Anatomy of the Vessel

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Abstract

Anatomy of the Vessel

Through my ceramic and sculptural work I have been focusing on the human form. I have been intrigued not only by the physical attributes of the form but also by certain lifestyle choices and their supporting emotions. Within my works, I challenge the viewer with internal and external conflicts regarding one’s physical and mental health that are all portrayed through a familiar element of the human form. By showing everything from the bones to the psychological aspects of a human being, the viewers can relate to each and every work. My research has consisted of artist inspiration like Janine Antoni and Louise Bourgeois, aesthetic analyses pertaining to emotion, environmental and health studies explaining the effects of chemicals on our bodies and anatomical depictions. One of my sculptures titled *Pollution* (2015), portrays the idea of the chemicals we expose our bodies to everyday. The natural element of the wood combined with the dark goopy texture of tar that is dripped amongst the pelvic girdle and cavity and femurs, which are carved out of the wood, creates a physical interpretation of what we subject our bodies to. *Bad Habits* (2016), portrays similar elements consisting of four ceramic castings of my arms and legs. Each appendage is a functional vessel, thus they are filled then with unhealthy food that the average person consumes but addresses the issue of the toxic products or food that we fill our bodies with. It is through my research and sculptural depictions that I have brought these familiar conflicts face-to-face with the viewers while convincing them to challenge their own opinions on the matter. My work focuses on portraying aspects of human life through natural materials and a natural environment, forcing the viewers to have a visceral experience with the subject matter of the “body” in order to recognize the underlying meaning within the artwork.
Acknowledgements
Anatomy of the Vessel

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Artist Statement
Anatomy of the Vessel
I have always found the human body to be one of the most spectacular forms of art. Each human has their own unique vessel that is capable of countless personal actions and expressions, ultimately constructing the form’s natural beauty. Through my ceramic and sculptural work, I have focused on the physical attributes of the human form and its anatomical structure, as well as portraying positive and negative aspects of daily human life through significant materials. My work forces the viewers to have a visceral experience with the subject matter of the “body,” while they also question my implied themes. Over the course of the last two years, I have concentrated on the internal and external conflicts within our environment regarding the human body and mind. Despite the beauty of the human form, we are not perfect and have become a source of destruction to our bodies and nature. Some of my works focus on the damaging psychological aspects many people endure regarding their own bodies, specifically the negative and uncomfortable emotions that body image generally provokes. Aside from the psychological struggles, keeping one’s body physically healthy has also been a recent issue within our processed and chemical-based society. Therefore, I have been intrigued by the effect of natural and unnatural products on and within the human body that we knowingly and unknowingly expose ourselves to every day. By placing toxic and natural products directly on the human form, the bareness provides a surreal perspective of actually seeing these products at one’s core. In addition, I have also carefully chosen materials for my sculptural works, as they are all momentous to their underlying meanings. My use of unconventional media not only adds to the visual interest of the physical structure but also compliments my conceptual vision of the work.

I have used the human body as an instrument because of its beauty, but more importantly for the recognizable and relatable connection it creates with the viewers through its physical form. The physical structure of the human form regarding my work, both realistic and
minimalistic, has become the perfect passage for my intended conceptual themes due to the physical works’ familiarity to the audience. Providing the conceptual idea of a work to the viewers, in my opinion, takes away their opportunity to critically analyze and interpret their own meaning of the work. Once an individual completely understands the artist’s intention of a work he or she might no longer find it stimulating because the mystery of the work has been solved. By telling the viewers what my intentions of a work are, he or she will lose that sense of wonder that draws them into the work. Therefore, when the viewers are initially able to visually understand the physical form, they are guided by my conceptual representation through the structure, but are still able to create an intimate relationship with the work through his or her personal analysis and interpretation.

The artists who have influenced my work consist of twentieth-century artists Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Janine Antoni because of their physical, conceptual and material references to the human body, but also because of the similar philosophies we share regarding viewers’ interpretations and relationship to the work. Louise Bourgeois has been considered the founder of confessional art, meaning she was one of the first to express her troubled past through her sculptures. Thus, her sculptures clearly reflected her father’s abusive and dominant nature and the physical and psychological affects it had on her and the rest of her family. Even though her childhood was her inspiration, Bourgeois always felt the physical work and how it made her viewers feel was what was important. In fact, even when she has told stories of her childhood, she claims that they are not explanations of her work but rather a metaphor of the viewers’ experience with it. Therefore, she focuses her work on the encounter between the viewer and her art so that the meaning or emotions the viewer experiences are not a product of the biographical content but rather the work itself.
Bourgeois creates this balance between the structure, her works’ dark portrayal, the space it shares with the viewer, and the meaning of her work, which has allowed her to guide her viewers in a certain direction without telling them the narrative behind her work. One of Bourgeois’ most famous works is *Maman* (1999), a thirty-foot tall spider made up of stainless steel, bronze and marble (Fig. 1). It is such a large structure that the viewers can walk around and underneath the sculpture. However, because of the massive scale, rough texture and general arachnophobia, walking underneath this structure would not exactly provoke happy or comforting feelings. Even though she created this sculpture in memory of her mother, one would think, because of its disturbing atmosphere, that Bourgeois did not especially like her mother - but it was the exact opposite. Bourgeois looked up to her mother because of her mother’s strength in her abusive relationship. As her mother was a nurturer and a tapestry weaver, the spider perfectly encompasses Bourgeois’ feelings of her mother.\(^3\) This is a work that can easily be interpreted completely differently by the public as opposed to how Bourgeois feels about the sculpture.

I received a similar response to one of my sculptures titled *Pollution* (2015), which reveals the idea of how a natural element like wood can be taken over by our toxic man-made materials (Fig. 2). The natural element of the wood combined with the dark goopy texture of tar that is dripped amongst the carved out pelvic girdle and cavity and femurs, creates a physical interpretation of what we subject our bodies to. While this work was just recently displayed, I was able to overhear strangers’ conversations and interpretations of *Pollution* (2015). One lady understood it as a statement on war, while an older man believed that it addressed a cleansing of the body because of the dripping tar. It is extremely interesting to me to hear others’ interpretations of my work, especially when they were unaware that I am the artist. However, it
shows that everyone is going to have their own opinion of a work and just because they did not see what I saw in my work, does not mean that their interpretation is wrong. In fact, I have only ever found others’ explanations and critiques of my work inspiring and for that reason I normally choose not to share my interpretations with my viewers. The viewers analyses are guided through the darker themes and physical aspects of my work; thus, I am leading them in a certain direction of how they should feel when viewing a work, without verbalizing my exact concepts.

As previously mentioned, the materials I use are a vital part of my sculptures and their meanings. Similarly, Hesse’s work completely revolves around the materials she chooses for her sculptures, in that the conceptual vision is found more within the materials and there is less emphasis on the physical structure. Coming out of the Minimalism era, she became extremely interested in unconventional materials, providing her with the opportunity to experiment with a multitude of natural looking materials. Minimalism work usually contained hard and rigid materials but Hesse challenged that model by experimenting with latex, polyester resin and rope, classifying her work as Post-Minimalist. Hesse would manipulate her materials ever so slightly by playing with the tension between organic and geometric shapes, industrial and natural materials, and presence and absence to completely transform the work. By creating this contradiction amongst her materials, it not only made each material stand out next to the others, but the materials also created a story through their contrast. Expanded Expansion (1969) created by Hesse, is made up of fiberglass, polyester resin, latex and cheesecloth (Fig. 3). It is a simple minimalistic sculpture, but the scale of the sculpture - at about ten feet tall and twenty-five feet long - makes it mesmerizing. The sheer size of this work and the use of an unusual sculptural material, such as latex, draws the viewers in, but it is the natural draping of the material over the fiberglass poles that creates an intriguing composition. In this work she wanted to show the
juxtaposition of the materials, through the permanence of the fiberglass poles that are holding the structure up versus the deteriorating latex and polyester resin. The materials she used in this work are viewed as natural and familiar to the human body because of the tan, neutral colors and skin-like textures. The natural draping of the latex between each pole even gives it a graceful, representational feel. The fiberglass poles also appear to resemble the strength of bones, as it is the fiberglass poles that are holding up the structure, keeping its form. While the latex references and even slightly resembles flesh, it is the deterioration of the latex over time that makes it the ultimate representation of flesh.

My work, *Natural Beauty* (2014), was actually my first sculpture inspired by Hesse’s use of natural-looking materials and the contradiction of the two (Fig. 4). I have always appreciated the neutral color scheme she followed and almost all of my works have followed the same natural, tan colors as well. The contrast in the textures she used also always fascinated me and I implemented that idea into this sculpture as well. *Natural Beauty* (2014) is made up of wood, tan nylons and nails. The contrast of the tough wooden bones within the soft textured nylons creates this juxtaposition of materials. This sculpture addresses the inner skeleton with a see-through layer of skin. The tan tights are pulled over the carved wooden leg bones, representing not only a layer of skin but also referencing the societal norm of women needing to wear nylons. The need to wear a second layer of “skin” to cover up ones natural self also reflects concerns with self-image. Being able to see the carved wooden bones through the nylons creates this illusion of protection from the outside, but really the nylons’ strength does not compare to the natural element of wood. The layer of skin is not always going to protect what is on the inside, whether it is one’s mental or physical health.
Antoni is a sculptor but she is also famous for her performance art. Antoni uses her body as her tool and even, in some cases, as the artwork itself. In Antoni’s *Slumber* (1994), she sleeps in the gallery for 28 days with an EEG machine recording her REM patterns, which she then weaves into the blanket that she sleeps with at night (Fig. 5). With Antoni’s earlier works, she was more concerned with pinning down the meaning and communicating it directly to her viewers. However, as she exhibited this work all over the world, she realized she cannot predict how viewers are going to respond. The musical sound of the loom could remind viewers of the rhythmic breathing we experience in deep sleep, while the intricate threads being woven could be representative of our dreams. The open-ended narrative, according to her viewers, of *Slumber* (1994) allowed her to become more open-minded and not so obsessed with conveying a certain meaning but rather directing her viewers in a particular direction. Antoni sees her works as objects she has been intimate with because she has used her own body in the production and exhibition of her works.

I have always considered my artwork as a part of myself by sculpting and carving anatomical depictions of the body. However, I always wanted to push it further by using my body as a tool and incorporating physical parts of my body into a work, ultimately creating a few works that were in fact a product of my own body. One of my first works that incorporated this idea is titled *Bad Habits* (2015) (Fig. 6). It is a ceramic body cast of my arms and legs that appear as functional vessels containing processed foods and the potential chemicals we are exposed to through those “edible” products. This work forces the viewers to see and smell these products inside of my arms and legs, challenging their own opinions of the products. One of my most recent works entitled *Human* (2016), I believe comprises everything that I have been trying to achieve through my work in this final piece for my collection (Fig. 7). *Human* (2016) consists
of a latex sheet stretched across two wooden posts that represents the mortality of the human body because, as previously mentioned, latex deteriorates over time. Embedded into the liquid latex, that is poured on the latex sheet, contains elements of my body and bodily fluids, essentially creating a mixed media painting. The liquid latex is a barrier that protects the latex sheet and fluids, therefore the liquid latex acts as the unnatural additives we subject our body to everyday in order to “preserve” our natural bodies. Human (2016) becomes this genderless representation of the body that uncomfortably forces the viewers to come face to face with elements of the human body.

As I have focused on Antoni’s, Bourgeois’ and Hesse’s physical work and concepts in relation to my own work, it is also important to take into consideration where and how their work is displayed. When viewing a work of art, one might critique the style and the composition then, possibly try to understand the concept the artist might have intended for the viewer. However, rarely will a viewer consciously take into consideration where and how this work of art was displayed. Since the 1930’s, the concept of the “white cube” within gallery spaces has been the favored style by many curators and has even been the home to most twentieth-century artists’ work, including Antoni, Bourgeois and Hesse (Fig. 8). The traditional gallery space that began towards the end of the nineteenth century was created not only to display works of art but they were also used as a public gathering space. They typically were decorated but not to the point where it distracted from the artwork displayed. However, because artwork during this time mostly consisted of paintings, traditional galleries had a standard and consistent way of displaying these works. It was not until after the First World War that galleries began to show work against a contrasting background of the dominant colors within the painting. This began the idea of personalizing a gallery space for an artist and their work; and, for the first time,
forcing society to notice the space where a work is displayed and not just the work itself. During the early 1900’s, scientists discovered the importance of sensory physiology, architects started using white paint because of its association with cleanliness and more importantly temporary exhibitions became increasingly more popular. Thus the white walls, as well as moveable walls and a flexible ground plan, allowed for a more personalized space for an artist and their work. Therefore, the white cube gallery quickly became the ideal space for an artist to show their work as well as the space becoming a work of art itself.

The white cube has become this psychological space for the viewer. It creates this initial setting for how they might interpret an artist’s work. If an artist intended to have his or her viewers feel a sense of happiness, displaying their work within a white cube setting, in my opinion, might not be the best environment. The clean white gallery alludes to a seriousness, possible confrontational feelings of emptiness as a viewer experiences the artwork within this sterile space. Thus, the white cube was the perfect environment for Antoni, Bourgeois and Hesse because of the exhibition freedom their sculptures and performances required, as well as their conceptual themes that reflected the gallery space. Displaying their work within a white cube gallery not only benefited their work, but also allowed the viewers to have an even greater visceral experience and relationship with their work through the surrounding environment.

As my physical works, conceptual themes and focus on the viewers’ relationship and interpretation reflect Antoni’s, Bourgeois’ and Hesse’s, the white cube gallery would also be the ideal space for my work to be exhibited. Due to the versatility of the space, its psychological effect on the viewer and sterile walls, viewing my work within that environment would heighten the viewers experience with my work. The space essentially works as an emotional guide that affects the viewers as soon as they enter the gallery, allowing the viewers to have a
understanding and personal interpretation of my work because of the emotional state the environment stimulated. In personalizing my white cube gallery space, I would create smaller rooms within one larger space, but the walls of the smaller rooms would not reach the ceiling. This gallery will create a more intimate and enclosed space with the viewer and the work displayed in the small rooms, while the viewer is still conscious of the entire gallery space, other viewers and exhibited work as a whole. All of my works reflect each other physically or conceptually, thus displaying them all within one single open room would make sense, but it will provide the viewers with a different experience. The open space, multiple viewers and works displayed throughout the room could potentially be overwhelming and I believe it would take away from a viewer’s intimate experience with a single work, forcing them to have a general understanding of the exhibition’s entirety.

As I value a viewer’s personal interpretation of each work individually, others might rather see and experience all of the works together at once. Perhaps the connection between all of the works in one visual field creates more of an experience for some as opposed to seeing one or two works per small room. In either gallery space, the viewers will still be affected by the white cube and my work displayed within it. Whether his or her interpretations reflect my original intentions of my work does not matter. My work and the gallery can guide his or her emotions and experience, but ultimately it is his or her personal interpretations and opinions of my work that will be more significant and memorable to the individual.

The human body has been a physical outlet that I have felt properly exhibits the conceptual problematic themes of how one recognizes or ignores his or her body as a vessel. In ceramics, a vessel is primarily referred to as a functional form, similarly to how our bodies serve a valuable purpose. It is when one neglects their duties to keep one’s body and mind healthy, that
the physical deterioration caused by the processed foods and products and modern day psychological struggles will destroy one’s vessel over time. I want my viewers to recognize and relate to the forms, but more importantly that they question what harm they possibly put their bodies through every day. With my work being aesthetically uncomfortable, I have directed the viewers toward a certain emotion, but it is their own interpretations that they receive from my work that will hopefully impact their lives for the better.
Appendix

A. Illustrations

Fig. 1 - Louise Bourgeois, *Maman* (1999). Stainless steel, bronze and marble, 30.42 ft x 29.25 ft x 33.58 ft

Fig. 2 - Lauren Denler, *Pollution* (2015). Wood, stain and tar, 16” x 1.5” x 36”

Fig. 3 - Eva Hesse, *Expanded Expansion* (1969). Fiberglass, polyester resin, latex, and cheesecloth, 10 ft x 2” x 25 ft

Fig. 4 - Lauren Denler, *Natural Beauty* (2014). Wood, nails and nylon, 2” x 5” x 48”
Fig. 5 - Janine Antoni, *Slumber* (1994). Performance: loom, yarn, bed, nightgown, EEG machine and artist's REM readings.

Fig. 6 - Lauren Denler, *Bad Habits* (2015). Porcelain, mayonnaise, Coke a Cola, Ramen noodles and french fries, 10” x 12” x 14”

Fig. 7 - Lauren Denler, *Human* (2016) Latex, fluids and wood 62.4” x 24” x 84”

Fig. 8 - White Cube Gallery, White Cube Bermondsey, London
References


4. "Minimalism with a Human Face: Hesse," Tate Modern (December 01, 2002).


7. Ibid, 53-54


10. Maak, Klonk, and Demand, "The White Cube."
Exhibition List
Anatomy of the Vessel
Anatomy of the Vessel - Exhibition List
Meiley- Swallow Hall, North Central College
31 S Ellsworth St, Naperville, IL 60540

Lauren Denler
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   36” x 5” x 36”  
   Plaster, rope, wood and masonry nails  
   $600.00

2. *Natural Beauty*, 2014  
   2” x 5” x 48”  
   Wood, nails, and nylons  
   SBA

3. *Organs*, 2015  
   Table Set for Two  
   Ceramic  
   $800.00

4. *Pollution*, 2015  
   16” x 1.5” x 36”  
   Wood, stain and tar  
   $400.00

5. *The Outer Layer*, 2015  
   14” x 9” x 26”  
   Ceramic and hanger  
   $500.00

6. *Home or Hived*, 2015  
   14” x 12” x 8”  
   Ceramic, beeswax and an apple  
   $150.00

   3 x 1.5 x 6”9  
   Plaster and wooden door  
   $300.00

   3 x 2”5 x 1”2  
   Nylons, fiber-fill and yarn  
   $150.00

   10” x 12” x 14”  
   Porcelain, mayonnaise, plastic knife, Coca Cola,  
   plastic straw, Ramen noodles and french fries  
   $500.00

NFS - Not for Sale      SBA - Sale By Arrangement
10. *To the Core*, 2015
   9 Femur Bones
   Porcelain, natural and unnatural products
   $200.00

    51” x 1.5” x 21”
    Wood, tea stain and beeswax
    NFS

12. *Dead End*, 2016
    12” x 2.5” x 22
    Rope and porcelain
    $300.00

    62.4” x 24” x 84”
    Latex, fluids and wood
    SBA

    34” x 17” x 33”
    Nylons, wire and wood
    $300.00

    26” x 1” x 28”
    Wood frame, nylons and hair
    $300.00

NFS - Not for Sale      SBA - Sale By Arrangement
Exhibition Descriptions
Anatomy of the Vessel
The Weighing, 2014

Plaster, rope, wood, masonry nails

The Weighing consists of five parts. The wood board with nails is hung on the wall above eye level. The brain, heart, bone and teeth in jar are each tied to rope and then each body part is hung from a nail. The order of how they are hung left to right is the bone, heart, teeth, then the brain. The ropes are already pre-tied, therefore the knots can just slip over the nails. This work has no variations in how it is hung because the order of how they are hung left to right and the length of the rope hold meaning to the works concept.

Natural Beauty, 2014

Wood, nails, and nylons

Natural Beauty is hung similarly to The Weighing. The wooden bones and nylons are already pre-attached to the wooden board that is hung on the wall. First, the wooden board needs to be hung on the wall above eye level and the bones and nylons will dangle. The left leg is able to bend, therefore I bend it slightly outward and nail below and on the sides of the tibia and fibula for support. The right does not have a femur, so the nylons are stretched to the right and nailed into the wall about five inches above the top of the tibia and fibula. The right tibia and fibula are hung in the nylons with a nail underneath to support its weight so it does not stretch the nylons down too far. Every time I display this work I try and do so the same way, however it always ends up looking slightly different. Each time it is displayed the nylons get more holes and more stretched also making the display slightly different every time it is hung.
*Organs*, 2015

Ceramic

*Organs* is a table set for two that is made up of mugs, cups, small plates, large plates, small bowls, large bowls and one tea pot. I display this set on a small wooden table for two with two chairs. I want the table set to appear functional because it is, rather than it being displayed in a case or on a pedestal. With the alterations I made to the thrown functional vessels, it is easy for the viewers to see it as sculptural instead of functional. When placing the vessels on the table, I organize the set in front of each chair as if someone were to sit and eat off of the vessels. I have also displayed this work the same way each time, even in how the tableware is placed in front of each chair.

*Pollution*, 2015

Wood, stain and tar

*Pollution* is a wall piece and hangs with the center of the work at eye level. It not difficult to display and is displayed the same way each time. It is also a very sturdy piece so it has not taken on damage throughout the multiple times I have displayed it. This work complements *Purification* in that they are visually similar but have opposite concepts, therefore these works are typically displayed on the wall next to each other. *Pollution*, however, can still be displayed on its own. It does not have to be displayed with *Purification* to impact the viewer.
The Outer Layer, 2015

Ceramic, wooden hanger and metal clothes rack

The Outer Layer consists of three parts and is displayed on the floor for viewers to walk around. The clothes rack is the crucial element in its display and the hanger needs to be fed through the bottom of the ceramic torso because it does not fit through the top of the torso. The wooden hanger is hand made just for this piece in order to hold the weight of the ceramic torso. The hanger in torso is then hung from the clothes rack. I have always hung the work slightly off center of the rack versus directly in the middle, but each time it is displayed it will look slightly different in how the torso hangs off of the hanger and in where it hangs on the clothes rack.

Home or Hived, 2015

Ceramic rib bones, beeswax and an apple

Home or Hived is displayed on a pedestal that is approximately four feet tall. With how this work was created, it will generally look the same every time it is displayed because it cannot be taken apart. The font of the work is where the viewer can see majority of the ribs with the apple towards the back. However, the work is designed for the viewer to walk around the piece.
*Gateway, 2015*

Plaster and wooden door

*Gateway* consists of three parts and is displayed leaning against the wall. When leaning the door against the wall, base needs to be further from the wall than the top of the door so that the door does not fall forward. The doorknob has a plaster hand attached to it, making the doorknob and door a functional piece. However, for travel purposes the doorknob is always removed and then replaced when displayed. Therefore, a screwdriver is needed in order to install and remove the doorknob and hand from the door. About where an eyehole would be on the door is a screw from which the plaster mouth is hung. It is a relatively easy work to display, but difficult to transport because of its size.

*Three Nudes, 2015*

Nylons, fiber-fill and yarn

*Three Nudes* consists of three pairs of nylons stuffed with fiber-fill and yarn. I have pre-attached the three stuffed nylons with safety pins because I have them wrapped and intertwined with one another in a certain way. However the ends, or feet, of the nylons are not attached because I do not want the safety pins to be seen on display. This work is displayed on a low pedestal about two feet off the ground but the pedestals’ base is around four by four feet in order to fit the entire work on the pedestal. Every time this work is displayed it looks slightly different as ends of the nylons need to be placed accordingly. I have even had to fix the display of this piece while it has been exhibited because of the nylons falling out of place off of the pedestal.
Bad Habits, 2015

Porcelain, mayonnaise, plastic knife, Coca-Cola, plastic straw, Ramen noodles and french fries

Bad Habits consists of four porcelain casts of my arms and legs that are displayed on a pedestal below eye level. One of the legs has difficulty standing on its own, thus that leg is laid on its side with the Ramen pouring out of it. In front of that leg, near the foot, the other leg is stood upright with Coca-Cola poured almost to the top of the vessel and a straw placed into it. Next, one of the hands is stood upright to the left of the standing leg and the right of the Ramen. This hand is filled with french fries and a few fries are also scattered over the hand and on the pedestal. The last hand is filled with mayonnaise, however I filled the bottom of the hand with paper towels so the mayonnaise does not get into the fingers. This hand is placed on its side to the right of the standing leg. Some the mayonnaise is whipped on the outside of the hand and the plastic knife used to scope the mayonnaise is rested on the hand as well. The most difficult part of this display is the food, which is a crucial part of the sculpture. This work has only been displayed one time and for a short period, therefore I am not sure how long the food will last before it needs to get replaced. That being said, the molding and spoiling or lack of because of the processed foods, also addresses the conceptual theme. No matter what, this work will look different every time it is displayed because of the food that is involved as well as the placement of the arms and legs that will always be slightly off.
Porcelain and natural and unnatural products

To the Core consists of nine femur bones that are all hung on the wall about an inch or two apart from one another directly at eyelevel, in order for the viewers to smell the products. On the back of each bone there is a hole that allows each bone to be hung from a nail. No bone is displayed the same way next to one another, meaning that some are turned around and others are upside down. Each bone has one product displayed on it and the order from left to right of how they are hung does matter. I do not want the viewers to know the products I chose, therefore they are not listed on the title card. However, for display purposes I will reveal the products so that the order in which they are displayed is known. The first bone from left to right is the tin foil bone. There is no need to take off and replace the tin foil after it is displayed, thus the tin foil is already attached to the femur. The second bone is covered in avocado. I mashed up the avocado and mixed a little lemon juice into the mash just to keep it from browning too quickly. This bones’ product will most likely need be replaced every few days because of how fast an avocado decomposes. In addition it is also washed after being displayed. The third femur is covered in Pantene shampoo, which tends to drip off of the bone initially but eventually dries. I will pour more shampoo on this bone over time in order to keep the shampoo smell, as that is one of the only ways the viewer can pick out the product due to the lack of texture. The fourth bone is covered in melted beeswax and stays on the bone. Therefore there is no work for displaying the product and it simply needs to be hung. The fifth bone is already covered in plastic wrap and is ready to be hung on the wall. The sixth femur is covered in a mixture of milk and cornstarch. The cornstarch makes the
milk thicker, allowing it to stick to the bone more easily. However, this requires multiple coats of the mixture to be painted onto the bone in order to receive my desired texture. Overtime, the dried milk mixture cracks which is fine when it is on display. However, each time I display this work I repaint the bone with the milk mixture. The seventh bone is soaked in blue toilet bowl cleaner. I poured toilet bowl cleaner into a bag and then let the bone soak in the bag over night in order for it to retain a faint blue color of the product and its smell. The eighth bone is covered in dirt. I mixed water with some dirt to get it slightly muddy just enough to where it sticks to the bone. If the viewers touch this bone the dirt does fall off, which I am completely okay with. However, this bone needs to be washed off after it is displayed for that reason. The last femur is permanently covered in tar and thus just needs to be hung on the wall. The bones’ products that need to be replaced after every display will always look slightly different but that is also the nature of the natural products that are the ones that need to be replaced.

Purification, 2016

Wood, tea stain and beeswax

Purification is a wall piece that is hung with center at eyelevel. As mentioned it is the complement to Pollution and therefore I prefer them hung next to one another. However it does not need to be displayed next to Pollution to have an impact on the viewer.
**Dead End, 2016**

Rope and porcelain

*Dead End* is a rope ladder made out of porcelain femur bones as the steps. Ideally the ladder would be suspended from the ceiling. However for my current exhibition I have it hanging from the second floor railing. The ladder reaches the floor with two or three of the steps gathered on the floor. The femurs at the bottom of the ladder will be intact but as they ascend to the top those femurs will be broken in half. This work will only need to be hung, as the bones will already be tied into the rope.

**Human, 2016**

Latex, fluids and wood

*Human* consists of three parts, the latex sheet with bodily fluids, the liquid latex poured over the sheet, and the two wooden posts that the ends of the latex will be nailed to stretching the “canvas.” This is my largest work in height and length; therefore, the size forces the viewer to walk around the work. This piece is displayed in the center of my other works because it is a final reflection of me and all my other works. Displaying this piece in the center of the gallery also allows the viewer to see through the work as opposed to if it were hung on the wall.
Inside Out, 2016

Nylons, wire and wood

*Inside Out* is displayed on a pedestal with the legs hanging off the front of the pedestal. As everything is already attached, the work needs to simply be placed on the pedestal. However, this work is extremely fragile and should be handled with care when being transported.

Pull Yourself Together, 2016

Wood frame, nylons and hair

*Pull Yourself Together* is a wall piece that is simply hung with the wire on the back of the frame. Both the nylons that are hanging off of the frame hang naturally.
Analysis and Interpretations

Anatomy of the Vessel
As mentioned in my artist statement, I prefer not to tell my viewers the meaning behind my work and would rather that they create their own interpretations and meanings. However, for my thesis I have decided to provide my thoughts, inspirations, analysis and interpretations of my works for academic purposes.

_The Weighing_, 2014

Plaster, rope, wood, masonry nails

_The Weighing_ was my first piece that really inspired my desire to work with the human body. Aside from the physical human elements that are portrayed, it also provoked a certain aesthetic that I wanted to continue throughout my future works. This work was inspired by the ancient Egyptian tradition “weighing of the heart,” which weighed ones heart against the principle of truth and justice, represented by a feather, after one had died. If their heart balanced against the feather, they would be granted a place in the Fields of Hetep and Iaru, but if it was heavier, a beast waiting by the scale devoured their heart. Therefore, there is meaning behind the length of the rope and why some are longer than others. The heart is hanging from the second nail on the wooden board. It has the shortest rope and is closest to the wooden board, making it the most important. The brain hangs from the farthest right nail and is slightly longer than the heart making it the next most important. Third, is a bone on the farthest-left nail. The least important is the teeth that hang on the longest rope tied to a glass jar. The importance is based on one’s opinion and how they view the elements of the body. The two most controversial, I believe for most people, would be deciding between the heart and the
brain. This is the conflict the viewers are provided with and it makes them question their own beliefs on the matter.

**Natural Beauty, 2014**

Wood, nails, and nylons

*Natural Beauty* focuses on the contrast of the tough wooden bones within the soft textured nylons creating a juxtaposition of materials. This sculpture addresses the inner skeleton with a see-through layer of skin. The tan tights are pulled over the carved wooden leg bones, representing not only a layer of skin but also referencing the societal norm of women needing to wear nylons. The need to wear a second layer of “skin” to cover up ones natural self also reflects concerns with self-image. Being able to see the carved wooden bones through the nylons creates this illusion of protection from the outside, but really the nylons strength does not compare to the natural element of wood. The layer of skin is not always going to protect what is on the inside, whether it is one’s mental or physical health.

**Organs, 2015**

Ceramic

*Organs* is a ceramic table set for two that consists of various organs of the body. In making a table set that represents organs of the human body, its makes this set almost disgusting to eat off of. I want the viewers to question which organ they would use to drink out of or eat off of and whether or not they are comfortable with that representation. I have addressed the body as a vessel quite often in my work and functional ceramic
works are often referred to in the same way. Therefore, by creating a table set of functional vessels and then manipulating them to become a part of the human body, makes the viewers question what a vessel is to them.

*Pollution*, 2015

Wood, stain and tar

*Pollution* reveals the idea of how a natural element like wood can be taken over by our toxic man-made materials. The natural element of the wood combined with the dark goopy texture of tar that is dripped amongst the carved out pelvic girdle and cavity and femurs, creates a physical interpretation of what we subject our bodies to. The wood for this piece was store-bought, and the stain that I used on the bones makes it stand out from the background. Therefore, this work represents the industrial products of our environment and how even a natural element like wood might not always appear so natural.

*The Outer Layer*, 2015

Ceramic, wooden hanger and metal clothes rack

For *The Outer Layer*, I wanted to create a skin that is portrayed as clothing in how I have it displayed. Therefore, I hung the sculpture on a clothes rack using a hanger I made. I wanted it to be cut up and distressed looking by its texture, so I cut out chunks of clay. One of my favorite cuts I made was right in front between the breasts because it not only adds to the female form of the figure but it draws the viewers eye more around the piece. I did not spend any time cleaning this piece up because I wanted the inside and
outside to both have a messy look to them. I called the piece *The Outer Layer*, because as humans it is something we are constantly focusing on, whether it be our clothes, make up, how our hair looks or our outer appearance in general. However, this outer layer will always leave us hollow, there is nothing about how others perceive it that will ever make it feel whole.

*Home or Hived, 2015*

Ceramic rib bones, beeswax and an apple

*Home or Hived* consists of twelve ceramic rib bones that are buried in the poured beeswax, while at the same time still creating the illusion of a ribcage. Behind the ribs and also buried in beeswax is an apple that is symbolic of the heart - also referencing the story of Adam and Eve. The common saying that “home is where the heart is” helped inspire the name for this piece, in addition to the current issue of the decline of bees within our environment. With *Home or Hived*, I wanted to reference the body as a hive and how it is home for us just as a hive is home for bees. The way the beeswax is built up around the ribcage also resembles a beehive. Therefore, this work is referencing not only our physical bodies but the issues that are going on in the environment around us as well.
Gateway, 2015

Plaster and wooden door

*Gateway* addresses the idea of the human’s mind being an endless gateway; it is an open door. I used the door as a figurative form and representative of the mind with the castings of my body alluding to the door as a human form. About where an eye-whole in the door would be, is a plaster casting of my open mouth with my outreached hand casted on the doorknob. When casting my hand I also put the door knob into the plaster before it dried so it was a way of securing the hand to the door as well as a way to make it functional. I then put mold soap around the door part of the knob so it allowed for the handle to be turned while still holding the hand. I wanted to play off the literal idea of it being a gateway. Therefore, I placed the hand as the handle, so it reaches out invitingly, almost for a handshake.

Three Nudes, 2015

Nylons, fiber-fill and yarn

*Three Nudes* is an abstraction of three women’s legs all wrapped around one another. I wanted to show the difference of using three different colored tights, yet everything was the same on the inside. The color of the tights did not matter. This work is addressing the issues of body image, referencing that it does not matter what the outside looks like but rather that we are all the same on the inside. Still with this sculpture I wanted to achieve the grotesqueness that I exhibit in my other works. I also wanted this piece to be placed on a pedestal and lower to the ground so the viewers can see it from all angles.
Bad Habits, 2015

Porcelain, mayonnaise, plastic knife, Coca Cola, plastic straw, Ramen noodles and french fries

Bad Habits was a difficult, expensive and time-consuming work to make even though the end product was casted molds of my arms and legs. First, I used alginate to make positive plaster molds of both my arms and legs. Then with these plaster positives, I was able to create a plaster negative that was used to create my porcelain slip casted molds. For this sculpture I wanted four in total, with the idea of there being two arms and two legs, or one human body. These molds can then be used as functional vessels while still maintaining a sculptural feel, referring to the human body as a vessel. Because each appendage is a functional vessel, I filled them with unhealthy food that the average person consumes, addressing the issue of the toxic products or food that we fill our bodies with. However, once I continued with this sculpture realizing the financial costs, I wanted to create this idea of fast food/cheap food/unhealthy food that we fill our bodies with, while still placing them within expensive outerwear. We focus so much on what we look like on the outside but at the same time not really caring about what is going in on the inside. With creating this “elegant dining room china” feel of my work and filling it with fast food, I believe it really draws the viewer in. They will want to smell the food, possibly even taste it but when this food is blatantly shown “inside the body” will the viewer still want the food? Or will they be repulsed?
To the Core, 2015

Porcelain and natural and unnatural products

To the Core consists of nine casted femur bones and addresses the issue of toxic man-made products we expose our bodies to, compared to natural products. I chose nine because I wanted an odd number, making the toxic products outweigh the natural products. I then have each product on the bone, making the viewer ultimately question what it is by its texture and smell. I like the idea of using bones to display this issue because it makes the viewer then associate these with their body. One will look at shampoo as a healthy product we use throughout the day, however most shampoos contain chemicals that we should not be exposing our bodies to. As the viewer looks at the bone, they can smell and see the shampoo and question whether, it is a toxic or natural product. I have also alternated the good and bad products, starting with a toxic product on the far left. Compositionally, I did not want this work to look unbalanced due to the materials on each bone. Therefore, I put the more visually heavy products towards the outside and have them gradually become lighter as the viewer’s eye reaches the center.

Purification, 2016

Wood, tea stain and beeswax

Purification was inspired by me wanting to create a work that complemented Pollution but in the natural aspect. I knew for this work that I wanted to incorporate beeswax in the same way I incorporated the tar in Pollution, but dripping it from the top as opposed to dripping it from the bottom with Pollution. The wood that I used to create
the canvas for this piece I found in someone’s garbage and loved the look of the naturally
decaying wood. The white paint was peeling off and there were rusted nails and screws
sticking out from various places in the wood. Finding this wood in the state it was I
believe perfectly reflected what I was trying to accomplish with this work conceptually.
With *Pollution*, I carved out the pelvic cavity and femurs but wanted to incorporate the
rib cage in *Purification*. Therefore in creating this piece all my materials were natural.
Instead of using a store bought stain, I made a tea stain out of black tea, vinegar and steel
wool. After I carved out the rib cage, I painted on the stain over the carved wood, let the
tea dry and then painted the vinegar and steel wool mixture over the tea which is what
made the color so dark. The beeswax then brought the entire piece together and made it
more relatable to *Pollution*.

*Dead End*, 2016

Rope and porcelain

*Dead End* appears to be a normal rope ladder, until the viewer sees that the steps
are made out of bones. I thought it would be interesting to create a recognizable
utilitarian object for the viewer but using the porcelain bones as steps makes it
impractical. In addition, the top three bones are broken in half, essentially making it
impossible for one to reach the top. I was inspired to create this piece when I was going
through a difficult time this year, wondering if I will ever reach my goal or end result.
The ladder represents the journey and the broken bones show that I will never make it.
And the fact that all the steps are porcelain, a fragile ceramic, suggests that maybe I
should have never even tried because I knew the journey would be impossible. As I have
a connection with all of my works, this is one that reflects my emotional side; an element that is not normally portrayed in my artwork.

*Human*, 2016

Latex, fluids and wood

After experimenting with incorporating my own body into my work, I knew I wanted to create a piece that was actually a part of my body. The idea of *Human* became this final product that connected all of my works together. I believe it is cliché to say that artists put themselves into their work, but in a sense it is true and for this piece I wanted to do exactly that. The countless nights that I have spent in the studio are representative of the mental and physical efforts I have put into my artwork and with *Human* I wanted to create a piece that was truly me. The frame and stand that I created for the work is five feet and two inches long which represents my height. This is an aspect of the work that the viewers would not realize without me telling them. Even though I wanted this work to represent myself, I did not want the viewers to necessarily know that the elements making up this piece were mine or even real. However, embedded into the liquid latex are my hair, baby teeth, vomit, blood, spit, urine and feces. I contemplated naming this piece *Lauren* but decided that title would imply that it was elements of my body and therefore would direct the viewers’ interpretations too much. By naming it *Human*, it reflects the human body in a general sense, which I believe allows the piece to be more relatable to its viewers. I understand that the contents of this work are unusual, and even controversial, but that is what I love about it. I wanted to push the boundaries with this piece and felt that I was successfully able to do that. This work displayed without the rest
of my pieces, I feel would be taken out of context. The concept behind this work is more meaningful with it being displayed amongst all of my other pieces, especially with displaying it in the center of the gallery. I consider this work as the final piece that connects all of my other works to one another.

When I came up with the idea for this piece, I had absolutely no problem with the idea of using my bodily fluids as a work of art. However, when it came time to actually create this piece I had a little more difficulty applying these elements to the latex canvas than I thought I would. I have never felt a closeness to one of my works of art before as I have felt in creating this piece. It was almost a surreal experience as applied these elements of my body, using them to create color, texture and a contemporary composition amongst one another.

*Inside Out*, 2016

Nylons, wire and wood

*Inside Out* is another work that references the battle between our natural and unnatural environment. The right leg is made of wire, representing the arteries in our body, which carries the oxygenated blood. While the left leg is made of sticks and twigs, representing the veins in our body, which carry the deoxygenated blood. However around the waist, the red wire is entwining itself around the blue sticks making it appear as it is taking it over. The title comes from the nylons that are placed on the inside of the arteries and veins, representing the skin of the legs as well as the overall theme of the natural world versus the industrial world. Having the inner surface turned outward can make one think about what exactly we might be doing to the environment around us.
Pull Yourself Together, 2016

Wood frame, nylons and hair

Pull Yourself Together was inspired by the idea that I am stitching myself back together with elements of my own body; there is nothing external that is putting myself back together. I am the one who is sewing the pieces, while using my hair as the thread to keep everything together. I chose to display it within a frame because it adds structure or “a frame” to the work, but also referencing the body. While the nylons are representative of the skin, the frame acts as the structure of the human form. I wanted this work to reference the struggle of trying to get oneself back on their feet, whether it is a physical or mental struggle. It is not easy to feel in control again after a breakdown, especially when trying to fix or repair oneself all on his or her own. With Pull Yourself Together, various patches of nylons are sewn together with hair, however in some sections the nylons are stretched more than others, creating holes from the thick hair thread. Therefore, even though the frame consists mostly of sewn together nylons, it is not perfect. There are tears and holes, thicker sections of hair and thinner parts. It makes the piece look more natural by having these variations and imperfections, while same time making the concept more realistic. When fixing something that has been broken or taken apart, it will not look or feel the same as it originally was. Aside from the patches of nylons, I also have one full leg of nylons hanging in the top left corner and a full pair of nylons hanging outside of the frame on the bottom left. I wanted to have a pair of intact nylons sewn together amongst the patches to show what they once used to be. But it is the hair thread and frame that are holding the intact nylons to the patches. Without the broken
elements, the intact nylons or “original form” have no support. It is the fixed and sewn broken pieces that ultimately support the work and keep it intact, referencing how a difficult past can create a new and improved outlook of the present and future.
Works
Anatomy of the Vessel
The Weighing, 2014
36” x 5” x 36”
Plaster, rope, wood and masonry nails
Natural Beauty, 2014
2” x 5” x 48”
Wood, nails, and nylons
Organs, 2015
Table Set for Two
Ceramic
Pollution, 2015
16” x 1.5” x 36”
Wood, stain and tar
The Outer Layer, 2015
14” x 9” x 26”
Ceramic and hanger
Home or Hived, 2015
14” x 12” x 8”
Ceramic, beeswax and apple
Gateway, 2015
3 x 1.5 x 6"9
Plaster and wooden door
Three Nudes, 2015
3 x 2”5 x 1”2
Nylons, fiber-fill and yarn
Bad Habits, 2015
10” x 12” x 14”
Porcelain, mayonnaise, plastic knife, Coke a Cola, plastic straw, Ramen noodles and french fries
To the Core, 2015
9 Femur Bones
Porcelain, natural and unnatural products
Purification, 2016
51” x 1.5” x 21”
Wood, tea stain and beeswax
Dead End, 2016
12” x 2.5” x 22
Rope and porcelain
**Human, 2016**

62.4” x 24” x 84”

Latex, fluids and wood
Inside Out, 2016
34” x 17” x 33”
Nylons, wire and wood
Pull Yourself Together, 2016
26” x 1” x 28”
Wood frame, nylons and hair
Overview of *Anatomy of the Vessel* in Meiley-Swallow Hall Gallery
Overview of *Anatomy of the Vessel* in Meiley-Swallow Hall

Gallery
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