

Arts Award 2014
Outcome Report Part 1
Julia Pedrick
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With this award, I intended to create a sculpture that encompasses both my interest in studio art and psychology. To do this, I researched psychological theories that I found interesting in class and thought of ways to represent them physically through art. I am very interested in Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, and the 'archetypes' associated with it. His idea is that all of humanity has certain "memories" that are universal and uniting within our species, most notably are his archetypes (characters) that represent these global concepts. Out of the seven archetypes that Jung described, I was most fascinated by the mother figure and what that represents to me and to a general viewer.

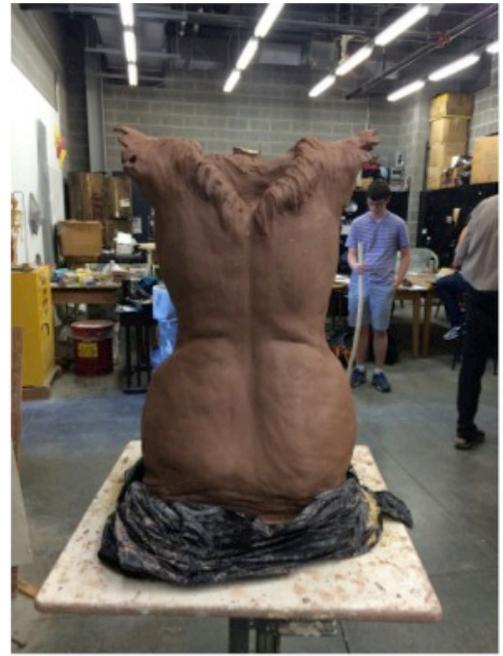
With this in mind, I wanted to create a larger than life sculpture of an older female torso. The torso would be soft and heavy and made of skin-like silicone. There would be no head, as my goal was to create a general maternal figure, which the viewer would project onto. And the arms would be a soft fabric, akin to childhood blankets. The sculpture would have an internal armature that allows it to "hug" the viewer. The viewer would apply pressure (presumably with their body like in a hug) to the torso of the mother, and the arms would close around the viewer.

In order to create such a complex sculpture, I looked to my current sculpture professor, Bill Bennett, to be my mentor. Professor Bennett is in the studio art department and is the sculpture professor, so he was the perfect resource. I also had help from Eric Schmidt, the studio and gallery technician at Ruffin, who aided me in materials and

developing the armature. Both mentors have helped me in developing and researching techniques for making a large sculpture.

I started my sculpture by finding an adequate internal armature upon which to build my model. After altering the wooden armature, I collected and cleaned clay, and began sculpting. I believe that this stage is the longest and most crucial, since it is the model for the final sculpture. Most of my creative energy is spent in sculpting the clay and developing

the three dimensional manifestation of my drawings. Much of this stage was spent on my own, with advice and



critiques from Professor Bennett. Earlier in the spring I participated in a 3rd year art show and critique, which proved incredibly insightful. Professors and my fellow classmates pushed me to reevaluate my sculpture and look at it from more of a visual perspective rather than its psychological background.

Once I determined that the clay was finished (which was difficult to do), I began the more labor intensive and technical process of transforming my sculpture. The first

step was to create a plaster mold from my clay model. This requires preparation, and different layers of plaster.



Once the plaster set, I attempted to remove the plaster mold. This is the point where my sculpture became more improvisation and innovation with the materials. The technique I was using was something we have never done in the studio before, and it was definitely a trial run. I decided to use bandages and plaster to create a lightweight mold since my clay model was so large, but once I removed the clay, the mold itself had become cracked and very fragile.



I cleaned and repaired the mold to the best of my ability. There was no way I could use it in the next steps before it was stable and smooth. The repair was intensive and added a lot of extra weight to both halves of the molds.



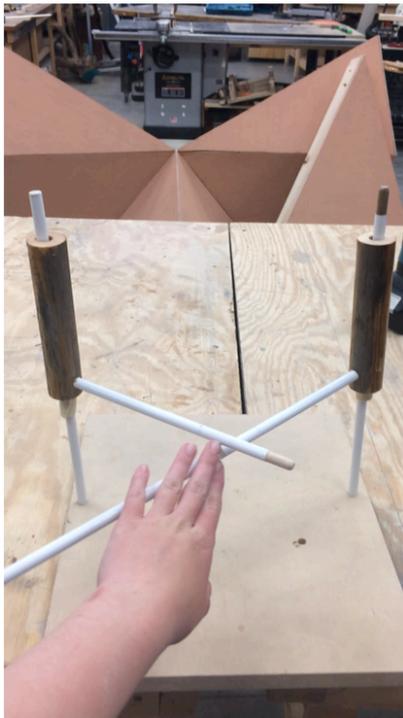
While I had been creating my clay model, I spent time researching materials and techniques for making plastic and silicone molds. I talked with Eric Schmidt about all of my possibilities, spoke with a graduate student in the drama department who works on prosthetics, and contacted a representative for PolyTek, a plastic and silicone casting materials company. I researched textures, colors, viscosities, and procedures for many materials, and finally settled on a silicone. I ordered the materials, and began experimenting with them as soon as I got them. I created a plaster mold and many small silicone models so that I could better understand the set time for the material, the color, and the viscosity.



While I played around with the material, I continued to brainstorm the internal mechanics of the sculpture. Eric Schmidt was very helpful in this regard because he taught and worked on the Stan Winston “Moving Creatures” class from last fall and spring. I created a paper mache out of my plaster mold so that I could experiment with internal armature without worry of damage.



I also began working on the internal mechanics using wood models before I begin manipulating the aluminum rods.



Very recently I worked with Professor Bennett’s summer class to do the initial internal model of my plaster mold. To do this, I needed the help of other students due to the weight of the plaster mold and the technique I was going to use. After talking with the PolyTek representative, I worked out a strategy to experiment with, called a slush mold. This was achieved not by filling the mold solid with silicone, but

by putting only a little into the mold and rotating it so that the silicone covered the inside, but only a few layers thick. This attempt was my first, and I plan to do many more to achieve about a half-inch thickness.

First, I made a large batch of the silicone, and added the appropriate silicone dyes. The amounts of both parts A and B are very exact and measured by weight, so I used a sensitive scale and only added the dye by drops. In preparation for the casting,



I sprayed the plaster mold with Pol-Ease, a release agent. Just to be careful, I also lined



the inside of the mold with vasaline, since I found that to be a successful release agent with my trial runs. I propped up the plaster mold so that when I poured in the silicone, it would coat the shoulders and upper back of the sculpture first. I poured the silicone mix into the mold, and

began rotating. With the help of the introductory sculpture students, I put foam pads on a table so that I could roll the mold back and forth without having to hold the mold's entire weight.

The silicone took much longer to set than I expected, and with help from a fellow classmate (Sandy), Eric, and Joe Schepps (Professor Bennett's assistant), it took over an



hour for it to set enough to stop rotating it. As the silicone became thicker and more solid though, it ended up backfiring and pulling off bits of silicone as it rotated around the sculpture, leaving certain areas empty or very thin. After finally setting it down, Professor Bennett

and I discussed problems with this method and ways to improve the casting process.

My plan is to not remove the thin first mold I created, but to do a second and third one on top of it (with a thickening agent to hopefully speed up the process). If that doesn't work, I am going to build a simple model that fits into my plaster mold (and leaves about an inch of space between the new mold and the old mold), where I can just pour the silicone in



and it sets within that space. The difficulty with slush molds, especially at this size, is fighting gravity every time the mold is rotated. I plan to continue adding layers to the casting, and potentially look at other techniques. I will also continue working on the internal armature.

I am incredibly grateful to the help and support I have received thus far from the sculpture community, studio art department, and College Arts Scholars. This award is an

amazing opportunity for me to experiment with and learn about professional grade materials. It is an incredibly enjoyable process that has pushed me to be innovative in my techniques and creative processes.