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Go Big or Go Home

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Conchi Sanford

Written Statement

November 2, 2011

Go Big or Go Home

My work embodies my response to the American Dream. Big houses, flashy cars and glamorous lifestyles are what many of us work for. Coming from a military family, I grew up moving often without an idealized connection to a single structure. In response to this, I use artwork to create translucent, ephemeral sculptures of these items, revealing them as tangible, hollow shells of their former selves. Clear plastic and packing tape sculptures leave a ghostlike reflection of what was. These shells of inanimate objects are personified through their creation, a process similar to what I compare to mummification or embalming. The semi-transparent, milky appearance of these sculptures is meant to give audiences a chill as one reflects on the life, death, and the plastic shell of objects' remains. Some days I feel like a creator, other days I feel like a mortician.

Previous work in my series consisted of small plastic shells of houses and bodies. These bodies were the first step towards charming and discomforting the viewer. I wrapped my body, head to toe, in plastic wrap and tape. Encasing my own body in a manner suggest the idea of embalmment.

My current work was formed on an actual semi-truck, which was used to haul the parts and remains of housing construction. In this piece, I question the infatuation and obsession with bigger and bigger homes in a time of economic uncertainty. The truck represents the dirty work involved in creating various "American Dreams" and reflects on how easily it is shattered and discarded.

While obliterating significant portions of the object on which it is based, my work haunts as it draws you in to the details of its construction. One stands dumbfounded as one's mind

flutters through the thousands of encounters it has had with similar objects in the past. The shapes in my work are always based on such familiar objects as houses, bricks, and doors. The goal is for the viewers to connect to the work. The materials also are common and easily identifiable – plastic wrap and clear packing tape. The tactile familiarity of the plastic becomes fetishized as a viewer looks upon the sculptures as a voyeur, a passive and detached spectator of its – and one’s own - former life. One is able to reflect on the juxtaposition of the objects ephemeral qualities in the sculpture with the lasting nature of plastic, evoking feelings of empty longing as we imagine the objects within, as they are used and discarded.

The work then shifts from the pragmatically familiar to a displaced functionality in the service of an atmosphere that underlies the emotive force of these temporary time capsules, fleetingly preserved to forestall the decomposition of dismissiveness. It is a circumscribed epitaph of glimmering glorious sanctimonious art, repulsed, re-examined, all knowing yet unknown, an engineered re-fabrication of an already existing entity, basking in the glory of its former self. The fortuitous juncture of unlikely materials in an entirely new setting confers new meaning upon the object. I become a shaman, endowing new status, functionality and beauty upon an unlikely marriage of objects and images.