with an object that gives a person pause to stop, consider, and reflect.”⁶ It is in the qualities that are not generally appreciated in western modernism that Wabi-Sabi is found.

⁵ Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. 2001

⁶ "Wabi and Sabi: the Aesthetics of Solitude - Articles - House of Solitude - Hermitary." Hermitary - the hermit, hermits, eremitism, solitude, silence, and simplicity. N.p., Web. 28 July 2012. <<http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/wabisabi.html>

3.

ARTIST INDEX AND THE HAPTIC EXPERIENCE

At times the Index or the use of the hand may be more apparent in the finished product. When it does the haptic experience for the viewer may also be present. When the mark made by the artist resembles a known texture. Our experience with materials in the world allows us to have knowledge of what this surface references, but it is the proprioception of our mind, body and gut that makes the haptic experience complete.⁷



(Ill. 2) Tamar Aldrich, Sentials (Detail)

Yet, these are also responses or reactions that relate to more eastern traditions. An expansion of the senses, are in harmony with nature, both relate to the tactility of the artist and the haptic experience and are principles of Wabi - Sabi.⁸

The evidence of the index of the artist is important in the overall interpretation of the art. Two reasons for this importance are. First, in this age of mechanical reproduction, artwork that shows

⁷ Root – Bernstein. R E Root – Bernstein. 1999. Sparks of Genius. New York. Houghton – Mifflin. P.160-181

⁸ "Wabi and Sabi: the Aesthetics of Solitude – Articles – House of Solitude – Hermitary." Hermitary – the hermit, hermits, eremitism, solitude, silence, and simplicity. N.p. Web. 28 July 2012. <<http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/wabisabi.html>>

the human touch holds more interest to the viewer. Additionally art that reveals the mark of the maker or the artist touch is exhibited more frequently and generates higher gallery sales.⁹ That is not to say that there is not a place in society for the appreciation of beauty and perfection of well-made wheel thrown pottery or mechanical reproductions of art. However, it is the art which reveals the touch of the artist's hand, the index, that has more popular appeal in art markets in our age of mechanical reproduction.¹⁰

⁹ Peim, Nick. "Walter Benjamin In The Age Of Digital Reproduction: Aura In Education: A Rereading Of 'The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction'." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41.3 (2007): 363-380. Print.

¹⁰ Peim, Nick. "Walter Benjamin In The Age Of Digital Reproduction: Aura In Education: A Rereading Of 'The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction'." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41.3 (2007): 363-380. Print.

SENSISM

Sensism, as defined by Joanna Brendon, in the article “*Do visual artists need to see?*”:
 “Multisensory stimulation philosophy of the way senses work in harmony. Where there is an interweaving of different sensory impressions through which sensory components are subtly altered and integrated with one another.”¹¹

As an artist, I strive to interpret my senses artistically. I work to transform the experiences or impression of one’s senses together or into an expression of another sense. This is the aura of a work of art and I feel it is as significant as the index in my artistic expression.¹² It is my desire to reinterpret sensory experiences and transform them into three - dimensional expressions related to tactility the sense of touch that may evoke a haptic experience in the viewer.

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(Ill. 3)
 Simone Fraser

Art can be a multisensory experience. Art viewers are able to experience Sensism. When we look at the art of Simone Fraser (Ill. 3) the evidence of her touch within the creation of her forms is apparent. Whether she is manipulating the clay by pressing into the form and dragging the clay with her fingers or whether she is pressing out from the inside of the form to create a bulge we

¹¹ Brendon, Joanna. “Do visual artists need to see?” *London Print Studio*. (2005): 1-34.

¹² Peim, Nick. "Walter Benjamin In The Age Of Digital Reproduction: Aura In Education: A Rereading Of 'The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction'." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41.3 (2007): 363-380.

witness the tactility of the artist in her creations in the craft of her making the vessels.¹³ We engage our vision to gaze upon the pots she creates. We access our memory and knowledge of our sense of touch to understand the textural surface patterns upon the vessel. This is a haptic experience. We use our vision as a vehicle to analyze the processes of the artist. When we touch the vessel our experience with the work of art is enriched. Through our senses, of touch and vision, we become more aware of the intricacies of the textural surface and of the artists intentions.

Sensism is an important part of my artistic voice. I feel that it is important for my art to show evidence of my touch. To leave the mark that I made, to show it was made by my hand and it is my expression. How are the senses engaged in the work *Lianas*? The haptic sense of touch is evident in the marks of my hand left in the clay. The ocular sense of vision is activated by the use of color and its placement within the composition. The olfactory sense of smell is activated by the use of essential oils. The auditory sense of hearing is activated by the movement of the vines as they sway in response to air movement. Viewers will not actually taste the exhibit material, but their taste sense will be activated by a haptic memory. The sense of smell will activate a sense memory of what this may taste like and the delicious colors with smooth glossy wet looking glaze may look like or evoke the idea of “Delicious looking poisonous candy.” All of the senses will work together to assist in a transformative experience.

¹³ Ballard, Brett. Timeless – Simone Fraser, *Ceramic Arts and Perceptions*, ceramicart.com.au , 2009.

MUSICALITY OF ART

The relationship between art and the senses is not a revolutionary concept. Consider music, an art form predominately related to the auditory senses. Aristotle was the first to link music with vision, or rather an aspect of vision, that being color. He states in his *De Sensu*; “We may regard all colors analogous to the sounds that enter into music.”¹⁴ Color was part of the beginning of our notational system and was used as a guide to represent music. This concept of relating music to color continues, as recently as 1963. Composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) included in his score *Couleurs de la cite Celeste*. He states, “I try to translate colours into music: for me certain complexes of sound and certain sonorities are linked to the complexes of colour, and I use them in full knowledge of this,”¹⁵



(Ill. 4) Tamar Aldrich, *Mondrian's Gumdrops Dumpling*

Mondrian's Gumdrops Dumpling (Ill. 4) is an example of one of my creations where the musicality in Sensism takes over and the sculptures sings. A visual analysis reveals that there are many factors that work together in creating the relationship of Sensism to music. The openings are all consistent in size and are equally distributed around the form in a consistent diagonal

¹⁴ Poast, Michael. "Color Music: Visual Color Notation for musical Expression." *Leonardo* Vol. 33, No. 3 (2000): 217. Print

¹⁵ Poast, Michael. "Color Music: Visual Color Notation for musical Expression." *Leonardo* Vol. 33, No. 3 (2000): 217. Print

pattern. The smooth surface and soft curve that form in addition to the squishy gumdrops make it appear as edible. It has an awkward posture and unexpected embellishments. The interior of the sculpture, the added component of a physical texture, is a brilliant red. The addition of this color draws the eye to the interior of the sculpture and provides a sense of depth. Also, the interior textural contrast to the stark white sleek smooth surface of the exterior adds an additional component that exhibits the tactility of the artist. Evidence of the marks I made are visible in the carving of the interior. There are channels left by the scraping of the interior and the pooling of the red glaze in the bottom of these channels creates a contrast to their peaks where the porcelain white clay body shines through. Additionally, when the interior is lit perfectly the interior glows and takes on the textural appearance of a red gumdrop. Seen in this light the piece sings as it is alive with color (Ill. 5).



(Ill. 5) Tamar Aldrich , detail *Mondrian's Gumdrop Dumpling*

Visual art and music have been linked together for centuries. The verbiage between the two art forms seem to be interrelated each relying on sensory knowledge of the other to describe their particular art. We relate the tone of music to color and the voice of a sculpture to its meaning. It is as if art itself, whatever the form it takes, is as multisensory as the humans experiencing it.

However, color and vision are not the only senses that have a connection to music. Donald N. Ferguson's in his article, *The "Secret" of the pianist's Beautiful Touch*; relates the intensity of tone, of the piano with the term "Color." "Every listener to the great pianists is at least aware that far greater suggestions of color and flexibility of tone can be produced from a piano than can be accounted for by the mere power of variable intensity."¹⁶ He relates this fact to the term "Touch."¹⁷ Here, we now have music being associated to three senses, hearing, vision and touch.



(Ill. 6)
Lianas, East wall, Rosenwald-Wolf gallery.

¹⁶ Ferguson, Donald N. "The Secret" of the Pianist's Beautiful Touch". *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3, July (1924): 385.

¹⁷ Ferguson, Donald N. "The Secret" of the Pianist's Beautiful Touch". *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3, July (1924): 385

BEAUTY

Beauty is a compelling force and I strive for it in my work. As a formalist I begin with a checklist of the “Elements of Art and Principles of Design” as a starting point in the development of beauty within each piece. Yet, beauty is found in other ways within life and art. Ian Roberts states in *Creative Authenticity*, “Art is about poetry, about vision and about seeing the ordinary as poetic...”¹⁸ F. Wellington Ruckstuhl in his journal article, “*What is the essence of all beauty? A definition*”; comments on poetry, “No poetry will ever be called beautiful which lacks the easy, shockless, undulatory, cradling, rhythmic, well ordered, balanced and lifting movement of lines and of words.”¹⁹ He is committed to the concept that

“THE ESSENCE OF ALL BEAUTY WHICH WE PREDICATE OF OBJECTIVE THINGS IN NATURE AND ART, IS A CERTAIN MELODY, PRODUCED IN US BY THE PATTERNING UPON OUR EYES OF VARIOUSLY COLORED RAYS OF LIGHT, INTERSPERSED WITH VARIOUSLY AGREEABLE PATTERNS OF LINES, THE FOLLOWING WHICH BY OUR EYES, VARIOUSLY STIRS OUR EMOTIONS.”²⁰

Beauty as defined by F. Wellington Ruckstuhl is divided into three perspectives.

- OBJECTIVE - Things that have form and are seen with the eye
- SEMI-OBJECTIVE - Things that are seen partly by the eye and the mind, such as poetry or music
- SUBJECTIVE - Things that are experienced by the mind alone, such as thoughts



(III.7) Drawing Based on Ruckstuhl’s ideals of beauty, objective, semi-objective and subjective.

¹⁸ Roberts. Ian. *Creative Authenticity: 16 Principles to Clarify and Deepen Your Artistic Vision*. 2004, Atelier Saint-Luc Press, Fairfield IA. PP 156.

¹⁹ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. and Ruckstuhl, F. W. *What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition*. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

²⁰ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. and Ruckstuhl, F. W. *What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition*. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

It is vital to the appreciation of the definition of beauty that all three of these characteristics are taken into consideration.²¹ Additionally, when Ruckstuhl introduces emotion into the discussion of beauty he classifies the three highest emotions as mirth, delight, and awe and associates them with the three categories of beauty; (Ill. 7)

- “Mirth is associated with picturesque beauty, with angular lines and some disorder that is comic and mirth inspiring. (Objective beauty)”²²
- “Delight is associated with Graceful Beauty, where serpentine lines predominate and accompanied by Logic and Order. (Semi-Objective Beauty)”²³
- “Awe is associated with Sublime beauty and a pyramidal composition that lifts us up and creates an uncertainty and mystery that we can connect to spirituality. (Subjective Beauty)”²⁴

Note that mirth, delight, and awe are emotions, feelings or responses of our sensory perceptions. I concur with the conclusions of Ruckstuhl and his interpretations of how and here beauty is found. I believe interpretation to my art including *Lianas* is informed by reaction to these points on beauty.



(Ill 8)
Trio of *Lianas* Stalk pods

²¹ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. F. W. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

²² Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. F. W. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

²³ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. F. W. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

²⁴ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. F. W. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

INSPIRATION

Artist Inspiration

At times my work is autonomous in nature. It may begin very intuitively and develop as I work my way through ideas. It related to formal issues; “elements of art and principles of design.” I believed at the time that sufficient enough for the piece to stand alone. I was not concerned with considerations such as “Causality, intention, historical events, political and cultural circumstances, and other referents.”²⁵ At the time it was enough for my sense of artistic fulfillment for the art to just be beautiful to me as a formalist. It was not necessary to respond to or address a political or socio/economical issue. Through the study of art, artists, and art history I gained a better understanding of my artistic voice and expression. I began to recognize connections with art theories, artist influences and the art inspiration from the historical past. As a result my art evolved.

There are specific periods and individuals in art history that inform my creations. The Victorian color pallet of modernism and ancient Grecian forms of the Hellenic period are two particular periods that are of particular interest to me. There are artists other than myself that are using current technology, devices or ideas and combining them with historical influences to create new art theories. In London a group of conceptual artists frustrated with responses to their art sought new forms of expression. In an effort to appeal to a larger market that could relate to their art and also increase sales the “Stuckists” developed new genera of art. It consisted of mostly painters who combined conceptual ideology with traditional foundations of the elements of art and principles of design. The “Stuckists” are one example of a group of artists that are using new ideas with historical processes and theories in the same manner that I am using

²⁵ Ibid

traditional materials, inspiration of historical or ancient influences, and nature.²⁶ When I create intuitively the work is analogous with art from an Eastern perspective where it is “imperfect, rustic, decayed, and has an aesthetic sensibility that finds a melancholic beauty in the impermanence of all things.”²⁷ Therefore I can relate my art to the art of the “Stuckists,” who like myself, combine new conceptual ideas with traditional techniques to inform their process.

Several artists have made an impact on my artistic ideals; Louise Bourgeois, John Chamberlain and Nathalie Djurberg are three of them. There are particular aspects that I find a kinship with; Bourgeois the way she thinks, Chamberlain’s use of the elements, and the presentation of Djurberg.

7.1

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

Louise Bourgeois- “Trust yourself; in your art you must tell your own story and if you tell your own story, you will be interesting.”²⁸ I can relate to this quote of Louise Bourgeois, because my art comes from my own stories, narratives, experiences with nature and living in rural Michigan. It is a kinship with the motivational causation of Louise Bourgeois’ creativity that influences my work. That connection is exemplified when in an 1988 interview with Donald Kuspit. She was asked; “Apart from your history of involvement with modern artists what does modern art mean to you?”²⁹ Her response follows:

What modern art means is that you have to keep finding new ways to express the problem, that there are no settled ways, no fixed approach. This is a painful expression and modern art is about this painful situation

²⁶ “Daubs and Daubers.” Welcome to Stuckism. N.p., Web. 11 May 2012. <<http://www.stuckism.com/Daubs.html>

²⁷ “Wabi and Sabi: the Aesthetics of Solitude – Articles – House of Solitude – Hermitary.” Hermitary – the hermit, hermits, eremitism, solitude, silence, and simplicity. N.p. Web. 28 July 2012. <<http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/wabisabi.html>

²⁸ Artist’s Market Blog. Louise Bourgeois Biography. Louise Bourgeois Quotes. <http://blog.artistsmarketonline.com/artists-graphic-designers/artists-market-online-remembers-2007-louise-bourgeois-interview>

²⁹ Artist’s Market Blog. Louise Bourgeois Biography. Louise Bourgeois Quotes. <http://blog.artistsmarketonline.com/artists-graphic-designers/artists-market-online-remembers-2007-louise-bourgeois-interview>

of having absolutely definite way of expressing yourself. This is why modern art will continue, because this condition remains; it is the modern human condition.”³⁰

She continues to describe how she feels modern art has a special relationship to the painful difficulty of self-expression in the modern world.

“It is about the hurt of not being able to express yourself properly to express your intimate relations, your unconscious, to trust the world enough to express yourself directly in it. It is about trying to be sane in a situation, of being tentatively and temporarily sane by expressing yourself. All art comes from terrific failures and terrific needs that we have. It is about the difficulty of being a self because one is neglected. Everywhere in the modern world there is neglect, the need to be recognized, which is not satisfied. Art is a way of recognizing oneself, which is why it will always be modern.”³¹

Her ability to be convicted for a lifetime to the concept “To thine own self be true” I find inspiring and worth emulation. Although, I find a kinship with some of what Louise Bourgeois thinks and feels about her art and process, I cannot say that I feel the same on every issue. A disconnect between her process and mine is revealed in her quote. “My art is a form of psychoanalysis. I was able to exorcise my demons through art.”³² I do not use art as a form of psychological therapy. I would rather focus my time and art on the creation of beautiful things in the expression of my personal artistic voice and narrative.

7.2

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

John Chamberlain began his career as a post war sculptor. However, his commitment to his artistic vision enabled him to endure through several decades and art periods or genres. His work crosses conceptual ideology and is considered post war, abstract, impressionist, pop, minimalism, process art, and baroque. His sculptures have been compared to Bernini, Rodin,

³⁰ Stiles, Kristine, Selz, Peter. *Theories and documents of Contemporary Art: A sourcebook of Artists' Writings*; Louise Bourgeois Interview with Donald Kuspit (1988). University of California Press, Berkley. 1996. Pp. 40.

³¹ Artist's Market Blog. Louise Bourgeois Biography. Louise Bourgeois Quotes. <http://blog.artistsmarketonline.com/artists-graphic-designers/artists-market-online-remembers-2007-louise-bourgeois-interview>.

³² Artist's Market Blog. Louise Bourgeois Biography. Louise Bourgeois Quotes. <http://blog.artistsmarketonline.com/artists-graphic-designers/artists-market-online-remembers-2007-louise-bourgeois-interview>

and Matisse. He considers himself a collagist and manipulates various materials as he creates; similar to the manner a collagist creates two - dimensional works. Although, he worked with a number of different materials including paper, Plexiglas, aluminum foil, foam, and metal, it is his metal collage sculptures he is most known for.

An interesting aspect to John Chamberlain's convictions to his art is his belief in the use of color in his metal creations. This may have been the most significant contribution Chamberlain made to the art world that of giving sculpture color. "Donald Judd wrote in 1960, Colored sculpture has been discussed and hesitantly attempted for some time but not with such implication,"³³ We learned from him (Chamberlain) that color is not just for painting.³⁴

The shifting paradigm in art and ceramics also can be compared to the shifting in John Chamberlain's work. It "Had shifted from being made of cars to being made from cars."³⁵ It is similar approaches we now take when we look at and critically analyze art. It is not how or what something is made of, but rather what is it aesthetically.

The ways in which I feel that John Chamberlain's work relates to my own creations is rooted in the concept that he held formalist principles in high regard. I find myself approaching my work in a similar manner. I relate to his interest in collage and how he worked as a sculptor in the same manner as he worked as a collagist. In addition to ceramic sculptures I also work with handmade paper and have collaged for many years. The process of layering and adding and removing formal elements in the creation process is the same whether working two or three dimensionally and leads to a strong cohesive composition. (Ill. 9)

³³ Rosenberg, Karen. Beyond the Junkyard. New York Times, 2/24/2012, p25.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Rosenberg, Karen. Beyond the Junkyard. New York Times, 2/24/2012, p25.



(Ill. 9)
John Chamberlain metal sculpture at Dia Beacon, NY

7.3

NATHALIE DJURBERG

Like the sea, somewhat frightening and enjoyable simultaneously, the experience I encountered with the art of Nathalie Djurberg at the New Museum in New York City in the summer of 2012 made a significant impact on my concepts of the presentation of my art work.

(Ill. 10 & 11)



(Ill. 10) Nathalie Djurberg *The Parade*,



(Ill. 11) Nathalie Djurberg *The Parade*

The exhibition was installed in the New Museums annexed gallery Studio 231 next door to the main facility at 235 Bowery St., New York. I was amazed with wonder and surprise and I found the sculptural installation delightfully engaging. Although, the Claymation videos that were part of the exhibition dealt with the darker side of humanity. The primary art forms exhibited were 80 astonishingly colorful handmade birds. The manner in which these birds were displayed was perfect. They were totally accessible as they were set directly on the bare floor without pedestals or plinths of any kind. The viewer was allowed to move around through groups of them along a path that curved right then left in a flowing manner. Each of these birds were unique and expressive as they were based on “Avian physiology, mating rituals and territorial display.”³⁶ The colors, patterns, shape and sizes were altered and exaggerated from realistic bird characteristics. The three-dimensionality of the birds with their colorful plumage allowed me to immerse myself into a joyful experience. The presentation of this exhibition significantly impact my interpretation of what an exhibition should do to or for the viewer that I have tried to emulate it in my current work “Lianas.”

Yet, the experience with the Claymation videos was different from that of the birds. “Even though the colors and use of Claymation liberated us from the weight the subject serious overtones remain. They were darker and more serious as they dealt with problems in human behavior. The fun birds seemed to balance these dark and troublesome topics of the videos.”³⁷

This exhibition is considered an experiential exhibit. The viewer does not simply walk in and look at the objects, the birds, and have a reaction to them. If that were the intent, the birds would have been placed on pedestals and lined up like photos on exhibit. Rather the viewer is lead through the birds via a path way that weaves in and out and through these magnificently colored

³⁶ The New Museum. Exhibitions. <http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/the-parade-nathalie-djurberg>

³⁷ The New Museum. Exhibitions. <http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/the-parade-nathalie-djurberg>

and textured three dimensional bird sculptures as if they are being lead through a garden path. Viewers become engulfed in the experiences as the birds surrounded them and they are surrounded by the experience. The question may be posed as to; why these two art forms were exhibited together? The videos were true to their description as they represented disturbing practices, rituals, or actions of humans. The message conveyed in part can be explained by the comments of Yi-Fu Tuan as he states in the chapter on Experiential Perspective in his book *Space and Place*. “Experience is the overcoming perils.” Furthermore, experiment, expert, and perilous share a common root word. The expert forges forward into the perilous and unknown to learn. The experience gained creates the expert. Experience is about overcoming fears through experimentation.³⁸ Why juxtapose these videos with dramatic representations of birds? I believe that as the videos deal with human behavior and the birds represent humans. Humans do take on animal characteristics and in the end we are animal in nature. Possibly it was the artist’s intent to draw a correlation between the animalistic behavior in humans and that of birds and animals. The exhibition was about the experience and the juxtaposition of these two art forms created a very memorable experience.

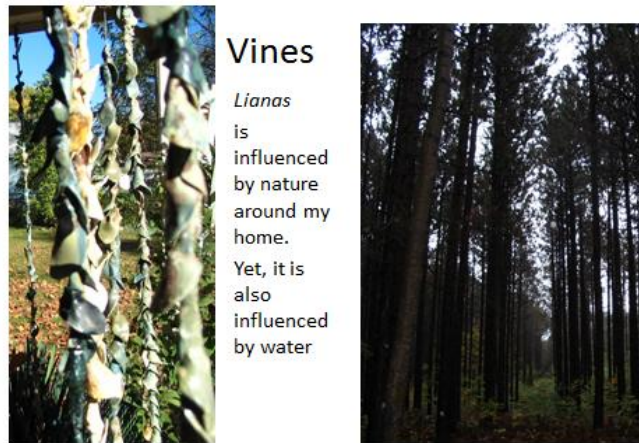
The installation *Lianas* relates to Nathalie Djurberg’s *Parade* in two ways. First is the presentation of the installation where the viewer is allowed to engage the exhibition as an experience. Where there are no plinths or pedestals and the art sits directly on the floor or in the case of *Lianas* hangs. Secondly the *Parade* addresses uncomfortable human behaviors in the same manner that individuals with the installation of *Lianas* may be uncomfortable being among hanging ceramics. It can seem somewhat perilous.

³⁸ Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 8. 2001

7.4

NATURE'S INSPIRATION

Nature inspires my work and is revealed on many levels. It may be the shape of the sculpture or perhaps it is the color or texture of the object. The association a viewer makes with the object often relates directly to water or plant life. Within the sculptural compositions it may be the flowing nature of the form that directly relates to water or that it may take on the appearance of particular types of trees or leaves. Regardless of the manifestation of this inspiration it is consistently present.



(Ill. 12)

Lianas vines and Mecosta county forest

Within *Lianas* The relationship to nature is ever present in all forms. First, there is the direct representation of the hanging module of leaf lengths. They are similar enough to a real leaf to be believable as a leaf, yet they do not perfectly mimic a particular leaf and therefore are an abstraction. Other plant-like forms that are placed on the floor are also abstracted. A reference to nature is also found in the trays of offerings or gifts. Finally there are the forms that are ambiguous enough to be abstracted life forms or abstracted organic matter. The interpretation

left to be determined by the viewer's experience. Vines hanging downward, stalks soaring upward and creatures floating between them, nature is reference in them all.

Although nature is fundamental in informing my art it seems that water has such an overpowering influence on my inspiration and that even when I attempt to avoid it, it surfaces. Therefore, I embraced it and created a heterotopia of an under - the - sea garden. While there are vines that hang from trees these vines have an aquatic sense. They are vines in the water and this becomes a forest of seaweed. Why a forest? As the vines soar upward they reference trees from the woods were I played as a child. (Ill. 12)



(Ill.13)

Tamar Aldrich and the Beech Grove in late fall

Through a visual analysis our eyes travel upward to the tops of the vines and then follow the leaves on vines as they curve downward, bringing the focus of our attention back within the sculpture itself. Once our attention has returned to the *Lianas* our eyes now survey the area for new focal points and areas of interest. Occasionally a creature floats through or nests on the floor of the sea. These can be viewed as focal points on the floor as creatures that dwell in *Lianas*. “Anemone” (Ill. 14) and “Nautilus nest” (Ill. 15) are two such creatures.



(Ill. 14) Anemone



(Ill. 15) Nautilus Nest

Upon examination of the individual vines you will find variations in not only color, glaze and pattern but also in small colorful buds and extensions of offshoots from the vine. Still *Lianas* references water. The vines are floating, hanging down beneath the surface. At the tops of each vine is a bubble. The bubble is rising to the surface. Atop each of the two intersecting rings of clay sits a blossom. It is as if each blossom is a gift or a prayer sent upward to the heavens.



(Ill. 16)

Northwest corner, View of prayer bubbles.

SPIRITUALITY

In one area of the installation you will find objects grouped together that do not feel completely organic. There is something constructed or more man-made looking than the rest of the environment. It may possibly be that these are offerings left, left by whom one can only imagine. Components of these offerings look like other parts of the installation. They may have been taken from *Lianas* prepared and then returned. Possibly there is a life giving, life supporting, or sustainability to *Lianas*.



(III. 17)

Offerings created from Lianas given back to Lianas

The space an installation is set into does have an effect on the interpretation of its meaning. Therefore, it is important for an artist to consider how their art will be interpreted with the placement of it. It may have an entirely different meaning when placed out of doors than it would inside a “white cube” museum or gallery. The museum environment will heighten the spiritual quality of the work, because the temple like structure of the typical museum/gallery

alludes to a reverence of its contents that in turn implies spirituality.³⁹ According to O'Doherty "We see not the art but the space first," and it is our impression of that majestic museum - like structures that give validity to the art within. These impressions are formed by our association between the museums and "Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory, joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics." Thomas McEvelley has a similar perspective in his statement. "The white cube represents the blank ultimate face of light from which in the Platonic myth, these elements unspeakably evolve."⁴⁰



(III. 18)
North wall window view of *Lianas*

³⁹ McEvelley, Thomas. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. University of California Press; Expanded edition (January 14, 2000).

⁴⁰ McEvelley, Thomas. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. University of California Press; Expanded edition (January 14, 2000).

My thesis exhibition relates to an occurrence in contemporary academic exhibition venues where the art work is created for the exhibition. The exhibition is not necessarily a place where the art is showcased as independent creations, but rather the entire concept of an exhibition is seen as a whole and constructed in that manner. This is a site specific installation. It also conforms to the concepts set down in by Thomas McEvelley in his article “Inside the White Cube,” where he states “Gallery space itself is the primary material to be altered by art.”⁴¹

⁴¹ McEvelley, Thomas. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. University of California Press; Expanded edition (January 14, 2000).

THE PERILIOUS or DANGEROUS EXPERIENCE

The ebb and flow of the sea can be equated to the ebb and flow of life. As art mimics life there is an ebb and flow to art. Therefore these conclusions of F. Wellington Ruckstuhl should not be surprising. The sea's undulating waves curve up then down and sway with a melodic consistency that soothes the human's soul. They provide relief and comfort, but the waves during a storm at sea are treacherous and perilous. They are not soothing and melodic but are greatly erratic, crashing and booming with thunderous frenzied power and violent movement. They are feared by most and rightly so as the treacherous sea can be life threatening to humans. Even in its calm states humans cannot live for long periods of time in the water. There is a duality of the experience humans have with the water in nature, whether it is a river, sea, or ocean. This is an example of the interest that humans have with experiencing the perilous. The experiential perspective is, "A reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought,"⁴² as Yi-Fu Tuan states in *Space and Place*. He goes on: "A world of sense is the real world constructed by the abstractions which the sense organs immediately furnish."⁴³ The human experience with the sea offers a prime example of the beauty of the objective form of the soothing undulating waves with the sublime perspective of the thoughts of fear and foreboding nature. There is an ebb and flow of the human experience with the sea between beauty and the sublime.

⁴² Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. pp. 9. 2001

⁴³ Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. pp. 9. 2001

10
HETERTOPIA

Although, many things influence and inspire my work, water remains a significant influential force. Here the garden and the sea have merged together to become a thematic topic of an under - the - sea garden. Yet, in the utopia of an under - the - sea garden with all of the color, lush vegetation and aquatic animal life; human life cannot be sustained. Therefore, humans cannot truly engage the forum and have an experiential perspective as humans cannot truly reside in an under - the - sea garden utopia. Granted we can peer through the glass of an aquarium and view the interiors of the man - made reef or miniature man - made utopia. We can suit up into scuba gear and submerge ourselves for a limited amount of time to glimpse the utopia of the under - the - sea environment. This inaccessible perspective has a forbidden nature attached to it because humans are simply not designed to live underwater. This utopia is inaccessible. The under - the - sea garden in the gallery has become a heterotopia. When Michael Foucault discusses utopias and heterotopias in, *Of Other Spaces*, he defines a utopia as a site with no real place, a fantasy. The heterotopia he explains as being a “counter site or an enacted utopia.”⁴⁴ It is where a real site is simultaneously represented, contested and inverted.”⁴⁵ He defines the third principle of a heterotopia. When; “The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.”⁴⁶ The inaccessible experiential perspective has changed and the viewer has been given access to it and then removed that access as they peer at it from the mezzanine windows above. As a result the viewer can experience this exhibition in two manners. They can wander through the installation and engage the objects and react to it with all of their senses or they can view it from the top through the window barrier .

⁴⁴ Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. 2001. P 231.

⁴⁵ Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. 2001. P 231

⁴⁶ Foucault, Michael. *Of other spaces*. 1967. <http://ebookbrowse.com/foucault-of-other-spaces-1967-heterotopias-pdf-d86170214>

They were inside looking around and now they are outside looking down at a linear composition. The glass of the windowpanes creates a barrier to the art in the same manner that the surface of the water would to an under – the – sea garden. It is also, similar to an aquarium vantage point. We can see it but we cannot access it. This lack of access creates a sense of yearning or a desire to enter. One longs to enter into the space but cannot get through the glass. Metaphorically the heterotopia was created when this lush flowing under – the – sea garden was pushed upward out of the sea into the gallery. Evidence of this is exhibited in some of the plant life that looks as if it is growing out of the floor. Where textured dry surfaces are placed adjacent to glossy glazed surfaces they appear splashed with water or as if the water is drying off the surface.

Now we are able to truly have an experiential perspective with the under – the – sea garden. We can walk among the objects and are lead through the installation by the way of short pathways that curve one way and back another. There is a melodic way the path moves in this undulating way through the installation. It mimics the action of waves soothing and calming our souls, while it responds to Ruckstuhl's ideals of beauty. Here in this heterotopia our perspective is an emotionally transformative experience.



(III. 19)
Mezzanine window view of *Lianas*

11
OBJECTION

It became apparent on brief outings in Philadelphia that I was drawn to the small flower boxes and potted plants at the entrances of buildings. These small heterotopias provided a brief mental reprieve from the otherwise hard, harsh, gritty environment of the reality of the streets of downtown Philadelphia made of, stone, brick, mortar, rock, concrete, pavement, sand, asphalt and rock. It was as if my world had been reversed. While at home at times I may have stood on a section of road, walk or driveway that consisted of these mineral based materials, but I was surrounded by grass, plants, vegetables, flowers, weeds, trees bushes, the river, sky, hills and fields. During the past three summers I found myself in a world created of stone with only small glimpses of nature found in the heterotopia window boxes.

Was I creating forms that were lacking in my life, leaves trees, flowers with references to water and other items from nature? Was it a subliminal effort to provide myself with the comfort of nature that I was lacking? Based on the premise that one of the fundamental underpinnings of Modernism is the individual's reaction against urban life's experience is a consideration for artists who are city dwellers. That is modernism. I believe I create what I know; I create from my own experiences of living in Michigan with connections to wooded and rural areas. This is not a reactionary expression, but rather a deeply personal invitation to share in what I find beautiful, joyful, and reflective of my life. My art is inspired by the formalist principles and how I use those principles to narrate my story from my perspective as a person from a rural upbringing. I have an appreciation for the simple beauty of nature and desire to share that beauty with others.

One objection to my use of nature as a source of inspiration is that it is not inspiration, but rather a reaction to my situation. I have spent most of my life surrounded by nature. Living in downtown Philadelphia for three summers I found myself in an environment that is the exact

opposite of my normal environment. An objection to my argument that my creation process stems from my life and personal experience, is the work that I make about nature is a reaction against urban life. This falls under the qualification of modernism. Although, I consider myself a formalist and formalism comes out of modernism. I do not believe this body of work is a reaction but rather an expression of my life.



(III. #20)

View of north and west walls of gallery through southern barrier of vines.

IT ALL RELATES TO LIANAS

Although, the construction of beauty is a process in “Lianas” it still conforms to the concepts of F.W. Ruckstuhl’s criteria of beauty, “Delight that is associated with graceful beauty, where serpentine lines predominate and accompanied by logic and order that relates to semi-objective beauty.”⁴⁷ Within “Lianas” delight is found in the serpentine vines and pathway on the floor of the installation. Logic and order are found in the liner vines that have curved leaves. Mirth is found in the whimsical nature of the arrangement of the objects and forms of the installation. Therefore according to Ruckstuhl’s criteria, “Mirth is associated with picturesque beauty, with angular lines and some disorder which is comic and mirth inspiring which relates to objective beauty.”⁴⁸ Beauty in the under – the – sea garden life forms; although, there is a delightful nature to these works, I also feel that there are components associated with awe.⁴⁹ Awe is associated with Sublime beauty and a pyramidal composition that lifts us up and creates an uncertainty and mystery that we can connect to spirituality. (Subjective Beauty)⁵⁰ Therefore the installation is delightful to look at, as it has semi-objective beauty but is also connected to the sublime through the awe achieved from the areas of pyramid contour.

My interest in nature is ever present as the main theme is a garden. Water is implied as the vines hang down as if in water. Yet, there is also an aquatic sense to color and to the flowing. The entire space is decorated with minute details with shifts in scale and the elaborate use of space. I have shifted from decorating vessels and forms to decorating space.

⁴⁷ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 88-100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

⁴⁸ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 88-100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

⁴⁹ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

⁵⁰ Ruckstuhl, F. Wellington. What Is the Essence of All Beauty? A Definition. The Art World. Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov., 1916), pp. 92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587672>

Sensism is represented by responses to the five senses and found in different aspects of *Lianas*. The haptic sense of touch is everywhere, because each piece is uniquely formed by my hand. The sense of vision is engaged by the linear composition of lines that soar upward, and along them are bits of color and offshoots that captivate and intrigue our vision. This happens all the while the brain is processing the information for notions of beauty. Smell is activated by the use of essential oils on the ceramic form. It aids in uplifting the spirits of viewers. Our hearing is activated by contact between vines as they sway in the light breeze. Ninety percent of our taste sense is activated by olfactory nerves. Therefore taste is activated in a haptic manner through sense memory of smell and aided by visual cues, such as the squishy bits of colorful Egyptian paste which appear like delicious bits of poisonous candy. Here again we invite the viewer to consider interaction with the perilous. *Lianas* provides the viewer with an opportunity to engage in a synthesis of their senses for an interpretation of the environment. Additionally, *Lianas* responds to Sensism through its poetic musicality. There is a rhythm to the nature of the installation. The vines flow in harmony with rhythmic movement as they are arranged about the gallery. On the northern wall hang a series of vines that are punctuated with varying shades of yellow and green tones. As the viewer's eyes reads across this wall it catches the varying placement of these bits of color and glossy surfaces in a musical rhythmic fashion. Throughout the installation there are orbs otherwise interpreted as bubbles topped with blossoms. These bursts of color and form can be interpreted as particular notes in a composition. Here Sensism is achieved by our reaction to the visual interpretation as a poetic response similar to what one has with the sensation of music.

The manner in which my work responds to or is influenced by Wabi-Sabi is in my appreciation of the beauty of nature and all of its imperfections. These beautiful imperfections

are found in *Lianas*. Some leaves are broken and they are erratic in nature. The colors used at times resemble decomposing leaves and organic matter. The composition of the space is not symmetrical or balanced it is very organic. It is imperfect, there is somberness and at the same time there is joy. As the lengths of vines flow downward they seem weighted, heavy with burden. The state in which this burden is considered has a somber quality. Yet this somberness is balanced by the joy of the whimsical and colorful nature of the mythical fantastical creatures that appear to hover among the imaginary organic matter. It combines eastern traditions in a western expression.

Spirituality is found in the upward soaring lengths of the vines and in the bubbles that represent gifts and prayers in route to heaven. The flower buds at the top represent life, rebirth, and gratitude. The placement of the expression in a white cube gallery also gives an overall reverence that strengthens the spirituality.

Life reflects art; art reflects life. The artist expresses their life and the artwork expresses the artist's life. I have presented my heterotopia for others to experience as a utopia.



(III. 20)
Friends of *Lianas* in meditation

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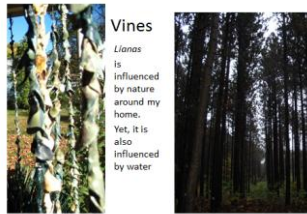


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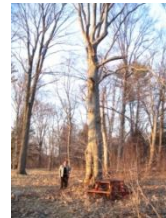


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