

Communicating “Science” Through Art:
Embracing Collective Activism Through Creative Research as a Participating
Consumer of Fish and Welcoming the Active Viewer to Join the Conversation

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Fine Arts

with a

Major in Art

in the

College of Graduate Studies

University of Idaho

by

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May 2016

Authorization to Submit Thesis

This thesis of Daphne Andino Cuadrado, submitted for the degree of Master of Fine Arts with a Major in Art and titled “Communicating “Science” Through Art: Embracing Collective Activism Through Creative Research as a Participating Consumer of Fish and Welcoming the Active Viewer to Join the Conversation,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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Abstract

For centuries, the ocean has been perceived as unyielding to the growing demand of man's appetite. Through the play of the "familiar" in chosen materials, processes, and presentation, I share my creative research on the issues and practices of overfishing. Through this body of work, I explore my struggles as a consumer of fish. My work's presence confronts viewers without judgment; material play and strategic presentation invite them to consider their own consumption as an active viewing participant.

In that moment of realization, I welcome my fellow participating viewer, and consumer of fish, to join in on the conversation on what our future "fish" meal will be.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Stacy Isenbarger, Casey Doyle, and Lisette Waits for their encouraging support, unwavering patience, and thought provoking conversations. I am forever grateful to my parents in nurturing my long love in the arts, and unconditional “apoyo”.

To all of my art instructors, teachers, and professors- Many paths are crossed in one’s life- I’m honored I have crossed yours.

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INTRODUCTION

Activism...: What am I?

I want to acknowledge the potential impression that I am working as an extreme activist or conservationist and stress that I am not. I am a realist sharing my own questioning through the field I am passionate about while dealing with the weight of the information in front of me. My research shows the negative impacts that are occurring due to fishing practices and harvesting methods. I cannot deny the evidence that is before me. If I did, then I would be lying to myself about not only what I have read, but what I have heard from people who are exposed to the fishing industry.



0.1 Daphne Cuadrado, video clip of salmon at Ballard Locks Fish Ladder, 2015, video, 16:07 min.

By referencing my own experience as a fish consumer, I expose to the viewer to my own vulnerable state. If any judgments are to be inferred through my offered content, I also suggest that I too should be judged. However, this work isn't meant to portray some version of fire and brimstone; instead, my attempt is to welcome anyone—someone who enjoys eating fish, a weekend fishing sportsman, a coral reef snorkeling enthusiast, a concerned global citizen, etc.—by showing that I too, am one of them. By attempting to link our need to question our role in the greater systems at play, my work begins to say something beyond me; it connects with and speaks for all of us. Therefore, I continuously strive to make meaningful, mentally engaging artwork that in their physicality offer themselves as a form of collective activism.

With the understanding that my audience ranges in age, and consists of direct consumers of fish and indirect participants of fish sustainability, I invite the viewer to consider the complex history of our consumption via exploring the “ideal” fish. In the process, the viewer will also be exposed to the paradox our current unsustainable practices have left us with.



0.2 Daphne Cuadrado, *Anatomy of a Net- Life Cycle (detail)*, 2015, found gill net with a dried halibut, 32' x 8' x 9'

A Short and Recent History of Fishing

Technology has progressed exponentially in the last century, and the commercial fishing industry has adopted and benefited from these advancements. Both World War I and II resulted in the integration of steel hulled ships, diesel engines, sonar, and refrigeration systems, to name a few. The fishing industry quickly adopted these new technologies to meet a growing consumer demand. Factory ships could process and flash freeze their catch on board, and continue to be out at sea for weeks at a time. Sonar allowed for pinpoint accuracy for where to drop nets for optimum yield of the target species. Ocean floor mapping and weather predictions increased these new practices' accuracy even further. Boats and nets became bigger as decades passed for the sole purpose that drives any fisherman and the commercial fishing industry- to “catch more fish”... for money.

At the same time within in the last 100 years, we have seen whole fish stocks collapse. In the 1990's, one of the most famous and oldest fishing grounds became "commercially extinct". The Atlantic Cod could no longer keep up with commercial fishing.¹ The Gulf of Maine fishing ground was known before the Vikings even made it to the New World. This rich fishing ground was enthusiastically emphasized for centuries as a place where "...someone could walk across the ocean on the backs of cod..." (Kurlansky 44). Fishermen had already reported a change in the cod population by the 1850's. Over the next hundred years, fishermen began warning the fishing industry and politicians about how the situation was leading them to move further and further out into the ocean to bring in enough catch. By the 1980's, the disaster that awaited the industry could no longer be ignored; exponential decrease of cod catches year after year finally caught the attention of naysayers and government. Whole towns, fishermen, processors, and families suffered from the slow death of the Atlantic Cod fishing grounds.

Through the 1980's, fishing towns began to suffer in larger numbers than in the 1970's, but it was not due to larger fishing and processing companies out-selling smaller businesses. The Canadian and United States governments helped to stem the slow economy of the cod fishing industry by giving subsidies and loans to companies and fishermen. These and other efforts were not enough, and so by 1992 Canada and the United States created a memorandum against North Atlantic cod fishing within its 200 nautical mile territories. The goal was to allow the stocks a couple of years to recover enough to begin fishing again. They are still waiting...



0.3 Bukaty, Robert F., *Fishermen mended nets on Merrill Wharf in Portland, Maine*, 2013, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/11/10/federal-fishing-officials-ban-cod-fishing-gulf-maine-for-six->

¹ To learn more about the influential history and collapse of the Atlantic Cod fishing industry, read Mark Kurlansky's *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*.

Questioning “Our” Future Meal

This thesis discussion is fueled by reflections on the issues of overfishing and ten year shift of an ecosystem I hold dear. The current state of the fishing industry and the people it affects closely calls to question our consumption, and the complex problems of commercial fishing. Yes, there is a need to fish and I understand the desire for it as well, but what is lost when we all sit down and eat?

My research involves exploring current, past, and global practices of fishing—both its benefits and consequences. Through a visual platform, my artwork sparks curiosity about a topic not considered by most individuals from an aesthetic view point. Learning something through participatory experience, the viewer is meant to reflect upon their own role as a consumer of fish. How can our choices protect the future of one of the last wild foods for future years and generations?

In a society that is growingly concerned about the origins and care of our food, where and how our fish was procured is becoming a more pressing issue than ever before. I could go off on how the health of our ocean benefits us all, from fish harvesting, agriculture, fertilization, pharmaceuticals, land and aquaculture stock feed, etc., but what would happen to all of these other industries if commercial fishing came to an end due to a yield in harvest?

I continuously consider my own role as a consumer of fish; I do not want to stop eating fish, but strive to be more responsible. My choices as a consumer, especially my own purchasing power, can effect change faster than any other tactic. By considering smarter fishing practices and selective consumption, I engage with a broader audience to contemplate and discuss the long term consumption of fish for our future meal.

CHAPTER 1: Sharing My Perspective

Confronting Frustration Through Making

Throughout the making of my thesis work, I attempted to stay as objective as possible while considering different perspectives even if those findings did not agree with my views. At various points in my research, I struggled to detach my frustrations.² Through “making”—drawing, replicating, weaving, object collection, rebuilding—I confronted these untethered emotions. As a result, I explored and reflected my own concerns for our future meal, embracing my elicited emotions to understand their origins.

The role in my work is not only tied to consuming fish, but also being a participant in several coral ecosystems I am familiar with throughout Puerto Rico. Over ten years I have seen these reefs dissolve into algae ridden, bleached coral. The economy in Puerto Rico has strained fisherman to fish out of season, while pharmaceutical plants and old sewer infrastructure pollute the coast line, affecting overall coral and fish health. Poaching from foreign countries within Puerto Rico’s waters has also not helped in the continued strain of these marine ecosystems. My last trip to Puerto Rico compelled me to research if the events occurring there were happening anywhere else; what I found was more complex than I had considered.

During my childhood, I had learned of coral bleaching, rising ocean temperatures, acidification, jelly fish blooms, dead zones, and other oceanic events that affect sensitive ecosystems or organisms. What was most unsettling many years later was realizing how my consumption of certain foods impacted the very ecosystems I treasured most. Eating sushi became a metaphorical tightrope act, trying to figure out which roll contained what fish, and what long term ecological impact was left in the wake of bringing this meal before me.

In works like *Vessel*, *Fish Funeral*, and the *Trophy* series I shared my vulnerable state of self-reflection while tackling my role of “consumer”—consumer of food, data, and visual language. At

² I would have to say that in my time researching various destructive fishing practices and outcomes to various commercial fishing extinctions, most of my findings have moved me into pensive frustration. Although, while reading Anders Halverson’s *An Entirely Synthetic Fish: How Rainbow Trout Beguiled America and Overran the World*, I reached a blind rage in chapter 8 when the author explains the “aqua-forming” that occurred to create the ideal environment for rainbow trout in a portion of Utah’s Green River. It was unbelievable to think that the use of rotenone was used to kill all native fish, to then introduce the “ideal fish” for anglers to enjoy while out in “nature”.

times my reasoning, process, or results were not founded on logic, but a visceral attempt to find a way to mend my previous blind wrongdoing. My explorations within these works were never clear-cut solutions, but avenues that left more questions to consider and further self-reflection. Every material, ordered step, and design decision used in the creation process gave voice to my own interests, life experiences, and tangential way of processing complex information.

Getting Past My Past Through Burial

The burden of living with a regret is attempting to reach a point of self-forgiveness and reconciliation with the past. In that spirit of moving beyond my past oblivious wrongdoing, I created a vessel to hold the remains of three fish. This ritualistic making was an act of penance inspired by ancient Egyptian burial practices to preserve not only the flesh, but the afterlife as well.



1.1 Daphne Cuadrado, *Vessel: Cast Off to My Mistakes*, 2014, vessel, raku jars, mummified fish, 8" x 7" x 32"

I respected their sacrifice by honoring them through mummification, giving each fish metaphorical eternal life. Individually wrapped with found fishing line and silk string, I endowed the fish with one feather so their hearts could be weighed in the afterlife. Each fish was given their own canopic style jar, coated in deep blue glaze so they could swim eternally. Finally, I fashioned a vessel, so they could travel into the afterlife. I considered this layering of container within container a worthy way to honor these fish by giving them the proper materials to pass on into their next phase of being.

In the end, the final physical manifestation was not as important as the process of creating and injecting myself into the piece. As beautiful as *Vessel: Cast Off to My Mistakes* was, its making



1.2 Daphne Cuadrado, *Vessel: Cast Off to My Mistakes (detail)*, 2014, vessel, raku jars, mummified fish, 8" x 7" x 32"

was my own illogical way of reflecting on my past and thoughtless consumption, as well as putting the burdened guilt I held to rest. I gave bits of who I am through the use and manipulation of materials, process, and collected knowledge. Through that sacrifice and offering, *Vessel: Cast Off to My Mistakes* speaks of my struggles dealing with my journey. It transforms my thoughts, concerns, and aspirations into something beautiful.



1.3 Daphne Cuadrado, Stills from *Fish Funeral: You Will Be My Death*, 2014, Hemlock, bronzed rainbow trout, burial process, verbal repetition of Hemlock plant's symbolism, 2:10min.

Fish Funeral is another series of explorations on burying my guilt. This time I acknowledged my present state: the conflict of being a consumer of a product I still want to consume. In this series, I explored modern burial practice while also considering ways in which we fertilize the ground. Seven videos showcase the same bronze cast rainbow trout, considered the ideal fish by most freshwater

sportsmen, being buried beneath a flowering plant chosen for its symbolic meaning. Typically, mourners adorn burial grounds with fresh cut or fake flowers, but here plants were placed into the ground suggesting a nurturing, symbiotic relationship. No, this bronze fish would not decay in a way supportive of physical growth, but would act as a talisman celebrating the spirit of the fish's potential, its idolization became an offering to the life cycle.

Each video in this series pairs a different flowering plant chosen for its symbolic offering with this ceremonial act. For example, in *Fish Funeral: You Will Be My Death* a hemlock is placed above the bronze rainbow trout just before the burial hole is filled. As a form of poison, the hemlock has been used in avoidable and questionable deaths. To reference the historical and literary symbolic association of the hemlock, I recite "You will be my death" when the fish is being covered.

In addition to exploring the idolized bronze fish, I also performed seven similar burials with a real rainbow trout. As seen in *Fish Funeral: Forget-Me-Not*, these videos acknowledge the nutrients offered through the burial of the fish and the grounded, physical relationship of its sacrifice.



1.4 Daphne Cuadrado, Stills from *Fish Funeral: Forget-Me-Not*, 2014, Forget-Me-Not, rainbow trout, burial process, verbal repetition of Forget-Me-Not's plant symbolism, 6:20min.

The *Fish Funeral* series allowed me to contemplate my individual consumption, while also dealing with the prospect of fish not being available one day in my lifetime. I consider the way the plants and fishes' symbiotic relationship spoke to humans and their food. My continued thoughtless consumption could become the means to my death if I did not engage myself to a system I equally depended on.

In the act of exploring the makings of *Vessel* and the *Fish Funeral* series, I was leaving an essence of who I was, as visual fragments, while on my journey to discovering my place as a consumer. I considered how these odd portraiture spoke to my perspective, where the viewer could empathize with my plight—or judge me.

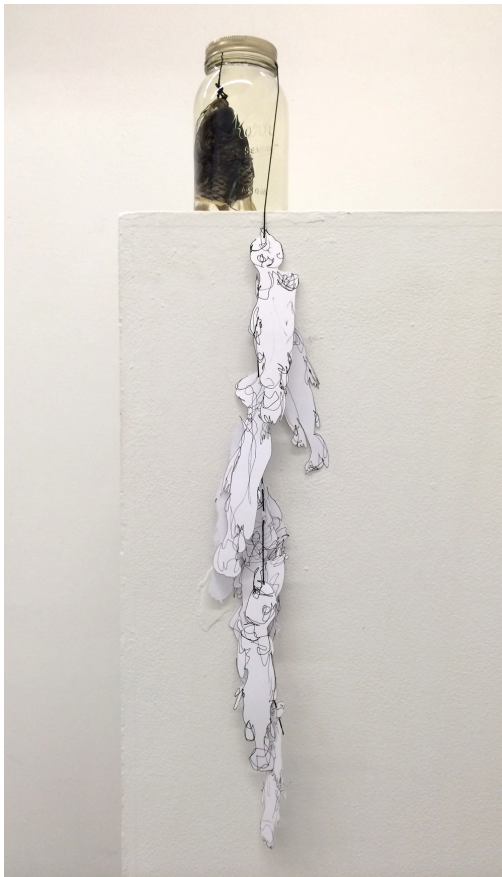
A Self-Awareness Moment, but No One Is Invited... At Least I Thought

The *Trophy* series tackles my continued struggle of consuming fish versus reconciling past errors. In the hopes of finding a more sustainable source of fish, I digest the weight of my research while guardedly reflecting on my actions. These vessels contain my experiential collections of residual meal remnants; here, I observe my consumption and examine what I have decided to leave behind.



1.5 Daphne Cuadrado, *Trophy: My Undesirables*, 2014, glass jars with cork, tarred braided nylon twine, remains of a fried rainbow trout, 7" x 6" x 4"

As I endeavored to find my “ideal” answer, I decided to define various types of trophies that explored my interaction with the fish I consumed. What I found was that the process of preserving my former meal, to then observe my consumption, communicated a commonality of nostalgia through all of my trophies. These clues tapped into the individual character of the owner and maker. Similar to a hunter mounting a kill on a trophy wall, an academic framing a diploma in office, or a serial killer collecting a souvenir from their victim, the “object” collected became a portal for the mind to procure temporal minutiae.



1.6 Daphne Cuadrado, *Trophy: Finding My Answer (while admiring my tilapia head)*, 2014, glass jar, tilapia head, tarred braided nylon twine, paper, India ink, 3.5" x 5" x 36"



1.7 Daphne Cuadrado, *Trophy: Finding My Answer (while admiring my tilapia head)(detail)*, 2014, glass jar, tilapia head, tarred braided nylon twine, paper, India ink, 3.5" x 5" x 36"

In comparison to *Vessel* and the *Fish Funeral* series, the processes I used to create the *Trophies* series spoke more to my very character and tendencies in my art practice through the self-portraiture nature of the artworks. Every time I made another trophy, I familiarized and embedded myself into my research, perfecting my craft in preservation but also leaving clues to my persona. My choice of presenting these objects in clear containers points to my kitchen; by allowing viewers to

acknowledge this aspect of my everyday experience, they can grasp a more real view of me. Growing up, I was berated not to “play” with the fish that I was so intrigued by any time my family cooked whole fish. My desire to see its anatomy (how the jaw moved, scales overlapped one another, etc.) was my way of visually collecting information to learn how things worked. By placing my specimen in any other vessel that denied observation, I would reject my deep-rooted curiosity to visually collect information. Through this presentation, I don’t offer the expected shiny, idealized icon of a trophy and instead divulged my willingness to be viewed in a more vulnerable, imperfect way.

These works are predominantly sterile specimens that deny or halt deterioration, creating a long term stasis for preserving my desirable undesirables. At first appearance it would seem I have intentionally denied the viewer a way to relate to the work due to its unexpected nature. The only clues I give them are the titles to the trophies and the contents within each corked glass vessel. Unless I share the experience and process of making the described above, the viewer is left disconnected from the objects inside. They are instead left to ponder the strangeness of this perceived empty self-portrait and reminisce on their own memories of what they place in jars.

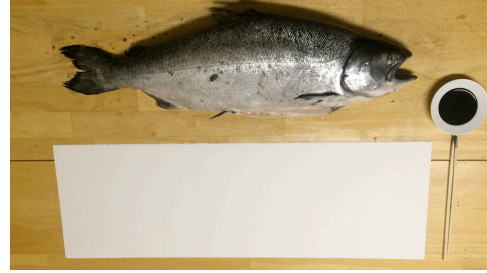
Conversation with a Fish

In a more successful approach to starting a conversation with my work, *Conversation with a Fish*, however immediately ludicrous in action, was my attempt to communicate with a dead fish. Here, active visual observation becomes the language used to both record and connect objects that interact with fish. While drawing the King Salmon, I employed a fork, sinker, fillet knife, pebble, and a pair of chopsticks for five distinct images. In nature this fish would have spawned on a pebbled streambed, or come across an angler. Caught for consumption, it may have been filleted, baked and eaten with a fork, or made into sushi rolls. My observation allowed me to question where this fish came from, what type of life it had, and what potential contribution it offered beyond itself.

Through each drawn approach I contended with the endless “what if” potential of any fish, but what laid before me was a two-day old, dead, farm raised king salmon that was harvested to be sold in a supermarket chain. Its contribution was artificial and cyclical. As I continued with our awkward interactions, I thought about and recorded the healed up scar a few inches behind its gill, the slight pink-red line running along its side, its clear eyes and split caudal fin. It was a well fed, healthy fish at nine and a half pounds. All of this information transcended visually from the objective



1.8 Daphne Cuadrado, *Conversation with a Fish*: (in order from top to bottom) *Chopstick, Fork, Knife, Pebble, Sinker*, 2016, Stonehenge paper, squid ink, farm raise off the coast of Vancouver, BC, organic king salmon, dinner table, chopstick, fork, knife, pebble, sinker, 30" x 10"



1.9 Daphne Cuadrado, Video clips from each recorded conversation (drawings), illustrating the process of *Conversation with a Fish*: *Chopstick, Fork, Knife, Pebble, Sinker*, 2016

like still-life drawing, when I picked up the fish and had it “leave its mark” on the conversation.³ That transaction of physical residue gave the fish the last word in our conversation. The fish impressed and reformed my marks, transitioning the conversation with its own fish scales, slime and blood.

The give and take of what I had recorded with what the fish left behind was not a true conversation between reactive beings, but a physical transaction of information. I felt a greater appreciation by the whole outcome of my own thought process and observation. In a moment to reflect on the results of my embraced ridiculous exploration, I consider Beuy’s 1965 performance, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. As I questioned the “ideal fish” laying before me, I began to chip away at the misunderstood and unknown, to a familiar act.⁴ As I continued drawing, I circled around this base question – “What is my ideal fish?”



1.10 Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, 1965, Gold leaf, honey, dead hare, felt pad, iron, fir tree, miscellaneous drawings and clothing items

³ A more traditional form of fish printing is Gyotaku, a Japanese art process of printing or rubbing a fish with ink onto paper. It is one of the earliest methods of recording an angler’s catch, proving one’s fish tale. When I made *Conversation with a Fish*, I was unaware of this Japanese art practice, yet the process spoke to my process and concept development. As a long life learner, it is equally exciting to learn something new and its application to my studio practice.

⁴ Anders Halverson’s *An Entirely Synthetic Fish: How Rainbow Trout Beguiled America and Overran the World* defines the rainbow trout as the “ideal fish”. In this book, the rainbow trout’s relevance, as a genetically engineered fish through aquaculture and husbandry, spawned one of the most prized fresh water fish an angler could pursue even to this date. Halverson also discusses the consequences of manipulating nature to satisfy man’s ideal nature. Into that effect, what is left behind is a dependent ecosystem needing constant supervision, restocking, and stewardship.

CHAPTER 2: Communicating “Science” Through Art

Making an Experiment

Many of my works’ design development and construction methods adopt a familiar structure: a scientific experiment. I have a general plan laid out, but in the creative process I am aware there will be unforeseen case scenarios which may occur- and I welcome them with open arms. Observations and conversations with my audience give me insight as to where I could improve on visual communication. These interactions also allow me to consider other conversations I would like to elicit in a future work.

My goal is to visually entice a viewer who may be more apathetic to engage intellectually to my artwork’s topic. The research I reference is predominantly intended for an audience focused in the ecological impacts of commercial fishing, local and global economics, consumer culture, conservation of ecosystems and fish stocks, and the industry’s history and workforce. Some sources have a journalistic non-fiction/ immersion journalism perspective, while others are scholarly papers and books. Making this research visible and tangible creates an atmosphere where learning can occur, and smarter consumer choices could be considered.



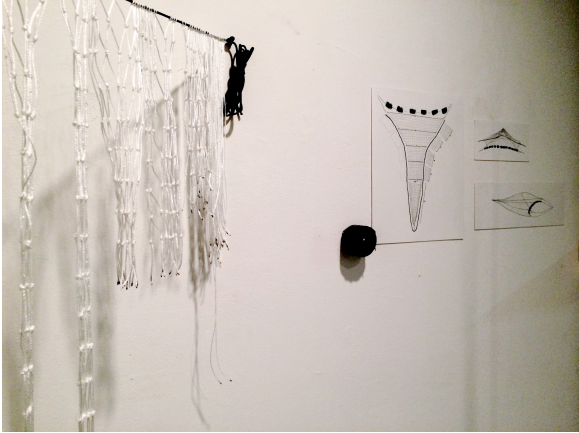
2.1 Daphne Cuadrado, *100 Reasons*, 2014, 100 bowls filled with water, and 100 reasons written on paper, in india ink, for the exploration of chosen topic, 4" x 60" x 78"

Understanding the Tools of the Trade

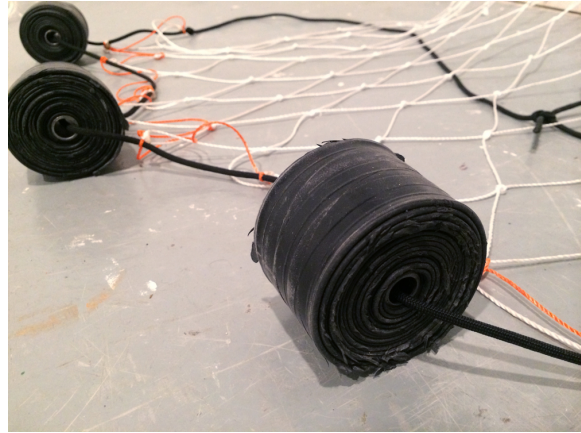


2.2 Daphne Cuadrado, *Anatomy of a Net: Learning About the Net through the Process of Making*, 2014, nylon twine, nylon rope, rockhoppers, 7' x 8' x 5'

Researching the origins and functions of fishing tools has helped me become a more informed visual communicator. Through the process of making a small trawler net, with materials accessible to most consumers, I learned about the practices of the fishing trade. In *Anatomy of a Net-Learning About the Net Through the Process of Making*, I reconsidered my subject matter in a way not attained by traditional means of research (from literal text or visual documentation). The act of physically making and interacting with the net exposed me to the extreme efficiency and strength this tool had. What lay before me was nothing more than many individual nylon strings, connected in a grid system of knots. Yet it was stronger by design and function. All of these interlocking strings worked as a unit to catch an exponential amount of fish, a drastic difference from the use of one line fishing.



2.3 Daphne Cuadrado, *Anatomy of a Net: Learning About the Net Through the Process of Making (detail)*, 2014, nylon twine, nylon rope, rockhoppers, 7' x 8' x 5'



2.4 Daphne Cuadrado, *Anatomy of a Net: Learning About the Net Through the Process of Making (detail)*, 2014, nylon twine, nylon rope, rockhoppers, 7' x 8' x 5'

Breaking down the net to its basic elements allowed me to see the net's aesthetic qualities as well as its lethal ability to ensnare its prey. Just like Naoya Hatakeyama's *Blast* series, which documents the destructive force of limestone mining, his photographs capture "an awe-inspiring perspective [not seen] (or foreseen) by the naked eye...[but] display[s] the human capacity to destroy" (Brown 146). As I looked upon the net I made, I was visually mesmerized as it worked like Sirens to lure me into a trap. The alternate thought experience to that encounter was my fate, as if I was its prey. I felt like prey. I was no longer a viewer, but a participant of the work. If anything I had become a victim to the net, and in that moment I knew that my viewer would also meet this fate in their innocent investigation. Just like fish swimming into a gill net, we are ensnared into a system we never fathomed could have the potential to bring us to our knees.



2.5 Naoya Hatakeyama, *Blast #05707A*, 1998, C-Print, mounted on aluminium, 100 x 150 cm

In the making of *Catch 62*, I remind the viewer of origins of net making. By knitting with yarn, a material more quickly associated with our comforts of home, I provide a bridge for the viewer to engage with the idea of the false comfort we have with our ignorance of fishing practices.⁵ *Catch 62*'s greets the viewer as an asymmetrical knitted wall and blankets the space with an engulfing warmth and familiarity. Its presence, however, embeds a secondary, harsh reality into the installation environment. The clues within the gallery space slowly reveal a visual display of statistical data, cloaking 62 years worth of global commercial fishing and aquaculture statistics within its knotted design.⁶ Upon the realization that the materials and colors employed are not meant to comfort and instead are presenting cold data on dramatic loss, *Catch 62* creates a false read on one's initial sensory experience. It becomes an uncomfortable, yet mesmerizing diagram of the growing demand we have put on the ocean—both in natural and artificial production—for sustaining our growing population and consumer demands.



2.6 Daphne Cuadrado, *Catch 62*, 2015, yarn, braided cable, 62 years of wild and aquaculture, audio recordings of statistical information and collected stories, 27' x 3' x 9'

⁵ Knitting is an old practice of repetitive knots in an interlocking system to make a web. This practice originated early on with fishermen making nets, and was soon applied in the making of clothes.

⁶ Statistical data used in *Catch 62* was compiled by Earth Policy Institute from U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Global Capture Production and Global Aquaculture Production, electronic databases, at www.fao.org/fishery/topic/16140/en, updated March 2012; estimates for 2011 and projections for 2012 from FAO, Food Outlook (Rome: November 2012), p. 10.



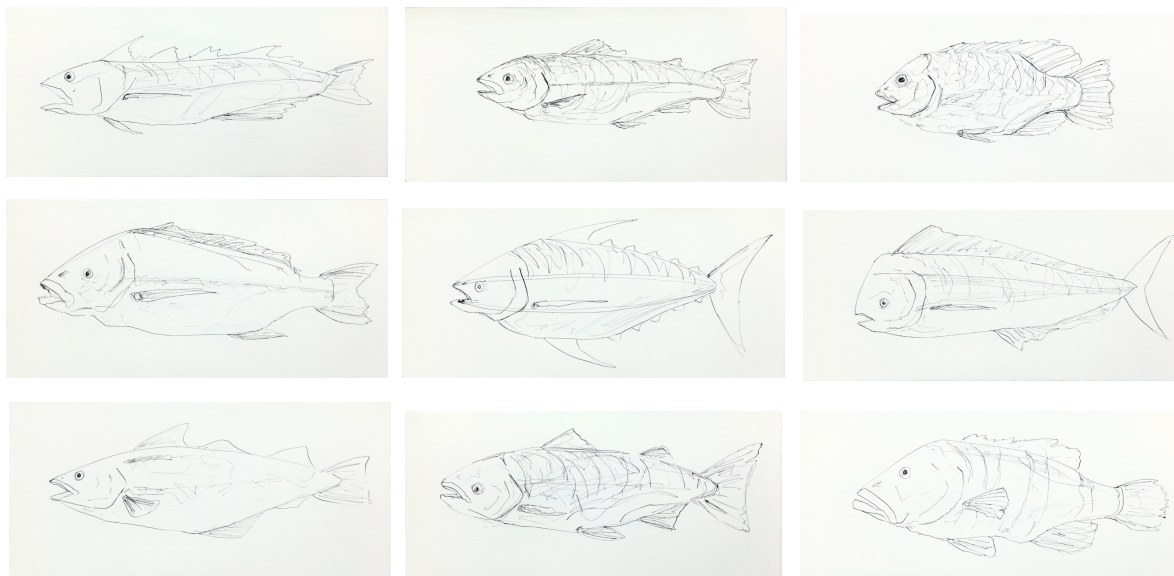
2.7 Daphne Cuadrado, *Catch 62 (detail)*, 2015, yarn, braided cable, 62 years of wild caught and farm raised statistics, 27' x 3' x 9'



2.8 Daphne Cuadrado, *Catch 62 (detail)*, 2015, yarn, braided cable, 62 years of wild caught and farm raised statistics, 27' x 3' x 9'

Interacting with My Audience

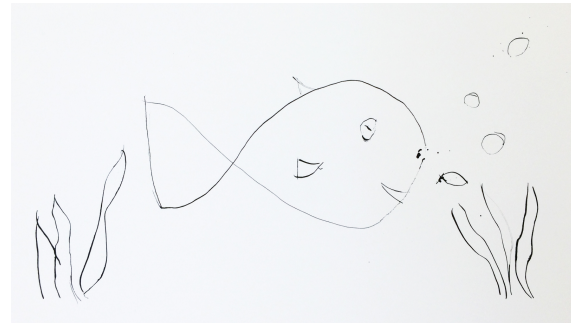
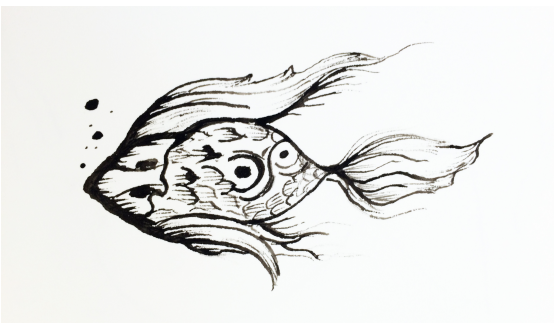
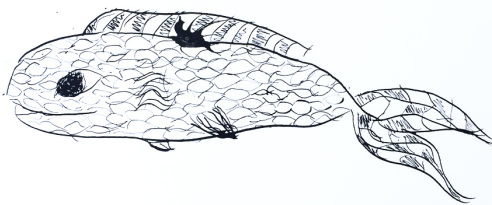
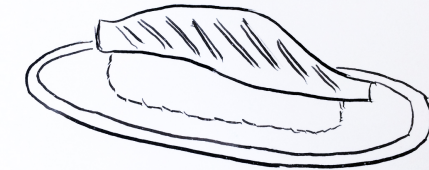
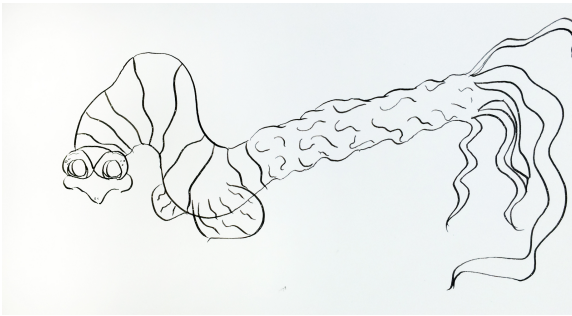
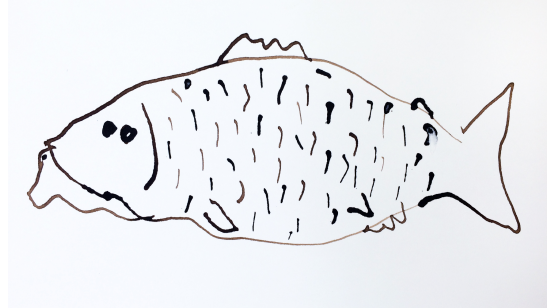
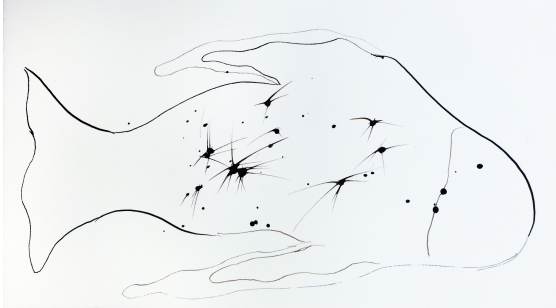
In Chapter 1, I explored my conflicted experiences dealing with being a consumer of fish. As an off shoot of *Conversation with a Fish*, I tackled the question “What is your ideal fish?”—literally. After some consideration I thought about how I could answer this question. I finally settled on drawing 9 fish I considered ideal to eat. After further reflection I prompted this question to fellow community members—and consumers of fish.



2.9 Daphne Cuadrado, *My Ideal Fish*: (from left to right, scrolling down) Cod, Tuna, Tilapia, Hake, Trout, Mahi Mahi, Snapper, Salmon, Grouper, 2014, Stonehenge paper, india ink, 24" x 10"

During Palouse area social group events, workshops, and individual discussions, I continued collecting my audience’s examples of their ideal fish, and I began to see a pattern. The individual’s imagination was used to draw the fish, rather than referencing a real fish. Personifying the fish was more universal than capturing correct anatomical structures. In the process of my participants drawing, they would share stories reminiscent of a project they did or pet fish they once had. Many others drew their fish as cartoon characters—a boy fish chasing a girl fish, or a cat eating a fish.

The use of their imagination to draw their “ideal” fish fascinated me! I meticulously reconsidered what “ideal” could stand for. I referred to my nine ideal fish, drawn to be as accurate as possible. In the act of searching for what these fish really looked like I was surprised by some of their appearances. I could identify a majority of the fish, not due to my research, but by past experiences growing up and buying whole fish with my family. In retrospect, I was fascinated by the stark contrast of how my participants answered the question “What is your ideal fish?”



2.10 Selections from participants answering "What is your ideal fish?", organized by Daphne Cuadrado, *Other's Ideal Fish*, 2014-2016, india ink, sumi ink, squid ink, walnut ink, and/or soy sauce applied on Stonehenge paper; ink nib and chopsticks used as drawing implements, 24"x 10" to 10" x 4"

Overall, observing how my audience responded to the question allowed me to get a clearer perspective on the known knowledge people had of fish. This clarity came not only through the anatomical discrepancies they presented, but also the conversations that ensued during my interaction with each participant. They were intrigued with the work I was doing (many of which found my research odd for their expectation of an artist), and would ask the origins of my pursuit. The factual information I shared through our further discussions surprised many.

The *Ideal Fish* series was another experience in my thesis work that exposed me to a broader understanding of my local audience. I found conversing with people in the act of communal making, to be the most fulfilling aspect of this series' exploration. As I continue to ask my viewer what their ideal fish is, I continue to ask myself the same question.

CHAPTER 3: Being an Active Participant and Realizing You Have Been All Along

Creative Research as a Participating Consumer of Fish and the Viewer's Roll at Joining the Conversation

As a visual communicator, I work to address the same concerns scientific and sustainability communities pursue in their field research and share through their data. The information we tackle is complex and reaching a broader audience is difficult. I feel the scientific community has difficulty distributing their findings beyond their own specialized research peers. The technical language and complex content addressed are specific and non-emotive—a contrast to the art world where elements and principles of design elicit emotional responses from viewers.

I utilize immersive visual language to quickly introduce my research on far reaching issues of overfishing. A conclusion from the information shared may not be quickly garnered or universally accepted, but I believe the explorative presentations of my work support internal reflection on behalf of the active viewer.⁷ It further promotes the opportunity for communal discussion driven by the data fueling each piece.



3.1 Daphne Cuadrado, *72 Sink*, 2014, raw clay, 120" x 54" x 5"

⁷ Ted Purves speaks to generosity and the participatory transition the "passive viewer" takes to become an "active receiver" when given a "gift". Purves, Ted. *What We Want Is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*. (Purves x).



3.2 Daphne Cuadrado, detail of *72 Sink*, 2014, raw clay, 120" x 54" x 5"

A way I explore bridging the two practices together is by confronting the viewer with my collected creative research, and having them tackle our own indirect participatory roll of consuming fish. In *72 Sink*, I play with my audience as a physical participant of my work, forcing them to confront a perspective commonly not considered. By having them inquire on shark finning's negative ecological impact and economic drive, I create an encouraging opportunity for further discussion of the topic.

Referencing a yearly average take of 72 million sharks, the 72 drying fin shaped clay forms visually represent the large quantity of sharks being removed in such a short time period. Foreshadowing an altered ecological balance, one has to confront the changes of the oceanic food sources we rely on. The participant's awareness of the work in the gallery space was discovered visually, or by physically walking onto it. By walking over the leather hard to green ware state fins, the viewer left their mark. The "out of sight, out of mind" practice of the observer and consumer is re-examined, as *72 Sink* records the interaction between the viewer and itself within the gallery space.

Here, I compose a situation, where the potential of a participant breaking, moving, and kicking broken shards around the gallery space is allowed to take place and be observed. The intended result is a recorded reflection on how shark finning is just being walked over, even when the disturbing practice is distasteful to the viewer.⁸ By placing the fins on the gallery floor I adopt a visual component originating from my research, forcing the viewer to deal with the uncomfortable reality that “out of sight, out of mind” censoring is not a long term solution.

Cuddle and Stuffed Trophy- Get Em’ While Their Here! alters the viewer into an active roll by forcing them to consider the familiar relation we have with stuffed animals and our role as consumer. The forms welcome the participant to come closer to investigate the soft, familiar material. Conflicted with the animal patterns presented on the surfaces of the fish shaped forms, I confront the viewer to consider our societal reasoning as to what is worth protecting.



3.3 Daphne Cuadrado, *Cuddle*, 2014, fur fabric, nylon rope, crane hook, 48" x 34" x 34"

⁸ In recent years the act of drying shark fins on sidewalks has taken to the rooftops in China, due to the increasing number of complaints from tourists and locals.



3.4 Daphne Cuadrado, *Stuffed Trophy: Get Em' While Their Here!*, 2015, stuffed tuna, sportsman trophy



3.5 Daphne Cuadrado, detail of *Stuffed Trophy: Get Em' While Their Here!*, 2015, stuffed tuna, sportsman trophy photos, 9' x 7' x 7'

Many endangered species are personified through stuffed animals, emphasize their aesthetic qualities in clothing, or adopt admirable attributes through cultural relevance, mythology, or symbolism. All of these actions have in some way supported the protection of many endangered species. Fascinatingly enough, we welcome the protection of creatures that in their natural state have the potential to do us great bodily harm. Countless big cats, bears, and wolves have been advocated as creatures worth protecting when their plight is exposed, even when these wild animals are stories of legend and horror. They become indispensable due to the threat of extinction, a concept that is permanent, inconceivably premature, and relates to our own struggles and eventual dealings with death.

In *Cuddle* I take advantage of our desire to protect what we personify by putting a different skin on the “stuffed animal”. I ask my viewer, “What is worth protecting, and why?”⁹ The animal print pattern’s aesthetic value is put on a form we are unfamiliar with, but have some visual knowledge as to whom the pattern is from.¹⁰

I take the opportunity once again to adopt the visual language available from fishing practices in relation to how *Cuddle* and *Stuffed- Get Em’ While Their Here!* are displayed. One practice used to remove large fish from ship hold is by tying them from the tail or head, reducing physical damage to the product. I invite my viewer to consider the vulnerable yet stagnant state of being suspended, and the connotations of this practice in human culture—humiliation, torture, distress, processing, ... I welcome the participant to reflect on the superiority complex that takes place when we interact with not only our food, but nature as well.

Going to Market: Mending Our Mistakes One at a Time also adopts an aspect of the familiar in the fish trade, and more specifically in this piece, the daily tuna auctions held in Tokyo, Japan’s Tsukiji Fish Market. Presenting the forms in an accessible gridded system, I welcome the viewer to investigate the tuna forms and acknowledge their unique attributes.

Each form is individually broken and then mended through a Japanese ceramic repair process called Kintsugi. Their unique treatment emphasizes their individuality, and attempt to repair, strengthen, and beautify the form. Through this process I emphasis my own plight to fix a fractured

⁹ Ted Purves speaks about the shift in the audience’s experience “from passive viewer to active receiver” when viewing artwork, in his introduction to *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art* (Purves x).

¹⁰ Aesthetic values is a component of Conservation Ethics that speaks to the moral, philosophical, and political reasons to protect biodiversity (Groom 119).

system, by bringing a second life and further meaning to the piece. As the viewer physically maneuvers the space of torpedo like forms, I invite them to consider their participatory state, not only in this space, but the greater system at play as a consumer of fish. The “out of site, out of mind” is brought before them, uncomfortably visceral as the gutted hollow forms lay before them.



3.6 Daphne Cuadrado, *Going to Market: Mending Our Mistakes One at a Time*, 2016, ceramic tuna forms, gold leaf, dimensions vary



3.7 Daphne Cuadrado, gold leaf detail on *Going to Market: Mending Our Mistakes One at a Time*, 2016 ceramic tuna forms, gold leaf, dimensions vary



3.8 Photograph by Daphne Cuadrado, *Human Remains of A.D. 79 Mount Vesuvius Volcanic Eruption, Pompeii, Italy, 2012*, digital photograph

Their black torpedo like forms appear to have nothing of substantial value or content. Instead they stand as fossilized casts acknowledging the void within each form, and the potential that one day these residual husks may be all that we will have of their existence. Just like the human remains cast from the ashes of Mount Vesuvius (Pompeii, Italy), the clues preserved speak to who these individuals were. As the hollowness of the tuna forms speak to the void not filled with edible substance, the external shell instead embraces their individuality. As the viewer attempts to understand their place as a consumer of fish, I attempt to reconcile with the fact that change is slow but possible. I come to terms while mending cracks that my efforts may be small, but they are something. In that process of change I can look for strength, and admire the beauty in what has been achieved within the cracks.

Bringing the Conversation Back to the Table

Jorgen Svensson organized *Four Lectures*, inviting prominent and famous artists to a series of art discussions. Select government officials were invited as well, along with anyone else in the public who wanted entry.¹¹ In actuality, Svensson never intended for the artists to be part of the gathering, but brought people together with a common interest—art. Orchestrating these events “[gave] the opportunity for guests to speak freely” to one another, especially with state officials (Svensson 55). The interaction and dialog that occurred among strangers during the function became the focus of the event, instead of lingering on their expected evening listening to the advertised honored art guest. “Many topics were covered: the relationship between art and politics, politician’s incompetence when it comes to art issues, the economic situation of artists, and so on” (Svensson 55).

After reading about the events that occurred in Svensson’s *Four Lectures* I wanted to replicate an atmosphere where a guided discussion could take place. More specifically, I wanted to focus an interaction around a dinner setting, where fish was being served.



3.9 Jorgen Svensson, *Government Dinner*, 1994

¹¹ Jorgen Svensson’s *Government Dinner* was a prelude to *Four Lectures*, where he made a government installation (also known as the “formation of a government” at a collaborative week long art intervention in a restaurant (Svensson 52).



3.10 Daphne Cuadrado, *Dinner Napkins: Tilapia*, 2015, embroidered tilapia napkins, dinner table, guests, tilapia baked in sliced tomatoes, garlic, rosemary, balsamic vinaigrette, and olive oil, with a side of mixed green salad and baked sweet potatoes coated in cinnamon

Branching from what I had learned during the *Ideal Fish* series, I referred to my nine drawings to create napkins for each fish. Each napkin contains words relating to a fish, a population/harvest line graph, and drawing of the fish for identification. Each of these compositions is embroidered in white on a white polyester napkin, and is presented in relation to what fish is being served.



3.11 Daphne Cuadrado, detail sample of the serviette's embroidery for *Dinner Napkins: Cod*, 2016, embroidered polyester napkin, 17" x 17"

During the meal, the participants begin conversation, serve food onto their plates, and place napkins in their lap. In this moment of interaction, the active viewer notices the napkin's design as they are opened up, and more attention is given to the embroidery. Whether or not the fish eaten is threatened or harvested in an unpalatable manner is taken in by the diner. The raised surface and distinct texture continues to remind the dinner participant of the napkin's visual and informational content. The presence of the napkin throughout the meal promotes the contemplation of the consumer. As the data is engaged with, it becomes less passive and deniable. Even though interactions will vary, the conscious discomfort *Dinner Napkins* creates welcomes the participant to confront their consumption. Through the act of consuming the fish before us, *Dinner Napkins* challenges our previous illusion of comfort.

There are various routes as to where the ongoing discussion *Dinner Napkins* may bring to the conversation on our eventual reality of consuming fish. Just like Svensson's *Four Lectures*, I welcome the active viewer to think and speak freely, without preconceived judgement, among one another about their consumption of fish. In that moment we, the consumer of fish, may begin to acknowledge our long term desires to eat fish, but consider changes we can individually make by being actively knowledgeable of where and how our future meal will be brought to the table. In any case, the *Dinner Napkin* series speaks to the most important and sometimes difficult discussion that could and should be occurring at the dinner table, "which fish should I eat?"



3.12 Photograph by Daphne Cuadrado, *Sushi Rolls*, 2015, digital file.

Conclusion for Now...

I continue to struggle with this question, and even though I still bring fish to my own table, I am more knowledgeable as to how my meal was brought to me. I know I will keep making mistakes in the pursuit of my next meal, but I must take solace in the fact that I can do better. I will continue striving forward in my search for a more sustainable source of “fish”. In any small moment of choice, I can shift the fate of a whole ecosystem for the sake of one meal.

Conversation with a Fish, *Catch 62*, and *Going to Market: Mending Our Mistakes One at a Time* are curated in the Prichard Gallery MFA thesis show *a•mal•gam*. These works transform the viewer from the state of passive observer to active participant (Purves x). In this space of reflection, I reevaluate my interactions with a fish, share scientific data fueling my work, and solicit my viewer to reconsider their place in the fish market. Addressing the fragility of globalized consumption and overfishing, these works are meant to both welcome viewers physically and disrupt viscerally. As the



3.13 Daphne Cuadrado, *Conversation with a Fish*, *Catch 62*, and *Going to Market: Mending Our Mistakes One at a Time*, displayed in the Prichard Gallery, 2016

viewer progresses to dissect this body of work, I activate their role as a consumer by quietly asking them to reconsider their place and influence among an affected ecosystem. Each work addresses systems of influence at play—the fishing industry, the market, & the person seated at the dinner table. It is my intention that through this exhibition, and much of the other work I have created at the University of Idaho, viewers will realize they too have an active role to play. I welcome the viewer to a renewed awareness as a consumer of fish and to join in on the conversation they have been part of all along.

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