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Downside Up & Parking With A View

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

in

Visual Arts

by

Trevor Amery

Committee in charge:

Professor Amy Adler, Chair

Professor Sheldon Brown, Co-Chair

Professor Robert S. Edelman

Professor Anya Gallaccio

2017

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University of California, San Diego

2017

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Abstract of Thesis .....	vi
Downside Up & Parking With A View .....	1
Bibliography.....	18

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1:</b> Documentation from trip to Alaska, 2016.....	1
<b>Figure 2:</b> Isa Genzken, <i>Galerie</i> (1987), <i>Rosa Zimmer</i> (1987), <i>Bild</i> (1989).....	4
<b>Figure 3:</b> Baidarka Launch, medium-format photograph, 2016.....	6
<b>Figure 4:</b> Harvey Golden holding a traditional bilge-pump, Lincoln Street Kayak and Canoe Museum detail, 2016.....	8
<b>Figure 5:</b> <i>Baidarka Archive</i> , medium-format photograph, 2016.....	9
<b>Figure 6:</b> <i>Capsize (pinnacle)</i> , steel, wood, brass, glue, Trona Pinnacle pumice stone, 2017.....	12
<b>Figure 7:</b> <i>Cactus to Clouds</i> , sculpture, painting, sauna, lookout, social sculpture, 2016.....	14
<b>Figure 8:</b> <i>Culture Wedge</i> , 3D printed doorstep, 2016.....	15
<b>Figure 9:</b> <i>Culture Wedge</i> workshop detail, 2017.....	16

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Downside Up & Parking With A View

by

Trevor Amery

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Professor Amy Adler, Chair  
Professor Sheldon Brown, Co-Chair

My MFA exhibition, *downside-up and parking with a view*, is about cultivating vulnerability and presence through experience and form. The show contains sculptures in myriad materials, many of which I have a personal history with. Whether it's the steel skeleton of a camper shell I used as a shelter when driving to Alaska or a jade plant I grew from a clipping I made on my first visit to California seven years ago, object ontologies intermixed with direct experiences become the locus from which each work grows out from. The sculptures are informed by research into the sublime, broken-tool being, and Claire Bishop's theories on social sculpture.

## Downside Up & Parking With A View



**Figure 1:** Documentation from trip to Alaska, 2016

“How can making bring into appearance what is not the result of making?”

Through projects that have required me to drive from San Diego to Alaska and Miami, or that are multivalent in their utility, I make instruments for personal transformation. Investing my energies in these types of processes, allowing varying experiences to shape forms I make and my material decisions inspires me to create interactive installations, discreet sculptural objects, as well as site-specific performances. “To me alchemy is particularly interesting when understood in terms of process and not product. It’s not really about attaining gold from base metals but rather the mental space that that process allows – that utopia, if you like. Process over product, that’s the key.” This quote from Simon Starling on alchemy is a perfect metaphor for explaining the above Adorno quote and what I hope my artwork does, which is to bring into appearance what is not the result of making.

### ARTWORKS

#### Kluane PN1

*Kluane PN1* is a sculpture comprised of materials, things, and objects that I have



purchased for specific uses, gathered along different road trips, or that have been a part of my life. The main architecture of the form is a camper shell I purchased from a craigslist ad on August 3rd, 2016 in Imperial Beach, California. I bought it with the purpose to convert my pickup truck into a mobile home for a road trip to Alaska, which was a performance and research project centered on the inaugural launch of a baidarka (the typical name given to Aleutian-style, skin-on-frame kayaks and which translates from Russian as “small boat”) I built a year prior. The camper provided shelter for me through many rainstorms and windy evenings over the course of the month and a half trip from San Diego to Homer, Alaska and back as well as an additional round trip to Miami in December.

I titled the work in reference to Kluane Lake in Yukon, Canada (a place that developed personal significance for me on my trip) and Hélio Oiticica’s sculptural works. I wish to explain the title here, as this sculpture unfolds in stages, from exterior to interior, directly referencing Oiticica’s *Penetrables*, *Tropicália* exhibition, and *The Nucleus* installation. Oiticica’s words articulate this well, “[a strategy that] allows the work to be seen in space (an element) and in time (an element). The spectator turns around it, truly penetrates its action field. The static view of the work, from a single point, will not reveal it in its totality; it is a cyclical view.” For me, the element of time is embedded in sculpture in multiple ways, through the materiality of the sculpture and the elements that compose it, as well as how the sculpture is physically navigated by a viewer. For example, the materials comprising *Kluane PN1* introduce different ideas of time, from geological time (lava rocks) to consumer time (second-hand camper shell from the 70’s). By combining these two elements I hope to create a new narrative where two ontological timelines intersect and new possible uses develop.

Creating sculptures with appropriated materials is essentially composing a set of relationships. For me, it is important that those relationships be grounded with a personal history. It is not about using a thing in a sculpture because I am attracted to the form of it. It is about paying close attention to the objects that intersect my life and recognizing the difference between those that just are what they are, and those that need to become part of an artwork. I often collect things with no real understanding as to why. I suppose it is usually the context or circumstances surrounding something that inspires me to pick it up, gather it, or buy it. The camper shell was a temporary home that traveled about 12,000 miles with me. And the lava rocks I collected from different geological locations around California on a different trip. They

are both markers of an experience, of a specific time, and a series of memories. These personal histories and memory-markers inspire how I create, shape, and build new artworks, but the completed artworks themselves do not explicitly narrate an experience.

As I began taking apart the camper shell with the intention of creating a new work, I could not help but enjoy how the steel square-stock understructure divided space similar to a Piet Mondrian painting. Knowing that Mondrian was one of Hélio's biggest influences, I used his paintings as another way to contextualize this sculpture and as a design strategy. All of a sudden I began to consider each pane of the steel an opportunity for framing space and reducing elements to relationships. I used the word design just before, but feel uncomfortable with not explaining my use of that word. *Kluane PN1* was not "designed" and then executed as to follow a plan. It was created through a constant process of drawing, adding materials, looking, questioning, remixing, and adding or removing more materials. It was a process best explained as a dialogue between the sculpture and myself, or a set of negotiations between the two of us. My sculptures are not designed and executed. I cannot function that way, as I feel too removed from the material, and the needs of the artwork. It is important to me to look with sensitive eyes, to listen, and to trust my own gut as well as what the work is demanding.

### Capsize

*Capsize* is an eight-foot by eight-foot wide sculpture resembling the undulating surface of the ocean. The surface of the water is near or about eye-level but does not allow a viewer to see the entire topography from a single vantage point. One can only walk around the exterior of the work and look up to, or across it. It is comprised of stack-laminated wood that has been roughly shaped. The wood is about an inch thick, with the top carved to resemble a windswept sea and the underside a calmer underbelly. This form sits atop an architecture that serves two purposes: to elevate the waterline to eye-level in an effort to elicit in a viewer a feeling of submersion and also to create a power dynamic where one feels overwhelmed by the sculpture. What I mean by this is that the viewer does not stand over the work and cannot see or experience its entirety all at once. The sculpture has a position of power over the viewer by not revealing all of itself, or allowing all of itself to be taken in. I want a viewer to feel as though they stand before the sculpture and not that the sculpture is there to stand before them. The first time I personally had this experience with a work of art was

walking through Isa Genzken's retrospective at the MoMA in December of 2013. As I made my way into the second gallery of the exhibition and encountered *Galerie* (Gallery) 1987, *Rosa Zimmer* (Pink Room) 1987, and *Bild* (Painting) 1989, I was completely stopped in my tracks and made to feel powerless before the sculptures. That feeling has stuck with me ever since and is one I hope *Capsize* emotes.



**Figure 2:** Isa Genzken, *Galerie* (1987), *Rosa Zimmer* (1987), *Bild* (1989)

The form and scale of *Capsize* grapple with ideas of presence and a lack of agency. It is a sculpture born out of a near-death experience that transpired during a performance in

Miami in December 2016. The artwork is not an illustration meant to describe what transpired. I am not transforming the physical incident into the perceptual. *Capsize* is about the visceral experience I had in the water that day, it is about feelings of being overwhelmed, surprised, scared, and powerless. Coming face to face with my own mortality was sublime, in the most Kantian-sense of the word. *Capsize* is an attempt to create a sculpture that embodies that feeling of sublimity.

In order to fully contextualize this project I should go back to my first intentions surrounding the baidarka. I began creating it because I had always wanted to make a boat, and though I was unsure of how it would function in my art practice I decided to trust that impulse and make one. So while I was attending Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in the summer of 2013, I researched the history of kayaks and found free plans online for constructing a traditional Aleutian kayak. At the time I could not afford the expensive, water-resistant wood the plans called for, so I wandered into the forest surrounding the residency and began collecting branches to make the ribs of the boat. I found comfort in the fact that the Unangan of the Aleutian Islands would have made kayaks with whatever driftwood would have come ashore and not the hardwoods the plans I was working with requested. Using fresh-cut branches also allowed me to make the kayak ribs by simply bending them into place while they were green without the need for steam-bending boxes and jigs. The baidarka is constructed from 33 tree branch ribs, two-by-four topdeck beams, two pine gunwales, and a three-part keelson. The whole boat is held together with artificial sinew lashings with zero mechanical fasteners and the skin is made from a polyurethane resin-coated ballistic nylon. As the Unangan's kayaks were designed for hunting seals on the ocean, their baidarkas (as well as mine) have a bifurcated bow to assist in cutting through waves with speed.

Through out the construction I found myself driven more heavily by the theory I was reading than by personal impulses or experiences. Being for the most part seduced by the writings on broken-tool being and object provenance; I felt I had to distance myself from the functional nature of the kayak. I focused on the boat's ontology, my relationship to it as an object of embodied knowledge, and the cultures of do-it-yourself and amateur craftspeople. As Walter De Maria put it, "Meaningless work is potentially the most abstract, concrete individual, foolish, indeterminate, exactly determined, varied, important art-action-experience one can undertake today... by meaningless work I simply mean work which does not make money or

accomplish a conventional purpose.” My first-year thesis exhibition, *What We Don't Know, We Don't Know* used the completed kayak as a point of departure to engage with all of these ideas and make “meaningless work”. I was not using the kayak to go on a voyage, to hunt, or to travel. In the exhibition, the watercraft could have been anything, a vintage toaster, an axe I hung, or an Ikea sofa, but it just so happen to be a kayak. I spent the week in the gallery creating architectural spaces, furniture, aprons, and “how to” videos from these efforts that focused on everything from how to remove stickers from wooden dowels to how to make a table from the wall.



**Figure 3:** Baidarka Launch, medium-format photograph, 2016

Moving forward a year I began to feel the itch of wanting to put the kayak in water. But If I was to do that, I could not just launch it for the first time anywhere. So this past summer I left on an expedition to drive the kayak from San Diego to Alaska to launch it for the first time in the same waters that gave rise to its original creation over 9000 years ago, prior to the

divergence of the Eskimo and Unangan. It only seemed fitting for the maiden voyage to take place in the birthplace of the kayak and the state whose name, Alaska, is a corruption of an Unangan word meaning “great land.” I saw the journey as a performance, or rather a performative pilgrimage about experiencing the land between these two locations and committing to the site of the baidarka’s inception. This commitment was in the form of a risk, a risk I was taking that the kayak would be seaworthy. I never put the kayak in any form of water prior to Alaska. I was trusting that it would work based on the plans I used to build it, my knowledge of woodworking, and the myriad forums I read online.

With my nerves wound tighter than a steel cable, I paddled the baidarka into the open waters off of the Homer Spit on August 20th at exactly 12:58 pm. As I took in the distant mountains cloaked in a film of blue atmosphere, I forgot about all of the theory that I had immersed myself in. As the current buoyed me back in forth a few hundred meters from the shore I yelled out loud in a fit of euphoria and accomplishment. I was amazed at how the kayak cut through the waves like a dagger, water running across the top deck only to peel around me and off the gunwales at the cockpit. I felt accomplished and at the same time connected to that place, to those mountains, those lakes between them, and that ocean. With its bifurcated bow, semi-transparent skin, and 17-foot long narrow profile, the baidarka made sense there. I had not thought of it in these terms before, but it felt as if it was of that land and of that water, water that surprisingly felt similar in temperature to the ocean off the coast of San Diego. How I am describing this performance is not an intellectual or academic account of this experience, but a poetic and visceral one. I am making this distinction between the theoretical and poetic because that is the root of one of my biggest realizations about my more successful artworks and the conception of my thesis exhibition. I realized I needed to embed myself in my projects by focusing on direct personal and physical experiences articulated with incredibly sober intentions and poetic acuity. Artworks that I have made without these conditions seem to fall narratively flat and depend too heavily on craft and design. They become lumps in the studio that I do not know what to do with.

Returning south from Alaska, I stumbled upon Harvey Golden’s Lincoln Street Kayak and Canoe Museum in Portland, Oregon and subsequently learned so much more about these watercrafts than I had known previously. Harvey has been building and using replicas of arctic watercrafts since 1993, and is one of the foremost experts on baidarkas in the world.

His museum is composed of over 50 vessels he has constructed himself and which he uses regularly. The space is divided into watercrafts from Greenland, Canada, and Alaska and each boat is designed to be historically accurate. He has traveled the world to visit remote museums and communities to conduct research, take exact measurements, and develop accurate boat plans so these histories and this knowledge does not disappear. Harvey spent nearly three hours with me walking me through all of the different designs from each region, how they functioned or what they were used for, and how the hunting tools evolved over time. I knew some of this information from the preliminary research I conducted prior to building my boat, but felt even more connected to the baidarka I built after this visit. Harvey's knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject is truly inspiring. Harvey has published two books on the subject and is currently writing his third. They combine taxonomy, anatomy, and ethnology in an effort to preserve the complex and disappearing histories around these water vessels and the cultures they come from. From Lt. Sven Waxel's first written accounts of kayaks off of Bird Island in 1741 to different patterns for sewing the seal skins onto the frames, Harvey Golden has compiled the most comprehensive reader on the subject.



**Figure 4:** Harvey Golden holding a traditional bilge-pump, Lincoln Street Kayak and Canoe Museum detail, 2016

This past December I was invited to participate and perform in the Satellite Art Show with the group Performance Is Alive. For my performance *Baidarka Archive*, I paddled my kayak around the islands of Miami and documented the shorelines using a medium-format camera, my mobile phone, and social media apps. The project's influences draw from Simone Osthoff's book, *Performing the Archive*, Fluxus theories of art and the everyday, and Tristan

Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* in 1918. With this in mind I was interested in relocating the theater/spectacle of a performance from the gallery to the outdoors. I wished to interweave performance and poetic gesture, and through the Baidarka Archive I was focused on doing this by being subsumed into the water recreation culture of Miami. I was conducting a performance, an act on the bay of Miami, but I made no effort to call attention to it as a performance. When on location I was simply another kayaker on the bay photographing coastlines with an outdated camera and smart phone. Using Instagram as an immediate platform to share my experience and expand my audience through social media was inspired by the *What We Don't Know, We Don't Know* exhibition. I'll take a moment here to explain that show a little more in depth. It was a process-based installation performing semiotics and systems of knowledge using architectural and sculptural interventions as well as social media website as platforms for engagement. The "how to" videos were made during the performative actions and shared on YouTube as a means to engage an audience beyond the gallery. The installation was inspired by my baidarka, constructing it using a downloaded .pdf file, and my relationship to this process. For this exhibition my interest was not about the kayak's "boatness" or functionality, but its state of emergence, its existence as an object of embodied knowledge, and how it has affected the physical spaces in which I have lived and worked.



**Figure 5:** *Baidarka Archive*, medium-format photograph, 2016



## The Plunge

On the second day of the *Baidarka Archive* performance the world went upside down. The performance was to culminate in documenting the coastline of Miami Beach from the Atlantic Ocean and paddling ashore. My route began on Virginia Key. I paddled out from a crowd of on-lookers at Hobie Beach and then circled underneath the bridges into the bay to explore an abandoned brutalist-style concrete amphitheater. From there I explored some small bird nest islands, cut over to the industrial loading docks, and then around Fishers Island out into the ocean where I needed to cross Government Cut and the South Beach jetty before making it to Miami Beach. It took me about three-and-a-half hours to make it around Fishers Island. As I entered the Atlantic Ocean the waves swelled in size and heaved forcedly. At this point I began to question the journey and my safety a little bit but still felt comfortable in these conditions. The waves did not make me have to paddle harder or strain myself; I was more gently climbing and descending hills of water with ease. I convinced myself that if this was all I had to deal with to make it to the end of my journey, I felt confident I could handle that. I also told myself, "with great risk comes great reward"... How stupid those words seem now. As I made it to Government Cut the waves became more turbulent, taller, and steeper in pitch. Before I knew it a wave came from behind me, backfilled my kayak, and flipped me over.

Time stopped. I was upside down.

I could feel the water pouring into the kayak and running along my legs in an instant. I attempted to Eskimo roll the kayak but was unable to do so in the washing machine-like current. I could see nothing but dark emerald and knew I had to do something different. I had to breath and my efforts were going nowhere. I pulled my body from the hull of the kayak, my head above water and found air. I say found, because that is how it felt. I looked around and saw one bright orange dry-case floating away with my phone, ID, and credit card in it. The current ripped each and every direction and I was scared to let go of the capsized kayak. I leapt toward the case and was able to retrieve it in a few strokes and returned to the hull. As I wrapped my arms around the filled kayak I jammed the dry-case, along with everything else, hard and up into the bow of the boat and plugged the bow with a foam pad I had used to line the base of the kayak. The land felt a million miles away at this instant. I spotted a sleek new yacht not too far away and tried to signal to them. The garish and impenetrable black glass

of the boat was as indifferent to my situation as the water I was treading. I yelled a few times, threw my hand as high as I could and waved it furiously back and forth, yet the yacht did not slow a knot. It cruised on by completely unaware of my existence. The kayak rolled a bit in the water and I feared it could possibly sink. Everything felt so far, the jetty, the condos on the coastline of Fishers Island, the sailboats out in the ocean.

I was alone.

As the next wave heaved me upward toward the sky I looked toward Government Cut and saw a jet ski heading my direction. Again I threw my hand as high above my head as I could to try and flag him down. For a moment it looked like he did not see me and I felt so defeated. After a few more seconds passed, which felt like years, he came towards me. He pulled up and seemed to be in shock at the sight of me. He threw me a tow-line with a carabiner tied to the end of it. After a minute of struggling with the line I was able to rotate the kayak so the cockpit opening faced the sky and clipped the carabiner to one of the ribs on the bottom of the kayak. After a few starts, stops, and readjustments, Marvin, the jet-ski operator towed me into a private dock and safety.

I had failed and in so doing came very close to drifting out to sea. I view this near-death experience as both a failure and as a moment of clarity. Which begs me to ask, is failure rooted in a plurality of possibilities and success singular? As I have been thinking about this again more recently, I came across Joel Fisher's essay *Judgement and Purpose* from 1987. Fisher wrote, "Failure is never planned for or organized. It comes from outside intention, and always implies the existence of another separate, more vital concern... Where failure occurs, there is the frontier. It marks the edge of the acceptable or possible, a boundary fraught with possibilities. This edge mixes certainty and insecurity. It taunts us to try again and tells us firmly to stay back. The failure tells us clearly where our limitations – at that moment – are." I, personally, resonate with these words. I took a huge, moronic risk and nearly drifted out to sea. This failure affected me personally and emotionally, but also inspired me, and a whole new body of artwork. The image below documents one of the sculptures from the Capsize series that came out of this experience. It is currently on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego as part of the A Step Away exhibition.



**Figure 6:** *Capsize (pinnacle)*, steel, wood, brass, glue, Trona Pinnacle pumice stone, 2017

### Capsize in Context

My thesis project, *Capsize* is the poetic re-imagining of my experience. As I stated earlier in this essay, it is not an illustration of what transpired. I carved the waves from wood by hand through intuition, not from a digital model or with a robotic arm or milling machine. Their wind-swept peaks and ripples are carved with the hope to capture my own experience of the water. I am not attempting to illustrate the trompe l'oeil representation of water. When I was sitting on the back of Marvin's jet ski with adrenaline coursing through my body I could not stop thinking about the surface of the water and how helpless I felt... I could not erase that inky, leaden viscosity from my thoughts. I was safe on the back of his jet ski and straining to hold the bow of the kayak with my leg and arm, but my mind was still in the water. My eyes were fixed on the unforgiving plane of the ocean that shifted its weight with herculean force. I think this was dread. True dread. I think this immensity is what Immanuel Kant is writing about when describing the sublime. I could not reconcile my "perception" of that power with my "un-

derstanding.” It was a truly horrific sight that was not seen, but experienced.

To explain the sublime Kant uses references from nature that inspire awe and are directly related to my experience, such as storms and oceans. The horror of an ocean in a storm acclimatizes the mind to a feeling that is itself sublime, and in doing so the mind abandons any sensibility for ideas of purposefulness. But then what is the sublime but extreme presence and vulnerability? Maybe it is not even vulnerability, but an acknowledgement of ones own mortality. No, no, not acknowledgement, experience is a more apt word. It is the experiencing of ones vulnerability and mortality. This idea is possibly more closely related to Heidegger’s being-towards-death. It is standing on the ledge of the event horizon of horror with your toes hanging off in full knowledge that you are exposed and at risk. It is the understanding that life is finite and within oneself, always. It is the intellectual understanding of one’s own experience of that magnitude and horror. I experienced this when wrapping my arms around my kayak in terror in Government Cut. At that moment I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the situation and completely confronted with my own finitude, which gave way to an aesthetic reflexivity minutes later when I was, finally, safely on the back of a jet ski. I saw the sculpture I wanted to make in my mind. In its fleeting nature, the performance set up its own terms for becoming the product with in its own aesthetic time and, going back to Fisher, was something I could never have predicted.

It is impossible for me to write about *Capsize* and what transpired in Miami with out tipping my hat to Simon Starling, Bas Jan Ader, Donald Crowhurst, and Tacita Dean. As Tacita Dean reflected on Ader, she wrote “... But for Bas Jan Ader to fall was to make a work of art. Whatever we believe or whatever we imagine, on a deep deep level, not to have fallen would have meant failure.” I suppose *Capsize* could never have existed if it weren’t for my foolhardiness and Government Cut. Quite different from my experience, failure, or futile action became a driving principle in Simon Starling’s project, *Autuxylopyrocycloboros*. The premise of the work was one of erasure and inevitability. Simon Starling purchased Destiny (a 20-foot long boat) in 2006 during his Cove Park residency. The original steamboat was at one point converted to diesel, sank shortly thereafter, and was then resurrected and refinished by a local. Starling retrofitted the boat with a small primitive steam engine again and then on the 25th of October departed the shore of Loch Long with an assistant. They motored Destiny in circles around the perimeter of the lake, sawing pieces from the boat to feed the steam furnace

powering the boat until it sank. Starling's performance embraced function, obsolescence, and futility with elegance. It is a work that continues to inspire me, especially knowing first-hand what a failed endeavor feels like.

#### Previous work



**Figure 7:** *Cactus to Clouds*, sculpture, painting, sauna, lookout, social sculpture, 2016

#### Cactus to Clouds

The project *Cactus to Clouds* was inspired by experiences I have had in both Finland and California; the relaxation I felt with each sauna session in Haukijärvi and the euphoria of reaching 10,800' of elevation on the Cactus to Clouds hike in Palm Springs. The work does not illustrate these experiences; it simply takes these as the seeds for inspiration. It is a social-sculptural kludge with functions that vacillate between discreet sculptural object (when in a gallery), a sauna, a gallery, a scalable object, an elevated bench, a meeting place, a lookout, and a meditative space. The word kludge, a noun used to define an ill-assorted collection of parts assembled to fulfill a particular purpose, is useful in describing this project. It is a 7-foot tall by 9.5-foot wide and 3-foot deep wooden trapezoidal structure with octagonal ends that also displays paintings that hang from the side (there is a library of landscape paintings

and vintage post cards from Palm Springs that I rotate through, one at a time). There are doors on one side where one can climb into the micro sauna, constructed with local California Redwood and bask in the infrared light. One can also opt to scale the exterior ladder and take a seat on the roof/bench top for an elevated view of the surroundings.



**Figure 8:** *Culture Wedge*, 3D printed doorstop, 2016

#### Culture Wedge

In 2016 I began to feel that the culture of the arts and humanities at UC San Diego was being consistently wiped out. The attempted closure of the University Art Gallery to create more classrooms, the eviction of the art department from the Science and Material Engineering Building to create more maker-spaces, and the apathy to act and protect staff and students from the ever-growing cancer cluster in the literature department are just a few examples of what I have experienced while in graduate school. In reaction to this trend I designed a 3D printable door wedge with the word “culture” written on it for mass distribution. I printed as many as I could and left them throughout buildings on campus. Additionally, I posted the digital file online for free so anyone around the world with access to a 3D printer or the internet could print his or her own or have one fabricated through a third party site. This is a gesture of resistance, and locally a gesture in defense of/for culture at UC San Diego.

I wanted to write about this project because it has more recently evolved to take a dif-

ferent form in an effort to meet a different need. In January I met up with a friend for a coffee, which turned into a four-hour conversation. We discussed the current political situation, acts of resistance, and how one can affect change in their own way and, depending on their subject-position, check their own voice and be an ally. We began discussing my *Culture Wedge* project and I immediately realized it could be slightly adjusted to become something much bigger and less restrained to a hyper-local politic, such as the art department at UCSD.

We live in a time that culture's equity is consistently questioned, devalued and exchanged for less than desirable forms. And in a time when systems for supporting artists are eroding, whether through the shuttering of the National Endowment for the Arts or the historic lack of support for artists of undervalued communities. I decided to transform *Culture Wedge* into a micro-granting, community-based project. To realize this I am organizing workshops with different communities to fabricate wedges, as doorstops in clay. Once glazed and fired they will be sold online for \$100 each, with the option to donate more if desired. I am currently seeking partnership with a 501-C3 so individuals who purchase the *Culture Wedges* can write off their purchase as a charitable donation on their taxes. All of the proceeds will be used to fund artists of undervalued communities with no-strings-attached micro-grants. The adjudication committee to select grant-recipients will not include myself and will be compensated for their time. I have partnered with current M.F.A. candidate at UC Irvine, Ian Meares as a principle on the project, as he is brilliant and has an extensive knowledge of clay. It is highly important for me to state that this project is not about either of us. Ian and I are simply a means to raise funding for other artists, working behind the scenes.



**Figure 9:** *Culture Wedge* workshop detail, 2017

Deep Time University hosted the inaugural workshop for this project on April 12th., 2017. Many people participated in the workshop and 24 wedges were collaboratively created. I am currently organizing the next workshop in August while in residence at the Teton Artlab in Jackson, WY.

#### Baidarka Book

Starting mid-May I will be working on an intensive book project about my baidarka, from inception and construction to the performances. I am collaborating with Lorena Mostajo to produce the book, printing it with a risograph printer. The book project brings together everything around the production of the kayak, the pdf I used to make it, my subsequent performances and experiences with it, along with the photos taken in Eastern Yukon and Western Alaska. Originally I conceived of creating a photo book of solely these photos of hillside graffiti written with rocks along the Alaskan Highway. Through studio visits with different faculty and a meeting with Lorena, and since I shot these while en route to launch the baidarka, I was inspired to expand the book concept to be about the kayak. The rock graffiti is part of the narrative and subsequent history of the boat as an object, and so it makes perfect sense to bring these two elements together.

#### Conclusion

Since returning to graduate school I have refined my practice, developed a rich theoretical foundation, and expanded my material strategies. I have found the most transformative environments are ones that encourage physicality in being, facilitate playful and considered conversation, and provide unique conditions or constraints for production and reflection. Moving forward I will continue to create sculptures as a method to engage the world outside of the studio and with the aim to complicate object ecologies, subvert function, shift orientations, and to paraphrase Sara Ahmed, get to a place that is oblique or more than the logic of a thing.



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