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Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

The Showings

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS
in Art

by

Liz Stringer

Thesis Committee:
Professor Jennifer Pastor, Chair
Professor Liz Glynn
Professor Juli Carson
Professor Kevin Appel

2024

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All Photos courtesy of Hiroshi Clark and Brian Bowman.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my committee members Professor Jennifer Pastor, Professor Liz Glynn, Professor Juli Carson, and Professor Kevin Appel. For helping me grow and cultivate my artistic voice, this journey couldn't have happened without your passion, care, and support.

I would also like to give thanks to my partner, family, and friends who encouraged me to take the risk. Your love has been a shining light.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Showings

by

Liz Stringer

Master of Fine Arts in Art

University of California, Irvine, 2024

Professor Jennifer Pastor, Chair

Conflating inanimate and animate, and just possibly, an analogy for a body trying to glimpse and comprehend its place within a more extensive hegemonic system, these works use the microscopic as a vessel to explore an individual's agency to affect and counter a hierarchical system.

The exhibition's title was found when looking through a book on medieval monstrosity and the female body. It is a direct reference to the 14th-century medieval manuscript "The Showings" by Julian of Norwich, a future anchoress or mystical recluse. While suffering from a severe illness, she experienced 11 days of hallucinations in which she hybridized Christ as a monstrous but compassionate mother figure. After recovering, she recorded her visions.

In this exhibition, five abstract sculptures are organized as hallucinations/visions of what a body could be. The viewer's procession through the show is framed by a copper foil archway, an entryway for both the viewer and the sculptures—an initiation, a doorway, a celebratory moment marking positionality. Each work is a "showing" oscillating between verb and noun, the vitality of each work highlighted like the fiction it is.

When making the work for this exhibition I viewed it through a lens of science fiction. Using science aesthetics in an embodied sympathetic method, my mind fantasized and created a world around the collective multitude and consciousness contained in each body, and its potential to turn into something monstrous. Similar to some science fiction writers there is an undercurrent of ethical allegory.

EXHIBITION PHOTOS



Fig.1 Installation Shot of *The Showings* (*Showing #1*(left) and *Showing #2*(right))



Fig.2 Installation Shot of *The Showings* (*Showing #4*(left), *Showing #5*(middle, copper), *Showing #6* (center, column))



Fig.3 Installation Shot of *The Showings* (In sequence furthest to the front then back: *Showing #2*(right), *Showing #3*(on wall), *Showing #4*(center), and *Showing #5*(back))

DESCRIPTION OF EXHIBITION

Liz Stringer | *The Showings*

Horror is the allure and frisson of the forbidden, and what is more forbidden than a body? *The Showings* is a sculptural procession of works of amalgamated ceramic, steel, copper, and resin that compound to generate a cultural body in various stages of protection and metamorphosis. Within this material drama, monstrosity and corporeal dread are effects, residue, aftermath. Liz Stringer uses drawing, sculpture, and installation, and ideas from biopolitics and feminist thought.

THESIS

Many of my daydream's center on the problematics of space through modes of concentration, touch, and scale. Chemistry is a spatial drama combatted through touch, interconnection, and relationships. Notions of rebellion, resistance, and death can be viewed with a chemical lens.

When you look at the atomic level of the cell: massive proteins, small molecules of water, DNA, and everything in between, each holds hands with its collective or multitude and allows consciousness to slip through its void spaces, a gunky residue that exists within the liminal space between actors. Everything is semi-permeable, and that fluidity is intoxicating when thinking about monstrosity and concepts of the corporeal self. Within organic and inorganic *biochemistry*, there is a flow of molecules that congregate, aggregate, ossify, sediment, and change, revolving around each other and linking parts. Performing different states of being at various times.

The body is like a city; DNA and proteins create cells, cells form tissues, and tissues work in communion to support life. "Outsiders," bacteria and viruses that symbiotically or parasitically feed on material, affect the body's existence. Through asynchronous energy movement, a body's life exists through different magnitudes.



Fig.4 *Showing #4*, 2024, ceramic and cinderblock, left
Fig.5 *Showing #4* (detail), right

The body is a staggering and incomprehensible *multitude of cells* coming together to create a higher form serving collective, social, and political gains. As a multitude, it is imbued with a vision of political existence (when dreaming). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri uphold the independence and capacity of the contemporary multitude to mobilize itself without political leaders; beyond barriers of social class and national borders, it is ultimately heterarchical (authority within a heterarchy is equally distributed).¹ But what of the level of the cell? It also has a purpose that directs its form. Spatially, cells organize to create tissues and a working, alive body. However, sometimes, it can metastasize into a mass or mob. The body

¹ Giunta, Andrea. "People, Mass, Multitude | Pueblo, Masa, Multitud." San Diego : Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego , California, 2018.

organized as a form on multiple scales is a spatial issue, superseding materiality, yet consciousness slips between it.

I have been thinking through materialist propositions and thought experiments, where the basic chemical and atomic states offer poignant metaphors for cultural and metaphysical involvement with the world. Secondly, I have been thinking about how a work can interlace *consciousness*, *fantasy*, and imagination to affect and change the perception of the work. Fiction is an entanglement we metonymically live by to engage spatially (or confront our spatial existence). Fiction is a seepage of energy beyond one's materiality and one's perception of it. My work, while embodied, is also

perspectival, an inside-to-outward exercise, a fantasy that affects my body's engagement with the material in its grip. Or, in other words, the ability of my hand to catch up with the fantasy informing it.

This multiplicity and chorus of bodies and perspectives envelop the viewer. It is an immersive meandering – thinking through making - and making through repetitive action. Each abstract sculpture is a voice and player of a fantasy. These physical manifestations contain within them the penumbra of consciousness. Two sides of a tissue live through construction and density change, always in a state of becoming. The viewer is a meander in the 'forest' that these bodies have gathered in; here, I am asking the viewer to perform the metaphor of consciousness in front of them like speech act theory. A moment of collaboration in time, space, in the 'now'.



Fig.6 *Showing #3*, 2024, ceramic

These sculptures manifest as a *psychosomatic* investigation of matter relating to physical and psychological space. Psychosomatic perceptions are a psychological condition that manifests physically on and within the body. Overwhelming psychological energy changes the modes of operation within a body, resulting in rashes, hives, loss of sight, or organ failure. It has been described as psychological energy burning the body from the inside out (micro to macro). Powerful mental energy directs forces of defense and vulnerability simultaneously.

But what if this concept of psychosomatic was applied to a human body's smallest contained unit, the cell? Within my fantasy, everything is conscious and scales exponentially to create psychosomatic infiltrations into reality. A cellular body and its symbiotic friends comprise 38 trillion cells—minute consciousness—and that energy must aggregate somewhere...but that's the fantasy of it, where a collective of cells, through a congregation, can begin to transform into something with enough emotive energy to change their physical reality. Like MRSA in a hospital, which creates a plaque through repetition of its unit to resist the sterile environment imposed on it, this staph infection creates a reactive body resistant to the violence of its surroundings.

I enter my practice through a lens of *science fiction* and *science fantasy*. However, there is no hard science within my work, and because there is no practiced science in my work—what remains is observation and manipulation of its modality/embodiment through aesthetic sense into something new.



Fig.7 *Dying Up on this Hill*, 2023, film still, shown at Beall Center for Art and Technology



Fig.8 *Dying Up on this Hill*, 2023, film still, shown at Beall Center for Art and

There are contentious opinions surrounding science fiction vs science fantasy, even categories distinguishing "hard" science fiction and "soft" science fiction. Like Ursula Le Guinn or Margaret Atwood, I differentiate between these two categories: "what can happen" (fiction) and "things that really could not happen" (fantasy)². However, I find a lot of my work slipping between the two categories. There are moments in this exhibition that are pure fantasy, a projection into the future, or alternate dimensions of what could happen. Works I have made in the past, like observing *Carpobrotus edulis* or the Highway Ice Plant (work: *Dying up on This Hill* (above Fig.7 and Fig.8)), an invasive, non-native plant filmed in a choreographed death throw, frozen within a chemical memory as its body begins to break down, cut flower buds continue to open and close to the sun cycle without light stimulation - something that seems fantastical, zombiesque, and yet

² Atwood, Margaret. "Is Science Fiction Going Out of Date? ." *Science Fiction: Documents of Contemporary Art*, MIT Press , Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2020, pp. 22–26.

possible under careful observation. I categorize this work as science fiction, as it was an uncanny encounter with an intelligent plant. Or even the irreverent use of gradient density, a scientific observational tool, in the second-year piece, *Pellucid (Fig. 9)*, could be straddling the line between fantasy and fiction. A slipstream of sorts, which author Bruce Sterling defines as "a contemporary kind of writing which has set its face against consensus reality. It is fantastic, surreal sometimes, speculative on occasion, but not rigorously so...this is a kind of writing that simply makes you feel very strange; the way that living in the early 21st century makes you feel."³ Salman Rushdie, Kurt Vonnegut, and Kathy Acker make the list and qualify as slipstream authors. Slipstream, as a visual aesthetic, encompasses my work very well. I view it as detached from the history it uses, stuck in atemporality that is hybridizing the subject categories my mind finds interest in at the time. Or what I aim to conjure is more like William Gibson's concept of semiotic ghosts, a concept used to describe science fiction and other imagery that permeates Western culture - 'bits of deep cultural imagery that have split off and taken on a life of their own.'⁴ When approaching a subject category, the work feels like it could be categorized to the subject in question. However, only with an understanding of all the categories overlapping in some 4-dimensional Venn diagram can one begin to make sense of the art object in front of it.

³ Sterling, Bruce. "Atemporality for the Creative Artist." *Wired*, Conde Nast, 25 Feb. 2010, www.wired.com/2010/02/atemporality-for-the-creative-artist/.

⁴ Aguirre, Peio. "Semiotic Ghosts: Science Fiction and Historicism." *Science Fiction: Documents of Contemporary Art*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2020, pp. 120–125.



Fig.9 *Pellucid*, 2023, steel, vinyl, polyurethane vinyl. Shown at The Room Gallery, UCI.



Fig.10 *Pellucid*(detail shots), 2023



Fig.11 *Pellucid*(detail shots), 2023

So to be more specific, the science-fiction that I align myself with are *The Family Tree* by Sherri S. Tepper, *Children of Time* by Adrian Tchaikovsky, *Otherland* by Tad Williams, *Dragon Riders of Pern* by Anne McCaffrey, *Raptor Red* by Robert T. Bakker, or *West of Eden* by Harry Harrison. There are many others. However, all these books explore alternate forms of consciousness and create awareness around the problems of a society that is imagining the future. This, in combination with a deep fascination for sci-fi films from the '70s (*Silent Running*, *Soylent Green*, *Alien*, *Rollerball*, etc.), cultivates a visual aesthetic that is both caught in the past while trying to conceptualize a future that isn't dependent on the human. However, like science fiction, my practice aims at character development, sympathizing with the character's (a bacterium's) ability to change, transform, and metamorphosize its surroundings.

Initially, in terms of rebellion and resistance of the multitude, I was ruminating on a body's ability to protect itself (not just a human body): organic *armor* like that of the beetle, inorganic, like the ballistic gel chest plates of modern armor today, to the psychological, which could be the act of forgetting.

While armor is defensive, it is also vulnerable. Armor is a constant evolution that mends the weak points within the organic, inorganic, and psychological states. A body experiences this evolution through mutations, scars, and healing at a constant equilibrium between heterarchical and hierarchical systems; authority and power can be decentralized in time and space.

Hierarchical systems tend to use violence to impose their hierarchy; when a body is under constant hegemonic attack, it continually adapts and transforms through mutations, scars, and healing. Bodies are smart and intelligent, evolving and mutating under stress. In the space of violence and destruction, new structures become possible. Moments of healing transition the wound, the ugly evidence of violence, to a scab/scar, a mark of what has been lost and gained. A mutant tissue records the distance between the old and the new. It is not an acceptance of its corruption but a celebration of its agency, a tessellating growth. The visibility and presentation of this mended body, a body with armor, scars, and scabs, celebrates the heterarchical.

Ornament is the chosen home of *metamorphoses* and is contingent on its ability to evoke natural forces that originate within architecture. If the body is the architecture, then the scabs are the ornament. Both rage and love are forces of transformation within the individual and creators of cultural change. Love and rage are also keepers of history and storytelling. They extend the body, and the body becomes the cultural artifact of these systems it is a part of.

And yet ornamentation as an aesthetic realm is as conventionalized as language. Within the realm of Space (defined here in a psychological sense), elements collide, combine, and mediate, creating a perpetual

aesthetic continuum. This continuum is punctuated by moments of 'metamorphosis,' when an entity is suspended between the fantasy of the internal world and the power structures of the external world. These moments, characterized by play and nonsense, are supported by power, utility, and relational figures, adding depth and complexity to the aesthetic realm of ornamentation.

Gothic ontologies, as an aesthetic tradition within the category of ornamentation, are "defined as a special relationship between figures and configurations, in which the figures are active parts that have a certain freedom to act, though only in relation to others and in order to form collaborative entities."⁵ Using a designed unit capable of perpetual novelty allows millions of variations of itself that result in groupings, different proportions, and interlacement—a constant complex change in form. These aesthetic contributions allow for combinational transformations that are not unlike the collective intelligence of other life forms and bodies (cells, molds, ants, AI). These forms can vary in degree and kind. Like William Blake, who proclaimed, "Gothic is Living Form," there is vitality in the work when the artist's hand and moments of Gothic imagination are in collaboration.

⁵ Spuybroek, Lars. *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design*. Bloomsbury Academic, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020. Pgxvii



Fig.12 *Showing #5*, 2024, copper foil, ceramic, concrete



Fig.13 *Showing #5*(detail), 2024.



Fig.14 *Showing #5*(detail), 2024

Before entering into the sections that explore my practice in terms of process, it is essential to note that, like in all good fiction, there is *character development/ tone*. Here, sympathy needs to be cultivated between the character and actor/artist to embody the role of the monstrous, microscopic collective multitude. Sympathy, with a strong Bergsonian resonance, becomes a mechanism of “feeling-knowing” operating in the interior of things, synchronizing its behavior with that of another. The process of sympathy is internal, “felt rather than thought.”⁶ However, science fiction also supports a model of overstated authorship that presumes that

⁶ Spuybroek, Lars. *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design*. Bloomsbury Academic, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020. p121

facets of a narrative cannot be borrowed from the observed world but must instead be emulated from the author's mind. Here, many works are the hand trying to keep up with the fantasy of the author/artist.

For many, an apocalypse and a dystopian reality are already here, in the now. Where can we look, modify ourselves, and adapt to hierarchical systems that stunt growth or permit constant marginalization?

Monstrosity becomes an interesting intersectional space, questioning what a body is, which bodies matter, and how a body is meaningful within a society. Miller emphasizes that “this predilection to exceed established categories of meaning far from renders the monstrous body meaningless; rather, it underscores the process by which the monstrous body becomes meaning-laden, and this meaningfulness is rooted in its very name: the monster, monstrum, is etymologically the thing that signs, that shows, that reveals (from the Latin, monstrare). The monster enmeshes body and word by corporealization signs, by becoming texts of flesh, whose meaning is not their own, but the readers find there. Both material corpus and literary corpus, monsters thus invite a *modus legendi* ‘a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender.’”⁷ I am interested in how this intersection becomes *corporealized*. The monstrous female body is regulated, eroticized, and repulsive simultaneously within the current biopolitical world. Similar to all marginalized groups, it is a body poorly understood biomedically. Dissimilar to other marginalized groups that are sometimes separated or distanced from the oppressor, the monstrous female body “took the form of mother, sister, lover, wife, and daughter. It was pervasive, proximate, and necessary on social, sexual and reproductive grounds,”⁸ to those who uphold a hegemonic worldview. I should note here that I do not aim to exclude anyone from the category of female; this is not a transphobic biological agenda. This exploration is only a more subtle view of what it means to be a body in a bio-politically regulated world from the viewpoint of a feminist problematic.

⁷ Miller, Sarah Alison. *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*. Routledge, 2014. P2

⁸ Miller, Sarah Alison. *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*. Routledge, 2014. P1



Fig.15 *Showing #4*, 2024, ceramic

These sculptures are metaphorical swarms issuing from a swaddling of tissues that form the architecture of a body. What surrounds a void will reflexively fill it. Slow tendrils hook into the emotional space of my interior and thoroughly rip it away to form its own other. Asymmetrical figures undergo metamorphosis between the organic and inorganic, a structure navigating between familiarity and fantasy. In the words of Jan Bialostocki, this metaphor is a moment of *natura naturans*: nature as it might become, nature as

combinational evolution, nature that is vicious. Everything changes when nature includes not only the outer world but also the inner.

The tone of each work is abject in that it is meant to be aggressive; it is not intended to be pathetic, neutral, or pleasant. The abject combines the taboo, systems of mourning, and aggression all into one thing. Meanwhile, suspense/terror creates desire in the viewer and involves operations of obscurity and uncertainty. Horror is the allure of the forbidden. And what is more forbidden than the body? To me, a body is grotesque; it occupies and expands into the realm of bio-horror - both a singular entity and an accumulation of multiple bodies, energies, and things forming into a psychosomatic force of resistance. The longer you look at the body, the more "other" and grotesque it becomes, something monstrous, exponentially quantified, and outside of control. This mysterious, dark unknown becomes the entry point into the carnal sublime.

Much of Western science has been currently discussed as a desire to "master" nature and the untamable chaos of the unknown, especially in terms of things that are death/pain-causing to humans. Many aesthetics within this discipline reflect this desire, filled with a schema for representing relationships and 2-D recording devices that both obliterate our understanding of 3-D space and yet inherently inform it. Science has prioritized vision as the primary/inherent component for understanding and constructing these knowledge-producing tools. My image repertoire has been indoctrinated with these vision-dominated tools: cell slide microscopy, CT scans, electrophoresis, 3-D modeling of molecules or anatomies, and so much more. Each schema is simplified so that each body or system can be layered and built upon instead of something that exists simultaneously. However, a body is a maximalist proposition; chaos, multiplicity, and unlimited potential are all rolled up into one thing. Moving through this world with a family in the medical field (two parent physicians, one pre-med brother, one sister in public health at Rady's Children's Hospital, grandparents in the medical corps) and a trajectory that was once aiming towards studying human biology

with an emphasis in microbiology I find myself continuing to choose to flood my vision and free-time in biomedical, biochemical, and microscopy research usually with an emphasis in the non-human. However, when one has been imbued with this knowledge throughout their education and transitioning into the 3-D realm of creative production, how could this *science aesthetic* not be embodied in a making process?



Fig.16 Showing #2, 2024, ceramic and steel

One of the methodologies of science aesthetics that I can locate in this exhibition is using *observational scale* as a tool in the work.

“Observational scale, also referred to as arbitrary scale (Weins 1989), is a human construct used for measurement and consists of grain and extent (MLA 2005) (Figure 5). Observational scale may or may not accurately depict a functional scale and can influence how patterns are interpreted. Remember, functional scale reflects the scale(s) at which a system property affects

a process (Li and Reynolds 1995). Thus, proper selection of scale affects our ability to understand and manage ecological processes.”⁹

Above is the scientific definition of observational scale, but to use this term colloquially: by changing the size of the object/gesture in question, you can change and observe your relationship to it more poignantly. An example of changing the observational scale is a person’s ability to sense the wind. This could be done by the person putting their hand out. However, only so much information could be collected through touch (perhaps a person could get a sense of the relative strength of the wind and possible directionality). Nevertheless, all of this information is in relation to this individual’s being. It is almost impossible to qualify into a measurable relationship like the wind moving North vs. South (to be fair, some individuals in this world are incredibly honed into their sense of touch; however, in terms of Western science, we shall continue with this analogy). To change the information collected into something more understandable and quantifiable, our scientist could use a sail or various other instruments to capture more of the wind and ultimately be able to observe it, quantify it, and qualify it more accurately.

There is this common assumption that to measure something is to tame it; however, in a world where scales are constantly in question (i.e., the scale of global warming, the scale of an endangered population, the scale of bacteria present on the earth’s crust) this method of measurement allows for orientation; ultimately orienting the viewer to the relationship in question, and allowing the viewer to empathize more completely. At the microscopic level, how could I ever hope to achieve the level of fantasy of what I imagine? What if the fast gestures of collective intelligence were replicated at a human scale?

In her book *What is Drawing?* Naginski suggested drawing as an “activity that exemplifies an imagination in flux.”¹⁰ Within this *drawing* lineage is how I like to qualify my relationship with drawing and its applicability

⁹ Plant and Soil Sciences eLibrary 2024. “Operationalizing Scale: Functional and Observational - Are There Different Types of Scale?” *Passel*, passel2.unl.edu/view/lesson/ab491bda9f88/8. Accessed 21 May 2024.

¹⁰ Naginski, Erika. “Drawing at the Crossroads.” *Representations*, vol. 72, 2000, pp. 64–81, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2902908>.

to other mediums. This type of drawing practice is pure philosophical play. It is an act of intimacy and extension where I can synthesize primary stimuli (observations, poetic machinations, and labor) into something new.

Sketching is an interactive process in which an initial idea is developed through the mark, or in my case, the gesture. These marks gain an expressive vitality that makes every element seem alive and evolving. Materials such as ceramics and steel offer immediacy and capture gestural energy through their malleability. Both allow for the immediacy of the gesture to be recorded fluidly and quickly. Both are relatively plastic processes that undergo the same level of chemical transformation: a super-heating that then crystallizes into something transformed. Literalizing some of the chemical relationships I aim to highlight, but also an irreverent use of these materials that is thrusting both of these very different material languages together.



Fig.17 *Showing #4*(detail), 2024.



Fig.18 *Showing #6*(detail), 2024



Fig.19 *Showing #2*(detail), 2024.



Fig.20 *Showing #2*(detail), 2024

The scientific body and *architecture* are semiotically structured by connecting, interacting, and interlocking various elements on physical and metaphysical planes. They are composed of hard and soft materials and aggregates of different forms. Connections between elements synthesize new meaning, foregrounding the inherent quality of a joint, an ultimate connector that, through some magic, transforms two into one, scaled exponentially. Like Lebbeus Woods, Claude Nicholas Ledduex, and Antoni Gaudi (all conceptual architects with a socio-ethical stance), I have been exploring the current work as theoretical architecture and, ultimately, a theoretical body or society. This practice is pure philosophical play. Using drawing to hash out propositions and theories through material play.

Repetition and *rhythm* are key components of my practice. I use repetition to trace the system from one unit of scale:

- Repetition is something that happens on microscopic and celestial scales.
- Repetition allows for a thing to be studied.
- Repetition codifies and makes learned behavior second nature.

- Aesthetically, repetition can induce the effect of defamiliarization of becoming grotesque.
- Repetition can be deeply rooted in anger, violence, and frustration
- Repetition extends the power of the smallest unit

Ultimately, like vine plants, ants, termites, slime molds, or seaweed, it is a different state of being, one outside the realm of control. Each body learns and becomes through collective intelligence that scales and becomes more complex through its multitude. This is the definition of embodiment that I developed through these sculptures.

Additionally, repetition in conversation with rhythm is productive and transformative. Rhythm is a corporeal and mental activity that, at one level, acknowledges periodic repetition while consciously moving to push, pull, and disrupt repetition. Rhythm is essential to storytelling, music, and so much more. Both repetition and rhythm are material and immaterial simultaneously. Rhythm and repetition couples Space and Time into the indomitable.

These abstract sculptures are like action-oriented thought experiments. Once the observational scale has been located, I physically combine materials using free association and labor as a *process* of materialization and dematerialization. Touch is a sensual operation, a real and sincere way of knowing. Touch is also the simultaneous assertion of autonomy and the recognition of autonomy within the other, external.

Within these sculptural systems I create, a body is composed of many units that can be expanded and built upon, connected to a collective system or social contract. From a distance, as you approach these abstract beings, it is easy to assume their unity; only getting closer to the surface reveals the intricate ornamentation laced, entombed, ossified, plasticated, carved, and fused with the surface. It is creating one working body, a magical entity. Each sculpture is cast and lit, like the theatrical fiction that it is.

On the surface of these organic and inorganic abstract sculptures are hints of the micro and macro crossing planes and being thrust together, a style of horror vacui on the surface of each sculpture, a meditation on being. Recognizable everyday materials transformed from their normative purpose are cheeky gestures that assert my existence and manifest the relationship between space and matter. Within all of the unit forms, an aggressive assertion of the hand inverts the systematically fabricated. Beginning with sympathetic or identifiable surfaces, they masquerade as a different thing, a material play between the hard and soft, fragile and unbreakable, moving and static through constant improvisation.

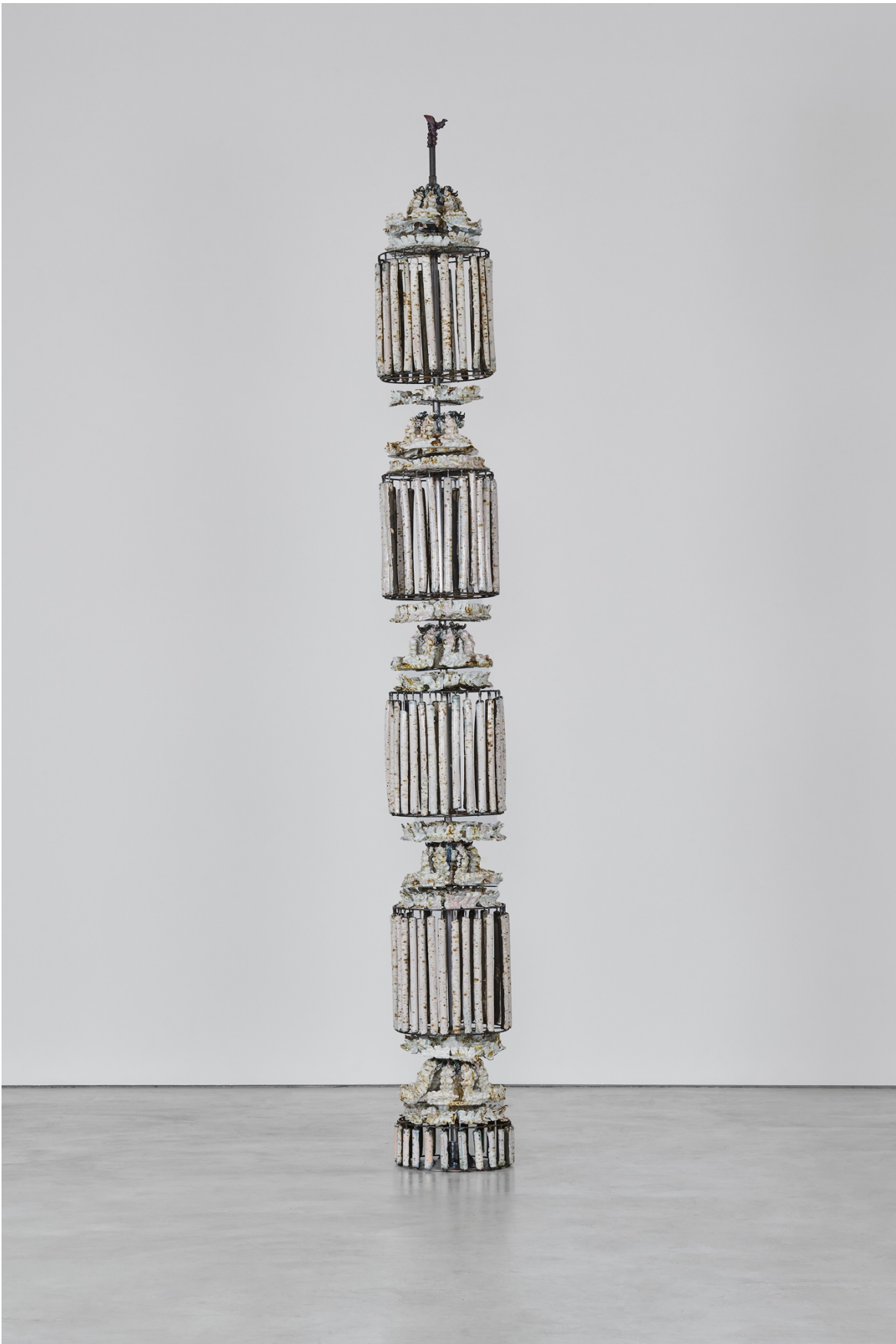


Fig.21 *Showing #6*, 2024, ceramic and steel



Fig.22 *Showing #6*(detail), 2024

Horror Vacui directly translates as a fear of the void or fear of empty spaces. Aristotle first proposed that "nature abhors an empty space," and ultimately, nature infinitely bisects to create something smaller to avoid the void. This term was an art style during the fall of the Roman Empire that prioritized visual complexity and abundance; the composition usually Lacked an obvious narrative but did create priority due to scale; all components existed simultaneously at once on the surface. Other examples of this art style exist in the Book of Kells. This illuminated manuscript elevated nature to the spiritual status of the divine but provides an overwhelming amount of mark-making and content.

To end this written thesis, here is a floorplan of the work as it was shown in the Contemporary Art Center Gallery, Building 727:

Liz Stringer
The Showings
May 11-25, 2024
Contemporary Art Center Gallery

1. *Showing #1*
2024
Ceramic, cinderblocks
2. *Showing #2*
2024
Ceramic, steel
3. *Showing #3*
2024
Ceramic
4. *Showing #4*
2024
Ceramic
5. *Showing #5*
2024
Copper foil, ceramic, steel, concrete
6. *Showing #6*
2024
Ceramic, steel

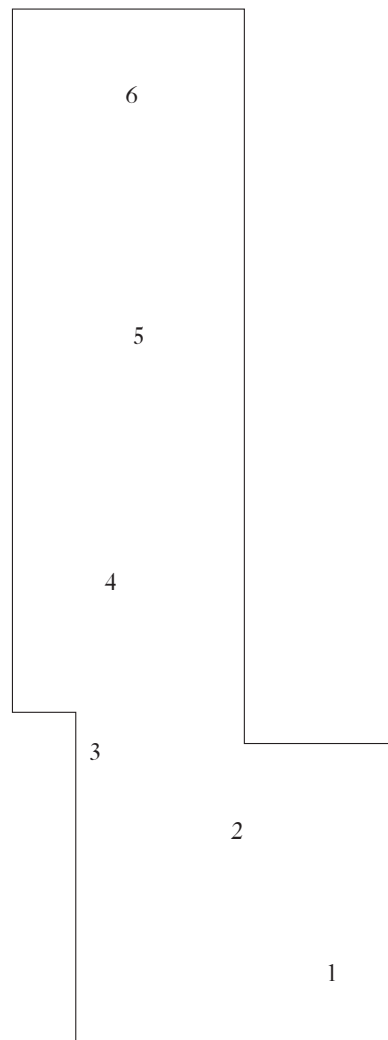


Fig. 23 Gallery Map of *The Showings*

ARTIST STATEMENT

Liz Stringer uses drawing, sculpture, and installation, and ideas from biopolitics and feminist thought. Her work is grounded in the articulation of narrative boundaries that are both physical and metaphysical, a complex relationship between embodiment, science, technology, nature, and culture. Fiction becomes a landscape to traverse through, a collapsing of micro and macro realms—where the aesthetics of science are renegotiated to create non-hierarchical narratives subverting operations of power within topics ranging from abortion, disease, consciousness, labor, death, and ‘objective’ research. Stringer examines how biopolitics produce both overt and covert themes shaping cognitive associations, daily practices, and vectors of power; highlighting points within this web of narratives to offer a stage of interrogation and playful projection.

Amplifying moments of body horror, existentialism, and the grotesque within the work Stringer aims to mediate the complete and inescapable dependence upon the body, its pain and pleasures, and the anxiety over its vulnerability. The imaginary world of fiction pervades into a static reality transforming, exploding, and rearticulating form.

In her most recent series, Stringer explores how an individual’s consciousness perceives its own bodily understanding when encountering a contaminant or contagion. More specifically, when fiction and narrative encompass moments of chemical, physical, and emotional changes in a body, fluidly recording its own understanding between the individual self, the multitude, and its involvement within the invisible system of biopolitics.

ARTIST BIO

Liz Stringer is an artist and arts administrator based in Long Beach. She received her dual Bachelor's degree from UC San Diego (BFA & BS), and is currently working towards her MFA at UC Irvine. Stringer is a participant of the Cold Read, an online critique group and artist collective that engages in gestures of care and support through writing. She is a co-founder of Group Practice, an initiative that aims to provide an affordable platform to facilitate experimental programs for working artists. She is currently involved in the sixth and ongoing version of INSITE.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Architecture p.21
Armor p.11
Biochemistry p.3
Corporeality p.15
Consciousness | Fantasy p.5
Character Tone p.14
Drawing p.19
Gothic Ornamentation p.12
Horror Vacui p.25
Metamorphosis p.11
Monstrosity p.15
Multitude of Cells p.4
Observational Scale p.18
Process p.22
Psychosomatic p.6
Repetition p.21
Rhythm p.21
Science Aesthetics p.18
Science Fantasy p.6
Science Fiction p.6

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