



STATE OF CERAMICS | September 20, 2022

Magdolene Dykstra

Ceramics in Relationship to The Bodily Record

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IN ATTENDANCE:

Magdolene Dykstra, Nicole Seisler, Emma Sher, Alissa Rothman, Teal Stannard, Michelle Montjoy, Sasha Koozel Reibstein, John Roloff, Anie Toole, Gill Bliss, Emma Logan, Sam Lucas, Ashwini Bhat, Jasmine Baetz, Beth Fiedorek, Nikki Renee Anderson, Cathay Fairbanks, Tanya Doody, Laura Rule, Julia Schuster, Brooke Cassady, Barbara Hashimoto, Vivianne Siqueiros, Ana-Sophia Mostashari, Robyn Phelan, Danielle Callahan, Montessa Maack, Donia, Mia Mulvey, Kris Buch, Natasha Mayo, Iso Marcus, Sam Shamard, Sherry Griffin, Kam Chan, Lena Chin, Bhavna M, Alison Raguette, Chris Konstantakou, Kris Buch, Jessica Stirling, Sherry S, Maia Beyrouiti

QUESTIONS FROM MAGDOLENE DYKSTRA

- Why do we insistently and purposefully leave records of our bodily presence?
- Why do different groups/individuals experience this same drive throughout history?
- Who is choosing to do this now? Why now? In what contexts?
- How does a bodily presence translated into material connect to the interior self?
- How might the practice of bearing witness to another's embodied consciousness impact how we engage one another in the world?
- How does the repetition of a quiet gesture differ in impact from grand or more ostentatious movements? Does scale shift the conversation?

- At what point is the bodily record an act of resistance? When does the bodily record succumb to commodification? Should commodification be avoided? How can works of bodily records ensure that they are more than decorative?
- How can the use of clay, a responsive material found worldwide, contribute additional layers of meaning to the bodily record?
- How does an incidental mark differ in impact from an intended mark?
- What is changed when the recording of a mark becomes a collaborative effort?

INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT FROM MAGDOLENE DYKSTRA



Magdolene Dykstra, *Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. Between the two my life flows*, site-specific installation at A-B Projects, 2022



Handprints in Cueva de las Manos, natural pigments on rock, located in Argentina, 7,300 BC to 700 AD

Magdolene Dykstra (she/her) is based in St. Catharines, Ontario and is currently exhibiting, “Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. Between the two my life flows” at A-B Projects. Magdolene shows two photos of her exhibition, describing the fired terra cotta records that carry remnants of her fingerprints in the front window of the gallery and her site-specific painting created by repeatedly transcribing her fingerprint onto the wall. The marks of her fingerprints allow the artist to record herself while not performing any particular aspect of herself – the marks are undeniably her, but as soon as she walks away they could be anyone. The curation of the two works further complicates the demand for visibility by working with the window – a viewer can’t fully see the site-specific painting until they enter the space. One work that is insisting on the artist’s visibility is obscured by another work insisting on the artist’s visibility.

After Magdolene’s introduction of her practice and exhibition at A-B Projects, she jumps right into showing photos of handprints in Cueva de las Manos in Argentina and asking the group **“why do humans insist on recording our bodily presence?”**

Two images of David Hammons work appear next as Magdolene reads, “Art too is a defense against erasure. The best of it will always outlive us” (*Out of the Sun: On Race and Storytelling*, By Esi Edugyan). This quote is particularly relevant to Hammon’s work, as a Black man recording prints of himself, his family, and his community with such honesty in the 60s when the fight for



David Hammons, *The Door (Admissions Office)*, wood, acrylic sheet, and pigment, 1969



David Hammons, *Untitled*, pigment on board, 1969



Yves Klein, *Suaire de Mondo Cane* (from the *Anthropometries* series), pigment and synthetic resin on gauze, 1961



Cassils, detail of *Human Measure*, cyanotype of participants bodies, 2021

racial justice was at a historical high. Humans insist on recording their bodily presence as defense against erasure.

Magdolene presents a Yves Klein work that was conducted by Klein directing female models as his “human paintbrushes,” he objectifies these women and removes their agency. This work has served as a jumping off point for other artists, such as Cassils *Human Measure* cyanotype. In contrast to Klein’s work Cassils cast 26 transgender and nonbinary participants to lay on a sheet of canvas prepared with cyanotype chemicals. Cassils preserved their collaborators’ anonymity. This work took place in 2021 after restrictions of the pandemic were lifted, and the participants described feeling each other’s bodily presence after being isolated for so long.

Magdolene shows Raheleh Filsoofi’s BITE (ceramic object and performance) and poses the question, “how does a quiet repeated gesture differ in its impact from a more austentatious gesture?” Raheleh uses quick, furious, large gestures, like bites on plates, and talks about inserting herself into the narrative instead of becoming some overlooked character. Magdolene describes her own gesture for her exhibited works as slow, quiet and repeated gestures. How does the manner in which we leave a bodily trace demonstrate the interior self? How does it provide an access point to the interior consciousness?

Why do humans insist on intentionally leaving bodily trace? Why are people pulled to this kind of practice/this kind of work?



Raheleh Filsoofi, BITE, ceramic object and performance, 2021

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION (WRITTEN BY A-B PROJECTS ASSISTANT EMMA SHER)

Touch

Magdolene opens up the conversation by again asking, “**why do humans insist on intentionally leaving bodily trace?**” This prompts a discussion of the need to create evidence of existence, and a deep longing to be known/seen/understood. Especially due to increased loneliness during the pandemic, clay served as a body to interact with during this time – its response to touch almost mimicking that of a human body. Touch plays such a significant role in the process of making with clay, yet the viewer’s experience of an object is often far removed from that initial touch, while they are only allowed to look and not touch. Many participants in this conversation shared how this dichotomy between looking and touching inspired them to create works that bring people together through touch and clay. One participant describes her work incorporating clay, bodies, and handshakes as, “the beautiful thing that is shared experience.” The group also discusses how trauma makes marks on the body and someone asks, “What’s the act of subverting that trauma, reclaiming how we make our mark?”

Surveillance

The question of surveillance is expected while recording marks of fingerprints in clay. A participant tells Magdolene that the use of fingerprints makes her think of someone being arrested. This starts a conversation about why Magdolene chose to use the fingerprint instead

of a handprint or another bodily mark. Magdolene responds that the fingerprint specifically pushes individuality instead of universality. Nicole brings up an example of her ongoing project of Hand Pressed Souvenirs, and out of over a hundred people who participated in the project only one posed a concern about the fingerprints in relation to surveillance. A participant explains that the fact that people are concerned about surveillance is this lovely sense that they can see the evidence of the mark. We often hand things between ourselves, such as money, but those things don't carry the visible evidence of the mark. She concludes by saying, "There is this universality about clay which is that it is this material that records us and that it becomes a part of our body."

Aggressive Gesture / Repeated Small Gesture

"How does the repetition of a quiet gesture differ in impact from grand or more ostentatious movements? Does scale shift the conversation?" In Raheleh Filsoofi's BITE ceramic object and performance (above), she uses the aggressive gesture of biting the clay on domestic objects such as plates and vessels. In the discussion, this grand gesture is compared to the masculine and the domestic objects that are being bitten are compared to the feminine. These ostentatious movements are often attributed to male artists, such as Peter Voulkos. Magdolene views the repetition of a quiet gesture as less performative, and expressive of the whole self rather than a particular aspect of the self.