



Studio: The Immersion

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

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Introduction - Artist Statement

I am examining ways of understanding myself through objects by focusing on giving form to invisible embodiments of states like emotions, memories, and experiences. This allows me to explore the circumstances surrounding me and ask: Where do I get inspiration from? What do I hear and feel? How do I process the memories of everything I have been through? Exploring these unshaped things in my studio work allows me to give form to my accumulated experience over time. This work synthesizes and catalogs my relationship with myself through the objectification of invisible things.

Research Background and Sources – Object and Sound

During the last two years of my studio practices, I have explored a vast plain, beginning with personal storytelling and culmination in this thesis work, exploring objects and myself through my studio experience. In the beginning, I told a personal story of trauma and my physical defects (a hearing issue) through clay. And in 2020, because of the isolation of the Pandemic, I began to ask questions about the relationship between the object I made and me, and ways to express some phenomena such as the touch of clay, sound, and movement. Based on these experiences, I chose to speak my 'language' with clay, not with a pencil or pen. I want to talk and share about the moments that people cannot experience of specific space such as studio, using objects as a connection between me and the audience.

From head to hand, even though all my objects are not related to crafting, I found the need to build everything by hand and leave a trace—thinking about craft as not a fixed concept, but rather a way of doing, an idea, something fluid and deeply innate (human). Glenn Adamson argues that “it is through craft that the real work happens”—artisans as preserving the past, the collective memory, knowledge of doing/knowing/making. However, this does not negate progress. As Adamson states, craft is in motion, an active bodily experience, and I think this sense of motion and collective memory are catalysts for progress.

Purpose of Object

I am interested in the many things that surround us. These may be objects we frequently see in our daily lives, or they may be tiny microorganisms invisible to the human eye. I am particularly interested in abstract things that cannot be seen visually.

The studio, the main keyword of this thesis and the title, is the most critical space for an artist. Through working with clay--kneading it, touching it, and smelling the dust--we become immersed in the studio. In this case, the artist's hands and tools are visual objects. In addition, the artist experiences sensory repetition such as temperature, sound, and touch in the studio. Based on the above, I am using clay to express all the abstract things I experience and remember in the studio, turning this into visual objects. The following will explain why abstract objects are essential and the reasons for choosing to focus on auditory elements, which is one of the most important experiences in my studio experience.

Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) has introduced new ideas, about objects. Graham Harman argues that objects, whether human or nonhuman, natural or artificial, realistic or fictional, should be equally noted (9). What is an object? Are objects just physical things? Harman says, “[that] objects exist at numerous different scales, including the electron, the molecule, the Dutch East Indian Company, and the galaxy” (p.40) Therefore, objects are not identical to their characteristics; instead, they are at odds with them, and this tension is the cause of all the changes that occur in the world. Through logic and numbers science cannot prove these arguments. Rather, Harman's theory stimulates people's desire to explore objects through other means, like art and humanities. Based on Harman's opinions, can we not say that abstract notions such as memories and experiences could also be understood in this network of understanding

objects?

Furthermore, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi suggests interesting relationships between people and their objects through his book 'The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self'. He defines this relationship "people and things are concrete entities that need no preliminary explication (p.2)." He cites Descartes' theory of *cogito*, subjective self-awareness, to demonstrate the interaction between person and thing. He explains that people's households and the things they were influenced by when they were young are all components of who they are. Of course, the things that fill our homes are common things that everyone has. However, we can argue that complex factors such as a person's ages, gender, cultural background, and the environment in which they grew up are at work as to why they choose these objects. If so, what is the role of the object he claims?

When a thing "means something" to someone, it is interpreted in the context of past experiences, either consciously, or unconsciously in the form of habit. The emotion that things evoke is also an interpretation or inference, a sign or symbol of one's attitude.
(Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-Halton. 21)

He deepens the theory of how objects internalize social and cultural memories through symbolism. He also explains how the self develops relationships with objects by using an infant's psychological and environmental growth process as an example. Because all these developments are intentional and practical, proving that the self's background and objects are closely related (p.90). According to his theory, it can be said that all of my works contain distant memories that I do not even remember, and memories of Korea. In particular, things like relationships with grandmothers and losses and achievements. Therefore, we say that Harman's objects are material

themselves, and Csikszentmihalyi's objects can be explained as symbols of things.

Harman and Csikszentmihalyi provide a completely new light on human's relationship to things. It also decisively challenges the fundamental idea of how we perceive objects. What are some examples of described objects? Many people who live in modern society have continued to study these 'objects'. Jane Bennett explores these objects through the concept of life and matter. In her book 'Vibrant Matter,' she explains the behavioral identity of inhumane forces such as food, metal and stem cells. Moreover, what can adequately explain the relationship between objects and art? After all, art is about focusing on the " objects " themselves, where human cognition and intentions have been removed as much as possible.

There are a number of artists who have explored the substance of objects and used different strategies in their works. Talking about the artist Donald Judd, Richard Serra said, "Judd's work is to be looked at first and foremost. The experience is always rooted in perception." Judd wanted people to have a metaphysical and visual experiences through his work. To this end, he chose simple, mass-produced materials to encourage audiences to recognize his objects. Most of his works are influenced by Immanuel Kant. Kant argued, "The chief point is a certain use of the artistic object...to which the condition, the aesthetic ideas, are limited, versus painting and sculpture whose main purpose is the expression of artistic ideas...and to be looked at" (Bloemink. 37).

Linda Swanson's work also well-represents these material features. The tension, texture, contraction, and expansion of clay represent the material importance of the object. How can we connect both objects' theories with the ceramics field? Is unfired pure clay an object? Does the

change of clay in a kiln give it the qualities of objects?

Like this, two different theories offer artists a way to ask questions and find answers.

Flow of Sound

The process of immersion in something is different for each person. However, regardless of country, culture, or gender, most people use auditory stimuli such as music and radio to focus. This moment of concentration is what Csikszentmihalyi calls the optimal experience.



Figure 1 Linda Swanson/ Seep

This experience, he explains, can be achieved when we actively engage in difficult but worthwhile work and push our body and mind to the limit to achieve it (Csikszentmihalyi. 3).

We can find similar phenomena around us. It could explain that this is similar to the trance experienced when an athlete strives to win a competition, when a composer writes a new song, or when an artist creates a work. I know we can experience something similar in the studio. I believe that people often experience it when they are focused, everything becomes quiet at some point, even when the surroundings are noisy. Also, at some point, I feel that such a memory tattooed in my brain. Can sound really have a close relationship with our memories? Now, I have become interested in the act of recording among the purposes of sound. Just as we look at photos to bring up memories, and when we smell a particular smell, we recall a specific location and memory, so sound also evokes various emotions.

The possibilities offered by photography and sound recording to collect fragments of daily life are already proving invaluable to historians. Media and oral history archives give

insights into everyday experience that in former times were lost to history. Such archives allow us to assess the impact of world events on the individual. To the historian, then, the memories and reminiscences found in the archives form an important resource in the attempt to reconstruct and interpret the past. In recent years, artists and composers have been increasingly drawn to historical archive material (Cathy, Parry.1)

As we can see from the quote above, sound can play a role similar to photography. Using these sound characteristics, Kevin Beasley created sound art for cotton, one of the symbols of slavery in America in the past. He bought an old cotton-gin motor, transformed it into a sound generator, and wanted his audience to experience times past and present. In this way, the rhythm of sound shapes our attention, memory, and temporality, making the visual experience possible.



Figure 2 Kevin Beasley, A view of a landscape: A cotton gin motor, 2012–18

Methodology - Studio Practice

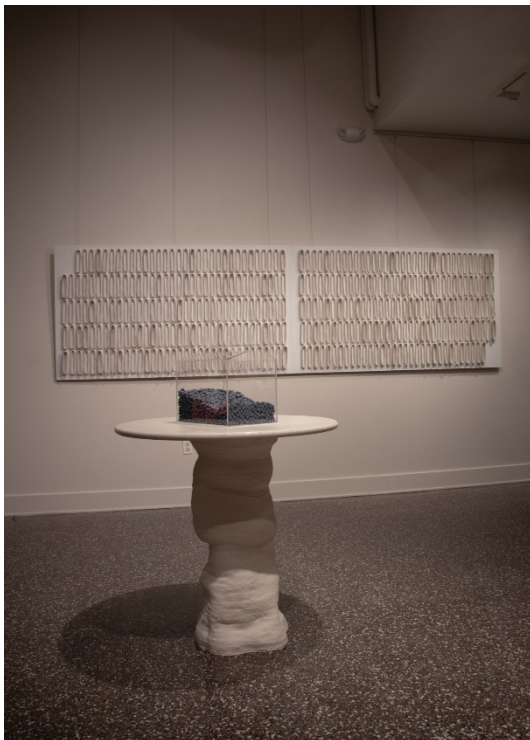
Time in the Studio

All of my works express my experiences from when I first came to this studio. Most of the forms of work are the inspiration of objects in my studio. <Metaphor of Punctuation> expresses a ritual and repetitive record of my work that is done on a studio table every day. The spaces at the beginning and the end



Figure 3 Process of Metaphor of Punctuation

of the composition were intentionally left blank, like the syntax of indentation and the punctuation of a period. The space shows the possibility of filling it up at any time.



<Jewelry Box> expresses my beginning and the end of this place. Tiny blue ceramic beads first made in 2019 and contained all of the emotions and memories of grief, sadness and memory of loss. A transparent moving box with blue beads expresses the flow of time moving forward rather than staying in the past.

Figure 4 Metaphor of Punctuation and Jewelry Box

<Flow> is a sound object created to express both a sensory and a visual studio experience. I collected the sound during working time in the studio such as sound of studio tools, construction noise, people talking, and touching, hitting clay. Through editing, which I produced the sound at specific times; it gradually fades and then becomes clearer at some point. I expressed the immersed moment of this time in the studio. I wanted to express this sound like white noise, where artificial and natural noise go together. The ceramic made the sound more intense, like underwater. I wanted to make the sound waves resonate more strongly,



Figure 5 Flow and Hands

so I created two chambers with different depths inside the cylinder-shaped ceramic sculptures. Two speakers were used to sound the right and left sides of the sound source in different chambers. A ceramic material has created a sound that is distinctly different from any other material such as wood. In particular, there was a big difference in sound with and without the top lid, the dome-shaped cover that smoothly reflects the sound. These ceramic sculptures surpassed the artificial effects created using any editing program.

Sound waves also fill our senses, but we do not get a visual stimulus. Visualizing invisible objects is one of the ultimate goals, so I used the sound work of <Flow> to express visual language. <STUDIO0206.WAV> as an extension of the sound object. I have collected and

reconstructed the images of various sound waves into a new three-dimensional image. I am immersed in listening to many sounds in the studio, checking the time, and experiencing the

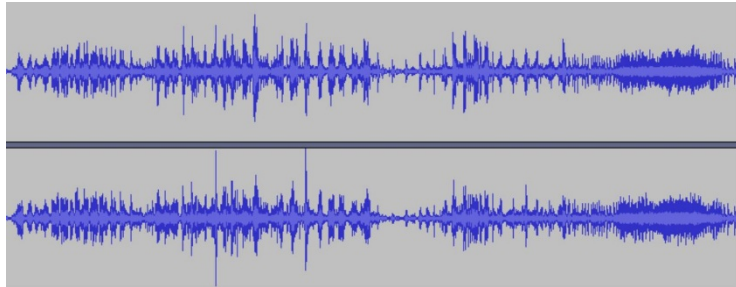


Figure 6 Image of sound wave

passing of time every day. In this way, I experience, remember, and express time through various senses in the studio.



Figure 7 STUDIO0206.WAV

<Hands> is the only flatwork, and the material of photography is used to create a link between the three-dimensional work and the sound object. I zoomed the surface of the bone-dry clay as far as I could to capture the texture my fingers had created. The light and shadow that the

texture shows and the movement of the fingers are similar to brush strokes helping the audience imagine a certain sense of touch and hearing.

The installation of the work wanted the audience to catch their attention through <STUDIO0206.WAV>, which they first encountered as they entered the gallery door. In addition, since the gallery ceiling had to be used efficiently, the space was appropriately divided, and the positions of the works were selected. In particular, the angle of the hanging works correctly showed the side and front of my work without



Figure 8 Hands

disturbing other works, drawing in the flow of the exhibition as naturally as possible. The rest of



Figure 9 detail of <STUDIO0206.WAV>

the works needed an electrical plug on the floor, ceiling, and wall except <Jewelry Box>, so it was easy to select a location. The distance between all the works is arranged so that it does not obstruct the movement of the audience. In particular, the volume of the sound work was adjusted so that it does not interfere with other people's works but connects my works properly with each other.

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Technical Information

Coiling is the most basic hand-building method that can be shaped directly by the artist's hands. Coiling techniques are formed by stacking coils of a certain thickness and, depending on the maker's proficiency; speed, shape, texture, etc., can be freely expressed. I believe my hand proficiency is related to memory. My hands can naturally touch clay based on my memories accumulated with all my experience. Therefore, my hand leaves visual language on the clay's surface, like the passage of time. Moreover, I pile up the row of coils on top of each other. If the traces of the object's surface are piled up, the lump of coil left on it expresses accumulated memories.

How can we predict and deduce various situations through memory? I think it is an experience built up in me. It is a built-up experience like a layer of sediment or dust. I have used coiling techniques for the longest of any process, since I first learned pottery. Every touch and texture of clay that my hand remembers can predict how I should handle it. If these physical memories are technical memories like crafts, from which memory did the object form come? I consider this memory mentally, especially my background. I am most familiar with; vessel, bowl, cup, organic forms, and rectangular forms from. Spending most of my time in Korea.

I chose a white clay body that resembled porcelain as closely as possible. The original recipe with C&C ball clay turned yellow color like off white overall, so I modified one of the ingredients and made the white I wanted. The texture of clay was not rough at all, so it was soft, but it cracked when it got a little dry. Nevertheless, the clay itself is hard without many contractions in the kiln. Instead, I have to be extra careful because it splits more quickly than other clay in the drying stage. I did not use glaze for this body of work, which would have

unique flowing, shiny features cover the texture of the clay and represent another visual language. I had to exclude as much as possible any elements that could interfere with the theme I wanted to express through my work.

Recipe of clay body from Cushing's handbook

<1> Original recipe

Grolleg	25 (%)
C&C	25
KONA F-4	30
Feldspar	
Frit 3124	4
Flint	16
Macaloiid	2

<2> Modified recipe

Grolleg	25 (%)
EPK Kaolin	25
KONA F-4	30
Feldspar	
Frit 3124	4
Flint	16
Macaloiid	2

Conclusion

I am continually exploring materialized invisible objects and relationships with myself. To this end, I researched two different object theories, such as materials themselves and as a symbol. Additionally, I am curious about how my senses react when immersed and how the sound affects them. As a result, I realized that these objects have the properties and symbolism of the material itself and are essential to me. Through this exhibition, I learned how to combine and use materials with different properties in the process. Also, I am looking forward to different forms of transformation in the future.



Figure 10 Studio: The Immersion Installation

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