Manufactured Landscapes

Garick Tai-Lee
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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The thesis exhibition *Manufactured Landscapes* is a visual exploration based upon thoughts and experiences stimulated by unique environments. The goal of the artwork is to invite the viewer to investigate. This physical action of looking engages the viewer with the sculptures and gallery and is utilized to stimulate awareness of relationships that are constantly occurring between viewers and objects.

The role of process and craftsmanship are also topics addressed in this thesis; both qualities are fundamental to the presentation of the artwork. Utilizing a central process and technique creates cohesion in the exhibition and aids in the interpretation of spatial relationships.

Evaluating environments, artists and philosophies, exposes both the issues of place and the role of the viewer in experiencing art. The thesis provides an overview on how the approach and technique behind the sculptures and the development of its manufacture fits into the larger context of contemporary art.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*Manufactured Landscapes* examines the role of form and our reaction towards it. The exhibition showcases four distinct interpretations of work that explore spatial relationships through variations of color and form. The scale, richness of the surface, the complex geometry of the sculptures and their placement within the gallery, encourages further investigation beyond their initial impression. By viewing the work from different areas in the gallery, the viewer becomes physically engaged with the sculptures and develops a relationship with the artwork. By creating a personal relationship with the artwork, the subtlety of craft, form and concept become clear. Instead of being a stationary object the works transcend to thought-provoking sculpture.

The complex geometry and architecture of the sculptures, as well as the treatment of the surfaces throughout the divergent types of work, showcases how different approaches achieve the same goal. While the forms appear simple in arrangement, both the hyperbolic planes and the process of combining multiple components into sculpture are challenging to fabricate. Approaching and utilizing complicated construction, as well as working through, and successfully employing an experimental painting process is a representation of process and craftsmanship and serves to promote these characteristics within the art.

*Manufactured Landscapes* more broadly represents sentiments of the environment, graffiti and gesture. Falling under categories like Geometric Abstraction and Post-Minimalism, the sculptures in the exhibition express process and perception. The act of simplifying complex visual information in the creation of unique forms,
utilizing geometric and industrial aesthetics, as well as the role of the viewer, are all hallmarks of Post-Minimalism. Many professional artists influence the sculptures in *Manufactured Landscapes* most notably, Richard Serra, Dirk Rathke and Fukami Sueharu. Richard Serra is one of the pioneers of Post-Minimalism and creates massive sculptures that alter our perception of space. The significance he has had on the art world, as well as the artwork by contemporaries Dirk Rathke, a Berlin-based painter, and Fukami Sueharu, a Japanese sculptor will be examined and discussed in Chapter II.

Chapter III examines philosophical influences that were important to the formation of principal concepts behind the sculptures. Mostly focused on Phenomenology, this chapter discusses the role of self in the process of existing and perceiving and also examines the impact Phenomenology has had on the formation of Post-Minimalism. Chapter IV explores personal experiences to environments that became the major influence of the intent of the artwork and what the viewer is meant to feel. The importance of process as a concept, as well as adapted techniques utilized in the manufacture of the sculptures will be covered in Chapter V and relate the sculptures to Post-Minimalism.

A more thorough analysis of the artwork as well as an examination on the decisions behind the sculptures will be presented in Chapter VI. Chapter VII concludes with my overall reflection of the thesis exhibition, as well as examines the evolution of my work and potential direction of my artistic practice.
CHAPTER II

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

The artwork and philosophy of Richard Serra, Dirk Rathke and Fukami Sueharu were the most influential to the formation and completion of the sculptures in the thesis exhibition. While their artistic practice occurs in different parts of the world and at different points in the past 50 years, the style of work they created would be defined as post minimalistic. Richard Serra is a pioneer of the Post Minimalist art movement that began in the late 1950’s and to this day continues to create massive structures of curved steel. Dirk Rathke, a contemporary artist who lives in Berlin, creates wall-mounted canvases that employ hyperbolic curves across the surfaces bridging the gap between traditional painting and sculpture. Fukami Sueharu is a ceramicist who lives in Japan and makes slip cast porcelain sculptures glazed translucent blue.

Even though the work they created does not appear similar nor is made out of the same material, it does correlate in regards to non-traditional approaches to a traditional medium, and in the conceptual process of simplifying form and content to arrive at the simplest iteration of that form. By stripping away visual information, the viewers’s perception can easily be changed based off of their own experiences. The sense of presence their sculptural work commands changes how the viewer approaches the artwork. The process of minimalizing was the quality originally explored in the construction and experimentation period of Manufactured Landscapes. The original explorations prior to the sculptures in the thesis exhibition was to create simple hollow ceramic serving platters to misconceive the viewer into thinking they were a solid form. From that point, when the idea of service was beginning to be ignored, a new direction
began; utility was no longer a significant part of the artwork allowing perception and interpretation to become the concepts of the work.

Based on this realization, research was conducted to see if, and which other artists were creating similar experiences through their artwork to start steering the direction of the thesis. Post Minimalism was the frontier of pursuing this approach to artwork and unlike other styles of art since its inception has been a consistent and leading genre of contemporary art. Due to this significance the sculptures of Richard Serra, Dirk Rathke and Fukami Sueharu were referenced and utilized as landmarks based of their use of medium, process and presentation.

Richard Serra

![Richard Serra's Transitive List of Verbs](image)

Fig. 1. Richard Serra, *Transitive List of Verbs*. 1967-68.

Serra’s current body of artwork, the sculptures that proved to be the very foundation of post minimalism, began by creating sculptures based on his *Transitive List of Verbs* (Fig. 1). Through the action, "to prop," and the resulting work, *One-Ton Prop* (Fig. 2) and *Prop* (Fig.3) he observed a characteristic that would become important to his
oeuvre. It was process; the process imprinted upon the work by the artist’s hand had shifted and was now embodied in the existence of the sculpture itself. The sculptures became transitive actions themselves and exist within that present moment. There was a continuous labor of elevation and an inherent tension in the force it took to keep the sheet of lead upright.

Richard Serra’s approach to taking the sculpture off of the pedestal and creating transitive actions out of the sculptures themselves lead to his large-scale core ten steel outdoor work that was first created in the 1970’s to his most recent exhibition at the Guggenheim Bilboa. His innovative approach to this material, which is normally used for construction, lead him to seek out manufacturing plants that were capable of handling such massive sheets of steel, requiring an industrial process to be realized. The sculptures presented in Manufactured Landscapes, while much more humble in size, utilizes a similar concept and takes advantage of an industrial process to complete.

Explorations of Serra’s monumental work (Fig. 4), equal in scale to that of architecture, work that interacted with the environment and work that strongly interacted
with perception and space, was meant to outline the relationship between viewer and space. “Basically, that is my subject: I used steel to organize space.” (Serra) To this end the artwork in Manufactured Landscapes is meant to make the viewer move around the gallery in order to view the artwork from different vantage points to make sense of the form and its material. These concepts are not a direct copy of Serra; the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes are utilized in accordance with material restrictions, yet still employ concepts of spatial relationships in order to make the viewer aware of the space they are in while at the same time realizing the space that objects occupy or frame.

The impact Richard Serra has had on artists since the inception of his professional career is monumental in that it serves as a guiding principle of the impact sculpture can have on the viewer. The sculptures within the thesis exhibition utilizes concepts first developed by Serra and other institutional Post Minimalists with a contemporary twist, utilizing materials not previously available, to not only explore concepts of space and perception, but preconceptions of material and craftsmanship.

![Fig. 4. Richard Serra, Carnegie, Pittsburgh, PA. 1985.](image)
Dirk Rathke

Dirk Rathke, a Berlin based painter, has taken painting and the traditional idea of a flat canvas to a new, original level. He constructs canvases and paints them simply with one or two colors (Fig. 5). High and low points on the stretchers, creates subtle hyperbolic curves from one side of the canvas to the other, a tactic he further stylizes by the placement of color as well as the placement of one painting to the other. While the work is considered painting, the technique is sculpturally inspired. “This Berlin-based artist is part of a young generation that has developed fresh approaches to painting and has distinctive solutions in the geometric-abstract tradition. The relationship between line, area, space and movement is the main emphasis in Dirk Rathke’s artistic exploration” (Roesch). His style of geometric abstraction tends to keep the work simple, yet commands a lot of presence when on the wall.

Fig. 5. Dirk Rathke, Curved Canvases. 2010.

Rathke also makes installations that are composed of tape and painted lines on the walls of the gallery such as Room-Drawing for Houston #2 (Fig. 6) and in other cases, draws vertical lines on the wall that start near the ceiling, continue over a small canvas.
mounted in the middle of the wall and terminate near the floor. He investigates concepts of shifting the viewer’s perception and explores this realm with his installation work.

Fig. 6. Dirk Rathke, *Room-Drawing for Houston #2*. 2012.

The similarity between Rathke’s paintings and the body of work created for the thesis exhibition, made Rathke’s gallery work a guiding influence in the presentation of the sculptures. In addition, his simplistic approach to paint and innovative use of surface became foundational principles for my personal artistic style. The smooth surfaces of the sculptures in *Manufactured Landscapes* are polished to create a pure version of form without understanding or needing to know what the sculptures are made of.

Fukami Sueharu

Japanese ceramicist, Fukami Sueharu, creates sculptures that are representative of experiences he has had with nature. His light blue porcelain sculptures appear to be formed as if they were captured in time, as if a gust of wind had lifted a corner of the work or created ripples across its surface. The forms are simple and pare down visual information to what is only the most essential. “It was the memory of an encounter I had with a sharp breeze while on the cliff during winter… All the senses in my body felt the
pleasure of the strange wind as it stabbed my cheek. This tactile experience is at the heart of my creations” (Sueharu, pg. 35).

*Fukami Sueharu: Purity of Form* a book written by Andreas Marks, documents the evolution of Fukami’s work as well as outlines the techniques behind the fabrication of his sculptures. The approach employed for this thesis exhibition differs from Fukami’s methods as it utilizes altered wheel throw and slab rolled components, and is painted instead of glazed, yet the ownership or process that he employs and the amount of time that he devotes to each sculpture is emulated in the work for *Manufactured Landscapes*. It is also important to note that Fukami’s approach is not in just creating sculptures, but objects that serve to showcase a personal experience he has had with the environment. This concept, as previously stated before, was a main principle of the artwork in the thesis exhibition and serves to complement the stylistic approach with an additional level of exploration.

Fig. 7. Fukami Sueharu, *Image of the Mind: “Clarity.”* 2002.
Fig. 8. Fukami Sueharu, Scene 2. 2004.
CHAPTER III
PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH

Art is highly influenced by and influential on the realm of philosophy. Starting in the early 20th century and consistent with contemporary approaches, artists visually and conceptually explore concepts developed in philosophy. The research conducted for *Manufactured Landscapes* focuses exclusively on Post-Minimalist’s impact on contemporary art. Richard Serra, as previously discussed in Chapter II, observed that his earlier sculptures followed rules of traditional painting conventions. This was in direct contradiction to Serra’s intent, to imprint the process upon the sculpture as well as to turn it into a standalone object reflective of time and space. This goal along with his work that impacts space and our perception of objects are visual examples of concepts developed in *Phenomenology of Perception*. The goal of the sculptures in the thesis exhibition change appearance based on where the viewer is standing. By creating compelling forms that require investigation to make sense of, the viewer begins to understand that the act of perceiving is not a passive act, but an active one.

What I shall argue is that Serra’s work (and also the work of other artists) enables us to catch ourselves in the act of perceiving and can allow us to comprehend the fact that experience is not a passive interior state, but a mode of active engagement with the world. In this way, Serra brings to rest the troubling oscillation between experientialism and realism. (Noé 128)

As such Serra, and other artists of his time (Turrel, Smithson, Hesse, Irwin among many others), conscious of current Phenomenological movements of the time, began exploring
visual and time lapsed artwork based off of concepts of perception and being an active viewer.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a form of philosophy that began in the first half of the 19th century. It explores the concept of self in regards to the interaction of objects and how this influences our perspective. It involves a constantly changing state of involvement within our environment and how our perception of things is a flexible concept. Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote *Phenomenology of Perception*, additionally an essay written by Martin Heidegger entitled *The Origin of the Work of Art* share ideas about perception’s reliance upon existence and references the process of making art to explore these ideas. These texts give artists a better understanding of how artwork is influenced, as well as clarifies intent.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger writes about the duality between artist and the artwork,” Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other.” (Heidegger pg. 143) The work developed in *Manufactured Landscapes* went through a process of creation and revision, instinctively sketches were made first, their impact was evaluated and reacted upon and developed before being evaluated again. Done in series, there would be a fundamental goal behind the first iteration. Upon its completion, with scrutiny and the criticisms of others as well, a series of revisions would transpire that would be developed in the next series of sculptures. This continued evolution is central to the sculptures in *Manufactured Landscapes* and towards the concept and appearance of the artwork and then ascertained through the
process of creating. The duality of creating, revision and refinement in order to create again, has become a central role of my process.

Post-Minimalism

Post-Minimalism occurred in the late 1960’s in reaction to the impersonal, machine wrought process of Minimalism. Post-Minimalism included artists who worked within styles of body art, process art and site-specific art and was instrumental to the formation of the Conceptual Art movement. While there are a variety of mediums within Post-Minimalism, the work that was most influential to *Manufactured Landscapes* was its sculpture. Richard Serra, one of the pioneers of this artistic movement, along with sculptors Robert Irwin, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris and others, defined this movement. These artists continued to utilize concepts originally devised by earlier Minimalist sculptors, yet rebelled against the impersonality produced by the use of industrial processes. Serra might be considered the exception to this mentality as many of his sculptures are produced from core ten steel and industrial forming processes, yet his emphasis was on perception, which made his approach to outlining space feel more intimate than Minimalist artists Donald Judd and Robert Morris.

Robert Irwin was able to articulate best what many other artists from his style were attempting to do. They wanted to embed artistic expression back into the sculptures while still maintaining a non-representational style. “To be an artist is not a matter of making paintings or objects at all. What we are really dealing with is our state of consciousness and the shape of our perception.” (Irwin pg. 48) The sculptures in *Manufactured Landscapes* represent many of the concepts first developed in Post-Minimalism. The most meaningful sculptures adhere to this artistic movement and unlike
other styles of art that may gain resurgence and popularity at different points of time, since its onset, Post-Minimalism has been a consistent presence. Not only has it survived the changing artistic landscape, but serves to be one of its champions and guides. By using non-traditional methods such as spray paint and automotive putty to smooth and color the surfaces, questions about the underlying material are inherently raised. Ceramic objects, through the process of kiln firing, will typically develop either glassy gloss surfaces or rough matte surfaces of undulating color. The smooth, homogenous appearance of spray paint counters a fundamental approach to ceramic surfaces yet offers a unique approach for ceramic artists to explore. In addition to non-traditional methods and materials, Post-Minimalist artists were interested in exploring and exposing perception, while Richard Serra was interested in creating sculptures that transformed the process of manufacture within his sculptures into an existence in which the sculptures existed themselves, the goal of the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes was to create a dynamic within the sculptures that made them seem frozen within time or exist within an imagined setting, thereby creating a personal and unique relationship between the viewer and the sculpture. The use of a forced perspective, mounting over half of the sculptures on the wall, as well as the use of subtle planar bends within the form of the sculptures adds to the presence that each sculpture possesses. The way the light reflected off of certain angles and the positioning of the negative space created a dynamic object that seemed to change as they were viewed from different angles. The concepts explored by utilizing non-traditional methods and exploring concepts of perception are paramount to the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes and as such, owe much to principles first developed by Post-Minimalist artists.
CHAPTER IV
ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

At one point, Manufactured Landscapes was meant to represent encounters I’ve had with the environment that have caused feelings of awe and attunement, yet simultaneously feeling alone and insignificant; my first trips to Japan, encountering Mount Shasta on a foggy day. The shock of those feelings was what was originally being explored, uncommon emotions that promote a sense of wonder and belonging. These emotions occur in both urban and natural environments, yet happen more readily when encountering these settings for the first time. The beginning stages of this thesis show were meant to explore these experiences and recreate them within the gallery in order to make the viewer aware of these feelings. Through the beginning stages of sculptural exploration it became clear that without proper scale or illusion, recreating feelings of the sublime is not only difficult to recreate but no longer was the significant goal of the artwork. It was in this realization that the core concept of Manufactured Landscapes was identified. Instead of trying to recreate a specific experience or place, it was the relationships between self and object that was at the core of these feelings. The exploration of visual and psychological properties surrounding these relationships became the goal of the sculptures. The sculptures for this exhibition are more in response to how we react to objects within our personal sphere of space than recreating situations experienced within the environment.

Traveling the World

What the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes originally meant to express was not about recreating places, but to stimulate the feelings experienced when encountering
these places that were awe-inspiring or fundamentally different. As personal experiences seemed to be the foundation of exploration that needed to be conducted for this thesis, it was important to consider what experiences stimulated these feelings and how they may further serve as stylistic and philosophic influences. The experiences gained in Japan as a little child were highly influential to the style within this body of work. The curvature of traditional Japanese roofs (Fig. 9) was one of many things identified as being dramatically different from America and one that defines their urban landscape. Furthermore, Japan’s rich history of ceramics, the aesthetics of which could be defined as austere and unpretentious, was evident and prolific in every facet of daily life. The lack of ornamentation is a creative concept in Japanese artwork, and as such, when the sculptures for Manufactured Landscapes were developing, remained a guiding aesthetic principle in their manufacture and display.
Urban Graffiti

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, more specifically, Polish Hill is located 3 miles from downtown where I grew up. It is a small neighborhood bordered by old factories, massive bridges and structures covered in graffiti. It was not just a daily experience, but seemed to represent the city as much as the landscape and the architecture.

The decision to place the majority of the sculptures in the exhibition upon the wall and the use of spray paint is in part based on my exposure to graffiti. The final appearance of the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes was informed by visual cues taken from graffiti, how color is applied and blocked out in order to exaggerate or stylize symbols. Spray paint became an important medium for this work, as the homogenous nature of manufactured paint made the colors reproducible and easy to apply to both clay and wooden surfaces. While the inspiration behind the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes is based on an admiration towards graffiti, it is important to note that the sculptures are not meant to recreate or replicate the act or philosophy of graffiti culture, but rather adopt the technology and stylistic approach.
Pittsburgh Principles

Pittsburgh is considered the city of bridges, rivers and hills; curves are an important visual element of the city. When I began to research Pittsburgh, I realized this visual element was in all three settings. Bridges utilize curves as structural components, the river and tributaries curve as they find the path of least resistance, and how the irregularities on a distant horizon, begin to smooth out and become a series of curves instead of trees of buildings. With this taken into consideration, my initial series of sketches were of curves balancing one way or the other to explore these environments. Feelings of motion and visual interest were being produced by the relationship of curves and the shapes they created. Lines that crossed, caught my eye at their intersection, lines that curved in towards each other seemed to contain a visual weight where the lines were closest and lines that bellied away from each other possessed a visual energy at their
boundaries. These foundational sketches were then explored in more refinement and in a larger format. Wheel thrown objects are limited by the amount of clay and diameter of the wheel head, added to this, weight became a mitigating factor in the finished size of the sculpture. With all this taken into consideration, three-dimensional maquettes and studies were conducted to see how these sketches translated into real objects.

This central process was identified and became the foundation behind how the sculptures in the thesis exhibition would take shape. By creating a systematic approach to the development of the artwork, cohesion was formed between differing bodies of work and lent flexibility to the final appearance of the sculpture. Through the development of this conceptual approach, as well as aesthetic principles outlined from previous experiences with the environments of Japan and Pittsburgh, the foundation behind form and color was conceived and with only subtle refinement completed within the sculptures displayed in Manufactured Landscapes.
CHAPTER V
PROCESS AND TECHNIQUE

The building process of the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes begins with a series of sketches that simplifies the visual information of the original image or idea to arrive at its purest and simplest iteration. The information gained from sketching is then further developed into large-scale drawings that work as blueprints for the individual sculptures. Skills developed within the ceramics and carpentry fields are utilized to refine and create the forms in dimension while the choice of color and finish is influenced by graffiti culture and visual experimentation in order to capture the underlying concept.

Upon viewing the artwork, it is clear to see how two-dimensional drawings were transformed into three-dimensional objects, as they are still unilateral sculptures; objects that have a clear front and back most easily identified in the wall mounted sculptures. Yet, based on observation the flattened nature of the sculptures transcends two-dimensionality by utilizing techniques such as forced perspective to exaggerate the depth of the artwork. In addition, by utilizing principles and techniques of graffiti, the use of color to establish dimension and to create dynamic areas within the composition, the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes are three-dimensional, yet owe much of their presence to two-dimensional processes.

Painting ceramics is highly debatable. Functional ceramicists are limited in that paint is not a safe or durable finish to use, however the freedom that comes with sculptural ceramics is the ability to forgo concerns of use in order to achieve a goal. In order to be intentional about the surfaces, to eliminate the risk of sculptures breaking in the glaze firing process, as well as to produce a pure saturated color, paint became the
best approach to apply color to the sculptures. Clay’s porous nature required additional technical experimentation in order to produce a smooth, flawless surface similar to that of a car, in order to present a pure, unadulterated form.

All of the concepts and techniques discussed in this chapter are important to the oeuvre of the show as it creates cohesion amongst the divergent forms, and also informs the viewer about the style and identity of the artist. By creating bold unique forms, and utilizing techniques that require intensive experimentation, diligence and nontraditional approaches, the sculptures in Manufactured Landscapes are personal creations that belong in contemporary art based on their originality, the non-traditional approach to process and the concepts they express.
CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS OF WORK

The four distinct genres of sculpture that are on display in *Manufactured Landscapes* share similar approaches in representing the concepts outlined in this thesis; exploring relationship of color and form to stimulate within the viewer feelings that make them aware of spatial relationships. The aesthetic properties of the exhibition, such as the high gloss finish and use of geometry and perception are meant to highlight the cleanliness and simplicity found with Post-Minimalism and are qualities shared within all of the sculptures. In addition, the use of paint and color blocking highlights and exaggerates either the perceived depth of the artwork or creates areas of added visual interest. While utilizing similar technique, the origin behind the sculptures differ in that the wall-mounted series *Rakugaki* and *Duality of Light and Dark* are formally influenced by two-dimensional explorations while *Architectonic Assembly* and *Multi-Faceting Space* series were divined by exploring three-dimensional components.

As mentioned prior, much of the technique and conceptual exploration is shared within the sculptures; yet, within each body of work different qualities are highlighted to represent different approaches at showcasing the core concepts. *Multi-Faceting Space* captures the viewer’s gaze to contemplate not only the sculpture itself but includes the environment through the use of framing. *Architectonic Assembly* utilizes accent colors and creates intimate spaces within the compositions to cause the viewer to investigate further. *Rakugaki* captures the use of movement and moves the viewer through the space while also presenting intimate spaces to pause and contemplate. *Duality of Light* showcases the impact of finish and also utilizes the use of visual motion to create points
of interest within and surrounding the sculptures. By creating different tangents of thought that revolve around key concepts, all paths that were taken to arrive at the finished sculpture can be displayed and analyzed. Not only does this create a dynamic exhibition but it also allows the viewer to see the process of thought that was taken to arrive at the final display.

Rakugaki

*Rakugaki: Blue* (Fig. 11), *Rakugaki: Green* (Fig. 12) and *Rakugaki: Orange* (Fig. 13) are three sculptures presented on the east wall of the gallery. *Rakugaki* is Japanese for graffiti and is used to represent the idea of placing an expressive “statement” (curvilinear clay portion) upon static “walls” (the rectilinear wooden portion). The use of Japanese represents my ties to the country and as discussed earlier, expresses aesthetic principles behind the work. Similar to the process of making my drawings three-dimensional, the rectilinear wooden element upon which the clay is placed, utilizes a forced perspective to appear as if coming forth from within the wall. This receding/protruding feature of the work helps to activate the space surrounding the work, and balances the gestural and curvilinear movement created by the ceramic components. These hyperbolic ceramic forms are based off of the gestural quality of two-dimensional sketches and create a sense of movement within the sculpture as each of the corners extend at different distances from the center of the work and utilize different degree curves to connect the points, thereby creating a line that the viewer’s eye travels along. These sculptures are the biggest in the show with the largest at 58” wide, 32” tall and protruding 13” from the wall and are painted predominately gloss white; the color of the sides are green, orange and blue respectively. Color choice and placement of color is utilized to exaggerate the
planes of the work. The three sculptures are placed next to each other to create a three-dimensional mural on the longest wall of the gallery. They can be viewed as individual sculptures, but due to the similarity in form and composition, as well as the color scheme, achieves harmony when viewed together.

The two divergent elements make the wooden part both appear to frame the clay, as well as change the perspective of the shape. This creates a hierarchy in the composition itself and additionally, through the use of framing pushes the sculpture off of the wall and protrudes it further into the gallery. The changing dimension, and the use of a forced perspective within the wooden form also helps to allude to an environment to further render the wall invisible and gives more predominance to the ceramic portion leaning out into space. The scale of the artwork also influences the presence the sculptures possess. By making the sculptures close to human size and by choosing to mount them on the wall, the visual weight and potential energy they exhibit is exaggerated and causes the viewer to interact with the artwork differently than if they were of a more intimate size.

Using white as the main color in the sculptures is meant to render the form as simply as possible and catches the reflection of the gallery lights to highlight the complex geometry. Accent colors are meant to capture the attention of the viewer, exaggerate the planes of the work and to create cohesion with the show. As there are a limited number of colors to choose from, it was important from the onset to decide upon a color scheme. Pure, saturated color, and the use of primary and secondary colors make the work approachable and the careful placement in regards to the geometry of the forms makes the sculptures appear deliberate and well crafted.
These sculptures were installed at a height on the wall that places the negative space at eye level. This negative space is meant to invite the viewer to look closer and also creates an intimate space within the work where the viewer’s gaze can rest. Normally a reflection of what the overall shape of the ceramic form is, the shape and placement of the negative space creates a dynamic relationship between what is there and what is not. The accent color of the sculpture is painted on the wooden form visible through the hollow of the clay and creates a synergistic relationship between the clay form and the wood form.

The *Rakugaki* series is an example of how different displays of color and form creates visual relationships of interest, balance and movement. The use of complicated construction techniques, the decision to display them on the wall along with surface and color considerations make these sculptures unique to other contemporary ceramic sculptures and serves as an interesting counterpoint that all ceramic sculptures must either be displayed on a horizontal surface or glazed.
Fig. 11. *Rakugaki: Blue*. 2015.

Fig. 12. *Rakugaki: Green*. 2015.
Multi-Faceting Space

Multi-Faceting Space: Yellow (Fig. 14) and Multi-Faceting Space: Red (Fig. 15) are sculptures within the show that represent a more organic approach to expressing space, and as such are formed more by intuition than science. Utilizing the term Multi-Faceting Space implies that the sculpture is created by multiple facets that make up the sides of the work, much like a faceted diamond. Not only is the geometry unique, but the use of dimension and change in planar depth activates light and creates shadows within the planes of the artwork. Added to which, creating a frame that is not square is unique
to personal experience and adds visual interest to the negative space within the composition. The inner and outer walls of the piece are thrown on the wheel and altered to create depth, dimension and balance in the final form. By creating an undulating line the viewer’s gaze is able to travel along the work creating motion within the composition. The view that is created by what the sculpture frames, changes based on the viewer’s position. These sculptures include within their composition the view that is also behind them, presenting a constantly changing dynamic sculpture.

*Muti-Faceting: Red* is a distorted red, square frame mounted on a teardrop shaped, matte black base, it is 13” tall, 12” wide and at its widest is 4”. Elevating the work upon a base, breaks it from the pedestal, and creates an interesting tension within the composition. The visual weight of both the color and shape of the base is directed in the opposite direction towards where the work leans and appears to balance the cantilever of the red portion. *Multi-Faceting Space: Yellow* is similar in that it is an organically shaped frame but appears more like a distorted zero. It is taller than the other piece, measuring 22” tall, 14” wide and 9” thick and was the most recently made piece for the exhibition. The plywood base is a smooth, high gloss white and has curved sides and sits on an angel upon the pedestal. The use of a non-traditional placement, as well as the yellow piece being placed across the diagonal of the base is informed by the lean of the sculpture and where the most visual interest seems to lie. There is a sense of movement captured in the work based on the direction of its lean and appears as if about to tumble from the base adding an additional level of potential energy and tension.

*Multi-Faceting Space: Red and Yellow* are exemplary in showcasing three relationships of space; the space the object takes up, the space the object frames, and the
relationship of the viewer to the object. The depth and geometry of the sculpture as well as the view through the sculpture changes based on where the viewer is standing and creates a dynamic form that invites investigation.

While monolithic in appearance, the scale of the work makes this series very approachable and personal. The sculptures appear “funky,” in that they are based off of forms we are familiar with but are stylized in such a way that the forms begin to lose any representation of pre-existing objects. This stylization as well as the placement of the work creates a sensation as if the sculptures are frozen in time and might well begin to move at any second.

Fig. 14. Multi-Faceting Space: Yellow. 2015.  
Fig. 15. Multi-Faceting Space: Red. 2015.
Architectonic Assembly

*Architectonic Assembly: Blue* (Fig. 16) and *Architectonic Assembly: Orange* (Fig.17) reference simulated environments such as quarries and places impacted by erosion while simultaneously becoming a miniature environment itself. Oxford dictionary explains that architectonic means “having a clearly defined structure, especially one that is artistically pleasing” (Oxford), yet instead of its intended definition that precludes engineering or architecture, fields that are regimented by design and structural principles, the sculptures appears assembled and frozen in a moment. In homage to my parents and the influence their career in architecture has had on me, but also to reference the deliberate nature of the forms. Both pieces are on pedestals in the center of the gallery and based on the complexity of their composition must be viewed from all sides to understand. Using the same color pattern as the *Rakugaki* pieces, the sculptures are predominately white and are composed of six main components connected by smaller risers of either blue or orange. Each of the works rests upon a ceramic base that copies both the predominant shape and color of the sculpture above.

Quarries are settings that are natural yet have been shaped by humanity. These locations possess an interesting balance between what is naturally occurring and what has been wrought by hand. Eroded rock also possess a similar quality of inferred manufacture that sparks curiosity about what is naturally occurring and what has been transformed by another element. The normally rough qualities of rock appear smooth, polished and organized. The principles explored in this thesis as well as these specific environments are the sources of inspiration for the *Architectonic Assembly* series.
The scale of these sculptures brings them into the realm of intimate objects. Added to which they are exposed and are meant to be viewed from all sides, creating a feeling of vulnerability within the artwork. There is no hidden face in these sculptures, like there is with the artwork presented on the wall, further exaggerated by presenting the work on top of a base instead of simply on a pedestal. In the creation of all of the artwork for *Manufactured Landscapes* scale played an important rule, the sculptures in the opening stages of construction, appeared to be models for much larger outdoor sculptural work. The paint made all of the difference and their display within a gallery created a different approach in how they were viewed. When an object towers over the viewer, a sense of wonder behind its manufacture and the impression it leaves is more akin to the experience of being out in nature or in the city. As stated in Chapter IV, the original goal of the artwork was to create sculptures that recreate awe-inspiring experiences, yet was simplified, to create sculptures that explore the visual and psychological properties of objects that cause feelings of amazement, curiosity and reflection. By scaling down the artwork, the intimacy of the sculptures allows for the viewer to create a more personal relationship with each.

After early models and sketches that appeared contrived and plain, it became clear that additional visual elements were needed to create a more structured appearance. Placing risers between the white components of the sculptures was an idea that came through my sketching process. It was also clear when considering the final appearance of the sculpture, that using the color scheme of the other sculptures would not only create a more cohesive exhibition, but would serve to further promote the importance of color and stylization for the perception of these sculptures. The accent colors separate the main
components painted in white and serve as separation points in the composition. This not only creates visual breaks, but also creates intimate spaces within the forms and creates focal points. The sculptures represent both organic and inorganic qualities in concord with one another.

Duality of Light and Dark

*Duality of Light and Dark* (Fig. 18 & 19) is a diptych wall mounted sculpture, they are mirror reflections with inverted colors and sheen of finish. Similar in composition to the *Rakugaki* series, these two sculptures are not as large measuring 27” wide, 18” tall, and protrude 9” from the wall. The gestural clay form is also based on a triangle, not a rectangle. The difference in sheen and color represent the impact that can be achieved through the juxtaposition of color and reflectivity, and how sight and perception can be directed by placement and gesture of visual weight. The sculpture also

Fig. 18. *Architectonic Assembly: Blue*. 2015.  
Fig. 19. *Architectonic Assembly: Orange*. 2015.
serves to show the differences behind the assumptions of light and color; light is all colors at once, where darkness has no color to it. Yet when visually represented white is always used for light and black is always used for color. This sculpture explores paradigms in conception and exposes it to show that even basic principles we have learned are always in flux and can serve two different perceptions.

*Duality of Light and Dark* showcases how reactions can be changed by different surface treatments. The white backdrop was done in a high gloss to attract more attention than the black matte ceramic piece, yet based on the nature of black matte color appearing to absorb light, attracts the viewer’s gaze. In comparison, the black rectilinear component is painted matte and the white on the ceramic is a high gloss, whereby more attention is given to the ceramic piece, the white seems to pop off of the background. In switching what is painted and how, this sculpture represents how impressions and perception can be changed.

The forms themselves attract visual interest based off of their complex geometry, the clay curves in a pleasing way and utilize negative space to create intimate areas within the sculptures. The painting process developed for *Manufactured Landscapes* is still relatively new, and the comparison of color and finish was a successful example that showcases the impact of surface treatment on attention and perception.

Before this sculpture series, form was the primary element explored in *Manufactured Landscape*. Upon the completion of *Duality of Light and Dark*, finish and light have become equally as important. To this end, future explorations of simpler forms with different finishes will be attempted in order to create the same presence of current artwork with a more basic visual language. In addition, the scale of this sculpture, as
presented in the thesis exhibition, made the individual components approachable, yet when viewed from further back, became a sculpture that enveloped even the window. Scale has become an interesting quality of the artwork and will also be explored with color and surface finish to create sculpture that utilizes multiple components and modularity to increase the presence that they possess.

Fig. 18. *Duality of Light and Dark (Black)*. 2015.

Fig. 19. *Duality of Light and Dark (White)*. 2015.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

*Manufactured Landscapes* created a vernacular of Pittsburgh and experiences I’ve gathered from traveling. Though its completion I have become more aware of the process of perception and the importance of being more involved with the present. By simplifying visual information to its most basic, a language is created that speaks to the widest audience. Throughout the construction of these sculptures, there were often exciting new directions that opened up yet were tabled in order to successfully complete the exhibition. Evolution and transformation are events that often occur during the creative process, being aware of both accelerates artistic growth and creates within an artist different ways to approach artwork. Continued explorations will involve form and color but place more of an emphasis on finish and the impact of light. Through research and continual exploration, I have developed a unique way of expression that expresses to others the significance of relationships between themselves and objects they encounter.

Additionally, throughout the process and completion of *Manufactured Landscapes* I rediscovered the significance that experimentation and exploration has on artistic development and how important it is to engage with what is surrounding us. I develop an intimate relationship to the sculptures I create, yet upon the completion and display of the artwork have learned to be objective in its viewing. Self-realization stands out as a central quality to a successful artist and is a quality that was developed in the conceptualization, fabrication and completion of this thesis.
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