Suffering Juicebox

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A DOCUMENTATION OF THE ONE-PERSON EXHIBITION SUBMITTED TO THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

BY Janelle O’Malley

DEKALB, ILLINOIS

March, 2024
CATALOG

Documentation of the One-Person Exhibition

By

Janelle O’Malley

The following work is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of (Arts or Fine Arts) degree at Northern Illinois University. The work was produced between January 2024 and March 2024. It was presented in an exhibition from March 4, 2024 through March 8, 2024 in the Anette and Jerry Johns Gallery Visual Arts Building, Northern Illinois University – DeKalb, Illinois.
List of Works

1. **Crushed**, 2024  
   Foam, joint compound, pigment, celluclay, nylon rope, plastic chain, found objects.  
   60”x144”

2. **Where Does the Sidewalk End?**, 2024  
   Celluclay, pigment, plaster, sidewalk chalk, found objects on panel.  
   30”x68”

3. **Spilling Her Guts Out**, 2024  
   Found mailbox, celluclay, gel medium, cellophane, juicebox, fresh flowers.  
   20”x6”

4. **I’ll Just Lay Here Awhile**, 2024  
   Foam, Bicycle tire, Celluclay, pigment, plaster, found objects.  
   10”x12”x5”

5. **Pity Party**, 2024  
   Wire, celluclay, pigment, ceramic, birthday candles, sidewalk chalk, found objects.

6. **I’m Giving You This Trauma**, 2024  
   00:05:00 performance.

7. **I Don’t Wanna Be Your Dog**, 2024  
   Toy pet cages, foam clay, pigment, celluclay, leather, metal.

8. **Corral of Emotions**, 2024  
   Celluclay, wire, pigment, toy fencing.

9. **My Tits are Down Here**, 2024  
   Foam, celluclay, pigment, googly eyes, fresh flowers.

10. **Turning Tricks on the Playground**, 2024  
    Found wood shelves, gelli bracelets, celluclay, pigment.

11. **Pressure Coming Down**, 2024  
    Found wood shelf, celluclay, gesso, sidewalk chalk, found objects.

12. **Crocodile Tear**, 2024  
    Wire Mesh, celluclay, pigment, gloss varnish.

13. **Blah ba Blah Blah**, 2024  
    Cups, celluclay, pigment, silicone, found telephone cord.

14. **Skidded**, 2023  
    Sidewalk chalk, candy and fake teeth on panel.

15. **Where the Sidewalk Flowers Grow**, 2024  
    Wood, wire, celluclay, pigment, chewed bubblegum.

16. **It’s Only a Phase**, 2024  
    Found wood shelf, celluclay, turf, pigment and found objects.
Objective

*Suffering Juicebox* investigates the confluences of nostalgia, trauma and identity making by means of sculpture and performance. Creating pieces with built layers of material and found objects *Suffering Juicebox* takes shape through collecting, forming, layering, petrifying, erasing and reimagining. Pieces are assembled into scenes attempting to rebuild what cannot be obtained. The objects collected and used are metaphors for the memories we accumulate.

*Suffering Juicebox* explores how gender and identity are created through layers of memory, nostalgia and trauma. Nostalgia’s etymology comes from the greek words nostos meaning “return home” and algos meaning “pain”, and together the word means homesickness. Using internal and exterior domestic views I create moments of displacement, trying to find a sense of home in the chaos. The imagery of the juicebox is used to identify self and my thingness. Thingness is described as the fact of existing as a physical object. As a young woman I am objectified, I become the object. I become the collector and the collector. The juicebox character investigates these memories, often getting lost in the details of what is fact or fiction while trying to find a sense of place and self.

Historical influences

Ree Morton

Ree Morton’s work spans drawing, painting and sculptural work that explore womanhood and personal narratives. Morton employed humor and irony in her work, often using words or phrases surrounded by sets of symbols to create installations. Morton would incorporate a series of symbols including drapery, flowers, arches and ribbons that were used to create a
“confrontational innocence”. The work often used the same set of pastel yellow, pink, green and blue to exaggerate feminist themes.

**Monika Grabuschnigg**

Monika Grabuschnigg engages in themes of longing, grief and melancholy. Grabuschnigg uses domesticated and commodified objects to create sculptures and installations. She explores the beliefs and desires that inform the fundamental understanding of our being.

**Catharine Czudej**

Czudej creates sculptures, installations, paintings and films using found and created objects. She inverts and manipulates familiar objects to evoke unnatural and absurd feelings. Her work explores gender roles, labor, power dynamics, and the body. Czudej uses humor and playfulness to destabilize the items being incorporated into the work.

**Yvette Mayorga**

Yvette Mayorga is a Chicago based artist working in sculpture and painting. She explores themes of female labor, oppression and colonial art history. Mayorga uses the color pink as a weapon in her work confronting “dainty” and “feminine” connotations. Yvette’s work is covered in pipped pink paint mimicking frosting textures which speak to art historical references of lushness and class.

**Alex Da Corte**

Alex Da Corte is an interdisciplinary artist who utilizes sculpture, film and photography. He creates immersive installations and video work that incorporate pop culture and camp. Da
Corte’s work speaks about personal and cultural politics, alienation, and the complexities of the human experience.

Tom Freidman

Friendman is a conceptual artist focusing on drawing and sculpture. He utilizes mundane materials and humor to recreate moments from everyday life. Friedman plays between reality and illusion with his objects.

Edmund de Waal

Edmund de Waal is a ceramic artist and writer whose work focuses on the act of collecting and archiving. De Waal creates installation work focusing on creating a visual narrative of those objects. “How objects are handed on is all about storytelling. I am giving you this because I love you. Or because it was given to me. Because I bought it somewhere special. Because you will care for it. Because it will complicate your life. Because it will make someone envious. There is no easy story in legacy. What is remembered and what is forgotten?”.

Materials and Process

Materiality is one of the main focuses of my work. I use combinations of domestic interior and exterior objects in contention to question ideas of time and place. Combining found objects into built structures emphasizes the interplay between memory and nostalgia by using the familiar and slightly distorting it. The materials are constructed with celluclay, a strong plaster and paper pulp material. This material becomes not only an adhesive but also becomes a way to calcify and distort the found objects within the pieces. Some materials are also chosen based on
their delicateness and consumability. Ceramic, birthday candles, stickers, fresh flowers, etc. allude to fragility and impermanence. Combining these pieces with sturdier structures of wood, metal wire, and insulation foam create a duality of hard/soft, sturdy/unsturdy, and truth/lie. I use homemade sidewalk chalk to layer onto objects and cast into form. The sidewalk chalk is synonymous with childhood activities. This material is used as protective layers which could be chipped or dissolved at any moment.

My material choices also lend itself to how nostalgia and memory can create an unreliable narrator. The juicebox takes the place of the narrator throughout the pieces in Suffering Juicebox. The juicebox itself has a certain amount of nostalgia attached to it. Taking this familiar shape and recontextualizing it by giving it personhood allows me to show vignettes of memories. By twisting and crushing the juicebox I change the lines of the juicebox just enough to make it a figurative form. Coating the juicebox with plaster also stiffens the form enough to allude to a skeletal structure.

**Philosophical and Aesthetic Concepts**

**Gender**

Constructs of gender and identity play heavily into the work I create. Growing up in a time period when the constructs of female gender were being more openly questioned in media and culture made me more acutely aware of how identity was being presented and even pushed upon me. Social constructs of gender is a theoretical framework that states how we organize, express and perceive gender dynamics. I reimagine and disrupt items from my youth into sculptural pieces. These objects were very specifically marketed to girls and often would be associated with senses of belonging, purpose and defined socially constructed female gender.
Gender is a product of society and using literal gendered products speaks to this strange dynamic and how identity and our own perception of self (including our self gendering) truly diverges and subverts.

Adolescence and Identity Making

“The most important psychological and psychosocial changes in puberty and early adolescence are the emergence of abstract thinking, the growing ability of absorbing the perspectives or viewpoints of others, an increased ability of introspection, the development of personal and sexual identity. Developmental psychologists have always known children learn by imitating adults aka modeling behavior. “Media, advertisements and observation of others' behavior directly affect an adolescent child as they begin to form their identity and understanding of their gender. In order to understand those moments of memory recall I recreate and imitate much in the way that an adolescent learns through modeling of behavior. Memories are reconstructed and modeled into pieces and environments that show the process.

Shel Silverstein Where the Sidewalk Ends

Where the Sidewalk Ends was an integral poem from my childhood. The piece is widely taught to students as a first introduction to poetry. The piece itself has been debated on the definitive meaning but generally it exemplifies the transition of adolescence into adulthood. The sidewalk becomes an innocuous divide. For me the piece drives at the yearning of youth and for me is the definition of nostalgia.

There is a place where the sidewalk ends
And before the street begins,
And there the grass grows soft and white,
And there the sun burns crimson bright,
And there the moon-bird rests from his flight
To cool in the peppermint wind.
Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black
And the dark street winds and bends.
Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
And watch where the chalk-white arrows go
To the place where the sidewalk ends.

Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
And we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,
For the children, they mark, and the children, they know
The place where the sidewalk ends.

Trauma

Trauma directly affects how people remember, form new memories and can even
sometimes create false memories. Trauma in adolescence can create two different scenarios as it
relates to memory. On the one hand, certain trauma can cause memory loss and false memories.
“...Individuals with PTSD, a history of trauma, or depression are at risk for producing false
memories when they are exposed to information that is related to their knowledge base. Memory
aberrations are notable characteristics of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression.”

The other side is that sometimes trauma in adolescence can cause flashbacks or relieving
moments repeatedly. My work emphasizes this sort of trauma memory recall. For me the
memory is bright, vivid, and fresh. But for the viewer it is something they are experiencing for
the first time. The way that each memory is presented causes a viewer to question its reality since
they have not experienced that moment.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is one of the major focuses of my work. Nostalgia is from the greek nostos, to
return home and algia which roughly translates to pain or sickness. Together the words allude to
a painful yearning to return to “home”. Mu usage of exterior and interior spaces play to this
definition of nostalgia. Coupling these scenes with actual items of my youth further evoke
feelings of nostalgia.

The collected objects used not only emphasize the usage of nostalgia but also how
nostalgia is part of the identity making experience. “Nostalgia is a distinctive way, though only
one among several ways we have, of relating our past to our present and future, it follows that
nostalgia (like long term memory, like reminiscence, like daydreaming) is deeply implicated in
the sense of who we are, what we are about, and (though possibly with much less inner clarity)
whither we go.”
Citations


"Suffering Juicebox," installation view

"I'll Just Lay Here Awhile" (2024) Foam, Bicycle tire, Celluclay, pigment, plaster, found objects. 10”x12”x5”
Where Does the Sidewalk End? (2024) Celluclay, pigment, plaster, sidewalk chalk, found objects on panel 30”x68”
Crushed (2024) Foam, joint compound, pigment, celluclay, nylon rope, plastic chain, found objects 60”x144”
Suffering Juicebox, installation view
Only a Phase, (2024) Found wood shelf, celluclay, turf, pigment and found objects.

Skidded (2023)Sidewalk chalk, candy and fake teeth on panel.
Don’t Wanna Be Your Dog (2024) Toy pet cages, foam clay, pigment, celluclay, leather, metal.
"Corral of Emotions (2024)" Celluclay, wire, pigment, toy fencing.
My Tits are Down Here (2024) Foam, celluclay, pigment, googly eyes, fresh flowers.
Suffering Juicebox, installation view
Pressure Coming Down (2024) Found wood shelf, celluclay, gesso, sidewalk chalk, found objects.
Blah ba Blah Blah (2024) Cups, celluclay, pigment, silicone, found telephone cord.
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Spilling Her Guts Out (2024) Found mailbox, celluclay, gel medium, cellophane, juicebox, fresh flowers 20”x6”
Pity Party (2024) Wire, celluclay, pigment, ceramic, birthday candles, sidewalk chalk, found objects.
I'm Giving You This Trauma (2024) 00:05:00 performance