Space, Shape, Volume and Objecthood
The more I explore materiality, building upon, beyond the tactile, beyond an object or scrim of light, towards something that has form and volume, something solid, immovable, impermeable, something fixed and absolute, the more I am confronted with the sense of things as mutable, mutational, contingent. The more I am interested in the state of in-between. A certain contingency or catastrophe, a falling apart while hanging together. Something seemingly casual and seemingly random. I can not commit to permanence, an object that is this one thing, even if it is the most minimalist of forms, a form without image, without allegory, without narrative. I can not commit to a specific object. Rather it must be an object unbecoming, an object in the midst of a hazard, an object that is prepositional.

On, about, in, despite, under, near, next, behind, below, toward, over, round, since, among, apart, except for — these prepositions show and indicate location in the physical world, in time. They indicate that in time below may become above, or beside behind. In might become out. The preposition suggest a state, that can become another, when we don’t know.

I think about this — the conceptualization of physical space distinct from a thing or part and parcel of the thingness of a thing. That is, how things take up space, how they fold and yield. Or stand still, hold still, stand firm. Think of stone and wood as opposed to felt and plastic, cloth and fiberglass, metal and cheesecloth, a pomegranate and a pumice stone, how each responds to temperature, pressure, light, air, water, time, let alone our touch. How these materials can be touched, formed and shaped and uphold that shape. The jellyfish in the sea and the jellyfish washed up on shore. The balloon in air and the balloon not blown up. Clouds just at the point of rain.

This is a material practice of art, not unlike cooking. Distinct from, let’s say, manipulating code, or making a photograph, or pushing bytes about to make a digital painting. In a world surfeited with data (a material in itself to sculpt), my imbrication into the tactile and material, away from code and the image, towards touch, to feel the sensation of things has made what to make things with the least overdetermination. Such works could only be an indication. A suggestion, a presentation of the very thing they already were. The beautiful orange in orange felt, the layered nap and almost velour of it. Your eyes want to run your hands on it. The bright yellow of thin Latex, its texture next to another hue of yellow acrylic. One almost viscous, the other brittle, both against the grain of wood. I want to present the sensate qualities of these materials, to present them as such within certain vernaculars of painting and sculpture. To be clear, I don’t wish to make paintings or sculpture, but to use their familiarity to present sensation.
The jellyfish is perfect, no shell, nothing but body.

Material and primary process are obviously analogous phenomena and similarly, functional language on its primary level of discourse is analogous to the esthetic practice of poetry (as opposed to its secondary, mythical level of ideological appropriation). Broodthaers perceives the various processes that lead into plastic concretion as processes of reification, commodification and ideological appropriation. These are the criteria that determine the object-nature of the work of art under capitalism — its shell, its mold, its framework its form of institutional circulation and commercial distribution is understood as a hidden mode of alienation and domination.

(Benjamin Buchloh, “Marcel Broodthaers, Allegories of the Avant Garde,” 1980)

As precarious and contingent as my shaping goes, and as much as I want to shape the event of the contingent, a shaping that gives forward a contingent state, an in between, that present materiality as something in and of itself, for itself, I know fully that the materials I’ve been using, are, in some sense, already highly realized as industrialized products. In this state, they are to be employed for a number of specific uses. Neoprene and Latex to contain water flow, silicone to manage heat surfaces, corrugate for roofing, and so on.

To see the contingent, I want to contrast it with the fixed, the more precise, if that is the right word. Perhaps better: the more certain. Here I can see the appeal of the crystalline. Snowflakes, diamonds, and table salt. Now a void becomes a solid, a fold, a right angle, a structure standing, even the simplest cube or rectangle. I decide to go to a woodshop and work with someone who had helped me saw the hardback books I used for my paper sculptures. Here I will have the proper tools.

I spend weeks gathering materials. Coroplast, Mylar, mesh, neoprene, felt, paper, corrugate, bubble-wrap. I begin model making, tall and slender versus square and rectangular, hard versus soft.

I fall in love and am intrigued by a 4-section form of a Manfred Pierce wooden sculpture. I try and figure the ratio of top length to bottom length to get the cross diagonals to protrude a little. I attempt several models. But I don’t want to work with wood.

I want to make something collapsable, foldable, portable. Instead of nails, screws, or a mold, I will use Velcro. Instead of a staple gun, safety pins and clips. Something deep in me seems adverse to the finality of a thing. That it will be in one and only one state. It will be made, as opposed to ongoingly making itself.
Nevertheless I persist in confronting this made work, this finished work, these finished works of Pierce. Highly material, very clever and playful. These are things, these are objects, persistent things. There is no allegory, no mythos, just Pierce’s dexterity with material.

Corrugated plastic is hard and brittle. The corrugate very much part of a industrial modular construction system for mass deployment. Unlike the porosity of brick or the grain of wood, it is cold and harsh, snapping and crackling when going through the saw. Like Mylar, it has an alien nature.

It’s this meditation upon the materiality of corrugate and mylar that intrigues me most. The tools that make it. I see the project of Roxy Paine so clearly at this moment. The thing that makes the thing with the thing is the thing. There is no final form, just forms, processes making forms, machines making and making. I am going to put a plastics factory in the Tate Turbine Hall. Ship an abandoned factory to the hall and reconstruct it.

I persist with persistence for a bit and make some things hard and fixed. This fixity, the very thing I wanted to move away from, the large framed photographic print, an object in itself, is here, weighty, taking up space, insistent.

Time as decay or biological evolution is eliminated by many of these artists; this displacement allows the eye to see time as an infinity of surfaces or structures, or both combined, without the burden of what Roland Barthes calls the “undifferentiated mass of organic sensation.” The concealed surfaces in some of Judd’s works are hideouts for time. His art vanishes into a series of motionless intervals based on an order of solids. Robert Grosvenor’s suspended structural surfaces cancel out the notion of weight, and reverse the orientation of matter within the solid- state of inorganic time. This reduction of time all but annihilates the value of the notion of “action” in art. Mistakes and dead-ends often mean more to these artists than any proven problem. Questions about form seem as hopelessly inadequate as questions about content. Problems are unnecessary because problems represent values that create the illusion of purpose. The problem of “form vs. content,” for example, leads to illusionistic dialectics that become, at best, formalist reactions against content. Reaction follows action, till finally the artist gets “tired” and settles for a monumental inaction. The action-reaction syndrome is merely the leftovers of what Marshall McLuhan calls the hypnotic state of mechanism. According to him, an electrical numbing or torpor has replaced the mechanical breakdown.

(Robert Smithson, “Entropy And The New Monuments,” Collected Writings.)
The uncarved block is wiser than any utensil that can be carved from it.

(Lao Tzu)

Rose: The anti-Michelangelo.

The uncarved block is wiser than any utensil that can be carved from it.

(Lao Tzu)

It’s the potentiality of being anything. Once you turn something into something, its universal usage is over.

(Carl Andre)

Moving downwards from the Idea of the bed to the painted bed, one moves from reality to illusion, from truth to lies, from God to the painter. The philosopher must move in the opposite direction, and while doing so should ignore the painted bed altogether. The knowledge of the Beautiful and of the Good—both embodied in the Ideas or eternal Forms—is too serious a moral goal to be waylaid by art and its dubious representations. Of course, the whole conversation is, in a sense, also a deliberate artifice created by Plato.

(Aveek Sen)

At the same time, I want to make felt or neoprene into a cube. I put a yard of black neoprene on the table and in the center a foot square cardboard box. I sort of wrap it about the box, only to quickly discover that I don’t want to wrap the neoprene or felt around the paper box. I am not interested in a wrapped present. I think I want a cube, but I don’t really. Certainly the neoprene doesn’t want such cuteness. I don’t want to make the neoprene submissive to my will. I want it to stretch and pull itself, I want it to extend itself, let it go, find its shape. I want to make a pastry not a box. I remove the box, and into the center, I put almost origami sheets of scored Coroplast, a kind of strutting system.
In Park Slope and Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, someone is always putting something on the sidewalk: books, old bikes, toys, action heroes, Playmobil, cooking utensils, chairs, furniture, boxes, all kinds of cardboard, lightsabers, sports gear, clothing, all kinds of children’s toys and much more.

Using found objects and rethinking them, combining them with unrelated objects, stacking them, cutting them, arranging them has been done from the readymades of Marcel Duchamp, to the Surrealists’ incongruous concoctions like the fur on the tea cup, to Robert Rauschenberg’s combines, to Joseph Beuys reliquary objects, to the iconic vacuum cleaner or floating basketballs of Jeff Koons, or the airborne ping pong ball of Damien Hirst, the assemblage sculptures of Isa Genzken. They are as much found and altered as they are made from wood, marble, or steel, designed from the ground up. In this sense, found objects and collage has become the major mode of sculpture today.

To give this a go, I have made a few of these below. As I have said there are many, many, many art history examples.

So the young students collect as many varied things as they can and bring them to the class. Each student then is given three or four items from another student to work withL kind of like a cooking show. They have five minutes to make something from the items they have been given. They then photograph the items for an Instagram post with a title. Three student judges discuss for five minutes what they like, and we repeat this again and again.
Strategies for objects, images, and situations

-not concealment or transparency but containment congealing coagulation - in this there is the idea of not wrapping but holding with in.

-thinking of Yoko Ono’s piece, you and me, two condoms filled with water, hanging in front of a white 16x20 white canvas like breakfast sausages.

-extend the idea of transparency into the dissolve

-dissolve between mineral and organic

-transparency can also be overlay, different than the dissolve as in seeing figures on the ground - but which figures, broodthaers

-what do these ‘operations’ do

-what do i want them to do

-to see again the environment

-to see again the photographic

-to see photography seeing

-to see the frame as the event of constituting or constitutive of the the object or event it frames

-there is then, no object per se

a. Conceptual

-think of the space, the white cube, as a sanitorium, think of it as a planet, both human and non human, inside the planetarium inside this white cube what is desired and what is made desirable a neuroscience of desire
b. Cinematographic

-think of the install as cinematographic, know that apparatus or program format of the Meier building exceeds any the ‘art objects’ of the purported gallery, which is simply a concocted idea and conceit to decorate the Meier lobby whose program of community rooms is most likely underused, though nannies to keep from the cold in the kiddie room.

-this is to say, my work presses up against this context.

-how do I want the outside of the building to show the works

-and from the revolving glass door to open up to the lobby and from there build the scale of the works in ways that give a certain sense and feeling, and what feeling.

-the play of color moves to the same colors now objects-wrapped stage props from some general narrative of natural topologies and disaster preparation - emergency relief hospital but clean
c. Imaginings of the space, the feeling of it, install plan

-neuroscience of sensation, color, materials, scale
-a mise-en-scene of sense, taste not as in tasteful, but tasty, tasting, imbibing, touching
-the objects and arrangement of objects give a mood, an ambience, need to do something big and bold, including large fabric work, hanging from ceiling
-post human whales fungus
-sanatorium, very creepy
-between monument and ornament
-ambient light box (desire of the art committee to use the window space will accentuate the works relation and interaction with this ambience

d. Scale

-what's bigger, what's smaller than the human body -1 to 1 relation to the body of the beholder
e. Between Absorption and Theatre

- suspended; between ground and ceiling, between humble textile materials and grand architectonics, between painting and sculpture, object and language.
- what are the objects, the works for the various spaces
- what is the argument

f. Visualization

- preview by selecting and printing images of objects for their respective rooms - what surrounds and what’s inside
- how are things displayed, where are things found, how do things read the space, windows, ceiling,

g. Actual Space

- windows, which works in which windows
- rooms, which works in which rooms, floors, ceiling walls, windows, revolving door - what is in lobby, long long hallway and kitchen are photographs and inside object and sculptures smaller and bigger
h. Rooms

- turnstile door, colored plastic or see through mirror mylar, draw people in - lobby
- hall way corridor
- living room
- billiard room
- side window
- front window
- kitchen (print lollipops or anatomies or make blackboard in colored chalk, make a wish, magnetic blackboard, a set of instructions in a box, imaginary cake recipe, recipe for a cake, an outlandish cake)

i. Along the spectrum of form (form-object)

- light objects
- soft forms
- constructed objects
- narrative objects (zen float tank, greek column, white sugar cube)
- found objects
- decorative objects
- imploded/exploded objects or deformations
- interactive objects
- concealed or veiled objects
-concealed or veiled narratives images pictures
-language objects
-variable objects
-elastic objects
-found or assembled objects

j. Along the spectrum of seeing, concealing

-text objects (writing)
-light pen objects
-mylar cape cod
-wrapped tree
-wrapped shopping cart
-wrapped mannequin
-not the tree, not the shopping cart, nor the mannequin, present just the wrapper
-draped large watercolors
-can print more images on aluminum two inches off wall drape w shear zipper transparencies -the dialectic of site and non site, this simultaneity of both places, held together in space place and the mind.
-the thought inside a thought. the thing inside a thing
-writing and sight Light Pen
-how can the light pen and plastic overlays read or mark up a specific theme or set of images. maybe a particular archive
-memories of photography
-seeing (make 2 large)
k. Along the spectrum of materiality, tactility

- plastic, paper, rubber, neon, neoprene

l. Ambience of it all

- floating solids
- floating vitrines
- hanging panels
- aluminum cut outs printed on both sides -mobiles
- paper cut outs or drawings, maybe
- 5 life preservers
- conceptual photos
m. Philosophy

- Not Form Not Objects but Materiality - Not Objects but Space

n. Qualities

- order versus noise
- messy over order
- found mixed with constructed
- chance over determination - process over finish
- form or deformed
- object ness over lyric or narrative