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ONE IS CONCERNED BECAUSE ONE IS A HUMAN BEING

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

by

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Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Figures.....	v
Chapter	
1 Biography.....	7
2 Don't Accept What Can Be Changed.....	#
3 Everything Has Its Beauty But Not Everyone Sees It.....	#
4 Our Future Is Filled With Many Possibilities.....	#
5 For The Sustainability Of Our Planet.....	#
6 Art Is A Lie That Makes Us Realize Truth.....	#
References.....	#

List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1: Ellipsis.....#	#
Figure 2: From Yourself To Your Friends, From People to Animals, detail.....#	#
Figure 3: Let the Flowers Bloom On Withered Trees.#	#
Figure 4: Let the Flowers Bloom On Withered Trees, detail#	#
Figure 5: Nurture.....#	#
Figure 6: Sisyphean.....#	#
Figure7: Perspective And Relation In 150 Days.....#	#
Figure 8: Perspective And Relation in 150 Days, detail.....#	#
Figure 9: Perspective And Relation in 150 Days, detail.....#	#
Figure 10: Blue Room.....#	#
Figure 11: Blue Room, detail.....#	#
Figure 12: 907.....#	#
Figure 13: 907, detail#	#

Abstract

ONE IS CONCERNED BECAUSE ONE IS A HUMAN BEING

By Sayaka Suzuki, MFA

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

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2005

Major Director: Jack Wax
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I am a nomad. I have not had a place to call home in almost two decades. I wander around the world searching for a place to belong, only to discover the forgotten lives and silenced voices. I have come to realize that to find a “home,” I need to first create a world in which to belong to.

My recent works are investigations of possibilities for another world, a world of compassion, through a critique of our current society. I create as I rediscover the forgotten histories and lives. My work captures my process of remembering and celebrating while simultaneously imagining our capacity to function as philanthropists.

BIOGRAPHY

One is not involved by virtue of being a writer or activist (or an artist). One is involved because one is a human being.

-Arundhati Roy

My first ten years were spent in a small house across from a train station in Yokohama, Japan. It was a tightly knit community, and the close proximity of all of the houses made it nearly impossible to not know the neighbors or hear their private conversations. If I was to look out of my bedroom window, I could see through to my neighbor's rooms. Because of this closeness, I am certain that our neighbors heard my sister and I get scolded, which would make us run up the ginkgo tree and onto the rooftop to escape. The world was ours at the top of the roof -- watching trains go past; we would quietly wait for the return of our father to keep us safe from punishment. From this address, 5-14-15, my sister and I went to a Buddhist nursery school, where we recited our prayers in the mornings. We walked to school everyday through a tiny alleyway, and if you stretched out both of your hands, you could touch both sides of the surrounding walls. By the time we were in Elementary School we often made a stop by the candy store where they still sold old-fashioned treats: no M&M's and potato chips there but plum candy and Ramune snacks. We got our first cat from the local postman, a snake from a man that ran a fish market, and collected lizards from all over the neighborhood.

(One time my sister caught a cockroach having mistaken it for a lizard.) On the weekends, we walked up the dark mountain trail to see my grandparents. I used to get frightened walking through the mountain at night. It's not so scary anymore, not because of my maturity, but because the city has leveled the surrounding mountains for the development of apartments and highways. Eighteen years later, my old house along with half of the neighborhood has been demolished. It has now become a 27-story apartment building with shops on the street level.

Over 18 years ago, I left the comfort of home and I have not felt the same deep sense of belonging since January of 1987. For almost two decades, I have been a foreigner wherever I went. I spent my teen years in utter confusion. Having been born in Japan, and having done much of my growing up in the United States and England, I have faced an identity crisis much different from the normal 'coming of age' confusion. What is it to be Japanese in the United States and England, to be acclimated yet so alienated at the same time? What makes a person be from the United States or England, when in fact, so many are immigrants? What makes me be from Japan when I can barely read the National Newspaper or understand the national temperaments? I am a permanent resident in the United States, a temporary resident in England, and have become a "Gaijin,"(a foreigner) in Japan. I feel that I do not belong here, there, or anywhere anymore.

This aspect of belonging 'somewhere' has shaped me into being a person who perceives life as a global spectrum. Through my personal journey, I have begun to think of myself as an individual always trying to find and fit myself into a "society."

How does one belong?

Where does one fit in the world?

How are we linked?

Through my work, I attempt to investigate this aspect of 'being' and what it is to "be-one-amongst many." My work is a direct reflection of and reaction to current American society: a throw away society, a society where lives are commodified, and a society where one's importance is showcased by material wealth. Things are always getting 'improved' and 'enriched.' I am concerned with what and who is being left behind, overlooked, or shoved beneath the carpet. As I search for my place in the world, I want to create a place for all those who are forgotten, ignored, and under represented. I want my work to do what the historian Howard Zinn and writer like Studs Terkel do: find the forgotten history and (re)capture it through the eyes of the workers, the survivors, the fighters, and those without voice.

DON'T ACCEPT WHAT CAN BE CHANGED

At a time when opportunism is everything, when hope seems lost, when everything boils down to a cynical business deal, we must find the courage to dream. To reclaim romance. The romance of believing in justice, in freedom, and in dignity. For everybody.

- Arundhati Roy (p.116)

Living in a concrete jungle inhaling the toxic fumes of the city, having skyscrapers hovering over us, one can feel alienated and distanced from others and ourselves. As we live like ants in a colony, one can lose sight of how we can and perhaps “ought to live.” My work, simply stated, is an investigation of possibilities for another world and a critique of our current society. I create as I rediscover forgotten histories and lives. My work captures my process of remembering, and celebrating while simultaneously imagining our capacity to function as philanthropists.

I am influenced a great deal by the unexpected heroes of past history. These heroes are: often the illiterate, landless, peasants who have picked up arms to protect their land and their freedom; they are often the people in prison who organize their cellmates

in order to protect themselves from police brutality; and they are often the people who go into factory farms and laboratories to investigate the inhuman treatment of animals. My heroes are often those who pick up their pens and paper, and who record with their cameras: they capture the history “accurately,” it is a history that is often concealed from us, by the popular media. Some of these brave people risk their own freedom to bring freedom and justice to others. These unknown people are my everyday heroes. The actions of these individuals have not always been grand in scale. They do not always affect our laws, not the governments’ decision-making processes, and these individuals do not stop wars nor end corruption. However, these people, it can be said, have all dropped a stone in the water. They have throughout history shown their fellow citizens that another “World” is possible.

These ordinary people inspire me because despite their often-desperate situations they fight, in an attempt to better themselves, their community, and their future. They have taken control over their own lives. They have left the doors ajar for possibilities. The strength that individuals possess, their persistence in fighting to create a better world is not only admirable, but also the root of my inspiration and my motivation to create. They have made me realize the importance of the individual as a catalyst and as a believer for a sustainable world. Also, on a personal level, I find comfort in their sense of community, the world as a community. Yoko Ono once stated during an interview:

We are all breathing the same air, and we are all connected to the world by air.

It is an amazing thing that we are connected to the world by air.
All our thoughts travel through the air.
So when you are thinking of something, don't feel that it is not going to amount to
anything because you are in some small corner.
Your thoughts will change the world...
What we are thinking creates society, and not just society,
but our body, our family and our environment as well.

I am a nomad. I have not had a place to truly call home in almost two decades. Perhaps this is why I find commonality with the people who are seeking something better for themselves: autonomy, protection, and/or representation, a rightful place in society. I find that I too am seeking a place. As I wander around the world, I am longing to find a place, a like-minded community where the ideologies and beliefs reflect those of my own.

In my wanderings, I have encountered many incidents of neglect of the environment, and have noted the suffering of both people and animals. Our planet is being neglected and abused for corporate greed and societal gluttony. And many people and animals of the world do not have a place to claim- they are the forgotten- they are the by-products of our society. I feel that if I am to find my own home, the place where I want to "belong", I have to first create a world in which to belong to. Through my work, through social critique, I attempt to create this world - a world of possibilities and compassion.

EVERYTHING HAS ITS BEAUTY BUT NOT EVERYONE SEES IT
-Confucius

I want to create a world where whispers, whimpers, and whistles are heard. I want to create a world without specie-ism through creating objects and the representations of lives that are often neglected and forgotten. By anthropomorphizing my subjects in the works, I work to depict both the enchanting and destructiveness of the human species and its culture.

Do people see the beauty and intricacy in even the smallest of mundane objects? I created *Ellipsis* to address the hidden beauty of our culture. The collected pecan nuts in this piece were soaked in water and dried out; this was done in order to crack the nut to reveal the hidden seed that nested within. The seed was then replicated in clear glass to be encased back into its original shell. By replicating and replacing the seed in glass, often seen as a precious, fragile material, I wanted to speak about the value and preciousness of these small nuts. In *Ellipsis* my intension was to speak of the quiet and wondrous beauty of pecan nuts and the life sustaining power of these objects. As these

nuts are produced and fall to the ground, they are harvested by critters or return to the soil for further growth. There is ephemeral beauty to uninhibited and untouched nature that people often overlook. There is honesty to their existence. It is their struggle to grow through concrete and bricks that brings a smile to my face. The unrelenting power of nature that peeks through the paved cityscape is captivating. I wanted the viewers to stumble upon the glass nuts in a gallery and realize all the beauty that exists in the world, and go back out in real space to look for the enchanting intricacies the world has to offer.

From Yourself to Your Friends, From People to Animals is based on my witnessing of the death of a handful of baby birds one summer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. However, the experience cannot be as easily stated as such, as these were dying animals that were still breathing and grasping for their last air...holding on somehow to life. Initially I took photographs of the birds to capture their last moment and to commemorate and to preserve their lives. I was both fascinated by the beauty and intricacy of their small fragile bodies and I was simultaneously disheartened by their situation. Yet, it was not the actual death of the birds that gave me the impetus to make this work, but rather, it was the carelessness of the people who proceeded to step, unaware, upon their dying bodies. I feel that many people have become too self-absorbed and shortsighted. In the rush of time, people have stopped giving themselves the opportunity to pause and to breathe, to look at the ground while strolling and to enjoy the other living species that surround our own. In *From Yourself to Your Friends, People to Animals*, 3" x 3" etchings of dead baby

birds and shades of gray were tiled up against the wall to create a larger 46" x 50.5" image. This grid references the geometry of the sidewalks and bricks, simultaneously speaking of how our culture has learned to live in a tightly organized grid - so centralized and confined. Through the replicating my own experience in the form of prints, I had hoped to create a situation where the viewer might make discoveries about their own peripheral environment. This piece was a direct response to this social temperament; longing for few minutes of silence and a moment to reclaim our senses (without the rumbling sounds of car engines in the background.)

Life and death... I wonder how we have become so desensitized to this integral element of life. How has our culture, a so-called modern and civilized culture, come to this? Not only have we lost touch with the cycle of life in all that surrounds us as people, but we as species have also seem to have lost touch with the unity of human life. Imagine a school bus, packed with kids.

Picture it.
That School bus you're picturing,
the common yellow kind,
holds about 50 students.
That's a lot of kids.

Now imagine seven buses.

Those buses are full of girls,
mostly around 16 years of age.
Three hundred and fifty
sixteen-year old girls.

That's how many have been murdered

in Juarez, Mexico,
over the past decade.

-Jeremy P. Bushnell

These are the whispers, moans, and cries unheard by the general public. This is a femicide of mostly factory workers and the children of Mexico. I began the creative process of *Kare Ki Ni Hana O Sakasemashou: Let the Flowers Bloom on Withered Trees* immediately upon learning about this incident in *Clamor* magazine. The impetus for creation was sparked by my emotional response to an article by Jeremy P. Bushnell and the image of seven buses filled with children that grabbed me. This is a tragedy I felt that everyone needed to know about. This is an unsolved genocide that will continue to occur without any public pressure for further investigation. My voice is embodied in this piece – it is a way to pass on my newly gained information, something that I felt strongly connected to.

Let the Flowers Bloom on Withered Trees stands 15 feet tall like a totem pole; it is a commemorative piece for the girls of Juarez. The surface of the pole is completely covered with pink plastic flowers that represent the number of deaths thus far. Numbers and statistics are easily perceived as abstract and lifeless, when in fact, these particular numbers represented the number of human lives that were lost. I personally needed to make physical this number- 350- to understand the graveness of the situation. The form and the color reflected the actions of the activists of Juarez who painted pink crosses on

electric poles whenever a body was found. Plastic flowers were used because of the cheap labor that goes into creating them, the same kind of work that the victims of Juarez might have done. Throughout cultures around the world, plastic flowers are used both for funerary and celebratory events. By using mass quantities of flowers and the text on the wall, I wanted to create both a somber feeling and simultaneous celebration of the lives of the girls. The pink acrylic text on the wall was important because whatever feelings the viewer was left with, the text was central to telling the story; the tragedy has now been told, though it may be forgotten in few years time by the viewer, the girls will not, not have had their moment of commemoration.

My motivation for creation lies in my hope for the triumph of the human spirit. I want the whispers, moans, and cries to be heard. I long for an inclusive society with a place for everyone to belong.

OUR FUTURE IS FILLED WITH MANY POSSIBILITIES

Our future is filled with many possibilities but we have to take a chance, ‘to help create an atmosphere in which change is not only possible, but inevitable. We have to stay engaged, because giving up doesn’t accomplish anything.

The real reason behind both my social practice and studio practice is to create this atmosphere for change. My work is a way of sharing knowledge- and sharing my social concerns as they are informed by personal beliefs, values, and experiences. By bringing to the forefront all my concerns and curiosities, I hope to reach a wider audience than by merely thinking about these things. There is more guilt in learning something and not doing anything about it than there is in being ignorant. The issues that concern me the most are those that individuals have direct control over, central to my concern is worldwide consumerism.

I have created several pieces relating to people’s consumer practices. My concern regarding this activity is the lack of conscientious decision-making on the part of the individuals. My personal philosophy holds that all life is precious, despite its status in the food chart. It is difficult for me to disregard the lives of dairy cows, silkworms, and pigs. These three species of animals are all treated as a means to an end: cows for milk, worms for silk, pigs for their flesh. How can one consider a life as a means to an end?

This philosophy is equivalent to the justifications made during World War II for ethnic cleansing, and those made for “collateral damage” in all of the current warfare.

As often as Herman had witnessed the slaughter of animals and fish, he always had the same thought: in their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right.

– Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Enemies: A Love Story*

A series of pieces I made was based on this treatment of lives as a means to an end; I used glass to represent the fragility and preciousness of life.

Nurture was based on the fact that people are one of the only mammals that consume milk past infancy and even consume milk from another animal. This piece speaks to multiple issues: the above fact, how humans consume dairy products en masse, the mechanization of lives, the suffering involved, and most of all, how is milk produced and for who? Who is supposed to be nurtured with this milk produced by the dairy cow?

In *Nurture*, several glass baby bottles are arranged on the floor in such a way to mimic a flowing puddle on the ground. A silhouette of a hanging cow is painted above the bottles- a sacrificial victim. No calf is present- it has been replaced by baby bottles that were made for people. There is dichotomy created between seemingly innocent piece decorated with transparent and reflective glass and the violent gesture of a hanging cow. Things are not always as clean and innocent as they seem. I hope the viewers will consider this next time they go down the dairy aisle in a supermarket.

Is it a common knowledge that silk is a protein fiber- a fiber made up of animal parts? In the manufacturing of silk, the worms are boiled to death after they complete the cycle of cocooning, just before they emerge from their shells. The unpunctured cocoon (with the shriveled worm inside) is then unraveled into a filament of shiny, slick silk. If the worm is allowed to hatch and puncture the cocoon, the silk is broken up and the shine is dulled and considered to be inferior. Therefore, silkworms are killed, not by necessity, but for the convenience of peoples' conventions of beauty.

Sisyphean was created upon learning these facts. Is it necessary to sacrifice a life for something as abstract as beauty- a socially constructed idea? Is the life of a worm so insignificant that they should be boiled to death in the hundreds to provide one with a shirt or a sheet? Once again, text was an important aspect of this piece; I used it as a tool to get the important information across. At an initial glance, this work is peaceful-- off-white text on white felt with felted glass bubbles that hang and sway with the slightest movement of the viewer. This visual peace and comfort is related back to that of finished silk. Yet as one sifts through the text (that has no spacing), one will pick out crucial words that describe the manufacturing process of silk. I believe that lives should not be terminated for luxury: that was a simple message embodied by this piece.

In a factory farm, an average pig will live for 150 days before it is taken to be slaughtered as opposed to its natural lifespan of thirty-five years.

Perspective and Relation in 150 Days was my first attempt at creating an

environment. It is almost a theatrical stage setting that was meant to mimic what it might be like to walk into a small factory farm. The creation of this piece was a turning point in my work, as it was where I began to create works that were intended to be viewed outside of “The White Cube.” I wished for it to be installed in a raw space with red brick walls and gray-cemented floors. I wanted my works to be able to live anywhere, in places where anyone can see them. I began to think of ways to use the architecture of spaces to converse with the work themselves. In this particular installation, the details like the cobwebs and the way the shadows were cast through the window bars were considered.

Against a wall of cinder blocks amongst the cobwebs is a puzzled together image of a larger- than-life sized mother pig. I imagined the size of the sow to be what the piglets might experience being with their mother. A distance away from the drawing is a stand created with aged, recycled palette wood that supports a handful of delicate, small, glass piglets. The distance between each speaks to the unattainable comfort of one another’s company in a factory farm. Because of this physical separation and their short lifespan of 150 days, the piglets will never experience familial love. I felt a correlation of how the piglets may feel to how I often feel- with a great body of water that separates myself from my family. Though I chose to place myself in this situation, the sow and the piglets are forced into this environment because of human desires and gluttony. I created this piece with empathy and hope that perhaps people will consider these things when they purchase their next slab of bacon.

FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR PLANET:

What is precious in this contemporary world?

Is it gold and diamonds?

Is it money or material wealth?

Is it social and political power?

Or is it the sustainability of our planet?

Are our water resources precious?

Is the air that we breathe precious?

We live in a disposable society. So many trashcans overflow with plastic, glass, metal and paper from our post-consumer refuse. I am concerned about the sustainability of our planet.

My small, small “world” is filled with resourceful, thoughtful, and conscientious consumers. This is a world, (a culture), where old ‘spent’ produce from local supermarkets and bakeries are transformed into edible meals for the hungry. This is a culture where exhausted materials are brought back to life and reused, through a little creativity and a lot of research. I having realized the extreme near-sightedness and

unsustainability of the current consumer-culture, and have adapted as my own, the idea of recycling and remaking anew.

All of these concerns have in one way or another filtered back into my studio practice.

I have been collecting used papers for the past two years while in graduate school—just for the sake of reusing and recycling, and to ensure that we make the most of the materials at hand. These are computer papers with only one side used. All of the papers have since then become precious to me, especially after having collected so many. It has made me realize in extreme just how incredibly wasteful our culture is. These papers are mundane and yet precious at the same time. They are mundane because of our everyday use, yet precious because our resources are being diminished as our rainforests and ecosystem are being destroyed, all so that our culture can continue to thrive on wastefulness.

With all this in mind, I saw potential in these standard 8.5 x 11 computer papers. How can I capture this sense of preciousness and have them transform into something else? I wanted to create with other people's waste to give the papers another life, by creating something new. These pieces of paper were transformed into an atmospheric installation that covers the entirety of my 10' x 10' graduate studio space. The small space is covered floor to ceiling with recycled papers that have been spray-painted blue to echo the color of the sky. It was important to me that the papers be

recycled, yet this is not at the forefront of the piece. The written prints seeps through from the back of the paper, just enough to give the resonance to the act of recycling.

I have also used recycled bed sheets as the main material for my piece, '907.' These sheets have the aroma of their past history, the smells of dust and the dirt of thrift stores. It is amazing to realize just how many sheets are out there "living-in" thrift stores. Instead of purchasing 907 animals worth of crisp clean black fabric, I chose to start with materials that were already available, as post-consumer waste products. As I worked with the materials, each reflected its own history. Each sheet of fabric (depending on the initial color and material) dyes a different shade: sometimes blue-black, sometimes, green-black, at other times, a hue of purple. These surprise moments were revealed to me as I took them out of the dye bucket. I listened to how the history of the materials insisted on being heard.

The 907 stuffed animals made of fabric is an attempt to show the complexities of the human/animal interaction. It mostly speaks to the commodification of life. Through this piece, I allow the viewer to see beyond the opaque architecture of slaughterhouses. What is happening at the base of the smokestack, I see as genocidal violence. It is a place where billions of lives are lost under stun guns: they are snuffed out by the slash of a knife; they are choked by overcrowding and the murderous treatment by people. All of this is done to suit "civilization's" selfish desires.

Nine hundred and seven: this is but one statistic, on a scale of perhaps a low estimate. This is how many animals people (in the west) on average eat in their lifetime.

This piece is not about vegetarianism as much as it is an attempt to evoke compassion and to give a voice to the voiceless. Does one need to consume nearly a thousand lives in order to survive?

I want the world to see animals for what they are: beings with similar needs and desires; like the need for water, shelter, and love. Animals do not come as pre-packaged meat in Styrofoam; they are living, breathing things that once roamed the earth freely.

By bringing the slaughterhouse to an urban setting, I hope to raise the level of consumer consciousness.

I like the idea of taking apart to make new. I like the idea of recycling and reusing to extend the lives of the 'exhausted' materials: old hay, old palette wood, old sheets, and used paper. By utilizing these 'spent' materials and transforming them, I get to start with the history that the material innately carries with it: dried insects, aged and stained wood and fabric bed sheets, my own and other people's writing on the paper. These 'exhausted' materials seem to have much more potential for me than the new, because of their histories, and because they are 'spent' by many standards. It is exciting to breath new life into these materials, and simultaneously be a conscious consumer/creator.

ART IS A LIE THAT MAKES US REALIZE TRUTH**-Pablo Picasso (p26 Zinn)**

Some artists create at the margins of society, others create from within. Artists that inspire me are those who have embedded themselves within society; they dream from the heart of life- of survival, of possibilities, of truth untold in history books. These artists function not only as creators but also as historians, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and at times, activists. Through varying populist modes of working such as prints, mural paintings, graffiti, performances and poster art, many artists create not with the intention of exhibiting in galleries and museums, but to communicate their ideas and concerns to a broader public.

From the late 1800's throughout the 1920's, Kathe Kollwitz -a German expressionist artist- captured life and the experiences of war from the perspectives of ordinary people. She was interested in creating work that reflected the social-economic conditions of the World War I era. Her drawings and prints capture the resounding compassion she had for her subjects: people living in poverty, people of the working class, people suffering from the conditions of war, and the women who have experienced loss of the loved ones as she did. I aspire to capture the kind of emotional spirit and

intensity that Kollwitz instilled in her drawings, together with the sense of history and the timelessness of varied human conditions.

A decade later in the United States during the depression era, the social realist painter Ben Shahn was creating similar kinds of work through photographic documentation and paintings. I came to know his works through my interest in the case of two Italian anarchists, Sacco and Venzetti, who were executed for their political beliefs. In this instance, Shahn did series of paintings of them. Shahn's style differs from that of Kollwitz in that it is more literal than sensory-driven. If Kollwitz worked like a sociologist, Shahn approached his work as a historian. His Sacco and Venzetti series inspired me to create *Let the Flowers Bloom on Withered Trees* about the women of Juarez, Mexico. As Shahn did with his work, I wanted to document the little known incident.

Outside of the traditional art making, I am interested in ways in which art works can live out side of galleries and museums. For Diego Rivera, a Mexican painter, the foundation of history could be seen in the working class whose lives were spent by war and industry in the name of progress. He investigated the struggles of the working class through his mural paintings. An aspect of Rivera's work that intrigued me was his choice of technique. He chose murals for the ability to introduce his work and ideas into the daily lives of people. This idea of accessibility has become an important issue in my studio practice. Today much of 'art' is created within a closed society; ultimately it is

taken out of all contexts and into the 'art world.' As a creator, I am still exploring the boundaries of what 'art' is and can be. As Rivera's murals did, I want my work to speak in 'an ordinary language' integrated with the source of its ideas and people.

A British graffiti artist, Banksy, works in the same manner as Rivera did, using the streets as canvas, an opportunity to express his creativity and ideas. The striking work of Banksy is where he chooses to create his works: dark street corners, highway bridges, zoos, and car parks. "Writing graffiti is about the most honest way you can be an artist. It takes no money to do it, you don't need an education to understand it, there's no admission fee and bus stops are far more interesting and useful places to have pictures than in museums... Graffiti ultimately wins out over proper art because it becomes part of your city, it's a tool..." I like this idea of my artwork and my ideas becoming directly a part of my environment.

Another British artist, Sue Coe, has had a tremendous impact on my life. Because of her published book *Dead Meat*, I will never eat meat again. Through her prints and paintings, she captures the violence and inhumanity of our society. She depicts the lameness of animals, their helplessness in the artificial confinements that people have created, and the violence of men against one another. 'She is not interested in social theory so much as in social practice: the way human beings treat one another and those that are at our mercy.' Her images are gestural, raw, and often violent. She demands to be heard. Stylistically my work is the polar opposite of that of Coe. However, I admire

her intentions and what she does as both artist and as an activist. She practices what she preaches.

Recently, I have had another influential experience. During my second semester of my first year of graduate school, I wanted to run away... away with the Bread and Puppet Theater of Vermont. Peter Schumann, a German dancer, musician, and a sculptor envisioned Bread and Puppet Theater in the 1960s. It is a deeply political theater group that creates props out of cardboards and other refuse. Through their performances, they are 'able to give voice to all that has been hurt and forgotten in the on-rush of civilization.' With their singing, dancing, and laughter, they captivated me. I felt included as a part of a community of ideas. I realized then that this is what I wanted my work to do. First of all, I want my work to be honest to the materials - have their histories speak through them - and I wanted maintain the integrity of all that is important to me. I desire that my work bring people together in understanding, even if it is just for a moment, in a way similar to the work of Bread and Puppet Theater.

Stylistically, my influences go far and in between, ranging from the traditions of painting and printmaking, murals, graffiti and performances. Contextually, my interests are focused on social consciousness. Aside from the artists mentioned, my work is also heavily influenced and informed by my readings that encompass the political, the social, the anthropological, and the philosophical. My concerns are filled with multiplicity and complicity. Because of this and my experiences, my work is sometimes

contradictory. Yet it is through creating and the creative process that I sift through all my information about our history, our present, and our future. I create in search for possibilities for another world, an inclusive world, where I, along with all of the other forgotten people and animals can find a place to live.

What I am trying to achieve through my work and my activism is to create possibilities. Howard Zinn said it best when he stated:

'Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment (beware of such moments!) but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag toward a more decent society. We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world. Even when we don't "win," there is fun and fulfillment in the fact that we have been involved, with other good people, in something worthwhile. We need hope... to be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness... The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.'

-Howard Zinn

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education

2003-05 Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Masters of Fine Arts
1996-00 Newcomb College, Tulane University, New Orleans LA
Bachelors of Fine Arts in Glass/Sculpture
Double Major in Political Science
1993-96 The American School in London, London, England

selected exhibitions / publications

May 2005 *907*, Masters of Fine Arts Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA
Mar. 2005 *Activist Art Show*, University of Richmond, VA
Spring 2005 *Food Activism*, Sustainable Eating Magazine, Issue #2
Nov. 2004 *Top Shelf* at The Barrel Factory, Richmond, VA
Nov. 2004 *PYT* at Flat International Gallery, Richmond, VA
Oct. 2004 MFA Sculpture Exhibition at Buford Gallery, Richmond, VA
Sept. 2004 *HoDge PoDGe* at Buford Gallery, Richmond, VA
May 2004 *Candid* Group exhibition at Plant Zero, Richmond, VA
Feb. 2004 *Kasserole* Group exhibition at Art Space, Richmond, VA
Nov. 2003 *Wo(a)nder* at Buford Gallery, Richmond, VA
Nov. 2003 *Made in Virginia* at Longwood University, Farmville, VA
Oct. 2003 Invitational Publication
Unnatural Materials Kansas City Review Vol. 5. No 6

- Oct. 2002 *Reconstructing the Hoop* , Solo Exhibition
Pensacola Museum of Art, FL
- Aug. 2002 *Paperwork* Group Invitational Exhibition
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans, LA
- Apr. 2002 Juried Exhibition, Tom Peyton Memorial Arts Festival
Alexandria, LA
- Apr. 2001 *No Dead Artist* Juried Exhibition
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans, LA
- Oct. 2000 *100-Mile Radius: New Orleans* Juried Exhibition
Pensacola Museum of Art, FL
- 2000 *Trickling Effect* Invitational Exhibition
Martin LaBorde Gallery, New Orleans, LA
- May 2000 *Retrograde* Bachelors of Fine Arts Exhibition
Carroll Gallery, New Orleans, LA

scholarships and awards

- 2005 Artist in Residency at The Studio, Corning Museum of
Glass 2003,04 Graduate School Scholarship
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
- 2004 Full Scholarship at Pilchuck School of Glass, WA
- 2004 Full Scholarship at The Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass
- 2002, 04 Studio Assistantships at The Studio, Corning Museum of Glass,
Corning, NY
- 2003 John Roos Memorial Scholarship
Virginia Commonwealth University, VA
- 2003 Studio Assistant at Centro Studio Vetro, Venice
- 2000 *Best of Show* Pensacola Museum of Art, FL
- 2000-02 Scholarships at Penland School of Crafts, NC

Teaching Positions

- Fall 2005 Adjunct Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University
Introduction to Casting and Advanced Casting
- Summer 2004 Adjunct Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University
Introduction to Glass Blowing
- June 2004,02 Teaching assistant for Kimiake Higuchi and Shinichi Higuchi
The Studio of Corning Museum of Glass, NY
- Fall 2003 Teaching Assistant to Professor Jack Wax,
Virginia Commonwealth University
- Aug 2003 Teaching assistant to Kimiake Higuchi and Shinichi Higuchi
Centro Studio Vetro, Venice, Italy

advanced studies

- July 2004 Workshop at Pilchuck Glass School, WA
Hot Glass with Boyd Sugiki
- June 2004 Workshop at The Studio of Corning Museum of Glass, NY
Hot Glass with William Gudenrath
- June 2002 Workshop at Penland School of Crafts, NC
Hot Glass with Einar de la Torre and Jamex de la Torre
- April 2002 Assistant for Mark Rosenbaum in *Modern Masters Series*
Home and Gardening Television
- 2000-02 Gaffer and assistant at Rosetree Glass Studio/Gallery
- 2001 Workshop at Penland School of Crafts, NC
Flameworking with Janis Miltenberger and Diane Benciolini
- July 2000 Workshop at Penland School of Crafts, NC
Hot Glass with Laura Donefer and Jeff Holmwood
- 1999 Workshop at Glass House Studio, Tokyo, Japan
Hot Glass with Mamoru Uchida and Hiroshi Kaito
- 1998-00 Assistant to Professor Gene Koss, Tulane University,
New Orleans, LA