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LABOR

Vera Bauluz

Claremont Graduate University

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LABOR MFA Thesis Statement

The body of work presented as Invisible “Labor” approaches my sculpture practice from the structural nature of the materials, the treatment of the surface, and the social, political, or psychological evocation that these objects might represent in any constructed universe and between themselves and the viewer.

I make *sacred* objects from scratch, from ready made, from industrial materials, and sometimes from trash or recycling. I treat those objects with love and reverence to embed them with essence and soul. I propose conversations with objects exquisitely executed, that question our social order and the machine, easily understood by everybody, although still challenging our understanding of contemporary art.

The placement of the work and the lighting, as fundamental part of the installation, attempts to generate strokes of conscience that enhance human understanding and capabilities beyond a specific discourse.

I aim to translate contemporary questions about labor into conversations between materials and shapes, forms and its placement on space, the idea of an object and the object itself. I let the plasticity of materials evolve into meaningful experiences which discourse anyone can customize to their own contextual perception of what labor means. I communicate ideas without the pressure of verbal language and without constraints that analytical political language impose to our culture, often in binary standardized terms. I work to enlighten the detail, to let the viewer make its own narrative and ramifications of meaning. Finally, I call for paying attention and enjoy the beauty of the work.

The tactile treatment of the surfaces is the skin element that unifies this body of work with sensual artifice and humor. The gilding material used to finish all the works and metal leaf technology applications comes to me throughout family bonds. My mom, Enriqueta Gonzalez-Martinez, Professor Chair of the Department of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, in the School of Fine Arts, Universitat Politecnica de Valencia, Spain, invented a new material for gilding called Stuc-bol. She created an acrylic formulation with synthetic and natural pigments in the context of conservation and preservation of classical art and decorative arts. With functional structural specific characteristics appropriated to antiquities and architectural preservation, Stuc-bol simplify the gilding process, it is biodegradable, removable, and non-destructive. It does not shrink, it does not crack, it can be burnish and become shining or naturally raw and coarse if let untouched and flat. It is made in a varied palette of pastel colors, adding the possibility to change the dominance of the red bol as traditional material underlying typically pure gold leaf. My sister Sara Bauluz, expert ceramist, fabricated the Stuc-bol for the exhibition and shipped it to me few months ago. It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be part of my family’s work and research, within the freedom of my own creative studio practice.

My task in the investigation with Stuc-bol is to extend its potential applications to other surfaces or materials than the traditional wooden statuary, fresco or canvas where the product has been applied successfully. I am taking a medieval oriented technology and pushing it into contemporary art production, articulating a discourse that embrace my social interest about labor and class structure as well as mastering on its technique. It is a continuation of my mother “labor” in a way she would never expect, interacting with materials or shapes uncommon in her laboratory. My work adds new technical information of the archival capabilities of her product

and expands its artistic possibilities. I am exploring extreme conditions of experimentation and creative application unseen before. Working with my mom's product, I construct a bridge to my origins, bringing the personal and familiar into the work, but nonetheless, I have the joy of working with a unique finishing material, which has a feeling and texture never explored before. This is the first time this product is applied in contemporary sculpture and seen by an audience in the United States.

Attending to the structural elements of the work and its materials, I am working with common objects and ready made, with a perceived low value, such as doormats, packaging, brooms, mops, used shoes... Deliberately not creating new objects, but transforming existent ones into building blocks of an alternative universe; coating them with artifice to become magic objects of evocation and provocation.

I am working with gold leaf, bronze leaf, and silver leaf, and experimenting unconventional applications over non-traditional surfaces attempting to alter its perceived sense of value. Gold which imaginary I always associate with ostentation, the Latin American genocide by Spaniards, slavery, the catholic inquisition, has evolved as effective material to question about our social stratification, acts of communication and transgression.

Humor and sacred coexist in my installation and in my pieces in the same way as in my understanding of the world. This work aim to up lift the viewer and make her a little bit happier and deeper human.

Vera Bauluz
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