



*Formed*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Fine Arts

in

Sculpture

Department of Art and Design

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This project-based thesis examines how formal choices impact visual communication as mediated through human experience.

Each of my steel sculptures begins as disparate elements that are found, made or manipulated. These elements are collaged together through both additive and reductive processes into formal compositions that are visually stimulating from multiple angles. My compositional choices are informed by the strategies applied in formal composition such as considerations of overall outline, colour, visual texture and unification of line and mass. Much like binary number code for computers, form-based composition can be broken down into a series of choices that result in a system that directs both the composition and the experience of viewing finished sculptures.

My sculptures explore the nature of their own materiality as it is experienced through human physicality. Repurposed and manipulated steel visually communicates surfaces that are simultaneously hard and soft, echoing that of human skin stretched over bone and muscle. When steel is acted upon by different hot or cold working processes, its physical properties change. Heat treating processes can result in steel becoming softer, harder, or more brittle<sup>1</sup>, much like the flexibility of human musculature that becomes more or less flexible when exposed to different temperatures.

Much of my artistic practice has been stimulated by the works of Modernist sculptors found in the, "...David Smith-Anthony Caro lineage... [that use] industrial steel as their medium of choice." (Sybems, 2016, pp. 67) I have incorporated the process of composition found in this lineage of Modernist sculpture into my thesis project, which teaches a system for making compositions that are abstracted, simplified forms by using formal choices that are filtered through the experiences of the person making them. When working abstractly, there is no one, externally-observed object. Instead, my memories of existence are the observed material. These sculptures are derived from memories of how I physically move through the world.

The visual rhythms of my sculptures are informed by the traditions of artmaking practices that are guided by formal principles based on human themes of existence. To quote Paul Crowther:

"...in all patterns of personal and social existence there are general aspects to particular experience. Human beings do not exist in states of personal or cultural solipsism. As embodied subjects, they share similar structural possibilities *vis-à-vis* the scope and limits of experience. From stone age to postmodern, there are similar existential strategies – such as plot and deceit; similar modes of feeling – such as love and jealousy; and similar needs – such as the demand for recognition from others. All this, of course, is in addition to common factors based on physical embodiment and the human form." (pp. 24)

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<sup>1</sup> see Jefferson, T. B., & Woods, G. (1990). *Metals and how to weld them*. pp 107-147 for in depth analysis of heat-treating processes of steel

In this project-based thesis I have translated a formal system of composition into a moving meditation. The sculptures become meditations on how my body moves through space and interacts with other physical entities. I use repetitive forms both in terms of elements and compositions. It is important that I have no predetermined plan for how a finished composition will look prior to building it. The process of making is instead guided by the formal, binary framework. This framework supports the series of repetitive, familiar choices that allow my mind to process the experiences of the day.

Details are lost or distorted through the process of abstraction and simplification. The direct experiences that I draw upon are not obvious or easily found by the viewer. Instead, only universal human themes of living and being are left in the work. The introduction of this ambiguity allows space for the viewer to superimpose their own meaningful experiences over the traces that I have left. This creates the opportunity to use the sculpture as a conduit for creating a dialogue between artist and viewer. I used the framework of an aesthetic system to provide a means of processing and communicating human experience that draws upon universal themes of human existence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Crowther, Paul. (2013) "Indifferent to Intentions: The Autonomy of Artistic Meaning." *Aesthetic and Artistic Autonomy*. pp. 24



Huff\_001  
**Untitled 15 (Silver Ship Eater)**  
2019-2020  
Welded Steel  
22"x 59"x 19"



Huff\_002  
**Untitled 17 (Leviathan, Body/Landscape)**  
2019-2020  
Welded Steel  
16.75"x 62"x21.5"

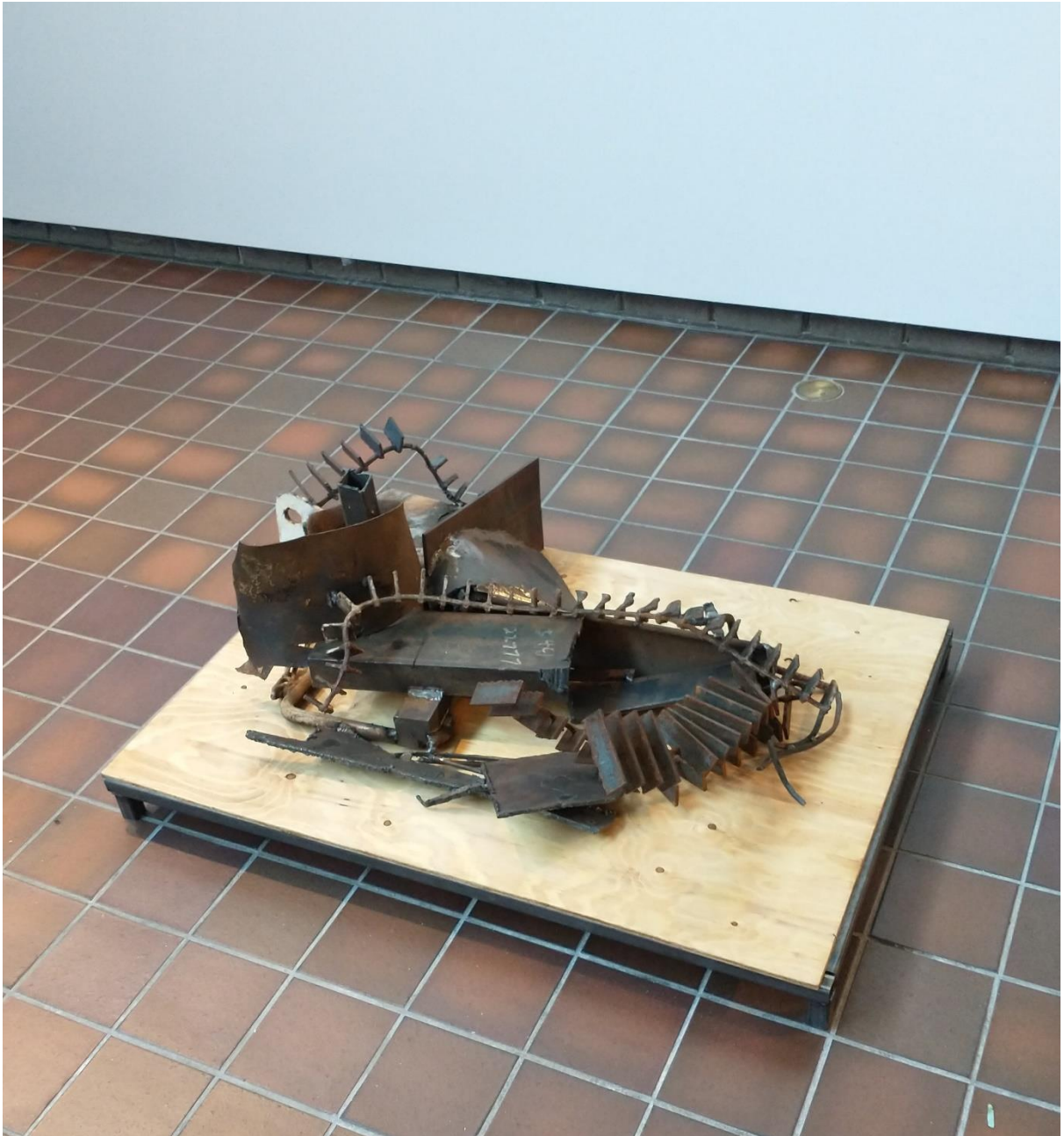


Huff\_003  
**Untitled 33 (Butterfly from Hell; large floor creep)**  
2020  
Welded Steel  
26"x48"x34"



Huff\_004  
**Untitled 30 (No helmet; floor creepzilla) 2020.**  
Welded Steel  
20.5"x52"x34"





Huff\_005  
**Untitled 24 (Isla's Flowers but horrible; floor creep 2)**  
2020  
Welded Steel  
11.5"x34.5"x23.5"



Huff\_006  
**Untitled 12. (Small landmine; floor creep 1)**  
2019-2020  
Welded steel  
11.5"x32"x18"



Huff\_007

**Untitled 26 (Foot smell; floor creep 3)**

2020

Welded Steel

18"x 40"x31"



Huff\_008 Installation image of  
**Untitled 12. (Small  
landmine; floor creep 1),  
Untitled 26 (Foot smell; floor  
creep 3)**



Huff\_009 Installation image of  
**Untitled 24 (Isla's Flowers but  
horrible; floor creep 2)**  
**Untitled 12. (Small landmine;  
floor creep 1), Untitled 26  
(Foot smell; floor creep 3)**



Huff\_010  
**Untitled 19 (Steve's Dragon)**  
2019-2020.  
Welded Steel  
26.5"x 39"x 26"



Huff\_011

**Untitled 21 (Pineapple Roadkill)**

2019-2020.

Welded Steel

22.5"x 42.5"x23"



Huff\_012  
**Untitled 14 (Bad hair day)**  
2019  
Welded Steel  
23"x 20"x 12"





Huff\_013  
**Untitled 18 (Angry Plant)**  
2019-2020.  
Welded Steel  
24"x 17"x15"



Huff\_014 Installation Image of  
**Untitled 14 (Bad hair day),**  
**Untitled 18 (Angry Plant)**

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