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Virginia Commonwealth University

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School of the Arts, Department of Sculpture
Virginia Commonwealth University

This is to certify that the Thesis prepared by Benjamin S. Jones entitled THE OTHER
SIDE OF THE FENCE has been approved by his or her committee as satisfactory
completion of the thesis or dissertation requirement for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

John H. Risley, Professor, School of the Arts

Kendall Buster, Professor, School of the Arts

Gregory Volk, Professor, School of the Arts

Amy Hauff, Chair, Department of Sculpture, School of the Arts

Richard Toscan, Dean, School of the Arts

Dr. F. Douglas Boudinot, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

May 10, 2006

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

BENJAMIN S. JONES
BFA, Ohio State University, 2004
MFA, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May, 2006

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my faculty in the Department of Sculpture and Extended Media for their unending encouragement and confounding. I would also like to thank my good friend, Laura Browne for sticking with me through all of this. I would not be here if it were not for you. Thank you.

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Abstract

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

By Benjamin S. Jones, MFA

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

Major Director: John (Jack) H. Risley
Professor, Department of Sculpture and Extended Media

I pull from what I see in my urban surroundings. There is always a sense of dread fused with optimism that prevails. Is it beautiful? Fragments of low-riders and tricked-out cars become symbols of desire and the glowing red lens of a stop light becomes a Cyclops poised to defend his garden. Candy-coated, blooming, dripping and seductively slick confronts you with the obvious warning: STOP! You could be next... ..The grass really is greener on *The Other Side of the Fence*. At least until winter comes.

The Other Side of the Fence

The slope of a line and the tension of gravity multiplied by a glistening milky plastic...
...My sculptures, prints, videos and installations are hyperbolic amalgams that borrow from the worlds of design, architecture, engineering, urban planning and popular culture. I harvest information, images and forms from the world around us and cross-breed, conflate and re/configure them; cautiously positioning them as open-ended propositions that are as communicative as they are confounding. The specific images in my work are at times less important than the ways in which these parts relate to one another: A pierced plane, a perfectly sealed joint, an open receptacle, a candy lime green blade of grass or a luscious spoooge of red-hot automotive love.

Many of my pieces start as a phrase or an idea (Parasitic Architecture, The Best Defense, and The Other Side of the Fence, Duplicate State, and Somnambuladder). I break these slogans apart into their abstract and literal meanings and reconstruct them as a reified syncretistic hybrid. For example, the phrase 'the grass is greener on the other side of the fence,' a quotidian reminder of the perils of gluttony is dismantled and separated into its literal and abstract meanings. The result of this fracture: a giant bundle of hot-rod grass supporting a slightly depressed stoplight who is lamenting the loss of a dear friend.

I create fantastic objects with tipped, propped, teetering and unbalanced fragments of American cultural imagery. My works often employ juxtapositions of languages of form; from roughshod and comical to super clean and serious. I am interested in how these relationships can address and inform issues of representation i.e., the validity of truth versus the realization of fiction.

I pull from what I see in my urban surroundings. There is always a sense of dread fused with optimism that prevails. Is it beautiful? Fragments of low-riders and tricked-out cars become symbols of desire and the glowing red lens of a stop light becomes a Cyclops poised to defend his garden. Candy-coated, blooming, dripping and seductively slick confronts you with the obvious warning: STOP! You could be next... ..The grass really is greener on *The Other Side of the Fence*. At least until winter comes.

Recurring themes in my works include commodification, defense and desire. My work examines the relationships between things as a metonym of relationships among people. I create personified objects that act as psychological stand-ins for real situations. In my most recent works I approach this as a series of questions, or “what ifs.”

I try to maintain a sense of the hysterical and even the absurd; my pieces are designed with a sense of theatricality, or a heightened dramatic presence. They are built with an attention to the overall scale, position and attitude to elicit a dramatic response. The resulting works are often as curious as they are confident and as awkward as they are proud. I explore these relationships through a kind of sculptural collage, a system in which ideas collide leaving in their wake a palette of impossible hybrids.

I generally approach each project anew, in search of a challenge and an opportunity to learn a new process. My methods range from traditional sculptural techniques to CAD design and digital imaging. This variety of techniques affords me the opportunity to work on several projects at a time, and encourages a cross-pollination of discrete elements. Thus the sculptures form apparently natural connections between disparate elements, creating their unique somewhat disjointed teleological and ontological presence.

“Let the fuckers work that one out¹.”

¹ John Lennon to Peter Shotton, upon finishing the lyrics to “I am the Walrus”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_The_Walrus

Images

{Figure 1: The Other Side of the Fence.}



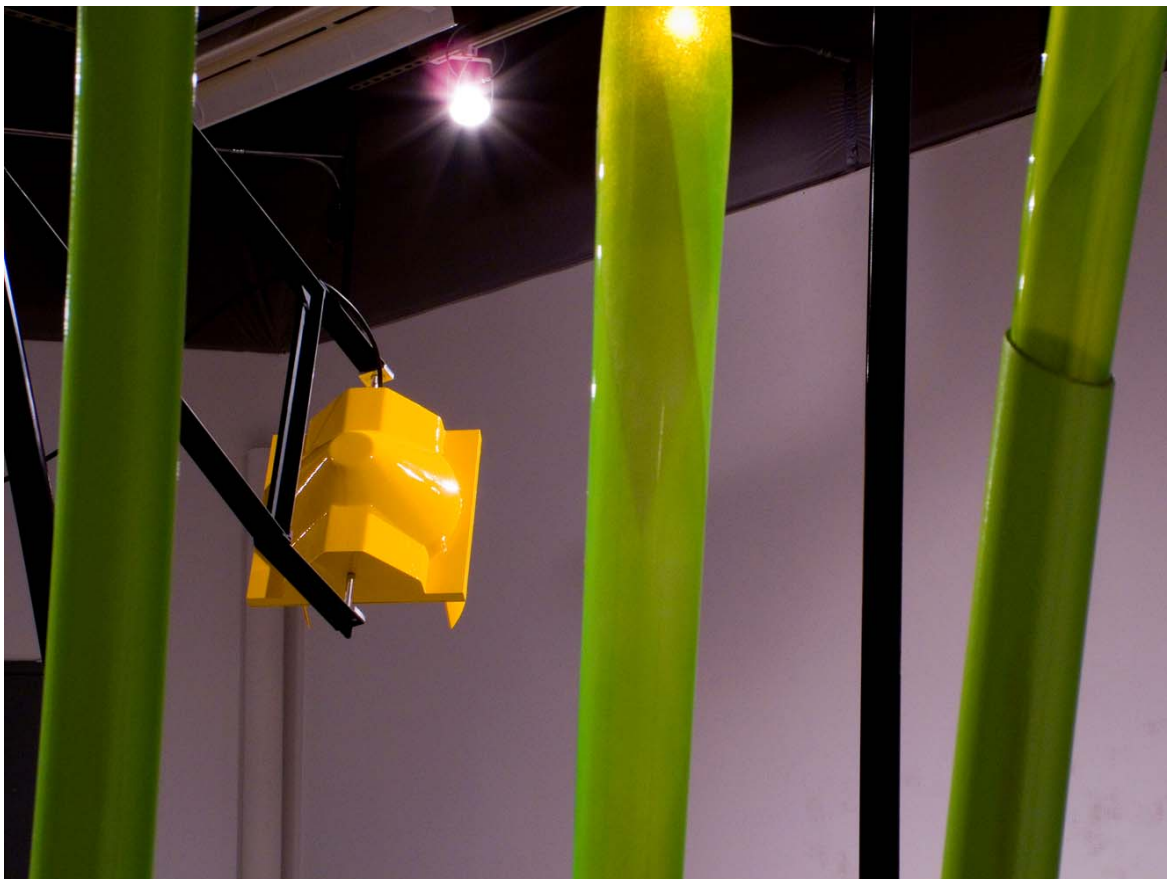
{Figure 2: The Other Side of the Fence.}



{Figure 3: The Other Side of the Fence.}



{Figure 4: The Other Side of the Fence.}



{Figure 5: The Other Side of the Fence.}



Literature Cited

- 1) Wikipedia, "I am the Walrus"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_The_Walrus

VITA

Benjamin S. Jones

B@BenjaminSJones.com

Group and Solo Exhibitions

- 2006 Arlington Arts Center, Arlington, Va.
 '*New Art Examined*'
 Inns of Virginia, Richmond, Va.
 '*I Mean C'mon, Fluff My Pillow*'
 Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Va.
 MFA Thesis Exhibition
 '*Other Side of the Fence*'
 Flat International, Richmond, Va.
 '*Fast, Cheap and out of Control*'
- 2005 Corrugated Box, Richmond, Va.
 '*Are We There Yet?*'
 Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington, De.
 '*MFA Biennial*', Curated by J. Susan Isaacs, PhD
 SkyLab, Columbus, Ohio
 '*Exchange Rate*'
 Stevenson-Blanche Gallery, Valencia, Ca.
 '*Sweet Substitute*',
- 2004 The Warehouse Block Building, Richmond, Va.
 '*Top Shelf*', Curated by Lisa Schroeder (Schroeder-Romero Gallery;
 Brooklyn/Chelsea, NYC)
 Flat International, Richmond, Va.
 '*Polymorphously Perverse*'
 FAB Gallery. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Va.
 '*Primordial Ooze*', Organized by Kendal Buster
 Peninsula Arts Center, Columbus, Ohio.
 '*The Big One*', Bachelor of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition.
 With Assistance from Ohio State University; Columbus, Ohio
 Arts Annex Gallery, Columbus, Ohio
- 2003 Ohio Union, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
 '*Recent Acquisitions*', *Ohio Staters Collection Exhibition*

Exposures Gallery, Columbus, Ohio
 ACME Art Company, Columbus, Ohio
 Hopkins Hall Gallery, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
2003 Undergraduate Juried Exhibition, Juried by OSU Faculty and Visiting Artists
 Hopkins Hall Gallery, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

Education

2006 Master of Fine Arts, Concentration: Sculpture
 Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Sculpture and Extended Media
 2004 Bachelor of Fine Arts with Distinction, Magna Cum Laude
 Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio. 3.72 GPA

Honors and Recognition

2006 International Sculpture Center, Outstanding student Achievement in contemporary sculpture nominee (2006)
 2005-2006 School of the Arts Scholarship
 (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia)
 Graduate Teaching Assistantship
 (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia)
 2004-2005 School of the Arts Scholarship
 (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia)
 Graduate Teaching Assistantship
 (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia)
 2004 Recipient of the 2004 Edith Fergus-Gillmore Memorial Scholarship
 (Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio)
 Ohio State University Undergraduate Research Scholarship
 (Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio)
 2003 Recipient of the 2003 Edith Fergus-Gillmore Memorial Scholarship
 (Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio)

Residencies

2006 Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Nebraska City, Nebraska.

Publications

Blackbird: An Online Journal of Literature and the Arts. V5n1, Spring 2006.
www.blackbird.vcu.edu

The Daily Constitutional: A Publication for the Artists Voice. V1n2, Summer 2006.
www.dailyconstitutional.org