

Alienation theory and its relationship to contemporary Arte Povera practice.

Confrontation and Contemplation

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments or in the reference list.

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Abstract

In this Exegesis I explore the rehabilitation of marginalized materials through a sculptural practice. The materiality of the work focuses on the commonality of the everyday through selection editing and transparency of materials. The materiality and concern for material presence in my work are used metaphorically to explore ideas of alienation in contemporary sculpture. My work has been informed by the writing Berthold Brecht specifically his alienation effect [A-Effect], a theatrical and cinematic device “which prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer”. Through the use of situationist tactics in alienation works I seek to explore an atmosphere of fragile transience that can be recognized in ourselves even as we struggle against it.

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Introduction

This Exegesis explores the rehabilitation of marginalized materials through a sculptural practice. I will do this by showing how alienation theory² is relevant to contemporary Arte Povera practice. I use Berthold Brecht's idea of *Verfremdungs effect* or Alienation effect also known as the A-effect "Which prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer."³

The A-effect, which is traditionally thought of as a theatrical or cinematic device, presents a similar influence to some of the tactics of the Situationists, specifically their use of confrontational installations. The A-effect is a way to break out of the frame of the proscenium arch. As painters like Walter Gaudnek, and Lewin Alcopley desired not to be limited by the frame. In my sculpture I want to break down the barriers between the audience and my work. In Gaudnek's work "Unlimited Dimensions" its distancing effect is used to create a more inclusive or interactive experience. "I see it as a demand for a new orientation in art, a need to extend a painting beyond its frame."⁴

² Alienation Theory in Multi-Media Performance page 461

³ Bertold Brecht , Brecht on Theatre page 91

⁴ Walter Gaudnek Polymorphism in Painting through the Use of a Labyrinth

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1
“Why art can’t kill the SI” Guy Debord

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”Barney rubble mobile” Reclaim the Streets (RTS) collective

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“The Leopard looked like ME!” Gary Willis

In this text I will also discuss how the concept of Trace, and the Japanese poetic form of Haiku, are actively used in the creation of my work. Materiality is used as a focus in conjunction with those concepts to produce work that reflects upon on the commonality of the everyday. The materiality in my work is often used metaphorically to explore ideas of alienation in contemporary sculpture. This is primarily achieved through selection editing, and transparency of materials. My work has been informed by the writing Berthold Brecht specifically his A-Effekt, as well as situationist theory, as put forth by Guy Debord in his *The Society of the Spectacle*, and through the use of situationist tactics described in works such as “Why art can’t kill the SI”, and exhibited in performance works like “and the Leopard looked like ME!” by Gary Willis, and put into practice by the Reclaim the Streets (RTS) collective in direct-action events such as the reclaiming of North London’s Camden High Street on May 14, 1995. In my work I seek to explore these ideas to present an atmosphere of fragile transience that can be recognized in ourselves even as we struggle against it.

Chapter 1

Alienation

1.1 The impact of alienation on my work

In my work I have referenced the alienation theory of German dramatist Bertold Brecht, specifically focusing on his concept of the ‘Verfremdungs effect’⁵. This translates as an estrangement effect, distancing effect, alienation effect, or the A-effect, as it is in commonly referenced in contemporary literature such as *A Post-modern Brecht*, and *Theatre Topics*. The A-effect is primarily known as a theatrical or cinematic device “Which prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer.”⁶

Brecht believed that an A-effect can be achieved by the artist through actively ignoring the division between the audience and actor known in theatre as the fourth wall. Brecht sought to remove the artificial barrier of the fourth wall through the use of unconventional theatrical tactics including techniques such as direct address of the audience, sudden scene changes, switches of role and exposure of the usually hidden workings of the theatre. These actions had the effect of breaking down barriers of audience empathy, turning the familiar into the bizarre and increasing the self consciousness of the viewer. The birth of the A-effect occurred in 1921 with the play “The Concrete Girl” which set the tone for Brecht’s early theory and later works culminating in the Epic Theatre.

⁵ Alienation in multi media performance

⁶ Milly S. Barranger, *Theatre: A Way of Seeing* page 122

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“State Briton” Mark Wallinger

Brecht felt that a play should not allow the spectator to emotionally identify with the action before them but should be provoked into rational self-reflection. Brecht felt strongly that the experience of a cathartic emotional release left the audience complacent. This was the opposite of what he hoped for theatre. Instead, he wanted the audience to identify social issues in their world with critical perspective and to be moved by them: to leave the theatre and effect change. Brecht employed the A-effect to remind the spectator that the play is a representation of a reality not reality itself. By highlighting the constructed nature of the play Brecht hoped to communicate the position of the audience as a construct, and as a construct it could be changed. This tactic is used by several artists today. Mark Wallinger's work "State Briton"⁷ explores how art can comment on our responsibility to effect change and to realize that the gallery, like the theatre, is a construct and can be used to affect change.

⁷ Photographer Toby Melville, Guardian January 15 2007

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“Nova Babilonia” Constant Nieuwenhuys, 1969, Colagem⁵

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“The Change” 1957 Ralph Rumney⁶

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“Unlimited Dimensions” Walter Gaudnek

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“Die Marquise von O” Frank Stella

The A-effect has similar aim to some of the tactics of the Situationists, a group that aimed to eliminate all forms of representation, and undermine all authority. While the A-effect used direct physical acts to make the audience aware of the construct of theatre the situationists used writing, art, and direct-action in confrontational ways to force viewers to interact. Situationists such as painter Constant Nieuwenhuy, and the English artist Ralph Rumney, utilized a juxtaposition of materials, textures, space and color to create their desired environment.

As Walter Gaudnek in his Labyrinth series of Installations, and other painters like Frank Stella in “Die Marquise von O” desired to break away from the frame and its distancing effects to create a more inclusive or interactive experience⁸, the A-effect attempts to bridge experience and theatre. The A-effect, which allows the performer to break from the theatre’s proscenium arch, can also be used as an installation/sculptural tool. The proscenium arch, the frame in a painting or the plinth/platform for sculpture all work as devices that separate the artwork from the audience. For my part, in my sculpture, I want to break down those barriers between the audience and the work. I feel that by creating and arranging installations that allow interaction like walter Gaudneks “Unlimited Dimension”⁹ and invite play/exploration by the viewer I can integrate the A-effect within my work.

⁸ Walter Gaudnek Polymorphism in Painting through the Use of a Labyrinth page 150
⁹ panel 6 1999 mixed media Bernard Jacobson Gallery

1.2 Arte Povera as an influence in my practice

The term Arte Povera was first used by the Genoese critic Germano Celant in 1967 for a group of Italian artists that attempted to break down the division between art and life. Arte Povera artists commented on societal and individual alienation through the use of “poor”, or everyday materials, frequently on a human scale. This scale and usage of materials often illustrated the disparity between the natural, unfinished materials, and the finished grand scale of the gallery spaces in which the artwork is shown.

Artists considered part of the Arte Povera movement include Mario Merz, Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabrio, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Jannis Kounellis, Marisa Merz, Giulio Paolini, Pion Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini, and Gilberto Zorio. They did not have a signature style as they felt that incoherence was a positive value in their work. They worked in many media including, but not limited to, installation, photography, performance and sculpture.

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“Venere degli stracci” Michelangelo Pistoletto

The rehabilitation and re-contextualization of materials is a central theme in many Arte Povera works. The “Venere degli stracci”¹⁰ by Michelangelo Pistoletto and the numerous works of collaborative artists Tim Nobel and Sue Webster are prime examples of the successful use of this practice. Re-use of materials from one artwork to another is a theme also utilized in Arte Povera works. The artist Christo, for example, uses the materials in his work over and over, moving, transforming and transfiguring them through reapplication and wrapping.

There are many reasons for artists to use “poor materials”. I feel that the use of such materials is not only because of their ability to “impoverish”¹¹ each person's experience of the work, but the use of these materials also helps the individual to free themselves from preconceived notions through a recontextualization of the materials in a new form.

I found myself drawn to the Arte Povera movement for several reasons; the materiality, the writing, and the discourse have all been instrumental in affecting my working practice and stylistic orientation. In my own work, as in Arte Povera and in the “Critical Observer”¹² produced by the use of the A-effect, I have found that the materiality and rawness of the elemental forms I employ, and the spatial arrangements I configure, give rise to an environment in which the viewer is made aware of their physical relationship and orientation to the work.

10 “Venus of Rags”

11 Arte Povera page 25

12 Post imperial Brecht, page 43

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Duck-Shit

In my sculptural installations I have used various methodological approaches to create works that hint at vulnerability and transience. In this section I will discuss the approaches that have led to the works made in 2007. There are several methods and stages I use when creating work. They are, “Duck-shit”/intuitively modeling, Haiku/editing, and Trace. I have found that the use of these methods and stages help me to create work that is effective while retaining elements of spontaneity and elegance.

Early in the development of the studio research I had the good fortune to meet Carlos Capelán who was a visiting artist at Auckland University of Technology. While discussing my work, he described the “Duck-shit” studio methodology. He argued, that like ducks with no control over their sphincter, who shit without thinking, so too artists can create work without thinking i.e. intuitively. However, unlike the duck we have the necessary intellect to look back at the work, and recognize the characteristic affects and emerging qualities in those objects that warrant further work. It is the artist’s responsibility to select and rework the intuitive objects into meaningful sculpture, thus going through several phases within our practice. This method permits the artist to be uninhibited enough to allow the work to flow from the subconscious. We then take responsibility for the end result and control in the work through selection, editing/refining and further development.

2.2 Modeling

In creating a new work I usually begin with a small-scale model of the proposed installation site to better visualize the negative space that the sculpture will create within the piece. At the core of each sculptural installation is an emotional content. Most recently the emotional palette has been one of vulnerability. Once the emotional tone is chosen I decide on the movement that will embody or evoke that emotion. I work primarily with the abstracted human form. I do this from a study of my own body.

I work to create a scale model of the basic ideas and forms of the sculpture and use these models to evaluate the possible success of each piece. I work with these models until I am satisfied that the installation will read well within the proposed space. I then collect the material I have chosen and explore its nature by sitting with it, looking at it, touching it, smelling it, and becoming familiar with it and its implications. I allow that familiarity to permeate my subconscious.

Due to my strong connection with the materials used in my work, I find that I choose primarily natural and rehabilitated material (such as Hessian cloth, hemp rope, and jute line). Due to their nature these types of material will often vary in form, structure, and history. I must recognize the differences unique to each and work with those differences in the creation of the sculpture. I have to recognize that if a rope I am using is dry I may have to oil it, or working with it may rip the skin of my hand embedding splinters, or it simply may be unable to be worked. Only when I am satisfied with the direction the piece is taking and I have found and addressed any irregularities or unique qualities in the materials selected do I begin construction on the full scale work.

I developed the practice of beginning each new full scale installation by creating individual objects and sculptures and laying them aside. I see the objects as individual elements that may or may not work together. I began to explore this process of combination, searching for relationships in my work as a way to finish the work in the editing. Working in this way the I see the different elements of each piece as lines in a haiku, and in the arranging and re-arranging of each element I seek to subtly but consciously direct the meanings of each piece.

2.3 Haiku

A Haiku is a minimalist form of poetry traditionally containing seventeen syllables in three lines through which the author conveys their experience. This methodology of editing through Haiku allows me to work intuitively while creating work that is fragile and hints at vulnerability. I find the three-line form of a haiku elegant and rhythmic, and useful as a way of editing the work. I do not adhere strictly to the meter or structural form of a haiku but rather to the idea of the haiku as a moment for contemplation.

Unlike the traditional poetic form I do not feel held to the subject of seasons or nature. The sculptures work in groupings allowing for a rhythm; though not all of the sculptures employ specific groupings of objects, I have found an unbalanced division by grouping can evoke motion. Working within a sculptural form of Haiku I find that I must not over-evaluate or allow the work to become too complex. It is the sparse quality of a haiku that helps me to hone the installation and remain aware of the space it creates.

In my work I see my individual objects as words, materials as syllables, and combine and rearrange these to make meanings though not necessarily narratives. In a written haiku it is through reading either sublingually or vocally that the audience discovers its content, in my sculpture it is the materials, the interrelation of elements, and the use of negative space in the piece which creates meaning. It has been said that a haiku shapes the area around it as lighting a candle casts shadows.

2.4 Trace and Material Memory

In a language based artwork like poetry the words do not deteriorate or age as a sculptural material does. Once the words are separated out of the haiku they revert to their original form, as Ruth Asawa discusses in her work . Ruth Asawa dealt with the positive and negative in her work relating it to the haiku and how the space around her work is a vital element in her sculpture¹³. The materials in my work show a trace of what they were before. They hint at a history, isolated for contemplation, what was in the past is irrelevant to what it has become. Simply that it was before is enough. Much as a haiku describes a moment isolated for the reader's contemplation, what happened on either side of the moment that the author was writing about is unimportant. This isolation encourages the individual to discover the work for themselves.

In all forms of haiku there are elements that are repeated. It is the trace that interests me. The material can decay, the dancer become fatigued a book might become dog-eared, but words are not material in that sense. Once separated they revert.

I am exploring the hinted at past, the history undiscussed, the unnecessary details, and the ability to discover it all for ourselves.

It is the happening not what happened that is interesting for me.

Decay and a visible history of the rehabilitated and reused materials is an important element in my work. Looking at the next images of my most recent work you will see materials being reused repeatedly; rope, canvas, glass; some materials have been part of half a dozen works. They are cut, sewn, spliced, piled, melted and transformed. Just as a poet might use a word in several haikus I use an object in several installations. The folds in the canvas, the slumping of the cloth, the kinks in the rope and the patina on the wax all offer an opening to the viewer. The trace shows that they had a life before and asks the viewer if it is important. The material hints and leaves it up to the viewer to notice or care.

¹³ The sculpture of Ruth Asawa: Contours in The Air

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“Wrapec Trees” Christo¹⁰

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“Dirty white Trash [with gulls]” Tim Noble, Sue Webster¹¹

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“It makes for my billionaire status” Phoebe Washburn

2.5 Material Memory

I explore the rehabilitation of marginalized materials in my practice, specifically how I utilize the memory or history within the material to create an atmosphere of fragile transience. The materials I am using are fiber-rope, wax, hessian cloth and canvas. Each of these materials can be easily marked by use, and the passage of time. It is this recognition of material history that has aided my exploration of alienation in relation to contemporary arte Povera Practice. The idea of the finite and subsequent decay of materials is an important element within my work.

In discussing material memory I looked at other artists who reuse or recycled materials in their work. The artist Christo as well as Tim Nobel, Sue Webster, and Phoebe Washburn use the materials in their works again and again, moving transforming and transfiguring them through reapplication. There are many reasons for artists to reuse and recycle materials. Though I am aware of the environmental aspect of such practice it is not the primary reason for that practice. I work with the materials for their emotional pull. I work metaphorically by using materials that are no longer useful in their original and at times still recognizable form. I ask if we will be unceremoniously discarded in a skip once we have passed our usefulness.

I am interested in how the past history of the material, hinted at by its less than pristine condition, can affect how people react to the work. Will the recognition of the materials be a way into the work or will it alienate? Will the poverty of the material detract? Will the audience be attracted or repelled?



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Chapter 3

Materiality

3.1 The Importance of Materiality

Materiality plays a central part in my work. I work with raw materials that are sustainable recyclable, recycled or rehabilitated. During early experiments, some materials which I worked with were corrugated metal, glass, and cast forms. Metal can imply strength, and security, as well as coarse industrial insensitivity, and the transient nature of the material when in a rusted state. Glass, like metal, has a way of breaking down when exposed to the environment it is slower and far more subtle. However, with glass its broken quality has a more easily grasped sense of danger. In my experimentation I have worked with piles of broken glass, combining the texture of both the jagged edges of sheet glass and the ground edges of recycled bottle glass. Castings from my body have also been used in some past, and more recent work to inject a human element in the work allowing the harsh industrial materials to be utilized in creating the A- effect.



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In the beginning of 2007 I moved away from the use of metal in favor of cotton canvas and natural fiber rope of varying weights. The use of castings became more abstracted and even replaced in some works with sublimated fingerprints barely recognized as identifying markers. I find the natural materials of rope and cloth convey a sense of fragility in contrast to the previous metal works, and also because of their organic nature and subsequent decay, they will become more fragile with time.

Honesty in materials is an important element in my work. The material forms are what they appear to be. I do not use imitation materials that attempt to look like something they are not. I do not paint or hide the characteristic nature of the materials, or their condition. If the material is old, I utilize the 'old' nature of the material and I accept and celebrate its qualities.

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17
“Igloo with Fibonacci Numbers” Mario Mertz

3.2 How the every day is tied to the materiality of the work

The two creative contexts I am exploring comment on the phenomenon of societal alienation from different angles: Brecht through the forcing of man to question the familiar, and Arte Povera through the use of materiality, scale, and context. Mankind is not limited to one lifetime but our lived experience is. There is a difference between knowledge and experience. In my work I explore the lived experience, the power over ourselves, and the responsibility we have for ourselves in relation to choices made in our lives. Specifically how alienation affects us, as we own our actions.

In my work I start with the idea of the finite and subsequent decay, I am also talking of the need for decay to bring about new ideas/life/experience. While Mario Merz dealt with the linear¹⁴ I am exploring the cyclical. Life is transient. The idea of this work is to explore the strength of transience and the fragility of my chosen materials, and how it questions the idea of alienation. Specifically how the contrast can be utilized to become more involved with those around us allowing us to live an experienced life.

Through using familiar materials in a way in which they are recognizable, but are unfamiliar in their form I am exploring an environment whereby the “A-effect” of Brecht can be utilized to bring about a shift in perception of the observer. This allows the observer to perceive the material on a basic level, while allowing them to determine its implications within the work. In addition to this use of a form of Brecht’s A-effect, I have also taken into my practice a continued reference to the human scale. All experimentation conducted in this past year has been directly linked to the body and its dimensions. By using the human scale and materials that are no longer useful in their original form, I ask, do the materials perceived strength correlate to the perceived strength of the human body? Are we not only alienated from each other in our society through the loss of control over our actions and production.

¹⁴ “Fibonacci Series” 1971 Arte Povera pg 252

Chapter 4

Reality of Determination

4.1 Internal/External

When I began exploring my most recent themes in sculpture I was concerned with expressing physical as well as emotional reality and I attempted to show how they combine to form the world that we perceive as real. The work was autobiographical in nature and focused on the idea of a “brick and mortar” reality (external) as well as a “reality of determination” (internal) as proposed by the German poet and writer Bertolt Brecht in his writing on Epic Theatre ¹⁴ . The work I made at this time focused specifically on our perception of reality during times of emotional extremes and how during these times the “reality of determination” can overshadow the “bricks and mortar” reality and may even help to steer the outcome of events. It was through this exploration that I became more aware of the space between the realities and how they might possibly overlap. In my reading I found myself drawn to the writings of Gaston Bachelard pertaining to the structuring force of the inside outside metaphor.

Outside and inside form a dialectic of diversion, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has a sharpness of the dialectic of yes and no, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made on a basis of image that governs thoughts of positive and negative. Logicians draw circles that overlap or exclude each other, and all their rules immediately become clear. Philosophers, when confronted with outside and inside, think in terms of being and non-being. Thus profound metaphysics is rooted in implicit geometry which-whether we will or no- confers spatiality upon thought; if a metaphysician could not draw, what would he think?¹⁵

The structure of the inside/internal and outside/external has had a powerful affect on how space can be connected to desire or aggression through installation awareness of installation in my work. This idea of overlap and duality in the structure of my work led me to reception theory, then on to the Situationists, Alienist theory in theatre, then Haiku. It has been a circuitous journey and one that seems to always hold onto the thread of the in-between and overlap to tie it together.

¹⁵ Bertold Brecht, On Art and Politic

¹⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of space* pg 211-212

Chapter 5

Documentation

By using familiar materials I have sought to create objects that elicit tension through an ambiguous use of materiality. By using material in ways they were not intended to be used, an imbalance of use and implied misuse is created which causes the A-effect in my work. Of the works created to explore the A-effect one of the most successful was a hanging glass sculpture.

The work utilized both visual and olfactory components, and began as a found wooden window. I then disassembled the window removing the glass and taking the wooden frame apart. The frame was then burned so that it was not immediately recognizable. Each pane of glass was individually suspended from the ceiling using the same spacing they had been placed with in the window frame. In the final installation the glass was hung directly above the burnt remains of the frame. As the viewer walked around the work the smell of the burnt wood filled the room.

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In the first group of work made in 2007 the rope was the diameter of my finger. The fiber rope had been used in the making of some twenty works the previous year. And had a substantial number of kinks bends and other signs of material memory. This trace I feel is what led the people at the critique to see the work as a fragile element in the greater installation. The other elements were newer material plaster casts, wood, and new materials wax and glue.

19

I began “Shelter” with the materials I had at hand and a borrowed rope. The wooden under-structure had been tied together covered with rope then covered with canvas and weighted with rope. The twisted rope was left to twist and the canvas slightly creased. For me it was a moment single and solitary.



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In the following “Haiku Group” I worked almost exclusively with rope. Three sculptures were combined, their interaction with one another creating one installation. The lengths of rope were suspended from the exposed ceiling beams in the space. The works had been arranged in my studio previously, however, in that environment I felt that the work was too crowded and the space was too busy visually. I felt that moving them to a more open area would be a positive move. After installing them I felt that the position of the ceiling beams caused the work to lose its depth becoming flattened.

The negative space between the sculptures was successful in this piece. The height differences between the works, and the distance between them created a pyramidal negative space. This installation is the first where the haiku structure is used overtly. The three components of the work shaped the space around each showing the trace of material memory.

21

This work “Duality” was made using borrowed rope and the internal rope from “Shelter”. The two figures are created out of one length of rope.



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This work "Self" hangs serpentine over a beam, the heavy knot balanced by the mask of waxed sacking cloth. This was part of the first overt "Haiku group". I felt the hanging knot was a strong element. The mask was not necessary to get the point across and was removed to make the work more abstract.

A detail of the work “Self” the wax was not uniform through the sacking and allowed the weave to show through. The reaction between the wax, and the sacking was a material success.





I placed the childlike figure on the ground near enough to the elevator to make people walking by uncomfortable. I found that though this element of the piece was successful in its emotional impact, I decided to work with more abstracted forms in future works.

In my rope works I have used the material and its properties metaphorically. The lengths of rope become knotted and tangled, and the ropes nature holds onto that material memory, bringing the motion of the making to the viewer. The older rope is more successful in the holding of memory, though the weight of the rope and its age do have an effect. The heavier the rope the more resistant to change the longer it retains its un-manipulated form.

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In this work “Quietude” the canvas is standing on its own held together with the bell covered rope, slowly slumping under its own weight. The large person shaped void of “Shelter” has shrunk to a small slit closed off and dark. The materials were reused from “Shelter” to create “Quietude”.

The marks and trace left on the material added to the new work hinting at a history but without disclosure.

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In my experiments with the rope I found the visual weight of it lying loosely on the ground didn't have as much impact. I thought of the hanging knot I had worked with before and wanted to see how a knot on the floor would act. I took the heavy rope and utilized its ability to knot and twist. Its heaviness sinking, weighing me down as I made it a bigger knot that I could roll.

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This work was made from the canvas from “Shelter” cut, sewn, and filled. The sackcloth material was added as a disparate element to create a dialogue within the work. Fine with rough, thick forms with thin forms.

29

I worked with the installation over the course of a week changing the placement and altering it several times a day. I was interested in how the materials slumped differently the canvas was more ridged and stood while the loose hessian would bend some times falling over and weights were added as needed.

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By the end of the week I had discovered that though I was having success with the conical forms there wasn't enough audience interaction with the work; people could walk by it too easily. I then decided to add the ropes as an element in the next installation

Working with the A-effect in my sculpture I explored how the plinth might alter the installation. It created distance and allowed the viewers to remain distant. It wasn't interactive and made the work precious. This was not where I wanted the work to go, so as a failure it successfully sent me in a more focused direction.

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The addition of rope and the further exploration of the visual weight within my work led me to bind the objects together in the installation. The hanging ropes and placement of the objects worked well though I have decided against the binding as it has overtly violent readings.

The conical shapes have evolved into larger forms that utilize the materiality of the hessian by filling, but allowing the hessian to wrinkle. The rope was tossed as well as coiled to create a rhythm within the installation.

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The largest hessian form was filled loosely and balanced in a nest of ropes. I felt the scale was successful but I thought the materiality of the wrinkled form was stronger.

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The wrinkled hessian form tied to the coiled rope, though anthropomorphic and somewhat violent, this piece did not read as violent as the previous hanging cones striking a balance that I found satisfied my aims in regards to the A-effect.

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I wanted to see how the weight of the vertical rope would be altered by the addition of the thin conical objects. I feel it created tension and encouraged the viewer to bring their own narrative to the work. This response was borne out by comments received during critiques of the installation.

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In “Two Wrinkled Hessian Cones” the cones slowly continue to slump under their own weight. The scent of the natural materials is an important element in the work, slowly fading the longer it was installed, though still noticeable.

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In this work I let the cone fall enabling the viewer to see into the object, allowing the hidden to become visible. Rope from the large knot is coiled on the ground. Though not as intrusive as some of the other works in this series it has produced several ideas for my end of year installation.

The work was site specific, it was tied to the building, looping from the third to the second floor the railings of both floors bound tightly together. I am proud of my installation. Though there were elements of it that were not a complete success, the nails used on the third floor to create a claustrophobic environment of draped ropes were too distracting as nails, and would have been better received had I used either spikes or rebar. In doing so get away from the loaded nature of nails in the gallery setting. The smell of the rope and the Hessian was strong it filled the area and elicited responses from the viewers.

Most of the rope for the end of year installation was borrowed from the Edge Theatre it is used to move sets and curtains during performances. The wearing on the rope is visible though perhaps it is too subtle for those unfamiliar with the material. It had been suggested that I bury or leave some of the material to be exposed to the elements. I did some experiments but felt it was affected and was contrary to my feelings in regards to truth to materiality. People touched, smelled, and looked at while negotiating the installation. The location was purposely chosen to encourage the viewers to negotiate the work. Having the installation in two transitory areas just outside of the lifts was problematic due to issues concerning fire egress. Though it was difficult and the work changed to the altered space, I plan on continuing to use transitional spaces in the future.

This installation used the second floor and third floor landings as well as the stairwell.

The image on the following page is of the second floor landing. The ropes wound from the second to the third level using the open space above the foyer to connect the two spaces. I was pleased with the size of the largest work and how it filled the space, as well as how it interacted with the other smaller elements.



On the third level I used rope to drop the ceiling visually, the nails were the least successful element of the work.



This image was taken from the third floor looking down at the staircase where I had used rope and the existing architecture to anchor the installation to the space.





The image on the left is a detail of the second floor showing how the rope was used to further tie the two levels together using the railings.

On the right the image shows the same rope from the third level. The binding of the two floors with the rope was similar to how the anchoring worked in the staircase the whipping and binding added weight to the rope.





On the left I have an element of the second floor installation this was successful, and helped to further tie the work in to the space. The rope first coiled around the hessian works, then up over the beam and then up to the third floor.

On the right is an image of installation on the third floor, looking toward St Paul St. The large coil was the main body of the rope that attached the stairway to the third floor and then the third to the second Floor.



Concluding Commentary

6.1 Conclusion

Poetry, especially haiku has been a part of my life for years. Using it within a sculptural context has been an adventure: one that informs and fuels the questions I explore as an artist. As a sculptor, I see the physical materials I use as my ‘pen’, and the choice of those materials as the foundation of my work. The forms I create become lines in my ever growing chapbook¹⁷. In my sculpture the moment is not tied to a narrative, it simply is. I walk everywhere and so I have time to contemplate, to think and to question my work. My biggest question is how does the sculptural haiku challenge the viewer?

How can I challenge the viewer to explore the work without being overt, allowing them to discover it on their own? For knowledge gained is worth more than knowledge given. I look at alienation and the A-effect as a way to answer that question. By using the shifting placement of objects within the work I aim to confront and involve the viewer, but hope that the confrontation will elicit contemplation. A haiku is so many things to so many people. It is a moment isolated, it is the space around the sound of the poem being spoken. Haiku is an uncomplicated structure that speaks volumes without allowing overstatement. It is precisely what is not said that attracts me to the form.

In reading I came across a quote from Matsuo Munefusa, known as Basho.

*Learn about a pine tree from a pine tree, and a bamboo stalk from a bamboo stalk*¹⁸

¹⁷ Chapbook-a small book of poems

¹⁸ Basho, *Lofty Dogmas Poets on Poetics* page 130

The notion is that the artist should detach their mind from self and enter into the object, sharing its life and learning from it. The poem forms itself, being in the moment. In my work I continually try to remain in a state of openness ready to receive ideas from the material or the situation I put the materials in. Making connections between myself and the moment as it is. Successful writing comes with knowing and being true to the subject; I sculpt with knowing and being honest to the materials.

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- 4 “State Briton” Mark Wallinger
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- 5 “Nova Babilonia” Constant Nieuwenhuys, 1969, Colagem
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Definitions

Arte Povera- Term coined by the Genoese critic Germano Celant in 1967 for a group of Italian artists who, from the late 1960s, attempted to break down the 'dichotomy between art and life' (Celant: *Flash Art*, 1967), mainly through the creation of happenings and sculptures made from everyday materials. Such an attitude was opposed to the conventional role of art merely to reflect reality. The first Arte Povera exhibition was held at the Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, in 1967. Subsequent shows included those at the Galleria De'Foscherari in Bologna and the Arsenale in Amalfi (both 1968), the latter containing examples of performance art by such figures as MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO. In general the work is characterized by startling juxtapositions of apparently unconnected objects: for example, in *Venus of the Rags* (1967; Naples, Di Bennardo col., see 1989 exh. cat., p. 365), Pistoletto created a vivid contrast between the cast of an antique sculpture (used as if it were a ready-made) and a brightly coloured pile of rags. Such combination of Classical and contemporary imagery had been characteristic of Giorgio de Chirico's work from c. 1912 onwards. Furthermore, Arte Povera's choice of unglamorous materials had been anticipated by more recent work, such as that of Emilio Vedova and Alberto Burri in the 1950s and 1960s, while Piero Manzoni had subverted traditional notions of the artist's functions (e.g. *Artist's Shit*, 1961, see 1989 exh. cat., p. 298). Like Manzoni's innovations, Arte Povera was also linked to contemporary political radicalism, which culminated in the student protests of 1968. This is evident in such works as the ironic *Golden Italy* (1971; artist's col., see 1993 exh. cat., p. 63) by LUCIANO FABRO, a gilded bronze relief of the map of Italy, hung upside down in a gesture that was literally revolutionary.

Alienation-A pivotal concept in the philosophical writings of Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, and subsequent writings in both idealist and Marxist traditions. Alienation (German *Entfremdung*, also translatable as estrangement) is centrally the idea of something being separated from or strange to something else: I am self-alienated in so far as I cannot understand or accept myself; thought is alienated from reality in so far as it inadequately reflects it; I am alienated from my desires in so far as they are not authentically my own, but assail me as if it were from without; I am alienated from the results of my labour in so far as they become commodities; and I may be alienated from my society in so far as I feel controlled by it, rather than part of a social unity that creates it. In Hegel the progress towards the Absolute is one of the growth of self-consciousness, itself a process of 'dealienation' whereby what is separate and falsely objectified regains its unity through self-creation and self-consciousness (although finite minds, the agency of this growth, alienate themselves in activity and in the 'objectification' of their material and social products). In Feuerbach, by contrast, the absolutist trappings of Hegelian alienation are abandoned, and the concept is replaced by self-alienation, a condition to be overcome by the self-consciousness that proper relations with our own activities and products brings. Marx's use of the concept is sometimes thought to separate his early, Hegelian, period from the later writings, but there seems little doubt about his permanent attachment to the idea of a human nature as self-alienated so long as the communist transformation of society has not taken place. See also anomie, authenticity, Dasein, false consciousness.

A-Effect- alienation effect or A-effect, the usual English translation of the German *Verfremdungseffekt* or V-effekt, a major principle of Bertolt Brecht's theory of epic theatre. It is a dramatic effect aimed at encouraging an attitude of critical detachment in the audience, rather than a passive submission to realistic illusion; and achieved by a variety of means, from allowing the audience to smoke and drink to interrupting the play's action with songs, sudden scene changes, and switches of role. Actors are also encouraged to distance themselves from their characters rather than identify with them; ironic commentary by a narrator adds to this 'estrangement'. By reminding the audience of the performance's artificial nature, Brecht hoped to stimulate a rational view of history as a changeable human creation rather than as a fated process to be accepted passively. Despite this theory, audiences still identify emotionally with the characters in *Mother Courage* (1941) and Brecht's other plays. The theory was derived partly from the Russian Formalists' concept of defamiliarization. "alienation effect." *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford University Press, 2001, 2004. Answers.com 08 Oct. 2007. <http://www.answers.com/topic/alienation-effect>

Epic Theatre- Dramatic form developed in Germany after World War I by Bertolt Brecht and others, intended to provoke rational thought rather than to create illusion. It presents loosely connected scenes often interrupted by direct addresses to the audience providing analysis, argument, or documentation. Brecht's goal was to use alienating or distancing effects to block the emotional responses of the audience members and force them to think objectively about the play. Actors were instructed to keep a distance between themselves and the characters they portrayed and to emphasize external actions rather than emotions.

Proscenium arch- the structure separating the main acting area from the auditorium in most Western theatres of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It usually forms a rectangular 'picture frame', the 'picture' being revealed by opening a curtain. Its associated dramatic conventions often involve the illusion of looking into a room through an invisible 'fourth wall'.

“Reality of determination” internal reality- An individual’s internal reality corresponds to a collection of processes, representations, and affects that are essentially (but not only) unconscious, which Sigmund Freud referred to as “psychical reality.” It thus contains the representations of the world that the subject has formed, fantasies stemming from unconscious desires, and universal fantasy structures: the primal fantasies. For the analyst, it has an existence and efficiency that are comparable to physical reality.

“Brick and mortar” external reality- External reality, also called material reality, subsumes the objects of our physical environment, the subject’s body, and the subject’s inscribed place in society.

Reception theory- This approach to textual analysis focuses on the scope for “negotiation” and “opposition” on the part of the audience. This means that a “text” — be it a book, movie, or other creative work — is not simply passively accepted by the audience, but that the reader / viewer interprets the meanings of the text based on their individual cultural background and life experiences. In essence, the meaning of a text is not inherent within the text itself, but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader.

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL one of the least known yet most influential (anti)art movements of the post war era: the Situationist International (SI).

The last of the international avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, which was centred in Paris, existed from 1957 to 1972 with a total of seventy-two European, American, and North African members at various times. The guiding figure of the SI was Guy-Ernest Debord (1931-94), the journey is organized around his biography.

The SI’s revolutionary program included the elimination of all forms of representation: the undermining of all authority, the destruction of all symbols of power, the elimination of art (even that of the Classical avant-garde) and all other forms of cultural spectacle, the regaining of the reality of life that had been expropriated by a society of consumption and commodities in short, the struggle against late capitalist dispossession.

Chapbook- A small book or pamphlet containing poems, ballads, stories, or religious tracts.

Haiku is a form of Japanese lyric verse that encapsulates a single impression of a natural object or scene, within a particular season, in seventeen syllables arranged in three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Arising in the 16th century, it flourished in the hands of Bashō; (1644–94) and Buson (1715–83). At first an opening stanza of a longer sequence (haikai), it became a separate form in the modern period under the influence of Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902). The haiku convention whereby feelings are suggested by natural images rather than directly stated has appealed to many Western imitators since c.1905, notably the Imagists.

Trace- A visible mark, such as a footprint, made or left by the passage of a person, animal, or thing.
Evidence or an indication of the former presence or existence of something; a vestige.

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