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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

A Between

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

Zaruhy Zara Kuredjian

Committee in Charge:

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2020

The Thesis of Zaruhi Zara Kuredjian is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

DEDICATION

For my best friends and the people who believe in me.

You are the wind, water, and earth.

You are the glint from morning dew.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A Between

by

Zaruhi Zara Kuredjian

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Anya Gallaccio, Chair

This text corresponds to a body of work that was developed at the University of California, San Diego with the intent to have a selection of objects exhibited together in the Main Gallery of the Visual Arts department. The exhibition was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This text is thus independent of the unrealized exhibition and solely focuses on the work as a series of object-types that were conceived of at the University of California, San Diego. The body of work is divided into four series of object-types; *Windows*, *Blocks*, *Portals*, and *Columns*. The artworks presented utilize sculpture, installation, and photography and engage

with the mold and the camera as base frameworks for how each object-type was produced. This text is divided into three sections: *Objects*, *Frameworks*, and *Influences*. In the *Objects* section, object-types are discussed in terms of their visual presentation, qualities, conditions, and orientations. This section directly focuses on each object-type. In the *Frameworks* section, the text focuses on philosophical and historical content that were conceptual considerations that helped to develop this body of work. Finally, in the *Influences* section, the text focuses on concepts, artworks, and sites that helped to influence the development of *a between*. This text does not justify or validate the work in any capacity, nor does it explain the work or how it may be experienced by an individual.

SECTION ONE: OBJECTS

This section will focus specifically on the object-types in *a between*. This includes four sub-sections that focus on observations of the objects as well as their qualities, conditions, and orientations. Although writing in this section is relatively objective, it cannot serve as a stand-in for the work. This text does not justify or validate the work in any capacity, nor does it explain the work or how it may be experienced by an individual.

Objects

There are four series of object-types within this body of work. The term object-type is utilized to refer to specific groupings of objects based on a repeated set of parameters that are performed for their production as a whole. Object-types include *Columns*, *Blocks*, *Windows*, and *Portals*. All object-types within this body of work contain traces of material flux. The surface of each object remains active in relation to its given architecture and previous frames.

Columns are vertical. They suggest a cylinder, a rod, and a line. The objects lean against the wall. *Columns* reach a maximum height of 5 feet. The diameter of each object is variable. The diameter cannot be more than five inches wide. The diameter also cannot be less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch unless material is absent. There are 10 objects. Each column is composed of a zinc alloy. Their surfaces are pocketed and irregular. The columns suggest an outward spread and vertical flow of material. *Columns* also suggest the use of a mold and limitations through their height as well as any cornered surfaces. Cornered surfaces suggest the possibility of a rectilinear form for the mold. See Figure 1.



Figure 1: An image of *Column 5*.

Blocks are horizontal. They suggest a cube. The objects rest on the ground. Each block is 12 inches long and 12 inches wide. Each block has a variable height of approximately 6-9 inches. There are 11 objects. The blocks are composed of hydrostone, concrete colorant, nylon fiber, sand, silver, felt, and urethane. The objects are black on the top-face and golden-silver on the side-faces. The side-faces of the blocks are mirrored and reflect their surroundings. The ground and space around the objects are as important as the objects themselves. The top-faces suggest a relationship to volcanic stone and reference a relationship to removed earth. The cube suggests a mold and a grid. See Figure 2.



Figure 2: Paired *Block 6* and *Block 7*.

Windows are vertical and rectilinear. They suggest the shape of a small window or a page. *Windows* are hung on the wall. They are 13 inches wide, 19 inches long, and $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch deep. There are 6 objects. The outer frames of each window is composed of the same mixture utilized for the blocks. Images on photographic paper are mounted on their surfaces. Each window has a glossy front-face that contains an image of another space with a window. The space depicted is often dark while the representations of openings are over-exposed with highly saturated white areas. The surface of the image becomes less visible at certain angles as light reflects off the glossy surface. The solid frame of the objects suggests the use of a mold. The image suggests the use of a camera. See Figure 3.



Figure 3: Image of *Window 4*.

Portals are central and rectilinear. They suggest rotated squares. *Portals* are hung on the wall. The objects are 52 inches wide, 52 inches long, and 2 inches deep. There are 7 objects. The objects have wooden frames with photographic paper mounted on the front-face. The edges are black. The surface of each object has an image of a space that contains a ceiling portal. The images of portals are over-exposed with dark peripheral space. The front-face of each object is glossy. The edges of the frame recede inwards behind the front-face. In dark areas of each portal, a soft reflection of its environment can be produced from the glossy surface. See Figure 4.



Figure 4: Image of *Portal 1*.

All of the objects document a specific moment where a state of matter changed. *Columns* are frozen or solidified from a liquid to a solid state. *Blocks* are produced from exothermic chemical changes both in the main body and side-faces of each object. The frames of *Windows* also experience the same type of exothermic chemical change. *Windows* and *Portals* contain a document of light and information. All objects present an afterwardness of material liquidity.

All of the objects are always active materially. They are contingent to light and shadow. *Columns* shimmer as they have irregular surfaces and have been polished. All objects reflect light. *Blocks* and *Portals* reflect as mirrors. *Windows* and *Portals* utilize glossy paper. All objects deal with their own degrees of abstraction: a removal from re-presentation of empirical experience. *Blocks* and *Columns* do not have a recognizable image. *Windows* and *Portals* re-present visual information but with degrees of withholding and alteration. All objects deal with a

type of architecture, whether of the mold, the room, the grid, or buildings. All objects contain a trace of another space.

Qualities

The non-objective qualities of materials utilized are important to each object-type. These qualities inform phenomenological experiences a viewer might have with an object. The qualities are embodied attributes of the materials themselves, thus embodied and inherent attributes of the objects. They are not superficial or symbolic meanings attached to materials utilized in each object-type. The materials embody these qualities and it is a part of each object's existential condition.

Columns are composed of a zinc alloy. Zinc has a state-change between liquid and solid at 787.2 °F (419.5 °C). This temperature is relatively low for the melting-point of a metal or alloy as compared to steel or bronze, for instance. During the production of *Columns*, the zinc alloy is poured into molds and solidifies quickly in long narrow passageways that the material travels through. The molten zinc captures moments of material transformation as well as spreading into the crevices of the mold. Areas that are rounded suggest surface tension of the material as the alloy cooled. There are no repeated surfaces. Although all objects are similar, no two are the same.

Zinc is a shimmering blue-white metal that is visually similar to silver. Zinc is also a ferrous metal that corrodes slowly. This occurs when it is exposed to air and water. Zinc generally corrodes at a range of 0.13 µm/yr in dry atmospheres to 0.013 mm/yr in atmospheres with more humidity. Generally, zinc corrodes at a rate that is approximately 1/30 that of steel. The rate of corrosion is also dependent on its environment. The zinc columns are polished with a

super-lubricant oil. This leaves a darker residual surface that reflects more light and allows the zinc alloy to corrode at a slower rate by establishing a thin layer of oil between the material and its environment.

Blocks are coated with silver and urethane on their side-faces. They suggest chemical residue as the trace of materials that undergo state-changes. The silver is residue of a silvering process involving a chemical reaction between three chemicals suspended in water. These applications are not seamless but, rather, show portions of the chemical reactions and movement of some residual material. The silver and urethane are also added through a liquid to solid process that suspends the surface of the object in a similar way to the hydrostone. The materials settle and take the impression of the surface they are in contact with.

Blocks as well as the frames utilized for *Windows* are made from a combination of powders, fibers, granules, and liquids. The mixture utilized for both object-types does not solidify in the same way as the zinc alloy. Rather, the mixture solidifies through crystallization. The hydrostone mixture is similar to something turning to stone as it solidifies. The material crystallizes at a moment in which the mixture and the material it comes into contact with do not mix or combine. For *Blocks* and *Windows*, this surface is earth and/or the mold.

The side-faces of *Blocks* and the front-faces of *Windows* and *Portals* have glossy surfaces. Glossiness is a dense uniform surface quality of a material. This is in contrast to the rough and porous surface quality of the top-face of *Blocks*, the overall surface of *Columns*, and the frame of *Windows*. All of these qualities vary in degrees of roughness and density.

Conditions

Conditions are an important element to the objects presented in *a between*. A condition for an object may refer to a set of parameters for the creation of a given object-type. These conditions range from the limitations of my body and the process of making each object-type to the utilization of the frame. Some conditions are specific to an object-type while other conditions are important for the entire body of work presented in *a between*.

Process is a condition for the making of these objects. This type of limitation is about the actions that I took in creating each object-type. Process cannot be discounted or ignored as a way in which these objects were produced. These sequential rules were put in place for each object-type and helped to establish their relationships to repetition and difference within *a between*. For example, the materials utilized for the hydrostone mixture in *Blocks* and *Windows* was measured by weight in grams following a particular set of measurements I invented for the mixture prior to creating any of the objects presented. Each object consists of a relatively similar composition because of this repetition. A similar situation applies to the process utilized for *Columns*. However, rather than measuring a mixture by weight, I measured the quantity of sand as well as several increments of time. These increments of time include the amount of time needed to erode the initial internal channel, the time needed for water to evaporate from the mixture, and the time needed for the mold to set. For the images utilized in *Windows* and *Portals* the process was also based on the repetition of a series of similar actions and time. Process is inherent to how each final form was resolved and produced. For all four object-types, the process always involved recognition for a level of material agency. This moment of capture positions matter in a situation in which its appearance suggests fluidity or activeness. With *Columns*, for instance, once the molten zinc is poured the interactions between zinc, sand, clay, and oxygen has little to do with

my body. Rather, the interaction between materials is what is paramount. A similar situation was applied to images taken with the camera. Once I press the shutter release, what happens between light, the interior of the camera body, and the sensor are things that I cannot control. What happens between materials in that space is paramount.

The process of utilizing my body as a limitation was integral to all four object-types as well. What was accessible and relevant to my interests and body's ability to perform, with or without the aid of tools, informed decisions made in the process of developing this work. With regards to *Columns*, my body's ability to work with the mold in its entirety was a major factor in how these objects took their form. For instance, the molds are tall enough that, standing on a table, a colleague and myself were able to pour molten zinc into each of the molds. The height of the molds are slightly taller than my own body with a fluctuating weight between 150 and 250 pounds. The weight of the molds was dependent on how much water was saturated into the sand and bentonite mixture utilized in the mold as well as how tightly the mixture itself was packed into the mold. The molds were flipped during the process of creating these objects because of their design. Thus, a limitation of my body was whether or not I would have the control to flip the objects without damaging the open cavity at the center of each mold. In terms of *Columns*, my body was physically limited in what spaces it could occupy, enter, and exit. I could not see what the shape of each space would look like before casting it. This limitation added an element of chance and limited predictability to the space and walls of the mold. The parameters of *Blocks* were similar to those used for *Columns*. The blocks are dense and fragile objects. My body's ability to lift and move each block was limited to what types of control and force I could exert. The blocks were also produced with a process that made predictability a relative and limited estimate as each cast was both similar and different from the next. With regards to *Windows* and

Portals, my body's limitation was whether or not I could access a given location as well as the time of day as the camera was dependent on light, time, and mobility. The scale of my body relative to spaces that were entered were also a limitation in that I was limited in how I could move through space or how close I could get to openings.

Although material agency is a key element in these works, the final presentation of works is curated and edited. Bounds and limits were placed on each object-type, often as a frame dealing with either space or time. The mold and the camera are tools that were utilized to exercise the idea of the frame. To mold, control, and curate. Material that passes these bounds is excluded from the work. Time-frames, on the other hand, were tied to the process and performance of creating these works with the available tools.

Orientations

The orientation of each object-type within a given space is important to how they relate to other objects or to a viewership. These orientations include how object-types are individually or collectively organized. Not all object-types are organized exclusively as either collective or singular objects. Some object-types have degrees of flexibility in their organization and presentation.

Portals are square-shaped objects that are rotated clockwise 47°. The peripheral walls are 2 inches wide and oriented at 45° angles with the planes situated inward behind the front-face of each object. This 47° rotation positions the peripheral edges of the front-face of the object on off-center diagonals in relationship to a viewer's body while the inward angled peripheral planes disrupt a sense of continuity with the wall on which the portal is hung. There is the suggestion of the possibility of an object floating at a distance from the wall. The positioning of the ceiling

portal within each photograph is also placed off-center within the parameters of the front-facing visual field. The objects are hung flush against the wall with the center of each object situated 63 inches above the ground.

Windows are positioned with the top of each object positioned 14 feet above the ground and flush against the wall. The scale of each window is synonymous with the original scale of the windows in the photographs. This creates a doubled distance between the viewer and the object as well as between the object and the image. This also establishes an upward and distanced viewing of the work as both image and object.

Columns are placed on the ground with a vertical orientation. The columns lean against a given wall with the bottom end of each column approximately 8 inches away from the corner where the wall and floor meet. *Columns* can also be organized with some flexibility and can be alone or in groups of two to three columns.

Blocks are arranged in clusters with a minimum number of 3 objects per grouping in a physical space. The objects can be single or paired groupings in a larger cluster. The organization of *Blocks* is variable. The blocks are placed on the ground with the reflective side-faces perpendicular to the ground. When two blocks are paired such that they meet at two corners they reflect their environment as well as each objects reflections. This establishes what seems like a transparency as well as a lack of density within *Blocks*.

SECTION TWO: FRAMEWORKS

This section focuses on concepts and theories that inform works created for *a between*. It includes three sub-sections that focus on observations of the frame, monastic complexes, and control. Although writing in this section is philosophically and historically driven, it cannot serve

as a stand-in for the work. This text does not justify or validate the work in any capacity, nor does it explain the work or how it may be experienced by an individual.

This information was highly influential for work produced in *a between*. Imagining, in part, about material, space, and fictive projection were influential to the utilization of the mold, camera, and frame as types of architecture. They are microcosms of the much more abstract architectural frame that is imagined and performed with. The works suggest potent imaginings of their physical and visceral qualities of materiality. They do not attempt to rationalize or provide answers to existential questions nor do they require language to explain what they might be. They are openings that provide a framework for possibility and moments of material awareness.

Architecture and the Frame

The idea of the frame is heavily emphasized within this body of work and takes on a variety of forms. However, it is only one of several conditions utilized within *a between*. The frame can be thought of as a territorialization of chaos within the cosmos. It has the ability to enclose. To focus. To erase. To curate. It also has the ability to extend. To build outward into another dimension that otherwise may not have been made visible. The frame is an abstract concept. An emphasis of isolation and focus on a particular.

In her book, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Elizabeth Grosz writes about the relationship between the body, the frame, and chaos within the cosmos. She suggests that the frame is, "...the condition of all the arts and is the particular contribution of architecture to the taming of the virtual, the territorialization of the uncontrollable forces of the earth."¹ She suggests that the frame is inherently tied to architecture and that it is an outward

¹ Grosz, Elizabeth. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. Page 11

expression emitted from the body. The frame provides the possibility of expression in qualities of objects and/or things that are capable of creating situations of tension. The frame possesses the ability to transform living bodies by isolating and concentrating some of the excesses of the cosmos. Moments of increased intensity and oscillation.

Grosz suggests that the frame is the first construction in what she refers to as the *plane of composition*. Within her book, she defines it as such:

The plane of composition, which cuts across and thus plunges into, filters and coheres chaos through the coming into being of sensation, is thus both an immersion in chaos but also a mode of disruption and ordering of chaos through the extraction of that which life can glean for itself and its own intensifications from this whirling complexity—sensations, affects, percepts, intensities—blocs of bodily becoming that always co-evolve with blocs of the becoming of matter or events.²

The plane of composition, in this case, is a decentered spatiotemporal organization that is inherent in art.³ Grosz suggests that art is not something that begins with the internal relationship to the body. That it does not come from an internal self or actualization that is then translated into a work of art. Rather, she suggests that art begins with this relationship to architecture and the drawing of planes and divisions that abstract and separate from the body. The frame establishes a division or in-between referent that creates a separation of self from chaos and can be seen as an act of othering and observation.

This drawing of the plane of composition begins with the marking of territory. It begins with the ground. Walls, roofs, and openings extend from this territorialization; creating different planes that establish relationships between two entities. They are divisive and magnetic at once.

²Ibid page 9

³Ibid page 70

As much as planes and frames have the ability to be constructed, they can also be deconstructed, bringing them closer to chaos. Structures of art seem to reverberate within this position between chaos and order.

These statements are of a portion of a position. One of many, albeit a critical one to consider in this relationship between humanity, art, and chaos. Art has a material tie to the unknowns of this chaotic yet somehow organized world. It conditions material becoming between self and other within the excesses of the cosmos. A folding moment of becoming in which material is always moving and nothing is the same. Framing chaos within a chaotic world and a celebration of life.

Monastic Complexes, Observatories, and Blackholes

This idea of the frame as a first construction of architecture is not novel and neither are extensions of space within, around, and beyond the frame. Within this body of work, images utilized within *Portals* and *Windows* focus in a more recognizable manner on this relationship between architecture, material, and the frame. *Portals* and *Windows* contain cropped depictions of ceiling portals and windows, respectively, that have a peripheral dark space and bright white focal point. These framed moments of light and darkness suggest notions that are uncontainable and ungraspable. About the sensuous nature of darkness and illumination. A moment and monument in darkness and its absence.

Photographs utilized in *Portals* and *Windows* are taken from monastic complexes in various regions of Armenia; a small country nestled in the southern region of the Caucasus Mountains. The monastic complexes are organized around the beliefs of local Armenian communities and their tie to the Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the oldest existing branches

of Christianity. Although Armenia was the first state to adopt Christianity by King Tiridates III between 301 CE and 314 CE, the prevalence of Christianity within the region existed well before its adoption as a state religion.

The medieval monasteries that were photographed are all located in the Southern Caucasus in northern, central, and eastern Armenia. Armenia is located in an earthquake prone mountainous region with less than 3% of the country located at an elevation below 650 meters (approx. 2132 feet). The terrain has myriad volcanic sites, a large supply of stone, and relatively few forests with volcanic mountains such as Mount Ara, Mount Aragats, Azhdahak, and Gegham Ridge. Monasteries photographed in Armenia were built with consideration of this environment and the resources available. Some of the first medieval monasteries in this region were built over non-Christian places of worship as part of a state-based privileging of Christianity that included the erasure and curation of alternative narratives. The monasteries are often geometric in form with stone vaulted ceilings, pointed domes, and an emphasis on verticality. Most monasteries in Armenia are built with volcanic stone, the two predominant types being tufa and basalt. All of the sites explored for *a between* are of medieval monasteries built between the 5th and 11th centuries in Armenia.

The idea of the frame, in the context of these images, is complicated by the subjects relationship to state-power, censorship, and resistance. Polish architect and author, Andrzej Piotrowski, poses an interesting set of ideas about the symbolism tied to these sites within his article *Heresy, Hybrid Buildings, and a Geography of Architectural Traditions*. The text focuses on several sites throughout Greece, Cappadocia, eastern Turkey, and Armenia. He focuses on the relationship between state power and historical erasure of alternative narratives and belief systems. Within his article he suggests how these processes led to the dominance of Christianity

that ultimately gained power in the West. "...Constantine [I], the founder of the Byzantine Empire, convoked the first Council in Nicaea in 325 CE to establish a religious canon for his theocratic state, the invited bishops were charged with eliminating all narratives that might clutter a pure notion of Christian dogma."⁴ Alternative belief systems were otherwise relatively common throughout the Southern Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia. These alternate belief systems included Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and Zoroastrianism among others. Both the privileging of Christianity and the coexistence of several other belief systems within this community opens possibilities about perception. That what is experienced might contain more nuanced content and meaning than a strictly Christian context and imagining.

Piotrowski suggests that some of the elements from these belief systems are inherently imbued within the design of many of the monastic complexes. He suggests, for instance, that Geghard Monastery, one of the oldest existing complexes, contains elements that establish a reverberation between the body and the elemental qualities of the material world. "The oldest cave church in Geghard, Avazan, was the site of ancient...rituals centered on the natural spring that still exists in the cave."⁵ Portions and whole chambers of the complex are carved inside of the surrounding mountain-side. The site also establishes a situation in which an individual is made aware of the elements surrounding one's body. Imagine, for a moment, being surrounded by still earth in a silent room. The walls are wet and sweating and a natural spring is flowing through the space. Thick, cool air and a singular beam of warm light enter the space through a small portal in the ceiling. This is an elemental combination that touches on ones relationship to

⁴ PIOTROWSKI, ANDRZEJ. "Heresy, Hybrid Buildings, and a Geography of Architectural Traditions." *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 27, no. 1 (2015): 7-19. www.jstor.org/stable/24719997.

⁵ PIOTROWSKI, ANDRZEJ. "Heresy, Hybrid Buildings, and a Geography of Architectural Traditions." *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 27, no. 1 (2015): 7-19. www.jstor.org/stable/24719997.

the material world that, although may be utilized within a Christian context because Christianity was privileged within the region, also possesses the possibility to be pulled out of that context. It entertains the possibility of alternative interpretations.



Figure 5: An image of Carahunge.

An example of this layered thinking about site is prominent in other archeological studies for older constructions as well, where narrative is still a point of speculation. A prominent example of this is the Carahunge Observatory near the town of Sisian in the Syunik Province of Armenia. The site contains megalithic structures that seem to frame a viewer's gaze towards particular stars or visible clusters. Carahunge is a pre-historic site dated to have been constructed approximately 4000-7500 years ago. A series of investigations by radiophysicist Paris Harouni and his team between 1994 and 2001 led them to a [now disputed] conclusion that Carahunge was the world's oldest existing astronomical observatory. Simultaneously, in the year 2000 archeologists from the Institut für Vorderasiatische Archäologie at the University of Munich concluded, in part, that the site itself was also a necropolis with large tombs. There are also

several other studies that contend with these views or proposed alternative functions for the site that did not necessarily have anything to do with astrological content. All of these proposed narratives are part of constructing a fiction about a place and culture that does not exist currently.



Figure 6: A constructed image of a blackhole.

In a more contemporary timeframe, on April 10, 2019 the first imagings of blackholes and their surroundings were pieced together. This was done with data collected from the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) by a team of astronomers and computer scientists located throughout the planet. They utilized a technique called Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI) in which radio dishes and telescopes at different locations on the planet were simultaneously focused on the same site, utilizing the Earth as a large data-gathering interferometer. VLBI works by combining several smaller lenses, in this case telescope lenses and radio dishes, that focus on the same area in a synchronized manner, essentially utilizing the Earth as a virtual camera with multiple apertures that record light as data which is then pieced together and imaged. This was an exciting moment in which speculation and narrative came upon something that humanity did not have an image or representation for its form.

What is particularly useful about Piotrowsky's observations is that they investigate the monasteries through an open lens that allows room for a larger grouping of ideas to be considered in the history of these sites. For instance, curated beams of light created by the ceiling portals and windows in the aforementioned monasteries suggest a spatiotemporal positioning to the cosmos and materiality. They create situations in which light is what is sensed as an active and ungraspable material rather than as a precondition for the appearance of an object, surface, or image. They are condensed and curated moments of material control through architecture that provide a platform for an individual to experience material for its non-objective qualities. It is this aforementioned moment that has influenced the creation of various object-types within *a between*. Part of the reasoning behind this is that light as non-object establishes a sense of a non-tangible other. The windows and beams of light also reposition a viewer by creating points of high contrast between illumination and darkness that allude to a sense of space that is uncommon to everyday experience, whether it be a transcendental, material, astrological, or cosmological positioning. Rather than positioning an answer, it's a continual unravelling of not knowing. Whether it be the EHT, Armenian monasteries, or Carahunje they are framing tools utilized to help imagine ideas about this world in a place that is relatively unknown and in which our bodies are limited in their ability to sense and control their surroundings.

Material, Control, and Intent

The frame is also about control and curation. Control is an exertion of power tied to governance and withholding. It is a transient attempt to apprehend an other. Control is political as it is personal. It is about boundaries, forces, territories, extension, arrest. Just enough to hold yet not enough to destroy or push away. A tension tied to willed suspension and intent. This

body of work is highly focused on performing control over matter and the ever-changing flux of the material world.

Imagine a box of nails produced from a single mold. The mold, in this case, is a frame for how material is organized and territorialized for a moment. Each nail remains a unique and specific material *thing* occupying space near a cluster of other material condensed into similar shapes. The cast is an after-image of in-formed matter. There is an inherent latency to the form suggestive of a process of production. This process of production is an extension of the body as the production of a curated ideal. Each nail in relation to other nails, suggests the concept of the replica. This is always ideological; the generalization of sameness through a performed act of repetition that results in a futile gesture that produces only a relative likeness by comparison. The mold is an invention of an ideal surface and volume of the negative idea of a particular. No matter how complex the mold, it remains a husk of a negative space, a material *thing*, and a frame.

With regards to this situation, however, the relationship between positive and negative space is perceptual and can be infinitely extended in relation to a perceiving body. The mold, cast, and space surrounding them are full of substance. They are all *full* of material and all hold to the idea of *place*. With this consideration, the performance enacted for the final cast, is not just about producing a form. It is about enacting control over forces and materials with the intent of reorganizing specific matter in relation to other specific matter. Each cast object is held in relation to its surroundings from start to finish.

French philosopher Gilbert Simondon's concepts of individuation as well as their explicit tie to the mold, genesis, and becoming in the world were paramount to *a between*. In establishing

his ideas about the “(self)genesis of individuals of different kinds and complexity,”⁶ Simondon wrote about hylomorphism and relationships tied to the formation of a brick. To Simondon, observing the brick was a way of thinking beyond the hylomorphic model, which focuses on form and matter as paramount and dualistic ideas that lend themselves to an understanding of objects. In the hylomorphic model, the brick consists of two components: the material and the form. The material would be clay which would be viewed as formless matter. The form would be the brick’s dimensional shape and volume. “The clay is considered passive relative to the forming effects of the mold, which imposes, from the outside, a form for the brick, one that is in principle infinitely repeatable.”⁷ Simondon’s assertion is that this notion is completely abstracted. It ignores multiple aspects of this movement of energy that leads to the final genesis of the brick, which itself is always changing. These aspects include notions such as the performed labor that preceded the creation of the brick itself as informational matter, such as the sourcing of clay or the creation of a mold as well as the genesis of those informed decisions. For Simondon, there are operations that lead to the capture of form that includes form, material, and energy in which a materialized form acts as a topological border of a system. A moment of becoming that both presents limits and a seizure of form and matter through their relationship to energy.

Many of the aforementioned ideas were important to how *a between* was developed, particularly thinking beyond the hylomorphic model as a starting point. A condition of the objects within *a between* is that they are cast and altered objects. Even with the physical absence

⁶Grosz, E. A. *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018. Page 176

⁷Grosz, E. A. *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018. Page 176

of the mold, the implication of its utilization is always present to the objects themselves.

Ignoring the possibility of the mold or the presence of performed interaction with various tools and actors is an act of willful ignorance. Wondering or guessing at least acknowledges that the object itself did not miraculously appear. As with Simondon's assertion that the hylomorphic model is abstract and divorced from context, similar notions apply to the objects created within this body of work. However, acknowledging both is important because there is a temporal positioning that situates these objects not just for how they came to be but also for a present encounter with a perceiving audience.

Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* was another important text that influenced how this body of work developed over time. Gilles Deleuze was a French philosopher who was heavily influenced by Simondon's concepts of individuation and becoming. Within the aforementioned text, Deleuze writes extensively about notions of intensities, difference, and repetition and that repetition is not the same as identity. In the fifth chapter of the book, titled *Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible*, Deleuze works through a segment focused on depth as a pure implex of the extensity of figure and ground. Deleuze begins simply by referring to someone coming to an understanding of depth through experience since depth is always changing relative to a sensing body. All depth has a possible length and scale. The sensing of depth as something constantly evolving has extensity with regards to a body as well as that body's ability to extend that understanding to other sensing bodies, both singular and multiple. He also suggests that depth relies on temporality as a condition tied to memory and the past. Deleuze quite eloquently elaborated on this concept of depth as such:

The ground [*fond*] as it appears in a homogeneous extensity is notably a projection of something 'deeper' [*profond*]: only the latter may be called *Ungrund* or groundless. The law of figure and ground would never hold other objects unless the object itself entertained a relation to its own depth. The relation between figure and ground is only an extrinsic plane relation which presupposes an internal, voluminous relation between surfaces and the depth which they envelop. This synthesis of depth which endows the object with its shadow, but makes it emerge from that shadow, bears witness to the furthest past and to the coexistence of the past with the present...Depth is like the famous geological line from NE to SW, the line which comes diagonally from the heart of things and distributes volcanoes; it unites a bubbling sensibility and a thought which 'rumbles in its crater'.⁸

Material agency is paramount to these works as they also suggest the movement of material and energy. For instance, *Columns* were created utilizing two closed systems, the mold and the process. These systems act as boundaries and conditions for the creation of each object. The columns themselves are casts of a negative space within the mold produced by water running downward in an open channel. The air that occupied this volume was displaced by water at one point and by molten zinc in another. The shape of the columns cannot be created without the closed systems, cannot be produced in the earth, and cannot be the same. These are objects that capture several moments of energy exchange, imply less obvious exchange, and harbor a potential for energy as well. For these reasons among many others, Gilbert Simondon's ideas about form, material, and energy are integral to how works in *a between* were developed.

Notions about depth are present throughout works in *a between* as well. Deleuze's ideas about depth were particularly important for how *Blocks* were developed. The mirrored surfaces of each blocks side-faces, although not the true interiority of each object, projects a perceived transparency that seems to go through them. A lie of being able to peer through each density. Each surface reflects its environment back into itself in a repetition that is always something slightly different than before. These notions about depth were also important to the development of *Columns*. Within *Columns* there is a qualitative difference between perceiving each object

⁸Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Page 229-230

from a distance and up-close. There is also the possibility of thinking about sensing the mold and the sand as well as the empty channel that the zinc alloy displaced. These are absent elements in what is presented and that might be sensed by a viewer. Sensing each object changes dramatically from seeing its entirety to its surface as well.

SECTION THREE: INFLUENCES

This section focuses mainly on art historical influences that helped inform works exhibited for *a between*. This section includes three subsections that focus on notions tied to space, repetition, material, and the frame. Although writing in this section is driven by works that influenced the creation of the four object-types, it cannot serve as an explanation for the work. This text does not justify or validate the work in any capacity, nor does it explain the work or how it may be experienced by an individual. Although there are several influences mentioned within this section, it only constitutes a selection from a larger pool of influences.

Marcel Duchamp and Lucio Fontana

Volume of the *plane of composition*. This is the infinitely small or large volume that a frame or plane of composition may occupy. It is the space that is a division between two bodies. This is, at once, an objective and fictive space. I will refer to it as *in-between space*. *In-between space* isn't the fictive space that the plane or frame establishes on its other end, as in immersing oneself in a painting. Rather, it is about the frame as an occupying volume and the bodies that are related to it.

Marcel Duchamp is an artist that was influential to thinking about this idea about the *plane of composition*. Duchamp, for instance, illustrated this idea in *Note 124 of The Green Box*.

At the end of *Note 124*, Duchamp establishes a mathematical comparison in a/b . Within the note a refers to the exposition/snapshot while b represents what Duchamp referred to as the possibilities generated by the “reality principle.” These meanings attached to each component of the equation were part of self-referential material tied to his practice. Within this equation, the emphasis isn’t on a possible answer or totality of the equation, as in $a/b=c$. Rather, the dividing sign $/$ for the equation is what allows the two notions to be related to one another. This can be referred to as the barrier that both separates the two principles but allows them to exist through their relationship to one another. Even though the $/$ creates the relationship between a and b within Duchamp’s *Note 124*, the $/$ itself remains metaphoric. It is utilized to make this situation more visible. There doesn’t need to be a physical barrier such as a wall, line, or slash but the $/$ is utilized as a tool for actively looking at this relationship. The $/$ is a plane that is constructed to make this relational problem more plainly visible.

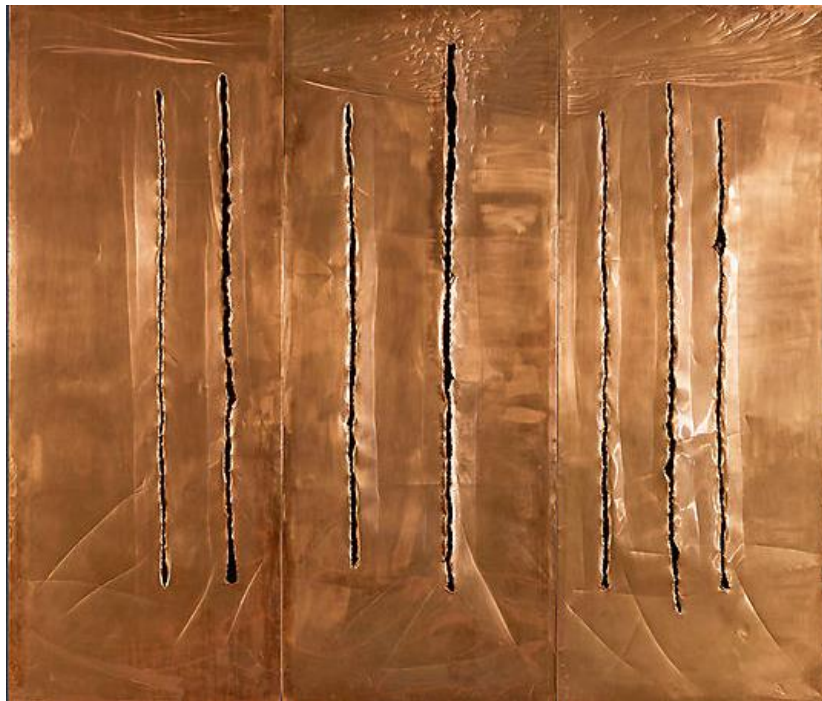


Figure 7: An image of Lucio Fontana’s *Concetto Spaziale, New York 10* (1962).

Lucio Fontana's slash and ideas about *Spatialism* were also highly influential to these ideas about the *plane of composition*. Ideas focused on projecting space beyond a given surface as well as a desire to move beyond recognizable forms were both impactful for how *a between* developed. His utilization of the slashes and holes were particularly influential to this line of thinking. Works such as *Concetto Spaziale, New York 10* (1962), for instance, contains slashes dispersed throughout a polished rectilinear copper plate. In this case the copper plate itself acts in a similar way to the / in Duchamp's equation. The difference is that it physically suggests a volume through the thickness of the plate. The copper plate seems to act as both object and as a material platform to think about space. The object provides a platform for the possibility to project past the object or plane of composition to imagine what might be suggested beyond its perceived surface. It also creates an awareness for the object itself and the space in front of it. There is a perceptual pull back towards the body through light being reflected from the polished surface. Within this work there is an implication that perceived space might be more active and porous by creating a separation that gave a point of entry into imagined space with an unknown extensity. The work suggests an awareness for material and space as non-fixed and fluctuating entities by working with that plane. See Figure 7.

Anish Kapoor and Lynda Benglis

Anish Kapoor is another artist that has influenced *a between* through pieces such as *Void Field* and *Descension*. His work is often ambiguous and suggests the frame through curated material surfaces or openings. Imagined and projected spaces suggested within his work may connote fictive potential beyond a given plane. *Void Field* (1989) is an intriguing example

because it multiplied this sense of void space while also dealing with interiority and volume tied to an object. *Void Field* is an installed field of carved blocks of Cumbrian sandstone. All of the blocks are cube-like blocks with empty central cavities. Each cavity is coated with a velvety black pigment. The idea that there can exist multiple fictive expansions of space in close proximity to one another was influential to how *Blocks* and *Columns* developed. The distinction between outside and inside is precise, making this opening, like the slash, imperative to creating this fiction. The plane that is the object's top-face contains both perceived entry and exit. In terms of the idea of *in-between space*, it exists as the infinitely thin plane on the top-face of each object. The opening or hole in each stone is similar to Fontana's slash, a porous window that suggests to a viewer the possibility to imagine past the plane of composition into a new projected concept of space. Another aspect of this work that is important is its perceptual and cognitive relationship to flatness and depth. From a distance, the openings look like painted black dots but upon closer inspection there is a revelation of an unknown depth. See Figure 8.



Figure 8: An image of Anish Kapoor's *Void Field*.



Figure 9: An image of Anish Kapoor's *Descension*.

Kapoor's *Descension* is another series of works that were influential to how *a between* was developed. The *Descension* series generally consists of a single crater in the ground with dark water that is producing a whirlpool near its center. In terms of thinking about *in-between space*, the relationship to depth and surface seems more complicated and active. The notion of *in-between* space seems more difficult to distinguish as an individual entity. The depth of the entry into new space is unknown. It may encompass the unknown depth of the pool, the end of the seemingly pitless whirlpool, and may begin at where the pit cuts into the ground. However, these distinctions, especially in the whirlpool, are unclear. The *plane of composition* becomes as wondrous as the space beyond it, both with unknown volumes. The de-centered moving hole of the whirlpool was interesting to think about in relation to *Portals*. The off-centering and shifting hole was influential to decisions made about the orientation of those objects. See Figure 9.



Figure 10: Installation view of Lynda Benglis' *The Fall Caught* (2016).

Lynda Benglis is another artist whose works have been influential to how *a between* developed. Poured pieces that suggest a frozen moment of material activity, such as *The Fall Caught* were important in terms of thinking about the various actors and unknowns that lead to the formation of an object. Initially, what seems to be presented is an aluminum object that suggests a frozen gestural moment of movement of material. Further, there is a folding liveness suggested within the aluminum, something that is not necessarily inherent in the pouring of molten metal. This gesture of levity towards the density of material was particularly important for *Columns* and *Blocks*. Notions such as surface texture, the use of an armature, and aspects of the process are kept unknown. Often, it seems that the objects are cast from a previous object that was poured with a different material. Part of the reasoning for this thought comes from wondering about the inherent qualities of molten aluminum and how it might move as it is poured as well as how it spreads and cools. Implications of the absent armature as well as the cast of a previously poured material are fascinating because they suggest an immediacy in material capture as well as a much longer series

of mediations in process. What is presented is not just poured material but, rather, the exchange between mold and armature as interior and exterior frameworks.

Volcanic Craters and Roni Horn

Repetition and difference are another set of concepts that are important to how *a between* was developed. Repetition within this work is often utilized through performance and measurements. They are cyclical re-enactments of an abstract idea. Often these repetitions are suggested in relationships between objects within this body of work through observable similarities in qualities of each object-type such as form and texture. However no two objects are the same. Material agency is given visual expression within the work through its own shaping of each object.

Volcanic sites throughout Southern California were influential for ideas of repetition, difference, and agency. Sites such as the Pisgah Crater in California's Mojave Desert were visited as part of site-based investigations that informed some of the material-based engagements that led to the creation of objects within *a between*. Thinking through volcanic sites present both the trace of the liquidity of material as well as a slower present tense of activity. Thinking about the repeated performance of flowing lava and large fields of cast stone were important imaginings for *Blocks* and *Columns*. No two points in which volcanic stone had hardened were the same but all expressed similarity and difference. All object-types play with the trace and implication of the liquidity of material through notions such as erosion, time, and energy. All object-types possess a type of afterwardness of materials in motion as well, a notion that is inherently present to volcanic sites such as the Pisgah Crater.

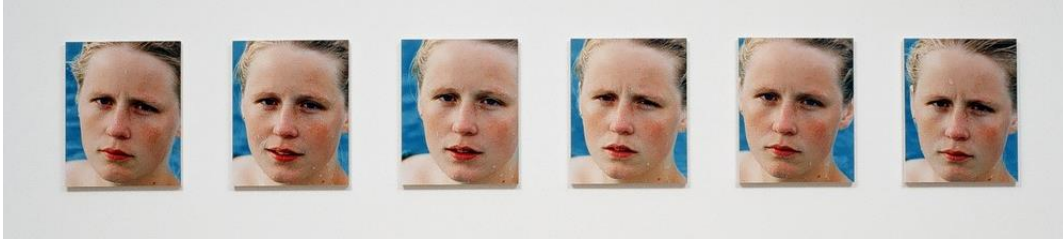


Figure 11: Close-up of one sequence from Roni Horn's *You Are The Weather*.



Figure 12: Installation view of Roni Horn's *You Are The Weather*.

Roni Horn's *You Are the Weather* was another important work that helped shape some of the ideas within *a between*. *You Are The Weather* generally consists of a room installation of a set of sequenced photographs that circumscribe the perimeter of a given exhibition space. The photographs depict the face of a woman looking back at the viewer, as though she was looking back at the camera that was used to take the photographs. Within the images the woman's face is surrounded by water, air, and light. Although there are myriad aspects of this work that were influential to how work in *a between* were developed, the relationship to difference, repetition, and material agency was particularly impactful. Each sequence of five to eight images is set and cannot be rearranged but the sequences themselves as a whole do not have to be organized in the

same way each time. Within each sequence there is a suggestion of time for each performance between the person holding the camera and the person looking at the camera. Each performance has parameters for how each sequence might be produced yet every image is different. The depiction of the face of the woman in the photographs was responsive to its environment through changes in skin tone and hair as well as the humidity of the atmosphere. Water, the woman, and their environment are in continual flux. Wondering about the different states of water as an ever-fluctuating material and the myriad ways it presents itself were important to how thinking developed around all of the object-types in *a between*.

Latency and unknowns within *You Are The Weather* with regards to several timeframes for the production of the work were also important because they suggest withholding and an enigmatic quality to the work. *You Are The Weather* does not openly provide the viewer with answers or with all the actions taken for its production. There seem to be degrees of removal through curation, cropping, editing, physically moving, flexibility, ect. These notions complicate the presentation of material agency by layering and repeating it in serialized performance. They suggest acts of control that layer experience as what is presented as intentionally different yet similar in appearance. See Figures 11 and 12.



Figure 13: Installation view of Roni Horn's *Dead Owl*.

Another piece by Roni Horn that was influential to *a between* was one of Horn's pair-objects titled *Dead Owl*. It consists of a diptych of photographs depicting a stuffed snowy owl. The images are separate but side-by-side. They look identical but the photographs were taken at two different times. There were several suggestions in this piece that influenced the development of *a between*. There is a compounding of time and place that is suggested within *Dead Owl* where the afterwardness of each object includes several frameworks, some of which do not include Roni Horn for their formation. This includes the life of the owl, the actions of the taxidermist, Horn's encounter with the object, the staging and performances of photographing the object, and the handling of two separate photographs. The photographs are two physically different objects that suggest both intertwined and compounded frameworks. These image-object relationships are suggested in other aspects of the work as well. For instance, the exchange within the depiction of an owl from living creatures, to object, to image, to objects is multiplicitous. It's a type of compounding that occurs within the work. See Figure 13.

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