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Valuation

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Valuation

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Abstract

My Studio Art honors project seeks to question the delineation between art, craft, and design and the lack of value placed on most everyday objects. While in our society homes are seen as an investment to be maintained and passed down, almost none of the objects that fill said home receive this level of care leading to mass consumerism of objects made merely to fit a function, not to last or hold their value. Valuation is a set of dining room furniture made of red oak and white ash accompanied by a full set of ceramic dinnerware and napkins. The table has three large interchangeable ceramic inserts along the center and is flanked by two benches and two chairs at either end. On top of the table is arranged a full set of ceramic plates, bowls, and cups all glazed to match the inserts and a set of accompanying linen napkins. Arranged to create a scene halfway between a home and a showroom with viewers encouraged to interact as much as they wish with the pieces. This project seeks to disrupt the often inaccessible, sterile and imposing nature of modern art galleries.

Artist Statement

“There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman.” - Walter Gropius at the opening of the Weimar Bauhaus in 1919

“In spite of the reverence of museums, collectors and even the public at large for the Bauhaus's products, we are not yet able to accept without reserve the concept of craft as art.” - Helen A. Harrison's 1981 article in the NYT on the opening of MOMA's Bauhaus exhibition.

In my work I seek to break the divisions between the categories of art, craft, and design. While these concepts are defined as separate by society, in practice they overlap significantly especially due to their constantly changing definitions. I create functional art presented in a fine art setting to present the viewer with questions about how and why we differentiate between art, design, and craft and the hierarchy of these labels. The interactive nature of my artwork is a deliberate choice to try and further question these distinctions by breaking the sterile, intimidating nature with which a majority of art is presented in today's fine art world.

I am motivated by my view that furniture and other such ‘ordinary’ objects should be held in higher regard and become an accessible way to improve ones life rather than a frivolous luxury. Through the creation of everyday objects using primarily locally sourced, natural materials and time intensive, hands-on processes, I seek to disrupt the loss of material intelligence in modern society and question how we value the objects around us in a post-consumerist and globalized world.

I believe that especially in the US we need to fight against the lack of interest in well-made, long-lasting items and how well-made objects are gatekept by the rich. Objects should be made to better one's life and last for generations, instead they are made to temporarily fit a role before being disposed of. Not only does this directly benefit the capitalist system that propagates it, but it also directly hurts those buying products. Objects no longer retain value and must be replaced endlessly. While it would require a restructuring of our socio-economic system and a large-scale adjustment in the way quality objects are produced and priced, so that the general public could afford them, I believe that changing the valuation of ordinary objects is an important step in creating an alternative to the self-destructive mass consumerism and planned obsolescence of our modern capitalist society. It is also because of this guiding principle of steadily making quality more accessible that I prioritize the usage of local and low cost materials in my work instead of high end materials such as exotic hardwoods and seek to create designs that are beautiful without needing to be ornate.

In my work I am inspired by the art of Edmund deWaal, Judy Chicago, Miae Kim, Hans Wegner, Arne Jacobsen, Pierre Jeanneret, Rasmus B. Fex, and ISANA. I also draw heavily on the writings of Peter Korn and Glenn Adamson on material intelligence and the concepts of art and craft as well as the postcolonial theory of Edward Said.





