

Essential Components, Elements

Essential Components, Elements is a body of work that asks its viewers what effect a hint of impermanence has on an art object. The body of work contains pieces that exist somewhere between the worlds of sculpture and painting. The materials utilized in *Essential Components, Elements* simultaneously give the work a sense of preciousness, as in something that is to be cared for, and casualness, as in everyday items. The pieces are created on and of abject and ephemeral materials that feel as if they are on the verge of decay or destruction. The body of work speaks not only to decay but also reconstruction. It references impermanence and the cycles or stages of use that objects and bodies go through. Bold colors, patterns, and materials that reference biological elements introduce a tension between the decorative, the biological, the permanent, and the transient. While the shapes and structures of *Essential Components, Elements* seem to be depicting something from the physical world, the viewer cannot pinpoint a direct reference. Even when recognizable objects such as a balloon appear, there is an ambiguity to their use that unsettles the viewer and lends to a feeling of formlessness.

The following is a list of pieces included in *Essential Components, Elements*:

#1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*)

#2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*)

#3 (*bodies of mixed media series*)

#4 (*latex and horizon fur*)

Smaller units that make a whole.

The way that an art piece is constructed has enormous consequences for the art viewer and how he or she reads the work. Each artwork included in *Essential Components, Elements* has multiple smaller parts that draw together to make a larger single composition. The repetition of smaller units that form a whole helps to relate the pieces to one another and imparts ideas of reconstruction, impermanence and building blocks to the body of work.

#1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) has many seams. The paper that the painting is created on has been adhered together making a Frankenstein of an art work. The pieces of paper are one form of smaller unit and the paint on the paper is another in the sense that the paint breaks the surface into relatively flat color fields. The way that the adhered paper and the paint interact is wide-ranging. Paint at times reaches out across disparate paper shapes to join them, follows paper edges, and ignores the paper shapes behind it by creating its own shapes. The interaction of the flat paint shapes and the flat paper shapes creates a feeling of overlapping planes, evoking references to tectonic plates. The construction of #1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) ultimately contributes a sensation of building blocks to the piece.

The concept of the building block is persistent throughout *Essential Components, Elements*. Through the breaking of each artwork into smaller units, *Essential Components, Elements* is able to reference the essential elements that form the world we live in, which I mean in a broader sense than atomic.

2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*) is constructed of many small latex orbs. The orbs are pinned on a wall in close proximity so that they become a modular component of a larger organic form. The recognition that the # 2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*) is made from so many pieces gives the piece a feeling of impermanence. It is subject to disassembly and the intricate composition looks as if it might not be capable of reassembly.

The shape of each pieces component can directly influence the viewer's understanding of the formless composition. In # 2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*), it is very significant that the smaller units are spheres. Because of the unit's shape and their proximity to one another, this piece does in fact allude to atomic structures.

In # 3 (*bodies of mixed media series*), is created from 60 small pieces of various materials that group together to make small compositions. In turn, the small compositions combine to make one larger composition. The smaller multi-media shapes in this piece are organic but have minimal direct references to a particular physical form. None the less, the shapes suggest a bodily reference. This is a direct result of several factors. First the shapes are created on the human scale. Second, the shapes are paired and at times reflect each other to create symmetry that we observe in human figures. Third, there are a few direct body references that cause the viewer to look for other body references in other

shapes that have none. Finally, the materials, which I will talk in detail about later, sometimes look like skin or some other type of body matter.

#4 (*latex and horizon fur*) is created from a two flaps, which each contain latex and faux fur. A strong horizontal line divides latex from faux fur and a strong vertical line divides the pair of latex and faux fur objects. The fact that the smaller units of #4 (*latex and horizon fur*) form a grid has several consequences. First, the strong horizontal line where lighter material rests on top of darker material references the most common horizontal line in the natural world, where landscape meets sky. Second, the strong vertical line sets up a conversation between the pair of flaps.

Besides causing a reference to the body, the smaller units of #3 (*bodies of mixed media series*) bring to mind the another form of art. #3 (*bodies of mixed media series*) is made of latex, polyurethane rubber, theatrical prosthetic rubber, fur, balloons, and acrylic paint, the construction and composition of the piece as a whole is more like that of a painting. The wall becomes the canvas and the smaller components become the brush strokes. There is a great diversity of associations between the individual multimedia pieces. Much like in a painting where one shape (which also could be considered a smaller unit that joins other units to make a whole) might have a complicated relationship to its adjacent shapes, having a soft edge where it meets a shape on its left and a hard edge where it meets another shape on its right, the relationship of the element's of #3 (*bodies of mixed media series*) to one another ranges from overlapping, to joined, touching, and spaced. Color, size and opacity of the material create a further complex relationship

between the elements. In #3 (*bodies of mixed media series*) how the pieces are hung on the wall is disguised, which contributes to the feeling that the wall is part of the arrangement. The following are two examples of the complex relationships that exist in #3 (*bodies of mixed media series*):

1. Toward the middle of the piece is a series of upward moving squares that are extremely spatial. The squares are colored latex, vary in opacity, and have only subtle shifts in size and shape. Although all of the squares are on the same surface, the coloration opacity and subtle shifts in shapes cause some squares visually sink back into the wall and others to be salient.
2. To the right of the piece two circular forms sit side by side. The base of the circle to left is made of theatrical prosthetic rubber. The base of the circle on the right is made of polyurethane rubber. The prosthetic circle is a translucent white that delicately emerges from and merges with the wall. The polyurethane circle, on the other hand, boldly distinguishes itself from the wall. Because the prosthetic circle seems to emerge from the wall, the wall itself becomes part of the composition.

Gross out factor, balloons and insubstantial paper.

I showed a colleague a tray of rubber pieces in progress. He said “I’m not going near those.” I suppose it is because the pieces look like detached body parts and they are gross. The paper in #1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) is ethereal and insubstantial. I labored over a painting on a material that is everyday. It can be crumpled, thrown away.

Paper doesn't last, especially not this paper. The #1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) is done on gessoed rayon paper. The gesso causes the paper to have a slight wrinkle that reinforces its flimsiness. When examining the painting, the fragility of the paper is fundamental to the painting. This paper curls at the edges, is marked by tears, and puckers at the seams. If examined closely, the viewer can see that in #2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*) the bulbs are made of colored balloons. Balloons are not a revered art medium. They are cheap and can be found in dollar stores. More importantly, they are impermanent. They can easily pop and even if they avoid that fate, they eventually deflate. The viewer can smell the translucent tan colored material used in #3 (*bodies of mixed media series*) and #4 (*latex and horizon fur*) and know that it is rubber, but if the viewer only sees them, they think that it might be skin. Or worse than skin, decomposing skin because the edges have an ashy cast that organic bodies have as they breakdown.

What does it mean to use these materials? My materials are demanding of a viewer who would shun away or disregard these pieces if they were anywhere but a gallery. The energy put into creating my work declares, "I am to be closely examined" while conversely the materials say, "don't examine me." In many ways, my work asks the viewer to investigate the quality of the materials as much as it asks him to investigate the compositions I have created.

Decorative and biological elements.

Decorative and biological are opposing terms. Decorative is synonymous with ornamental and frivolous. Biological implies life and something essential. Art objects, particularly paintings, have a history of being called decorative and of depicting decorative things, but my work is full of contradicting feelings of decoration and biology.

Dutch still lifes, paintings of paintings, and portraits done of subjects in their most luxurious garb all use decoration as their subject matter. # 1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) contains little symbols, they look almost like cherries. They assert, "I am decorative." Aside from these decorative symbols, the space is made of robust organic shapes. The fact that the paper that serves as a base for the # 1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) is cut into non-regular shapes causes the outer edge of the painting to be organic, curvaceous and growing. The shapes included in the painting assert themselves as biological and contests the idea that this painting is decorative.

In #2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*), is composed from blatantly decorative objects: balloons. The balloons are not fully inflated, however, as balloons used for decoration typically are. The balloons are at varying stages of deflation, which transforms the decorative object into an object that speaks to life-cycles. The balloons are pinned on the wall and hang downward. They are not buoyant and light. The influence that natural forces like gravity have on the balloons is entirely apparent. The viewer experiences both the decorative objects and their natural life cycle. The latex used in multiple pieces, because it degrades quickly, allows me to reference the life cycle of objects throughout the *Essential Components, Elements*.

The tension between decoration and biology allows me to draw more complex emotions from the viewers of my artwork. The decoration disguises the eeriness of my other materials. The juxtaposition of the two elements makes each element stronger. In # 3 (*bodies of mixed media series*), the paint is a separate entity than the latex. The latex is biological. The colors of the paint are bold and assertive. The paint is often used to create patterns. It is decorative. The decorative quality of the paint reinforces the biological quality of the latex and the biological quality of the latex reinforces the decorative quality of the paint.

Conclusion

Ultimately there is a considerable room for wandering minds in *Essential Components, Elements*. What I have given the viewer to work with is the idea of units of a whole that are created from abject and ephemeral materials. Each viewer will likely develop from his or her own life experiences references for the units and for the over all compositions. This is perhaps most articulated by the following interpretation of *Essential Components, Elements*, which I find quite beautiful, given to me by a close relative:

“...The message presented, the solid forms [#4 (*latex and horizon fur*), the two middle panels [#1 (*painting on insubstantial paper*) and #2 (*bulbous latex a.k.a. insubstantial reflection in balloons*)] and then the disbursement of life as we know it presented in the final panel [#3 (*bodies of mixed media*)] perhaps suggests that

our past experiences have but been the foundation upon which will become the building blocks for the superstructure of new life. I am at peace with that.”