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When The Wind Stops

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When The Wind Stops

by

Qwist Joseph

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Eddie Dominguez

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When The Wind Stops

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Advisor: Eddie Dominguez

The sculpture I make exemplifies my interest in objects, their creation and our tendency to covet them. Humans have developed elaborate and diverse systems to categorize and dictate the value of things. As a culture we elevate and protect Art and its display is a platform in which this object obsession is exaggerated. Through the podium of art exhibition, I explore the idea of object-ness. I question the parameters around what defines something as an object, and more specifically what's necessary to transform that thing into Art. Further, I wonder where the line is drawn between Art and the ordinary; my work is meant to test these limits.

I'm interested in mundane things acting as accessible windows into my thought process. Everyday identifiable objects and the happenstance of process become agents, bringing to light the spiritual and ephemeral qualities of imagination. Although my work relies on the interaction between many materials, clay often begins the conversation. Its plastic moldability is the perfect vehicle for translating this creative language into actuality. Clay has the unique ability to quickly and directly print a thought, with every second of activity affecting its form. This sensitivity yields objects that appear hyper-made or obsessively handled. I couple this quality with nontraditional, often found materials. It is important that these components incite an uncanny, transformative

experience, showcasing both obvious relationships and material mystery. A wooden panel spray painted silver can read like metal and a retired plastic windsock is actually bronze.

I want to balance the permanent and rigid tendencies of Art with the fluid nature of its creation. This idea informs work that appears to exist in an un-naturalized environment, a hybrid situation that indicates the disconnect between the areas in which art exists: the studio, the gallery and the home. A still frame in the process, the sculpture captures the transition of an idea into a reality, physically connecting me to my unconscious. This obscures expectation of place, resolving the detachment between these three worlds. Working in the context of postmodernism, I find it important to hold onto this modernist ideal. In order to reveal this transience, I employ props in the form of blinding light, reified shadows and clashing material qualities. These act as unsettlors, creating a tension that is heightened further by my use of the in-between; the fine line between beauty and the unpleasant, between the positive and the negative—a purgatorial existence. These distinctions are important to me, being that I feel Art itself exists in a similar space. It's innately a physical part of the world, but only as an allegory of our being.

When presented as a group, objects absorb and reflect meanings from one another and their surroundings. By exaggerating these relationships I create a disorientation that is integral to the effect of the work. We live in a time where answers are readily available and the unknown hardly exists. American culture is one of immediacy and knowability; it is important to me that my work offers a departure from this monotonous reality. My compositions are open invitations for questioning and investigation, creating a collaborative dialogue with the viewer.







