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Abstention and Opposition

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ABSTENTION AND OPPOSITION

by

Ryan LaBar

A THESIS

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ABSTENTION AND OPPOSITION

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University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: Peter Pinnell

Working with clay, I fabricate individual wheel thrown elements, these, together with other clay parts, are carefully stacked on top of each other to compose a layered and woven structure. Each element counterbalances the position of another. These precarious constructs are placed in a kiln, and the heat of the kiln melts and moves the clay and glaze. The clay parts deform as the material softens. Tensions are released, causing the system to undergo a domino effect best described as a cascading failure where the failure of one part triggers the failure of successive parts. As the firing progresses, the movement quiets and the system of parts reach equilibrium and become a singular and rested whole.

The final composition reflects the motion and revealed tension of the integrated clay parts. The deformed elements of the system appear suspended in space or compressed by the weight of another. Cool blue celadon bands twist around soft white porcelain rings as brown stoneware rods, once rigid, bend and weave their way throughout.

The piece is a dynamic whole of singular elements. The combined movement of the neighboring parts has affected each singular part. The structural rods, bands, and rings change from being a physical structure of support to being a visual illusion of structure. The parts have mixed to become one. A transformation has occurred. Each component's rigid and singular identity has changed, warped, and bent to accommodate

the integration of the neighboring elements.

The pieces are compositionally balanced with areas contrasting harmony and discord. Areas of harmony are emphasized through the use of color, line, and the repetition of form. Contrasting the areas of harmony are sections where form is lost and discord dominates. This is done by placing random elements that are structurally sound and don't deform next to elements that provide and communicate movement. In these areas of visual discord, the viewer is confronted with the inability to find resolution. Resolution can only be discovered when a balance between harmony and discord are discovered and embraced throughout the whole of the structure.

The pieces are a metaphor for my personal identity. My psyche, like my work, is a composed structure of many single elements of experience. These experiences, woven together, tangled and piled, undergo a “cascading failure,” melting together to create collaborative memory that defines me as a pluralistic whole. This whole is a composition of self and guides the changes that bring me closer to self-actualization.

As I collect and integrate experiences, I occasionally step back to analyze myself. After this moment of self-awareness, I seek out experiences that will lead me to become my idealized whole. In life, as in my work, I have an understanding that things will only turn out as an approximation of my intent. What results is usually something unexpected. It is within the unexpected where truths can be found. These truths define one's course of experiences. This ever changing, self-defining feedback loop drives the improvement of my work and self.