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Half-Light

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HALF-LIGHT

by

Kelly Ann Stading

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
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In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Santiago Cal

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HALF-LIGHT

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University of Nebraska, 2015

Adviser: Santiago Cal

My work explores concealed emotions such as fear, disgust, rage, resentment and shame. This emotional darkness is the underbelly of life, resulting from situations where people are victims of social pressure, trying to survive with what they have, while trying to achieve social norms. The comfort of a home allows these emotional responses to surface. “Half-Light” focuses on my concealed emotions, bringing them out of the dark to be confronted.

A home offers comforting routines that are easily infested by internal conflict. One nagging feeling builds on another until I’m forced to grapple with it. I often imagine different ways I could have reacted to situations while washing dishes, baking supper, or in the quiet moments before sleep. My work is a response to these invasive memories. I take the main emotion the memory harbors and re-imagine a similar situation in a domestic environment. Currently, this involves rodent-sized characters invading routinely used items in a home. The function of the household object correlates with the emotion the character is portraying. For instance the old woman’s disgust for her circumstances matches the disgusting materials she feeds down the garbage disposal, or the couch character’s denial of the important things concealed between the cushions. The scenes are my fears trapped in light, like rodents ensnared in mousetraps, their presence not openly acknowledged until trapped and grotesquely displayed.

These fictionalized scenarios stretch reality, which is why they are presented in half-light. The dark livens many dormant fears and nightmares. The brain may know there is no imminent threat, but that does not stop it from conjuring fear of what could be out there. Each sculpture in the dark gallery has only enough light illuminating it to match a thin beam of a flashlight. Each beam of light offers a glimpse of my inner turmoil, which is given physical form to be confronted and contained.

Each sculpture is an isolated memory pulled from hundreds of others that are the sum of my life's experiences, much like my home is a compilation of objects that represent my built identity. To mimic the isolation of the darker memories, the routinely used objects from the home are removed from their original environment. Displayed in a gallery, any personal associations with the objects become exposed, invaded and unfamiliar.

The scenes are placed behind a closed door, in a dark room, so that if outsiders chooses to enter, they become secondary invaders. Trapping their own memories and secrets inside the space when they close the door. These invaders become larger versions of the rodent-sized figures, to be studied by others who are also invading the space. I want the environment I create to be uncomfortably intriguing, as you explore my vulnerabilities and, in turn, explore your own.









