Bright Spots

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by

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Authorization to Submit Thesis

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Abstract

In order to produce work that prompts the viewer to undergo a process of personal exploration resulting in a heightened sensory experience, it is necessary to challenge rules and social norms about how we interact with and define art. Echoing an almost childlike curiosity, my work attempts to balance between the wonder of the experience and the patterns, rhythms, and familiarity of the materials. My intent is to create interactive experiences that cultivate dialogue between the viewer and the artwork. I engage multiple senses in an attempt to connect with the viewer in the creation of a piece or in the final presentation. By using intense colors and everyday manufactured materials, I hope to create bright spots that are playful and approachable in contrast to the deeply rooted questions about authority and rules that form the foundation of my creative process.

Acknowledgements

Several people have shared their time, support, and expertise in the realization of this thesis. I would first like to thank Delphine Keim, my committee chair, for her unfailing support and unwavering encouragement in developing my art practice. Her knowledge of design and art principles challenged me to dig deeper into my art making. Thanks as well to Rachel Fujita who inspires me to create art in new experiential ways and is a great example of both an artist and teacher. Thank you to Jennifer Ladino whose literary and theoretical knowledge helped breathe substance to my work.

A special thank you to Jay Pengilly and Len Zeoli who have taught me how to convert my digital ideas into actual sculptures. Your patience and perseverance are immeasurable. Thank you to the faculty at the University of Idaho Art + Design particularly Stacy Isenbarger, Casey Doyle, Val Carter, Greg Turner-Rahman, Sally Machlis, Lynne Haagensen, and Marco Deyasi. It takes a village to teach and I appreciate your encouragement and critique these past three years.

Dedication

To my treasured personal "bright spots."

Thank you Matt, Meridian, Isabelle and Elias. You are the force that sustains me, the inspiration that moves me, and the delight of my life. A special thank you to Matt, my husband and champion, it is through his unfailing love and support that this journey was possible. Thank you for believing in me and all of my 'weird' ideas. Thank you to my in-laws, Avalon and Nigel Wappett, who continue to encourage me and inspire me to try new things. To my parents, Melinda and Dan Daniels, who raised and supported six children to follow their dreams and now one of them can be called an 'artist'.

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Introduction

"all the world there, as we find the sun in the bright spot under the burning glass"

– W.B. Yeats

Modern poet, W.B. Yeats' ambition was to transfigure the everyday world into paradise, the everyday self into a heroic person. He hoped his role as poet could shape knowledge and lead readers to understand "the thought in a marrowbone" (Miller 125). Yeats presented bright spots in his poetry which, under the intense gaze of the magnifying glass would allow the reader an entry into a new world. The bright spot is a fitting visual for what I aspire to create in my art practice and aligns with Yeats' goal to create new passages and new understandings. My art and design work encourages viewers to challenge rules and social norms about how we interact with and define art. My intent is to create multisensory experiences that cultivate this dialogue between the viewer and the artwork in an effort to create a moment of awareness that moves a person to a new state as they interact with my work.

This thesis outlines my artistic endeavors in four sections. The first discusses the power of aesthetics and senses in which I use affect theory to support the pull we have to certain objects. The next addresses the rhythms of life, balance, and tension as they relate to several of my pieces. In the third section, I address my material choices and the use of play in my work. Finally, I discuss community in the context of my largest project that involved more than 300 participants at the University of Idaho.

The Senses

Most artists strive to connect with their viewers by activating the senses. Whether it is music for the ear, color for the eye, or food for the mouth, artists want to make a connection with their viewers on a sensory level. The use of aesthetics in art theory reminds us that art is perceived through the senses. Thus, an understanding of art depends on an understanding of sensory-perception.

Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty posits that the body is the filter by which we experience the physical world. According to him, "It is not just the mind, which perceives experiences, and represents the world; instead, embodiment signifies the role of the body in how one experiences the world" (Emerling 214). When applied to art, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the very "colours, patterns, and textures of sensory experience, before they are the qualities of objects, are the thick interactions which manifest the disclosive, intentional structure of experience" (Emerling 216). My work attempts to activate this sensory experience prior to a cognitive realization of what a viewer internalizes. Many of my pieces break two-dimensional boundaries and become sculptural in a reaching effort to grab a viewer. I use familiar manufactured materials that are playful and inviting. These choices are deliberate in order to create an accessible entry point for the viewer to have a sensory experience. Vibrant colors and inviting tactile objects create an experience that is at odds with social norms about behavior towards art. It is this moment of in-between-ness where the body reacts and the mind restrains that I feel is fertile exploratory ground for my work. The state of in-between-ness happens when emotions are unmoored from individual bodies, as “the transpersonal or prepersonal intensities that emerge as bodies affect one another” (Anderson 78).

Affect theory provides an additional theoretical framework to explore this binary opposition between the precognitive forces that drive us toward movement, thought, and ever changing forms of relation (Brennan 5) and the deliberate actions we do or do not take. While affect theory has many paths and is notoriously difficult to define, Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg explain that "affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness of forces or intensities" (1). Affect "is the name we give to those forces that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought… or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (Seigworth and Gregg 1). Often affect is tied with emotions, which are "complicated collections of chemical and neural responses, forming a pattern" that are felt precognitively and typically regulate how we behave (Damasio 51). Small children are good examples of unrestrained affective behavior as they respond first with their senses. For example, one July night during the Rendezvous music festival in Moscow, Idaho, a band was playing some upbeat, powerful music. Immediately the children in the audience jumped up and moved. Their bodies swayed to the beat. It was as if the music was a sort of pied piper calling, and the children immediately responded. They didn't feel, think, and then determine whether or not it was socially acceptable. They just acted. As Damasio states, "It is through feelings, which are inwardly directed and private that emotions, which are outwardly directed and public, begin their impact on the mind; but the full and lasting impact of feelings requires consciousness" (36). The children felt the music and acted while the adults in the audience recognized the feeling and then determined whether or not they would get up and dance.

Within my work, I seek to explore that almost childlike response within viewers with a bright spot that encourages wonder but also creates an internal struggle. One of my first attempts to explore this dialectic was an exhibit at the Turnstone Gallery. The space was a

singular room with three large windows. I created four chairs based on simple Shaker construction with the words "Do Not Sit" (fig. 1) etched on the back. The choice to use Shaker design was deliberate in order to leverage their religious roots of utility, simplicity, and honesty. Three chairs hung from a chair rail while a fourth was on the ground facing those chairs. The one on the ground was red and it faced another red hanging chair that did not have the words "Do Not Sit" etched on the back. I included this chair to serve as the accused in a quasi trial with the one on the floor acting as judge. This further complicated the dialogue between objects as to what role each filled. The purpose of the chair was put into doubt with the words, "Do Not Sit." Questions regarding the stability of the chair such as, "Will it tip?" arose. Questions whether or not the chairs were an art object or a piece of furniture also circulated in the gallery. All of my design choices were made in an effort to create these questions and to elevate the purpose of the chair from a household staple to a messenger of dialogue in order to facilitate an internal struggle between viewer and object.

In addition to the chairs, I included two brightly colored balloon pieces titled *Do Not Touch* (fig. 2). The pieces were each 12" × 36" and were threaded with hundreds of un-inflated twisting balloons. These two installations were in a pull and push conversation with each other. The chairs, which seemed stable and reliable, offered a viewer a chance to sit within the space except for the warning not to sit. The balloons hung directly from the wall and almost begged viewers to touch them, but wording on the walls asked them not to touch. Viewers who entered the space wondered, "What are the rules?" On the one hand they see brightly colored objects reminiscent of toys and on the other, words directing them on what they can't do. While I am no pied piper, my intent was to lure viewers into the seemingly innocuous space with bright playful colors only to deny them any play. The commanding

imperatives of "Do Not Sit" and "Do Not Touch" deflated the atmosphere and created tension between the objects and the viewer. Interestingly, affect theorist Sara Ahmed, addresses the atmosphere in spaces and suggests that bodies "do not arrive in neutral"(36). Viewers enter a space and "feel the atmosphere" (Ahmed 37). Ahmed continues by saying, "the moods we arrive with do affect what happens" (37). When a viewer rushes into the gallery, they may bring the feeling of anxiety to the room and may react to my pieces in a like manner. Objects like my imperative pieces can add to a charged atmosphere or even create one, causing internal deliberations within a viewer. One evening I stopped in the gallery and a visitor came up to me and introduced herself. She wondered if I was the artist. After explaining that I was, she meekly apologized that she couldn't resist, but she touched the balloons. This started a conversation about rules and objects. The atmosphere in the gallery changed from tense to calm as she became more at ease and understood my intentions. Ben Anderson, professor of geography at Durham University explains, "atmospheres are perpetually forming and deforming, appearing and disappearing, as bodies enter into relation with one another" (79). In order to create a sensory experience, the objects must add to the atmosphere and invite the viewer to participate in some way either by breaking the imperatives or by complying with them.

Several contemporary artists are exploring the senses within their art making. Most notably is Ann Hamilton and her current exhibit at the Henry Gallery in Seattle entitled, *the common SENSE* (fig. 3). Within this exhibition, Hamilton focuses on the sense of touch that is common to all animal species and uses animal images and skins to convey her message of "the finitude and threatened extinctions we share across species" (Henry). Hamilton uses multiple access points to convey her message from newsprint images that can be ripped off the

walls by viewers to presentations of clothing made out of fur, feather or guts. While she explores this sense of touch, Hamilton avoids the natural science museum route of allowing viewers to touch furs or animals. Instead, she presents visual cues and a more scientific presentation of the facts. While Hamilton's pieces in this exhibit focus on the cognitive emotions of touch at a safe distance for the viewer, my work attempts to slip in-between those emotions and chase the initial feelings a viewer may have to a piece of artwork and encourage a closer encounter with the work.

The Rain Room is a literal room that engages the senses and took years of planning and creating by artists Stuart Wood, Florian Ortkrass and Hannes Koch (fig. 4). The artists explain, "We're intrigued by how people and objects behave and respond to one another" (Gambino). When a person enters the rain room, the indoor downpour detects them and adjusts rainfall to keep them dry. Art installations such as the rain room are finding their way into galleries and museums in order to engage viewers on new sensory levels. Viewers have the smell and sight of rain, but their body controls whether or not it rains on them. Some art critics like Ken Johnson from the *New York Times* express skepticism about the validity of installations like the Rain Room, but the Museum of Modern Art who housed the Rain Room, explains that "the work…encourages people to explore the roles that science, technology and ingenuity can play in stabilizing our environment" (Gambino). Artists like the creators of the Rain Room and myself are seeking new ways and new materials to capture viewers and draw them into an immersive experience that will create a lasting impression.

Because the average viewer is estimated to spend 15 to 30 seconds with a work of art, it is incumbent upon the artist to use whatever means necessary to engage with the viewer (Rosenbloom). In my art practice, I focus on sensory experiences that elicit multiple touch

points with the viewer. This practice is not new and can be found in the entertainment industry from Walt Disney's theme parks to restaurants such as the Hard Rock Café. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore write, "the more senses an experience engages, the more effective and memorable it can be" (104). While I am not attempting to commercialize my art, I do recognize the benefit of multisensory intersections as a means to create affectively charged moments of in-between-ness between the viewer and art.

Figure 1: *Do Not Sit*, Lianne Wappett, 2013

Figure 2: *Do Not Touch*, Lianne Wappett, 2013

Figure 3: *the common SENSE*, Ann Hamilton, 2015

Figure 4: *Rain Room*, Stuart Wood, Florian Ortkrass, and Hannes Koch, 2013

Rhythm and Balance

The realities of life surround us. Patterns emerge not only in nature, but in our surroundings and provide order and structure to our days. These patterns form the rhythm of routine, but predictability can become mundane. Creativity offers the balance. Creativity gives us new experiences that allow us to break away from the repetitive, thereby enriching our lives. My work builds on familiar design principles that echo these ideals of routine but also echo the way I "re" act to my own quotidian routine.

In my work I use design principles to reassure and engage the viewer. Design principles such as unity, balance, proportion, rhythm and emphasis give the viewer a familiar foundation in which to explore a new experience. In my piece *Burst* (fig. 5), I use symmetry by slicing a circle in half and flipping the ends. The two panels create one whole circle and two halves. The center circle gives a formal balance to the piece and grounds it with a more static and passive enclosure. The two circle halves on either end of the piece leave the design open and suggest movement. The materials in the piece include yellow balloons and gold leaf. I chose gold leaf in an attempt to elevate the design since gold leaf is traditionally used in gilding important or sacred objects. Balloons are not considered sacred but festive. My intent was to combine the two in order to leverage the equity from the gold leaf to the balloons and hopefully elevate the material to something new. Panel number two does not have gold leaf and uses the lip of the balloon. I chose this as a counterbalance to the first panel that uses the tip of the balloon. The title *Burst* suggests a sudden internal breaking and is represented by the two parts of the balloon separated on two different panels, referencing the material and its behavior if overfilled with air.

Using design principles gives familiarity to my work, which then allows me to inject

creativity in my pieces. While some people like more structure in their lives, preferring the routine without surprise, there are those who thrive on new experiences, chaos, and challenges. Creativity helps us cope with new situations, and provides interest and excitement. Most types of work have elements of recurrence. This helps us to develop efficiency and skill at our jobs. Repetitive labor is described by Rebecca Solnit:

> Many makings are so drawn out, so repetitive in their realization that they become routines, rhythms that echo bodily rhythms rather than creation's break from rhythm. Long after the idea of making the brick has transpired, there are bricks to be made, and so making becomes doing, becomes rhythmic, laborious, cyclical, repetitive (166).

Much of the work I do within the home is repetitive. Laundry, cooking, cleaning, mowing the lawn, and other household jobs are performed over and over. During my years as a stay-at-home mother, the ability to free my mind while performing the mundane nourished me and allowed me to mentally escape at times. While I might not have embraced the work, I did accept it and I enjoyed the results. However, the satisfaction that comes from completing the task is fleeting because the work is very soon undone. Finding satisfaction with the process elevates the making.

Repetitive motions are found in my balloon threading. After a design is complete, the making begins and includes hours upon hours of threading. During this time, I reflect on the piece and other concepts. At times, I watch movies or listen to podcasts. This gives me the freedom to enjoy the process and allows me to do activities I otherwise would not do. When I invite others to thread with me I have a chance to talk with them and the repetitive making becomes a chance to learn more about someone or to simply do.

One piece that highlights this "doing" and introduces "undoing" is titled *Pull* (fig. 6) and *Pulled* (fig. 7). In *Pull* I used three large circles in the center of a square panel. Two of the

circles are offset and suggest some sort of a pull between them. Again I used gold leaf but only in the parts that seem to pull away from each circle. Surrounding this struggle there are hundreds of circles with orange balloons. At the onset, each of the balloons emerged only a quarter of an inch from the panel. When I installed the piece for display in the Reflections Gallery, the title prompted viewers to actually pull the balloons. Consequently, the piece evolved over time as balloons were pulled. The once tidy panel now suggests chaos and is more true to the struggle presented in the center circles. I spent hours neatly arranging each orange balloon only to see them be tugged and pulled by unknown persons. There is fulfillment in the doing that makes it worth the sacrifice of time and energy. But, I was willing to walk away from the repetitive and the tidy to allow the viewer to engage with the piece and create chaos. A balance is needed between the repetitive and the creative, or in other words between order and chaos.

Artist Devorah Sperber creates rhythm and balance within her works as she employs the use of map tacks, stickers, marker caps, thread spools, and pipe cleaners in her large-scale pieces. The use of everyday objects in a systematic way presents a new optical perception. In her piece, *Lie Like a Rug* (fig. 8), Sperber replicates the intricate patterns found on oriental rugs with Pantone marker caps. Through her artistry, she creates a deception that is at once familiar and astounding. As Steven Holt and Mara Skov note, "this is a piece in which the artist delights in testing sharp intellectual perception at the same time as her rounded pixel format challenges optical perception" (151).

Mid-century designer Charley Harper also exemplifies design principles of rhythm and balance as he created highly designed interpretations of the natural world. He said, "When I look at wildlife or nature subject, I don't see the feathers in the wings, I just count the wings. I

see exciting shapes, color combinations, patterns, textures, fascinating behavior and endless possibilities for making interesting pictures" (Charley Harper Studio). In his print, *A Day in Eden* (fig. 9), Harper selected four animals enclosed in the infinity sign to convey the importance of continuing animal life. Each animal is primarily circular and is reduced to its geometric form. Harper continues to use patterns and balance in other landscape prints like *Cass Scenic Railroad* (fig. 10). His use of multiple rounded triangles to create the sky conjure up images of raindrops and mountains, but his use of rich yellow, red and green keep the viewer unsure of his intentions. In this way, Harper uses the design principles in creative ways that make his work interesting and engaging.

Both Sperber and Harper leverage patterning and rhythm to create something new out of the familiar. In my practice, I find my work is grounded in those same principles which help me create a foundation in which to build pieces that allow the viewer to be at once comfortable and challenged at the same time. As Eva Hesse explained, "If something is meaningful maybe it's more meaningful said ten times…repetition does enlarge or increase or exaggerate an idea or purpose in a statement" (Holt and Skov 64). The repetitive fills much of my day. I find security in the daily actions required of me as mother, but long for times when something new and unexpected happens, even on a micro level. Likewise, my art reflects a rhythm that makes it approachable. My hope is that it can also deliver a bright spot of unexpected creativity.

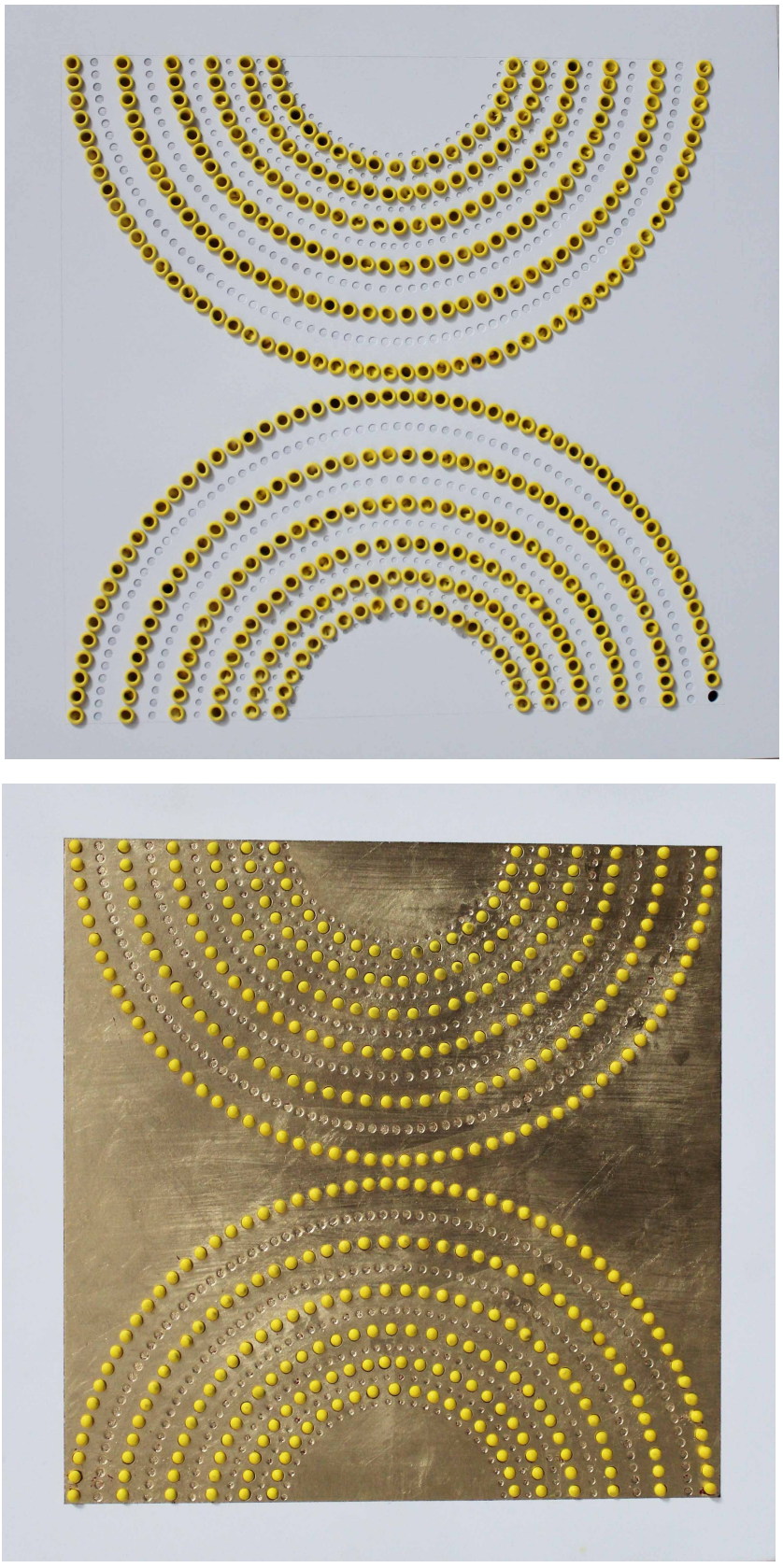

Figure 5: *Burst*, Lianne Wappett, 2015

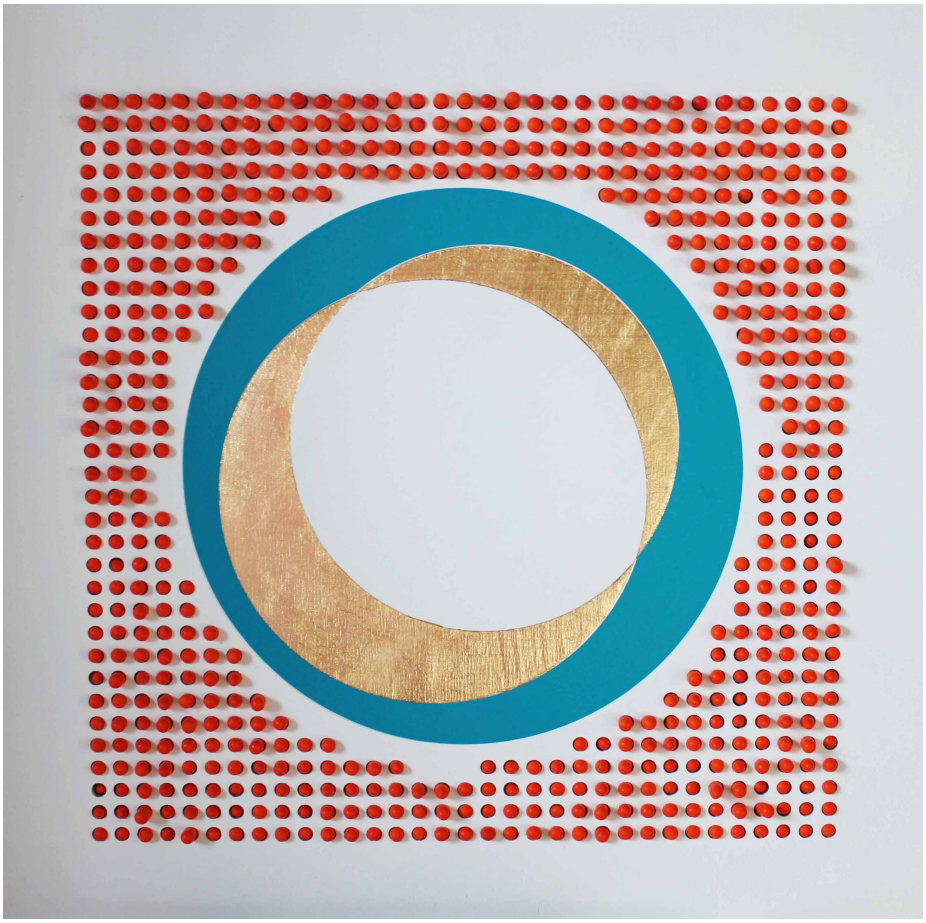

Figure 6: *PULL*, Lianne Wappett, 2014

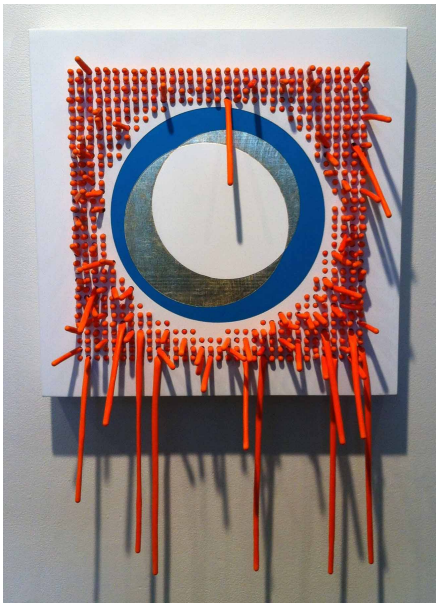

Figure 6: *PULLED*, Lianne Wappett, 2014

Figure 8: *Lie Like a Rug*, Devorah Sperber, 2001

Figure 9: *A Day in Eden*, Charley Harper, 1984

Figure 10: *Cass Scenic Railroad*, Charley Harper

Tension

While rhythm and balance are foundational to my work, this section will focus on another footing: tension. Tension between principles and pragmatics is important as I create pieces that attempt to connect with viewers. Usually my work begins with a prompt from everyday life such as my observation of the county fair clown which I detail later in this section. On one side of the work, I'm thinking about the idea, possible meanings, and researching background information. I also sketch out as much of the design as possible on the computer. The other side of the work is the time in the field or the studio, gathering materials, experimenting, building and assembling. Much of the production work is intuitive. However, once the piece is underway, there is a natural tension that comes between the two sides of the work as I balance my digital expectations and the reality of making. The translation between one world to the other is fraught with potential detours because my material choices often alter my original concept. This tension of give and take produces a better result than the original concept. I also attempt to introduce tension within my pieces to aide in creating an affectively charged atmosphere previously discussed in the senses section. This requires an element of trial and error as I must gage viewer interactions. A description of the development of my first piece illustrates the process.

When I started graduate school I explored concepts that were multisensory. My first explorations focused on the senses of sight and smell. The reason for this study germinated when I read Duke Ellington, the legendary jazz pianist, describe his process for creating jazz music. He said, "I hear a note by one of the fellows in the band and it's one colour. I hear the same note played by someone else and it's a different colour" (Classic fM). Synesthesia is a neurological condition, or ability, involving the intermingling of our senses, where "the

stimulation of one sense stimulates another" (Ackerman 290). I began to read and think about colors and if it were possible to replicate a synesthetic experience for the viewer. I created three 18" × 6" clear plexiglass boxes. The words "PURPLE," "YELLOW," and "ORANGE" were etched and painted yellow on the back of the boxes (fig. 11). Each box had a hundred small holes drilled into the front plexiglass so when the viewer neared the box they could smell lemons, but no lemons were present. The boxes looked almost exactly identical, the only difference were the words written. I attempted to create tension for both the body and mind. While reading the color yellow and smelling lemons feels natural, reading the color purple in yellow and smelling lemons is not. In this case, the viewer read one thing but smelled and saw another. Overall I was pleased with this first attempt, but the experience lacked tension and was not clear to the viewers. I also had trouble handling the plexiglass and housing the scents for long periods of time in the clear boxes. In addition, I grappled with scents since they typically come with a range of emotions. Some viewers commented about cleaning products and its relation to home, others talked about the taste of lemonade on a hot summer day. I realized that the sense of smell could be overpowering and thwart my initial concept of creating tension between object and viewer. From this first installation I began to think how I could simplify the experience and focus on pieces that more aligned with my purposes.

Understanding principles and expressing them in a way that will be understood by the viewer is not easy nor is it exact. It is my desire to create high quality, beautiful work that successfully represents concepts in a multisensory way. By December of 2013, I shifted my study of sight and smell to sight and touch with a sketch exhibition of *Do Not Touch* during our Art Seminar class. The summer before, I attended our local county fair and watched as the wandering clown created balloon animals for children. Children gathered around her and

patiently waited for their animal. One small toddler was on the fringe of the group, clearly not interested in the animals being created, but by the balloon belt wrapped around the clown's waist. On this belt the clown kept her many balloons so she could easily reach down and get one. The balloons swayed as she moved and the toddler couldn't resist and reached to grab them. The clown immediately swatted the child and told him not to touch. He turned and ran back to his mother. I was entranced by the entire 45 second scene. This experience was the impetus for my adoration of latex balloons as an art material, a material that could be at once both desirable and untouchable.

With that experience in my mind, I started to consider how I might develop the experience I saw into a piece of art. I ordered several hundred long, orange Qualatex 260 twisting balloons that are used in creating balloon animals. I chose bright orange because it is often associated with both amusement like the Orange Streak Rollar Coaster and danger like the road safety cones. I used clear plexiglass and lasered hundreds of holes in a systematic pattern that I created on the computer. Each hole was a perfect diameter to receive the un-inflated balloons. The result was an irresistible mound of latex balloons hanging from the wall. The piece looked very organic and fiber-like. No formality of framing existed and no title except for some small vinyl letters on the wall that said, "Do Not Touch." I installed the work a few days prior to the exhibition and made it a point to observe viewers. The results were mixed. Some viewers saw the piece and reached out to touch it but stopped short as they read the sign. Others immediately touched and then read the sign and began to look around. I later had others who knew me come and confess that they indeed had touched the piece. I then began to explore other forms and designs (fig. 12) using balloons knowing it was a medium in which I could explore a sensory experience that addressed tension between materials, the desire

to touch, and the established conduct for art.

An art gallery has a certain etiquette associated with the space. Most of this etiquette is understood implicitly rather than spelled out. Visitors to a gallery tend to speak quietly so not to disturb the thoughts or experience of other people in the gallery. Artwork is viewed from an arm's length away and is not touched in order to preserve materials. Public artwork, on the other hand, is often placed in parks or next to busy streets where viewers can interact with it on a daily basis. The materials used in public art are durable and able to withstand the elements. My work merges these two worlds by creating accessible art within the gallery. Because of the set decorum in a gallery, I must carefully clue the viewer into what is acceptable and what is not. In my piece *Touch* (fig. 13) I present three separate hand prints surrounded by 900 mini balloons. While the natural inclination is to match your hand with another's, I prevent this interaction by placing a plexiglass covering over each hand. This intervention does not allow access to the viewer even if they wanted to interact. In another piece, *Twist* (fig. 14), hundreds of purple balloons are tightly pulled at the top third of the piece and then released to spin freely at the bottom. Located at the top of the sculpture is a red handle. This object along with the name might inspire some viewers to try and twist the sculpture which is an acceptable form of interaction for this piece. The only obstacle is that the handle is about 6 feet tall, thus removing some young viewers from the opportunity to actually twist the piece. The location of the handle is an invitation to adults to play with the piece and twist. Over time and with experience, I am learning how to better control the art environment and give the viewer subtle gestures as to appropriate behavior with my pieces. However, there is a fine balance between the tension I wish to create and how much I wish to direct.

Barbara Kruger is an artist who capitalizes on tension by using words, images, and her

signature black and white type (fig. 15). She often twists photos and phrases that invite an alternative reading from the original context to show the skewed representations of reality found in the media (Rosenbaum). Kruger often uses imperative exclamations and all capitals in her work to command attention. As Ron Rosenbaum explains on Smithsonian.com, "Her work has become more relevant than ever at a time when we are inundated by words in a dizzying, delirious way – by the torrent, the tidal wave, the tsunami unleashed by the Internet." Certainly the spaces her work occupies are affectively charged. At the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C., Kruger's work occupies an entire room that is accessed through escalators. She titled the exhibit *Belief + Doubt* (fig. 16) knowing the exhibit is a stone's through away from the United States Capital. Her intent is to create tension between her words, the gallery, Congress and the White House. While my work does not focus on hot button cultural issues, I too use imperatives in my work or within the title to add to the tension of the piece.

Tension can also manifest itself in sculptural pieces such as Eva Hesse's series of Accession boxes (fig. 17). The boxes were manufactured to be thirty-inch, five-sided, steel cubes. Within the box, Hesse filled by hand each of the cube's 30,670 holes with plastic tubing. In so doing Hesse created tension between the regular, geometric exteriors of the boxes with the more organic, hairy insides (Sussman 213). The result is a tentacle-looking interior juxtaposed with an industrial exterior. While viewers did not touch the plastic tubing, the visual impact of materials created a host of anthropomorphic associations. Although Hesse was initially pleased with the series, over time she became disapproving. She stated, "It becomes a little too precious, at least from where I stand now, and too right and too beautiful…I'd like to do a little more wrong at this point" (Sussman 213). This can be a challenge to artists as pieces

over time can lose their tension and become more familiar. As viewers have repeatedly seen my work, I observe the tension they initially felt diminish. I believe this is part of the art process and challenge, to continually find fresh ways to engage with viewers.

Figure 11: *Scent Boxes*, Lianne Wappett, 2012

Figure 12: *Do Not Touch - Purple*, Lianne Wappett, 2012

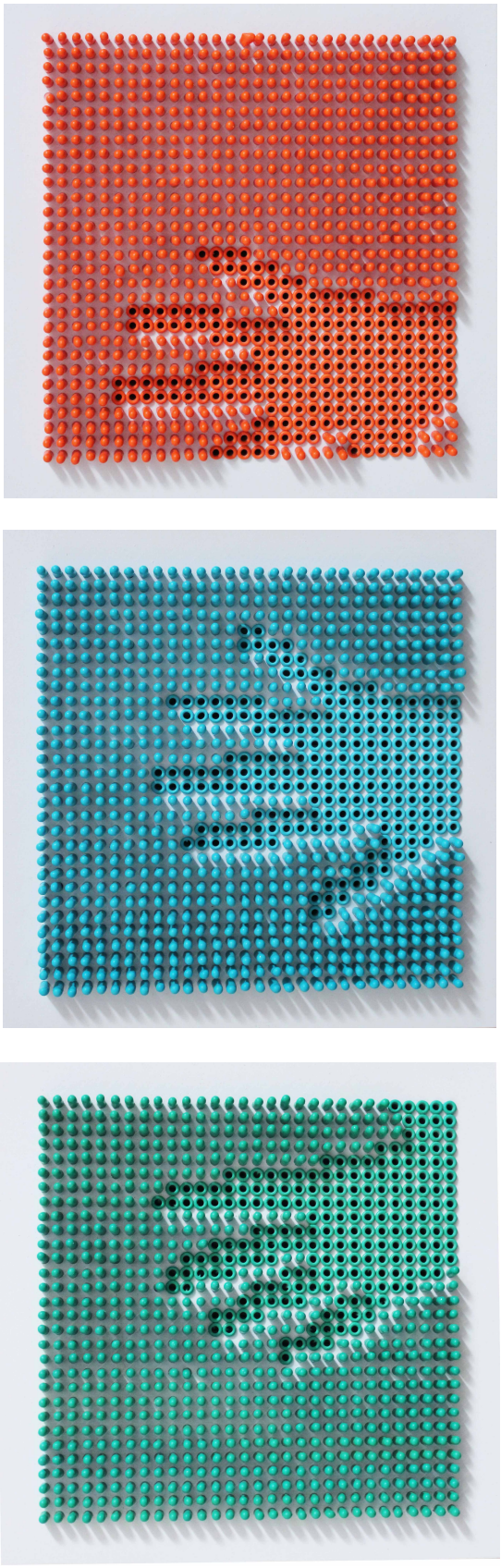

Figure 13: *Touch*, Lianne Wappett, 2015

Figure 14: *Twist*, Lianne Wappett, 2015

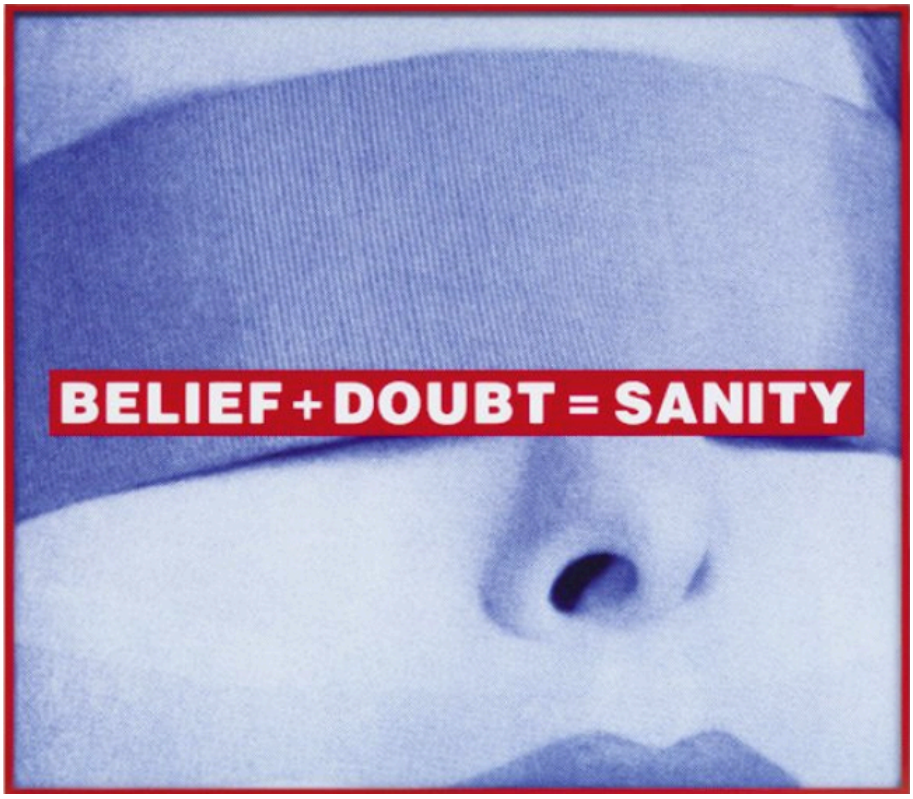

Figure 15: *Belief + Doubt*, Barbara Kruger, 2015

Figure 16: *Belief + Doubt*, Barbara Kruger, 2015

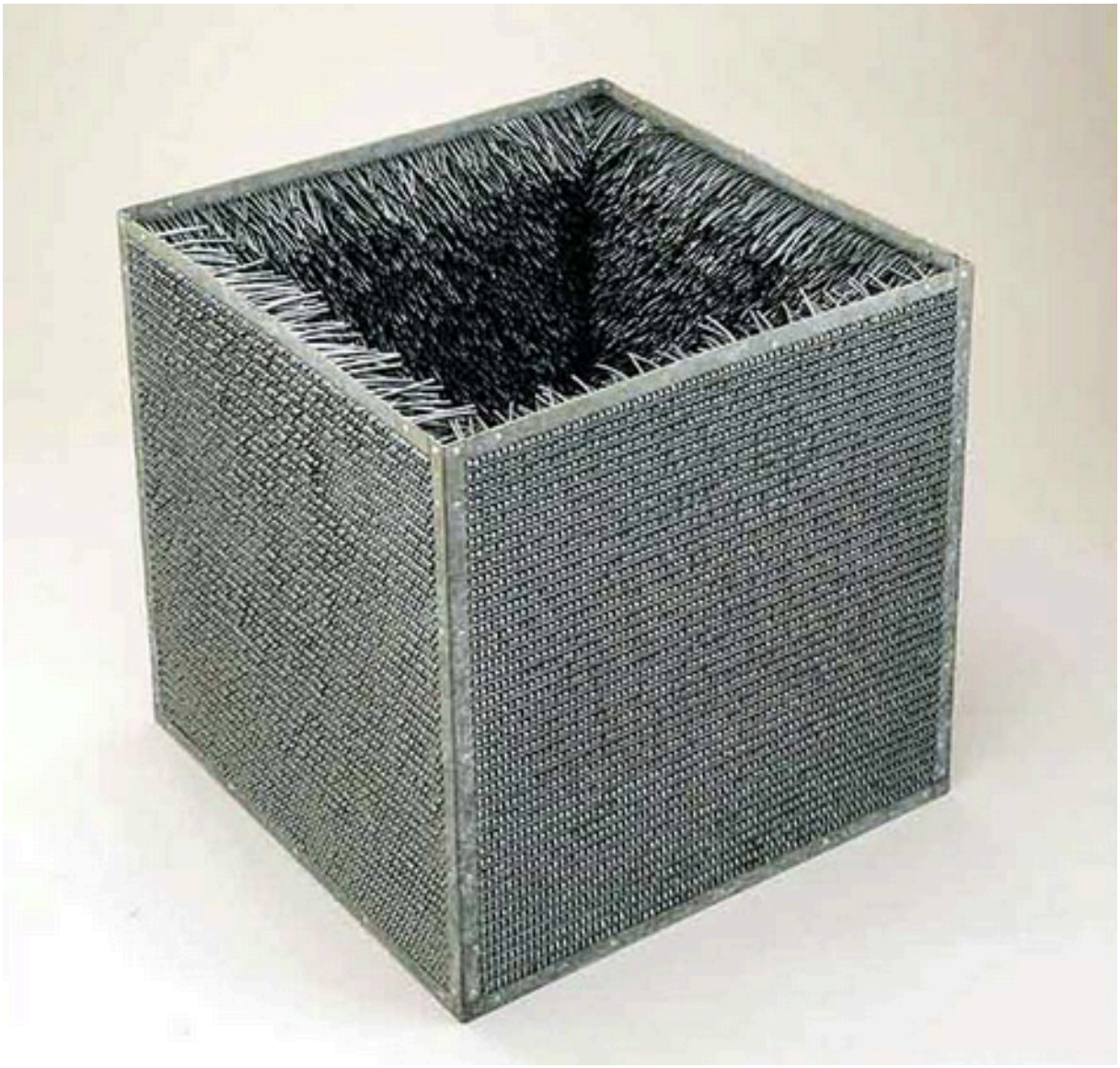

Figure 17: *Accession*, Eva Hesse, 1967–1986

Materials

I have discussed the senses as a driving force that inspire my work, and I have shown how rhythm, balance and tension are foundations to my practice. This section will focus on the materials I use in my art making. Due to my background in graphic design, my typical workflow began with some rough sketches. I then translated those ideas into a software program where I refined and scaled according to concept and project specs. Once the project was designed on the computer either a printer or programmer would take my design and publish it.

As I started my graduate studies, I began to refine my artistic sensibilities. I wanted to control more of the process and began to explore how other mediums could be used in my work to enrich and at times challenge my concepts. I was drawn to manufactured materials like plexiglass, laminates, gum and balloons. I found the result is a highly refined manufactured feel that brings interest and vitality to my work while allowing the viewer to be comfortable with objects that might initially look mass produced. Viewers are at once familiar with these materials but see them in new, unexpected ways that show how beauty can emerge from the ordinary.

"Finished products are the newest raw materials in today's art, craft, and design realms. Because these products are produced in such profound abundance, they can be acquired in vast quantities with the relative ease of getting one's groceries" (Holt and Skov 21). The cornucopia of consumer goods can be easily accessed, but not all materials match the underlying concept. Time and effort is needed to manipulate these materials into a manufactured object, that is an "object that has been made not once but twice" (Holt and Skov 21). The use of manufactured materials can bring challenges of coldness and sterility. These are attributes associated with

environments interested in cleanliness over comfort like hospitals. Roland Barthes lamented the introduction of manufactured materials in toy making when he stated, "Henceforth toys will be chemical, in substance and in color; their very material introduces us to a coenesthesia of use, not of pleasure" (Barthes 61). My material choice must be a careful balance between the highly manufactured material and my intent to create desire to play or touch the object.

In my practice, I first explored the highly manufactured material of plexiglass. I began to build and create objects with it based on my design renderings. Many of these initial pieces felt too fabricated and sterile and did not achieve the objective of a sensory experience as I had intended. Then on a trip to Seattle, my children and I stopped at Pike Place. In an offshoot alley lies a wall filled with bubble gum. My children and I visited the wall and added our own gum creations. It was both exciting and disgusting as we pressed and formed our gum pieces into the brick crevices.

Upon returning to Moscow, I opened my sketch book and saw my notes regarding the experience and determined to create a mini gum wall outside of my studio. After installing the piece and directing viewers to "chew + add", I listened to the chatter outside my door as fellow artists played with their gum and created their own gum creations. After more thought, I began to experiment with chewed gum smashed and then sealed between two pieces of plexiglass. I did this as a way to distance the viewer from the actual saliva found in the gum. The result was a stained glass looking panel that combined multiple pieces of colorful gum and saliva (fig. 18). When I showed the piece during a studio tour, viewers wondered what the material was and saw resemblances of flowers. When I told them it was gum their reaction changed from one of interest to one of intrigue, and at times, disgust. The material was loaded with reactions of interest, aversion and curiosity. Like the latex balloons, this material was

loaded with both positive and negative emotions. I determined I needed to explore this material in environments where I could involve multiple people and explore their range of emotions.

I contacted several organizations and found five classrooms willing to allow me access during class to conduct my art experience. One of the groups I visited was a 5th grade classroom at the Moscow Charter School. I asked each of the children to chew on a piece of gum and think about their best friend. Children could select their own flavor of gum, but I had limited the selection to color varieties I felt complemented each other. This gave me more control over the final piece and ensured the colors would be visually pleasing. I then invited each of the children to place the piece of chewed gum on a large piece of plexiglass. Later in my studio, I sandwiched the gum between another piece of plexiglass and applied a great amount of pressure to flatten the gum. After cementing the edges together, I returned to the classroom to show the children the finished piece (fig. 19). Many of the students were amazed at the transformation. The lumps of gum they placed on the plexiglass had turned into translucent colors that cast amusing shadows when held to a window. The children commented on how much they loved the artwork. The act of chewing with a good thought helped the children associate positive emotions with the piece and dismissed feelings of potential disgust. I invited other groups to create gum panels and found that young adults and adults alike had similar reactions (fig. 20). In the older groups some chose not to participate, but most willingly agreed and marveled at the transformation of the gum. The nature of chewed gum changed from something identified as an annoyance found under school desks or stuck to the bottom of one's shoe to a representation of a shared experience that was both beautiful and repellent.

Donald Judd was an artist who used manufactured materials and simple geometric forms to create what is known as Minimalist art. Judd's materials included aluminum, galvanized iron, stainless steel, plexiglass, and plywood. He selected these materials because he felt they lacked historical baggage and they were affordable. In his work, the materials also offered a smooth, spotless finish (fig. 21). This removed any mark of the artist which supported Judd's process of artmaking. Because of the complexity of the materials Judd selected and because he no longer felt it necessary for his hand to be in the making, he began to hire specialized technicians who created pieces based off his sketches. Clement Greenberg, an art critic who did not like Minimalism, countered that art produced in a factory by others was "practically art, but not-quite-art; indeed, an art nearer to the condition of non-art" (Meyer 213). Greenberg objected to the industrial elegance and called it "designed" rather than "art" (Meyer 216). Today, Greenberg's objections are no longer valid. The use of modern materials by Judd opened a floodgate of contemporary artists who like myself continually challenge the definition of art and design by using modern materials as part of the art making.

When creating my pieces, I selectively choose materials that have vibrant colors, but are commonplace in our culture. The latex balloon is familiar to the point of banality, the balloon is an object we all know from parties or festive occasions. Plexiglass is used for display cases, desk organizers, and even windows that require flexibility and durability. Laminates are found on countertops and surfaces that require strength at low cost. My intent in material selection is to bring something new to the familiar. I appropriate balloons and plexiglass as a raw material for my exploration into issues that create tension while seeking a multisensory experience. In each of my pieces, I attempt to test the expressive limits of the material for art

making, all the while striking a careful balance between exploiting its formal attributes and recognizing its place in our culture.

Figure 18: *Gum Study*, Lianne Wappett, 2013

Figure 19: *Best Friend*, Lianne Wappett, 2013

Figure 20: *Monster*, Lianne Wappett, 2013

Figure 21: *Untitled*, Donald Judd, 1989

Play

Because of the vibrant, rich colors I use in my pieces, the association viewers have between my art and toys is natural and desired. The equity of play can be leveraged to further my exploration between viewer and art, between subject and object, and between imagination and the particulars of one's affective atmosphere. Play offers viewers a "heightened engagement…because of this bracketing within the normal and the everyday of an alternate time and space of game/play in which they can and do act and identify differently and more intensely" (Getsy XII). When an object looks playful, we often are attracted to it as a way to divert our attention from the everyday. When we "just play" what we are really saying is that those activities do not resemble what one would or should normally do (Getsy XII). If an art object looks playful in the gallery, then our natural inclination is to want to play with it, but we restrain ourselves as it is inappropriate to "play" with works of art.

Modern discovery centers are places where play is allowed and encouraged. Typically the venues' objective is a "hands-on, minds-on" learning environment. In Portland, Oregon the World Forestry Discovery Center's objective is to both "educate and entertain about the importance of forests and trees in our lives, as well as environmental sustainability" (World Forestry). In these places, children run freely, playing wherever they choose. In an art gallery, children are rarely seen and are told from the beginning not to touch or play with art. To create a multi-sensory art experience, artists like myself look to these discovery centers for inspiration to encourage play, but repackaged in an art gallery experience where the rules are different. In my work, I attempt to present pieces that have the possibility of play to create an internal conflict between restraint and action.

In my piece, *Message in a Box* (fig. 22), I present twenty-five 4" × 4" boxes. The boxes are suggestive of Joseph Albers' *Homage to the Square* paintings where I use highly intense colors within colors while using color balloons. Albers notes in his landmark book, *Interaction of Color*, that "A color has many faces, and 1 color can be made to appear as 2 different colors" (76). In my piece, the colors bring energy that attract the viewer. In each box the balloons form a letter. The boxes appear stationary and are arranged in five rows of five boxes spaced closely together. When read across, diagonally and backwards, the message reads, "LEVEL." This word is a palindrome and also supports the overall concept of the piece. Each box is attached to a Lazy Susan that can easily spin. The play part of the piece happens when the viewer discovers that they move. When I install the piece, I align each piece perfectly with each other except for one box, which I tilt and is not level. Because this box is out of level, it beckons to the viewer to straighten it out. If the viewer chooses to act, they will realize that the box actually spins. The viewer is then faced with the question of whether or not to spin or play with more boxes, thus challenging the initial impulse to level the piece out.

Play is a safe venue for viewers to approach the in-between-ness they may feel between an art object and the desire to act. Affect theorist, Ben Anderson explains, a "work of art expresses a certain bundle of spatial-temporal relations – an 'expressed world'" (79). The ambiguous atmosphere of play can arouse feelings that otherwise cannot be expressed with words, but require actions that result in an experience. The affective qualities of an art object can create unfinished atmospheres "because of their constitutive openness to being taken up in experience" (Anderson 79). Anderson suggests that these worlds are "always being taken up and reworked in lived experience – becoming part of feelings and emotions" (79). Play aides in the unmooring of feelings that reside within my art and within viewers. In my work, I

attempt to use intense colors to create the feeling of surprise and happiness that attract viewers and provide a sense of vibrancy subdued tones do not emit. The surfaces of my work encourage the feeling of excitement as viewers intuitively understand that they are durable and familiar and can be played with. The feeling of calmness and harmony is also present in my work as I use principles of designs previously mentioned. This playful affective atmosphere supports my goals of creating happy, "bright spots" that get closer to the multisensory experience I seek to achieve in my work.

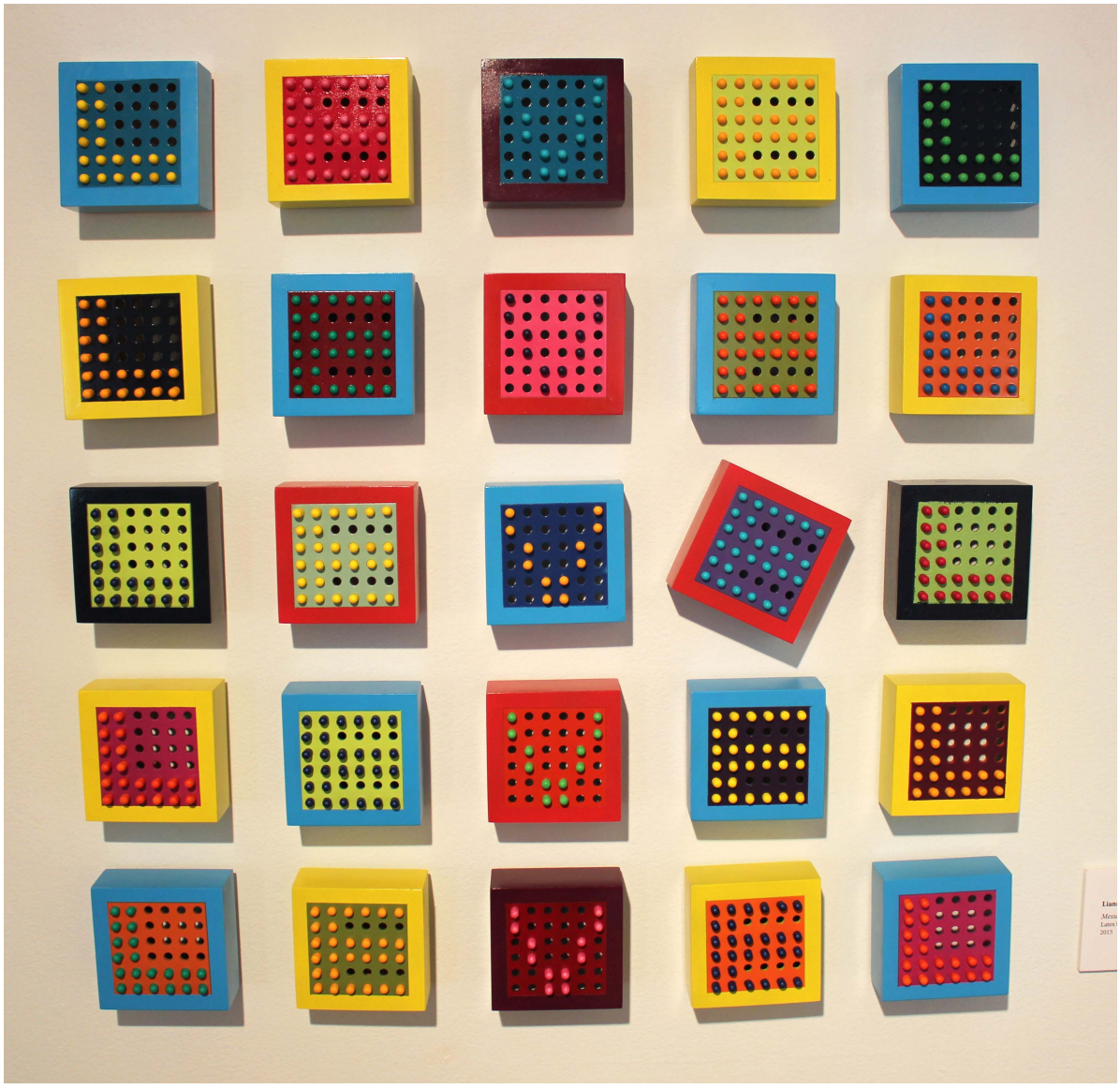

Figure 22: *Message in a Box*, Lianne Wappett, 2015

Community

Community art enlarges the scope of art making and can deliver a lasting experience for a large number of viewers. I first began exploring this avenue of art making with my gum project previously explained. The interactions from this first project were fulfilling and I wondered how my art might evolve to include more people. When creating art that includes others, the art is "the expression of a larger group, it is less individual, less personal" (Faulkner 78). Often the goal is to remove the participant from their daily routine and offer a bright spot in their day. Today, public art is no longer confined to static memorials as more and more artists like myself are encouraging viewer participation. In Fall of 2014, I designed an art piece that encouraged viewer participation. My intent was to design a piece that would be highly directed and simple so that anyone could participate and become part of the "making." I submitted an art grant application to the University of Idaho and was awarded funds to purchase materials in order to create the piece through 2014 and into 2015.

Hello (fig. 23), was completed in March 2015 with the help of over 300 University of Idaho students, alumni, and faculty, as well as community members from Moscow, Idaho. *Hello* is an 8' x 4' sandblasted, perforated steel piece that is threaded with over 30,000 un-inflated yellow balloons. Each balloon was hand threaded during "balloon bees" that I set-up around campus and in the community. This is reminiscent of quilting bees where women gathered to talk and express their artistic capabilities. For two weeks, I set up a panel in the University of Idaho Commons where students often take courses. Throughout the four hours I spent each day threading, many students would come and ask me what I was doing and if they could help. I had a sign that said, "Hello" near the piece which also acted as an invitation to participate. Throughout the threading, I interacted with so many different people

who were willing to spend a few minutes and, at times, a few hours, threading. During this time I learned about Greek life, student life, far away countries, hard classes, assignments and even a painful break-up. As each balloon was threaded, I felt their stories were being captured. One student sat and began threading. After a few minutes of silence, he told me he just needed to relax his mind and this was the perfect way to do it. He came back the next day and threaded for over an hour. The panels were brought to sorority houses, a public indoor market, and even a Design Conference. While the panels got heavier and heavier with balloons, the addition of more stories and interactions made the work feel light and fulfilling. The title, *Hello*, was selected to mirror the University of Idaho's "Hello Walk" taken every Fall. The President and his wife traditionally lead a parade of faculty and students through campus as a way to begin the semester on a friendly, congenial note. This goodwill is also represented in my art piece as faculty, students, and community members all threaded together, sharing and listening. *Hello* will be unveiled during the MFA Thesis show at the Prichard Gallery and I've invited all those who've helped create to come and experience.

I hope this final piece will be a bright spot for many viewers in the MFA show at the Prichard Gallery. The two ends of the piece curve a foot away from the wall in an arc designed to resemble an embrace. I designed the piece to allow viewers to see the front and back. On the front, latex balloons billow over each other in a fiber-like way. The viewer can rumple the balloons as they would a favorite pet or simply surround themselves in the immense quantity of balloons that fill their peripheral view when up close to the piece. The viewer can also move around to the side to peer inside the piece and see the very organized rows of holes exposing the balloon end (fig. 24). The inside is covered in clear plexiglass that acts as a window for the viewer to see inside. The two sides deliver very different visual dividends: on the one side a

very organic, free flowing structure and on the other a highly meticulous, organized foundation. In my initial concept, I did not arc the sides of the piece. This would not have allowed the viewer to "see inside." However, as I've discussed in previous sections, repetition and design are part of who I am as an artist and in many ways this curve exposes both parts of myself. I pay attention to detail and order, but embrace creativity and change. Although a community art project shares ownership of a piece with all the contributors, the beginning and end lie with the artist and her concept to create a lasting experience with all who interact with the piece.

Ueberall is a renowned, award winning experiential design company founded by Nik Haefermaas and Jeano Erforth. Their work can be found in public venues, institutional spaces, and corporate environments. They employ state-of-the-art media, graphics, and architecture to create installations that are creative and cause surprise, empathy, and beauty within viewers in order to create narratives that bring the physical with the virtual into location-based experiences (Ueberall). One example of their work is *AirFIELD* (fig. 25), a dynamic sculpture created to synch with real-time flight data from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. In the sculpture thousands of custom-made discs change from "opaque to transparent states with an electric charge" (Ueberall). This dance of light creates soaring, elegant patterns in direct dialogue with the airplanes in the air (fig. 26). *AirFIELD* converges art and design together to create a piece that is real-time and reflects the environment and space it occupies. Ueberall's work pushes art and design together by using modern materials, technology, and concepts that invite and enrich the viewer experience into something multisensory and lasting.

Public art in the 21st century continues to push the lines between art and design as artists seek greater interactions with viewers. Andrew Shoben, a founder of Greyworld who creates installations in public spaces, explains that typical public art was usually installed at "a physical distance that separates it from the public…you can't touch it, sit on it, or interact with it" (Brill). This is changing as art encompasses group participation in the creation of a singular piece like *Hello* or art that only becomes complete as viewers or systems participate within its structure as in the case of *AirFIELD*. The result of combining art and design is a more people-centered art that delivers lasting multisensory experiences and the creation of new places or destinations in communities.

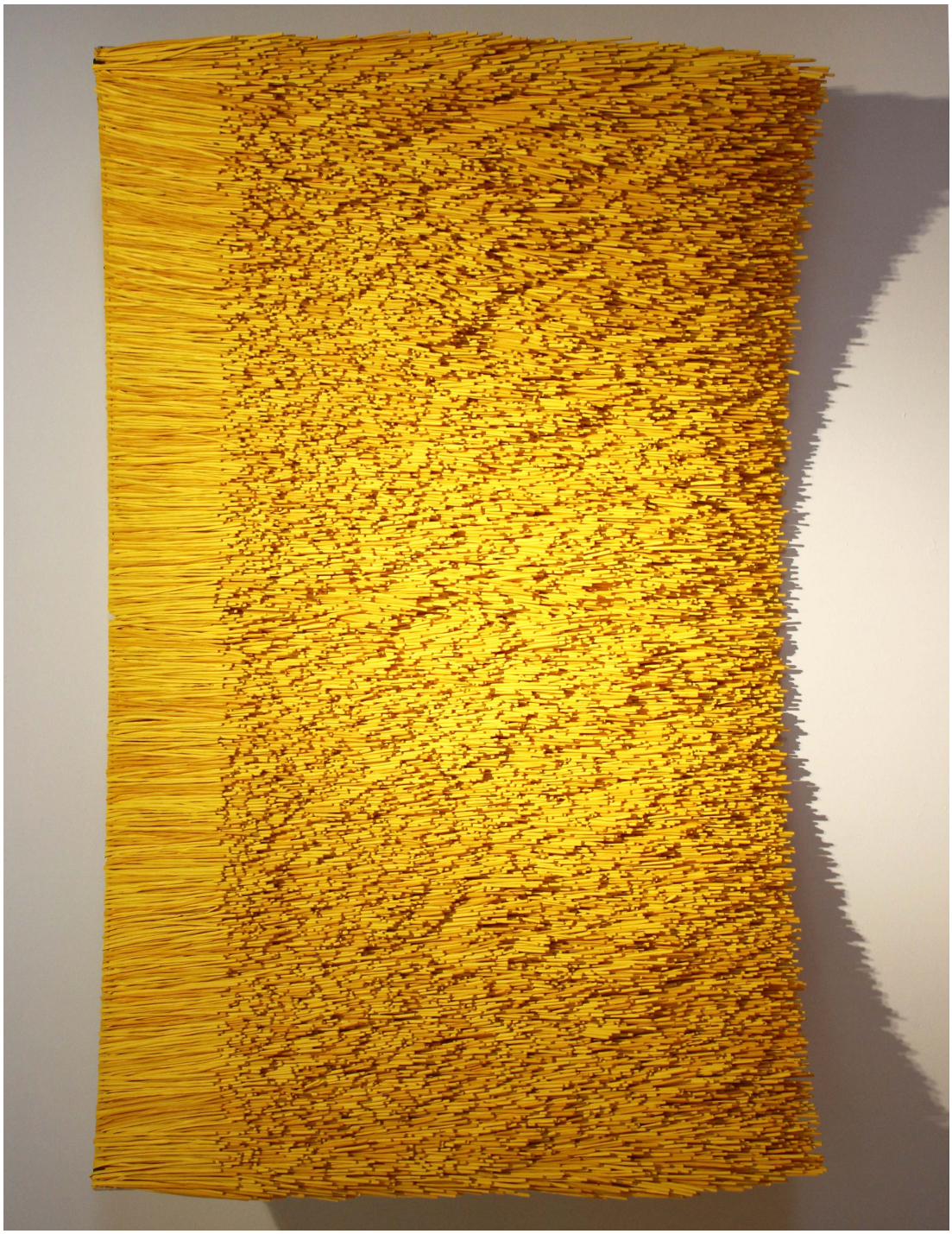

Figure 23: *Hello*, Lianne Wappett, 2015

Figure 24: *Hello (*side detail*)*, Lianne Wappett, 2015

Figure 25: *AirFIELD*, ueberall, 2013

Figure 26: *AirFIELD*, ueberall, 2013

Conclusion

Yeats and other modern poets created poetry that could be universal or archetypal. They used imagery and fragmentation to magnify a "bright spot" in an attempt to create a jarring moment of self-awareness. In my work, I seek that same theme of "making it new" by creating themes that present dichotomies, a push and pull. For me, art is both public and personal. It exposes the self, but it also creates and recreates experiences with others. I use manufactured materials and computer design to remove the mark of my hand, but carefully craft each piece with those same hands. The rhythm of my personal life manifests itself in the repetitive designs my work reveals, but patterns also creates harmony and balance for the viewer. I am drawn to play and use inhibition to challenge one's instincts. Tension is also critical as I create affectively charged atmospheres between object and viewer. These three years of concentrated art-making have resulted in a greater understanding of the relationship between my artwork and the viewer, all in an effort to deliver my own "bright spots."

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