Conscious / unconscious

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ii.
DEDICATION

For my Mother

MARY A. CRAVENHO


I know it meant a lot to her that I finish this thesis, but it’s almost as though it took her passing for me to finish this because her death is the end of the story. I’m the only one left to tell the story now.

There’s a special communication between two people who have gone through a traumatic experience. You don’t need words to know what the other person is thinking, so that when my mother saw my thesis show, I didn’t have to tell her about my work. It brought tears to her eyes because she understood the content and the experience that I was trying to capture. It is important to me that she should see the show and experience what I was trying to get across. It didn’t take words for her to capture the feeling in the pieces. It didn’t take anything verbal like it does for this thesis. The thesis is for someone who hasn’t had the experience. But I felt, if the figures worked for her, they could work for anyone.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was made possible, thanks to many people who, in one way or another, motivated me to achieve more in life.

Thanks to my family for their support. Special thanks to my brother John and Sharon Berg, for taking the time and effort to understand me and the little parts of my story and ideas, helping me organize them to flow through the thesis.

I also wish to thank my chief advisor, Professor Robert Schmitz, and my associate advisors, Professor Kris Nelson and Professor Sheila Wells, for their friendly and valuable guidance during the development of this thesis.

By making graduate school so hard, Professor Graham Marks has made me and my work stand on our own.
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vi.
INTRODUCTION

I am an artist who uses clay as a medium. My work deals primarily with my personal past. It is reflective of the past history of ceramic sculpture, and the work of a number of contemporary sculptors.

My monumental totemic masked figures express the culmination of past personal experiences, and deal more specifically with one date and event. The sculptures work universally as figures, and the viewer gains a sense of permanence from the pieces.

My work relates to African, Haniwa, and Egyptian sculpture. There is a sense of the culture of the people who made them, and a mysterious quality, an inner energy, to the figures. Viola Frey, Robert Brady, Michael Lucero, and Peter VandenBerge are contemporary sculptors who also reflect these characteristics. I feel a bond with the work of these artists, realized in the sense of soul and spirit, expressed in my masked figures. I hope they are timeless, and will prove through time they are not dated by gimmicks and trends, just as good art relates to the past, present, and future, working universally.
PERSONAL PAST

The response we have to criticism is an individual experience. At one time or another, we have all criticized or been criticized. Some of us have something in particular which people direct their criticism towards. I am one of those people. For me, the word criticism means psoriasis.

I developed this skin condition at the age of seven. At times, it is easier to deal with the medical aspects of my condition than the social aspects. People have a terrible habit of commenting on, and criticizing, what they see and do not understand. For example, I have encountered extreme reactions daily when I extend my hands to another person, even in the simple exchange of money. Out of these incidents, I have learned that you have to take a negative situation and turn it into positive work. You learn from it, build on the experience, transform the inner to the outer.

What I have found most difficult, is when people criticize my condition relative to my field of work. A number of times, people have said to me, "You are in the wrong field," meaning that my sculpting is not helping my skin condition. This is something that is easy for them to say. However, my determination to use clay as a medium, and my love of art, is something that cannot be thrown aside.
There is a certain incident in my past that has had a major impact on my life and my work. It shall never leave me totally. DECEMBER 23, 1978. It talks to me about pain, suffering, and rebirth.

Two days after my eighteenth birthday, I was surprised outside my home by a masked man who attempted to murder me. He chased me to the house, breaking the front door off its hinges to follow me inside. He threatened my mother, my dog, and me, for an hour, with a dagger.

After this incident, my psoriasis became extremely bad. Part of the ritual I follow to take care of my hands involves wearing plastic bags, which work as a sauna to help the medication penetrate my skin.

I literally brought a relationship with my skin disease, to the sculptures. I put plastic bags on the hands of the masked figures, and wrap the wrists with tape, repeating the ritual I use on my own hands. This parallels the incident, as my attacker wore surgical gloves.

My family worked together. We always came home together. But this day was different. My parents had purchased a stereo for my birthday and Christmas gift. My mother insisted that I wait for my father to help me unload the stereo. But, I promised my father I would unload it when I got home.
We lived year-round in a summer residential area of Cape Cod. It was desolate in winter. There were four pieces to the stereo. It took three trips to carry it in from the car. On the third trip, the atmosphere was wrong. There was a silence I had never heard before.

I had a premonition of danger, and as I approached the trunk, I sensed someone was there. I screamed. A large figure jumped up from behind the rear wheel opposite me, holding a dagger high.

There was only the width of the car between us. I stared intensely at the mask, a loose-knit hood resembling a hangman’s hood. Under this covering, there was a blurred contour of the face. He could see out through the loose knit, but I couldn’t see in. I felt that he was scared, as I was at that moment. I knew that if I ran, he’d have to kill me.

I moved my foot. Then he started to chase me, plunging the knife over and over, trying to reach my back. I whipped open the front door, slamming and locking it behind me. The door hit my attacker, knocking him off the front steps. I ran towards my mother.

We heard the door come off its hinges as the masked figure entered the house. We backed up, facing him, all the way to the kitchen. My mother, my dog, and me, side by side. We were crying. He never said what he wanted. He
just stood there, tall and powerful. He kept saying, "Tell your mother to shut up before I stab her to death." He kept repeating this for an hour.

My sister had a suit hanging up in the kitchen that had just come back from the dry cleaners. He grabbed the suit and stabbed it, again and again, ripping it to shreds.

Then he threw it on the floor and stomped on it like a child having a tantrum. That was when my mother asked him, "What do you want from us? What have we done to you?" And he said in a hard voice, "I want money."

We managed to circle around, keeping our backs away from him, and worked our way back to the living room. My mother picked up her pocketbook, and while he was struggling with her, trying to take it, I ran to the kitchen and grabbed a handful of knives. I kept thinking "bigger and better."

He was almost to the door when I started throwing my knives at him. They pierced the wood and puttered in the door as he ran out into the dark with the purse.

During all of this, I had flashbacks of my childhood remembering certain photographs. These images were hitting me in the face full force. I saw myself stabbed over and over, left in blood, a funeral, buried. This returning to childhood, through flashbacks and a sense of death, is
crucial since one’s past is a large part of the present and future.

At the age of eighteen you are an adult. This incident made me so insecure that, for a time, I felt I had returned to childhood.

No time is a good time, but it seemed this happened at the worst time, in the midst of the Christmas season. One is busy preparing for this joyous time when family comes together. More critically, this incident took place during the Christmas break of my freshman year in college.
EARLY WORK

My functional pieces didn’t talk about me, but about how the wheel can overpower you. The pieces could have been made by anyone with that much skill and craftsmanship or by a machine. Yet, my forms did speak about me, through refinement, proficiency, subtle timing, the finish and completeness of the forms. All of that technical information captures a small part of my personality and is reflected in my present work. The figures are conscious of the history of the vessel, but they’re out of the realm of being functional, because of scale and enclosure. They’re like large enclosed vessels, but they’re sculptures.

The wheel-thrown pieces I did at undergraduate school were altered. I’d go to the grocery store and realize, for instance, how beautiful eggplant and butternut squash forms contain an inner growth. The work made references to the essence of human forms and the growth of organic matter the way that a stem grows from its main core. These connections are very important. In restaurants, I observed people’s posture, excess weight, how the skin of a person overlaps; and an arm became part of a concept for the handle of a teapot. A twisted clay coil became a continuous vine that grew through my teapots to function as handles. They worked well as utilitarian objects, but they talked more about the idea of a teapot than its function.
In my first year of graduate school, I was interested in capturing the essence of a person through a portrait. How could I say "face" in the fewest brush-strokes possible? These platters were talking too much about painting and not enough about clay. I was between functional and non-functional work. During a critique, Graham Marks said, "What are your two-dimensional paintings saying to your three-dimensional forms?" I asked myself, "What does this really mean?" and realized the answer was, "There was no marriage between the painting and the form. It shouldn't look like the painting is a decal or a wrapping for the form." That was something to work on to integrate the two.

I tried to make the platters more sculptural by doing portraits inside other forms, bowl shapes, building up the surface, making the images three-dimensional. I asked myself, "How can I turn these two-dimensional paintings into three-dimensional forms?" This is how I got to the bust figures of my mother and sister and from these to the figure, "Self-Portrait."

I wanted to do strong work. I felt I had to go to the strongest university for ceramic sculpture which was Alfred University. I ended up realizing that it's not the place that makes your work strong. It has to come from within. A change can bring this out. However, working with the strong makes you stronger. Their energy is contagious. And yet, I am my own competition.
CONSCIOUS/UNCONSCIOUS

All of my senses have sharpened since the attack. I am aware of the spirit and soul in all living things, the way a limb protrudes from the main core of its existence. I bring these sensibilities to my work.

I am very conscious of what I am doing in my sculpture, but the unconscious elements are present. It remains intuitive; ideas come into the work that surprise me. I avoided conscious recognition that the figure after my self-portrait would be a masked opponent.

My figures are not literal in terms of being a portrait. They do tell the story, however. The opponent is overwhelming; he’s tall; he’s masked. In moment of terror, you don’t think of race or sex. But at an unconscious level, it registers. This is why these issues become part of the work. People say to me, "They’re sexless," and I always say, "It’s in the pants." There is a reason the masked figures are static. My attacker didn’t move, for an hour, while he was in my house. Consciously bringing the past to the present allows me to learn from it and build on the experience, transforming the negative situation into positive work. It’s like being your own psychologist, your own therapist.

The four pieces of the stereo are like the four modular sections of my masked sculptures. I couldn’t control the
situation, but I can control these figures. Yet, clay has a mind of its own, its own integrity, its own spirit, its own soul. If you’re sensitive enough to the medium, it will respond. African, Haniwa, Egyptian, and contemporary artists that I feel close to are sensitive enough to their medium; their sculptures speak.

The pieces talk about a situation; they tell a story. But of course, not everyone is going to read in the full intent of the artist. Good art will draw you back. You will contemplate it and, days or months later, realize the piece has grown and has more meaning. There is an interaction between the artist and the piece, the piece and the viewer, the conscious and unconscious.
Before "Self-Portrait," (see Plate 1) I was thinking, "What do I know best?" The answer was that I know myself best. I completed this figure at Alfred University in the summer of 1983. I don’t look like that, but it describes my story literally. It’s like being at attention. It’s tense, a still life. There’s a lot of pressure in the piece, a lot of nervous energy. The piece looks like it could have been carved out of wood. This figure has a majolica glaze. I’ve made it matte dry, so the surface is rough and more textural. I used all the defects of this glaze to my advantage in this piece. It’s usually an elegant glaze, but I’ve used the pitting and crawling to create a more sculptural figure.

"Self-Portrait" naturally led me to the masked opponent, "December 23, 1978," (See Plate 2) because I always think of me, and then him, and the violence. When this piece was finished, I felt threatened by my own work. I was frightened out of my own studio.

This piece worked because there was a marriage between the two-dimensional painting and the three-dimensional form. This piece, and the masked figures which followed it, were different from "Self-Portrait" which was made in two modular
sections because they were made in four modular sections. Let's take the piece from the bottom up. That's the way I work. When I think of "December 23, 1978," I think of the piece standing on a form, and from its shoes, to long socks, to knickers, to the torso, and the arms with the psoriasis on the hands, to the hangman's hood. It's like the masked figures are looking down at the viewer and down at the psoriasis on the hands. The viewer can't see what's in the hands. They only see that they're wrapped in plastic bags.

The shoes on these pieces relate to growing up with my family's business and how I was accustomed to dealing with modern styles and brand names of shoes. But I wanted to make shoes that didn't relate to a specific brand name, my own generic shoe form.

**BIG GUYS IN PAJAMAS 1** (See Plate 3)

The name for this piece came out of a critique Graham Marks gave me in my studio. "If all you want to do is make big guys in pajamas, then go straight ahead." I felt, if that's what he thought my masked figures were, then it was a good name for the pieces. He had named them. What he meant, though, is that the carving of "Big Guys in Pajamas 1" was more systematic. My mark-making became more like an overall pattern on the individual modular sections, so this piece wasn't as integrated as "December 23, 1978." The two-dimensional painting and the three-dimensional form weren't
one. That’s what was missing. The position of the hands is
different in this figure too. The figure still looked down
on them, but they were held upright, closer to the body.

BIG GUYS IN PAJAMAS 2 (See Plate 4)

This figure had the same problems as "Big Guys in
Pajamas 1." The overall patterning of the painting became
systematic. It described the form, but it wasn’t integrated
enough. What was different about this piece, was that it
related to African sculptures in the sense that the pedestal
became a torso with upheld arms that supported another
figure. I placed these figures on wooden pedestals at my
thesis show. I wanted them to work, not so much as
pedestals, but as the ground floor for the pieces. I had to
deal with a greenish tweed-textured wall, and I wanted
people to be able to walk around the pieces, to see them
whole. They were placed far enough from the wall that it
became a backdrop.

When people came to the opening of the thesis show,
you were intimidated by these tall figures. It seemed as
if the gallery was divided in half with most people on the
side opposite the figures, looking at them from a distance.
Only a few people approached the figures to touch them,
though children obviously felt more comfortable around them.
I made these figures for the specific space and wall of my
thesis show. The Bevier Gallery reached above the second
floor of the institution, so that if people were intimidated

by the figures on the first floor, they could climb to the second floor to touch the heads of "Big Guys in Pajamas 1" and "Big Guys in Pajamas 2."

I find it very interesting that you can control your audience in how and where to view the sculptures. The first two pieces worked better than the last two in many ways - in scale, a shade over life size, so people could relate to them one-on-one; they weren't as intimidating and were more accessible. Those two were half the size of the last two.

I could see the relationship between the modular sections easier on the smaller ones. The last two I couldn't see until they were fired, but the last two are more advanced because I want the pieces to be monumental and overpowering and control the viewer. In all the pieces, the negative space flowed with the three-dimensional forms. However, there were some things I forgot. By more than doubling the size, I lost some integral concerns I was dealing with, especially in the integration of the painting and the form. This doesn't mean that the pieces were unsuccessful, but there are elements that could have worked even better.
THE MEDIUM

Clay has a special quality. A fresh piece has energy. It’s wet. As it dries, you lose that fresh quality. It’s almost as if the piece had been over-worked, that some vitality was lost along the way. You go forward with the piece, fire it, but you go back through time to recapture that original vitality, bring it back into the piece. I think everything to do with clay is timing - the stages of clay, the construction, the painting; everything is timing.

Clay is part of nature, part of everything we walk on. It’s the earth, and it’s part of us. It has its own integrity, its own spirit, its own soul. It’s living because it’s a part of everyone’s culture.
AFRICAN SCULPTURE

My pieces are carved with an ax or knife, like totemic wooden sculptures of Africa. "Self-Portrait" looks like a wooden sculpture; "Big Guys in Pajamas II" is one figure supporting another. This echoes African sculptures which have a bottom figure that becomes a pedestal for the figure it supports. They are very vertical and many pieces are masked. The mask is regarded as a container for the soul. The African religion involves ancestor worship through totems, magical carvings, and fetishes. All sculptures were regarded as power objects once the maker pronounced that the power had entered the figure. Often the spirit of an ancestor was concretized in a sculpture.

Masks were used to hide the identity of the wearer and assign a new identity. These masks were considered to house the spirit of a dead person. The wearer took on the power of the spirit represented.

Totems involve a relationship between a group of people and an animal or plant. This formal relationship is charged with emotion. When the totem is an animal, one is forbidden to kill it. The totem is invested with the power to overcome basic human emotions and governs social relations between members of the group. African sculpture reflects the inner world of the native in this way. It is believed to contain magic which directly controls the spirits of
nature. Because of this, when a sculpture fails to perform the magic required, it is destroyed and replaced with a new sculpture. In the African religion, death meant the soul left the body, not through destruction, but through a transfiguration. Religious beliefs entered into all aspects of the people's lives.

I feel a strong connection to the religious power and emotional content in the African Sculpture and regard the masks on my figures as containers for the spirit. The Catholic Church also uses fetishes in its rituals, symbolic objects invested with protective or sacred power, such as holy water, amulets, and the cross itself. My sense of the African people is that they are positive thinkers, working to change evil or negative forces into good, and I appreciate the power they assign to symbolic objects. One gains a strong sense of culture and the presence of the maker from these figures. They are carved with strong planes and rigid poses, but there is a directness in their sculpture. African sculptures are solid pieces, whereas my own figures are hollow. Yet, through their culture, the Africans invest their sculptures with an inner energy.
HANIWA

Haniwa are cylindrical sculptures with an inner energy and volume. The name means "cylinder" in Japanese. They are found in the region of Kansai, and earliest pieces date from the late 3rd to early 4th century. The later pieces were all made before the 7th century, mostly in the plains around Tokyo. These later pieces were larger than the early ones, and more frequently depicted the human figure. Haniwa sculptures are usually between one and three feet high; yet, they have a sense of being monumental in a small scale. They appear to be guardians at sacred tomb sites protected by moats. Arranged around the tomb to celebrate the spirits of the dead, the cylindrical tile was buried below the ground. I feel these tiles correspond to cylindrical pedestals. The Haniwa incorporate the tile in the figure. This is similar to the way the pedestals of my sculptures are integrated with the figures.

The Haniwa served as part of a burial ritual that acknowledged the cultural past in the beliefs of their makers. My own masked figures stress ritual and acknowledge my personal past. The past is brought forward, becomes part of the present, allowing me to move towards the future.

There is a very spiritual presence in both the Haniwa and my own figures. Both the inside and outside of the pieces are considered. I always say, if my pieces are
fractured, the fragments will have as much integrity as the whole form. It's their enclosed captured space, the volume pushing out to define the structure. They transmit an energy from within, an aura. My pieces are like crucifixes in their posture, their stand.

My construction methods are the same as those of the Haniwa which are built from clay coils. There is a similarity in the construction of the pieces, the same inner/outer concerns, the rigid position of attention. They are built for sacred areas and purposes. My work responds to those concerns. My pieces could be used outside like the Haniwa. They would be part of the environment, a marker for burial or vertical forms on a specific site.

The primary difference between the figures and the Haniwa is in scale. Where the Haniwa are between one and three feet tall, my opponents are human scale or larger. The Haniwa were constructed as a unit. My figures are made in modular sections. The Haniwa portray people from all walks of life. Mine depict one specific person. The clothing on the masked figures is integrated to the form. In the Haniwa sculptures, it is sometimes another layer that reflects the underlying structure of the figure.

Haniwa figures have an eerie feeling about them. You know they are burial pieces. The only part of the inside you can see is through the eyes and mouth. They’re the only openings to let the spirit enter or leave. My masked
figures have the same mysterious quality. The slits of the eyes, the mouth openings, have subtle, but powerful, expressions. Though they’re just cut out, their silhouettes are altered. There is a suggestion of the head underneath the hood. This adds to the subtle expression. Only the essentials are represented. When the viewer moves, they have a sense of being watched, the eyes following, though the figure remains static.
EGYPTIAN SCULPTURE

Egyptian sculpture has a presence. This is true whether the piece is monumental or small. There is a static quality to the poses, similar to African sculpture. They are mysterious, frontal representations of pharaohs, nobles, and their servants and family. It was important that the portrait realistically portrayed the person that it represented, at the height of their career. The man’s role in the physical world affected his role in the afterlife. This meant the ideal qualities won him honor and respect. The statuary preserved his name, memory, and public persona, and his name and title were represented on the figure. The statues were shown standing against a pillar, or seated on a throne, providing a plane at the back which could be inscribed. This naming invested the statue with an identity.

Egyptian sculpture is ritual and spiritual. It is funerary and was not meant to be viewed. It was meant for gods and spirits. Yet, the insides of the sarcophagus were painted and considered as much as the outside. There is an inner energy, even though the sculptures are solid. The religion of the Egyptians invests them with a power and presence. They tell a story inside and out, though the tombs were never meant to be opened. This related closely to my own work and talks about the fragment meaning as much as the whole. People say, "It doesn’t matter what the
inside of the piece is like. No one will ever see it."
It's not true. Just like the Egyptian tombs, it may take 200 or 2,000 years, but someone will see it.

The faces of New Kingdom pharaohs and statuary are masked. Though several masks may have been produced for a single sarcophagus, they represented the same person. This is similar to the way my masked figures have experienced subtle changes to the hood, but all represent that one opponent in a non-literal way.

The statues of Egypt were made from wood in Dynastic era and were later made from stone. The wood for these statues was imported. The trees they did import were rarely large enough to make the piece whole, so that the arms and the advanced left foot of standing statues were made separately and attached by dowels. The sculptor used the grain of the wood to emphasize features of the statue, acknowledging the qualities of his medium. Many statues were made with a strengthening bar between the legs. In my own figures, the negative space between the legs is important to the sculptures.

The esthetics of the Egyptians was strongly affected by their desire for the tombs and statuary to last forever, to pass into eternity in the afterlife of the deceased. Every aspect of their life was deeply rooted in this religion. My pieces have been constructed with the intention that they will endure.
I feel a bond with four contemporary artists, Viola Frey, Robert Brady, and Peter Vandenberge, all from California; Michael Lucero lives in New York. All of the California artists studied together, and I feel they've influenced each other's work. They are conscious of things they want to represent, issues they are dealing with; yet, clay has a force too. They let it flow and respond to it. As a result, their pieces are very powerful; they speak.

My work incorporates the concerns of all of these artists in different ways. Vandenberge's pieces evoke the work of one of my favorite painters, Amedeo Modigliani; his method of construction closely resembles mine. Frey's monumental figures correspond to the intimidating scale of my masked opponents. Brady's work expresses a primitive content and emotional force that echoes my own. Lucero's pieces incorporate a high energy and consciousness of inner/outer concerns in his different bodies of work.

There is an honesty and integrity to the work of all of these artists. Their work tells a story. The individual pieces are not treated like precious objects. Each of these artists puts a large part of himself into his work. You feel the presence. The work has an inner spirit.
VIOLA FREY

Viola Frey is best known for her series of large-scale monumental figures. She works with contrasts, male/female issues, a collection of images that refer to her past. Frey describes her work as a "bricolage," a bringing together of cultural images and events. She works with clay because of its facility to unify drawing, painting, and sculpture. When Frey started, her sculptures were very small, coffee table size. They grew to reflect her own physical presence. My work is similar in scale. Yet, while Frey's physical structure is brawny, mine is slight. Our work reflects this difference. Our figures grab the viewer's attention and are unsettling, partly due to their scale. The viewer is turned into a figurine. However, the intimidating quality of Frey's figures is exaggerated by intense colors. This quality is heightened in my figures by use of subtle values.

Frey's pieces are overpowering in a fanciful way, almost like cartoons. Her figures make aggressive gestures while remaining static. The rawness of her colors is vibrant and shocking and helps define the awkward, frozen postures. They confront the viewer. People are more comfortable viewing them from a distance. Their presence takes over the environment.

Inner construction in the figures supports the outer form. The inside is not considered in terms of spiritual
presence. The captured space is altered by Frey's structures, interrupting the flow of inner energy, the tension between inside and outside. Still the figures maintain a sense of volume. They are weighted rather than filled with the tension of a balloon that's ready to burst.

Frey makes uneven divisions that acknowledge anatomical definition in the human form. They are honest, undisguised separations, rather than visual interruptions. Her sections have no beginning or end, unlike my own modular units. Each one locks into the next form with a flowing contour. There is no attempt to hide the divisions.

The figure is time-consuming. Both Frey and I work on paintings, cylindrical wall assemblages, and large-scale figures, all at the same time. There is a connection between elements in these three ways of working, and the wall-assemblages are more immediate. I had been working on cylindrical wall sculptures for years before I saw Frey's "Plate" at the Victorian-Albert Museum in London, England in 1984. I was surprised that I had always associated her work with full-scale sculptures. When Frey's figures were shown at the Whitney Museum (1984), their relationship to my own "Self-Portrait," completed the year before, amazed me. There is a great similarity between this group and "Self-Portrait," due to the spontaneous nature of the figures, texture of the glaze, and vitality of the colors.
Frey has used majolica glaze in an untraditional way on low-fire whiteware figures. She has intentionally created what is considered defects in the glaze, using them to her advantage, building up texture through layering. Though she has used whiteware and I have used earthenware, by using low-fire, we both gain a greater range of colors. The clothing on Frey’s figures is a layer integrated with her forms and used like a canvas for abstraction.
ROBERT BRADY

Brady and I are generally interested in the directness of several primitive cultures. Primitive sculpture comes from the heart; only essentials are given. This is what Brady and I do.

Brady has said, "You have to know pain to make art." I believe this is true. He suffered a long, painful, illness and brings his personal past to the present; so, the negative situation turns into positive work. He's not making death figures. Children understand them in a playful context, as animated objects, though adults see their relationship to death imagery. At my thesis show, children were less intimidated by my figures than adults. Images of death and pain make the viewer uneasy. Brady says he's been influenced by the Day of the Dead in Mexico when spirits revisit and death is celebrated. There is humor in his work. His pieces are whimsical with precarious postures. They sway and move. The pieces are frozen in position, but there is a tension, an inner energy.

The energy of his figures comes through emotional content, not just the space inside. Some of his forms are awkward. Brady's elongated masked figures have more activity in the upper portion of the body, giving an uplifting quality. Brady puts a lot of himself into his work. His figures are vulnerable, burdened, fatigued, or
devilish. Everything is there to be seen if someone is sensitive enough to grasp it.

He alternates between human and animal forms, sometimes in the same piece, and demonstrates a technical expertise, fusing the impulse and execution. He’s not afraid of taking risks, following impulses, and altering the form during execution.

Through his interest in archaeology, Brady has developed esthetics which refer objects with a history. He says, "So my work isn’t about a living, vital, person. It’s more like a rock which has withstood centuries." His work comes from his soul, his gut feelings. Rather than a specific figurative representation, Brady makes his connections to primitive cultures in an emotional and spiritual way. His simplified forms are related to the totemic. He makes abstract marks to indicate eyes. It’s as if he said, "What’s another way to say ‘eye’ without being so literal." But it’s essential that it is an eye, that the figure does have a face. As he has said, "Without faces, they seem to be mute and entombed."

The colors of his palette, the values, are subdued. His surfaces and textures are highly energized. There is a marriage between his two-dimensional painting and his three-dimensional form; they’re one. His life-size figures work universally. When full impact of the piece is not immediate, the viewer dwells on it, and deeper meaning can develop through time.
Lucero says, "I always considered my figures to be totems even though they were just different gestures." He has a way of breaking up form, building elongated shard figures, and heads, which integrate storyline and painting. It’s a kind of shorthand. He’ll use a pot to say, "head," and long linear forms made from brightly colored shards to suggest bodies. There are whole stories and adventures in his totems and heads.

He says the figure is universal, a format which ideas are expressed upon, "a form from ancient times" he regards as "the first symbol of man." His pieces are not just about the figure, but about himself. They are the surfaces he inscribes his ideas on.

His heads are the same. Lucero’s stories take you into the form and out again. There’s a whole universe in each piece. It’s not just focal points. The story continues around the whole piece. He does it with the eye, creating illusions that take you inside the piece and pull you back to the surface.

He moves freely through many different bodies of work - heads, figures, totems, bringing his own imagery into these forms. His sculptures all sing and are strong. They’re adventurous and exciting. His colors are electric. He keeps changing and growing. I especially like how he uses
parts of color to build form in the figures built from ceramic shards. They’re single-line structures, armatures designating the figure’s stance.
VandenBerge works in large-scale busts that are reminiscent of the painter Modigliani. His figures are dressed in 20th-century costumes. They are very elegant, though their overall appearance is crude. They have a whimsical humor. VandenBerge makes strong connections with mythology and his personal history through these forms. There is a primitive quality to the work, though it definitely belongs to this century.

Though they may be four-foot busts, the viewer is not intimidated, though they seem life-size. There is a sense of the monumental. They looked aged like they’ve gone through time.

The busts have almond-shaped eyes similar to the eyes in my masked figures. Though the opponents eyes are cut out, VandenBerge’s are frontal with the elongated faces, long noses, and elegant necks of Modigliani’s portraits. It’s almost as if he had taken those figures off the canvas and turned them into three-dimensional sculptures. There’s a painterly quality. Yet, they aren’t saying Modigliani. They’re saying VandenBerge.

VandenBerge’s method of construction is like my own. He constructs his forms in bands, coils flattened into slabs, and makes no attempt to hide the seams. You can see the divisions between the coils. He makes them work for
him. They’ve been incorporated into the structure to express clothing and form. His busts communicate an inner energy, a sense of inner space.
CONSTRUCTION

My figures are constructed of low-fire earthenware coils, rolled out and pressed into long narrow slabs. It is the same method used by the makers of Haniwa sculptures. When they are leather-hard, these long narrow slabs are overlaid in a spiraling fashion to create the form. They are made from the bottom up. The pieces are shaped from the inside and outside with small wooden tools and my hands. The tools have been collected from flea markets and carry their own significance as objects that have a history and once knew a specific purpose. This gives them special power for me in the making of my sculptures.

The coil slabs have a greater chance of separating because of the way they are placed, one on top of the other. There’s more surface where they can split, on seams where slip joins the coils. It’s like each unit is built from a series of smaller units. This has both negative and positive results. There’s greater risk involved. There’s also an inner/outer spiraling seam that you can’t get any other way. Unlike the Haniwa sculptures, my forms are not reinforced with a smearing of clay on the inside. There is no inner construction. It is important that the inside is considered as much as the outside. If a piece is broken, something hidden will be revealed. The fragment means as much as the whole sculpture.
My figures were not built in one piece. Each unit stands on its own. When they are put together, they read as a whole figure. Divisions between the assembled units are not disguised. They don’t read as visual interruptions. They are direct and honest.
CONCLUSION

I feel that in the piece, "December 23, 1978," there was integration of all the components, my personal past, the past history of ceramic sculpture, the marriage between the two-dimensional painting, and the three-dimensional form. There is no inner construction. The construction is part of the form. It is important that the inside is considered as much as the outside. That is what makes strong work. No one element, but all combined.

Consciously bringing the past to the present allows me to learn from it, build on the experience, and move towards the future, just as good art relates to the past, present, and future, and works universally.

I am happy with the work of my thesis show. It is strong and powerful. It is now several years later; I feel I needed the time to complete this thesis. I don't feel one can do this thesis directly after graduate school or during the second year. Doing the work and thesis together would make one or the other suffer. This thesis is like another sculpture. Everything of any importance to me is in it.
### TECHNICAL INFORMATION

**Sculpture Body - c/04**

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@ Black Copper Oxide - 3%

**Black Wash - c/04**

Manganese Dioxide 100%

I used a great deal of mason stains. Depending on the color, lighter colors add 20% to white slip. Darker colors add 10% to white slip.
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Books


