

Holographic Universe

by

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B.Sc.(Hons.), University of Calgary, 2008

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Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in the

School for the Contemporary Arts
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

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Abstract

Holographic Universe is a multi-faceted sculptural installation that questions themes of monumentality, importance, and permanence with an emphasis on subjectivity as a tool for creative action. Composed of vinyl, resin, lacquer, and plaster, the works share physical properties of transparency, reflectivity, glittering surfaces, and subtle colours. This installation is meant to produce an otherworldly environment whose mesmerizing perceptual experiences and visual uncertainty encourage the viewer to question the learned frameworks through which one might view and create art. This work was inspired by Nietzsche's conception of the unconscious as a component of artistic thinking as well as the possibility of agency through creative action, as described in Deleuze's "Nietzsche and Philosophy". The sculptures were exhibited in the Audain Gallery, Vancouver BC, from September 11 to September 21, 2013.

Keywords: Sculpture; Contemporary Art; Monumentality; Visual Ambiguity; Nietzsche; Deleuze

To Jake.

Acknowledgements

During the course of this project I received indispensable advice and encouragement from four excellent artists and friends: Alex Heilbron, Sunny Nestler, Francesca Szuszkiewicz, and Ryan Mathieson. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the loving support of my partner Jacob Hardy. I am grateful for the intelligence and integrity demonstrated by my advisors Laura Marks and Elspeth Pratt, who provided me with helpful and patient assistance, as well as the involvement of Allyson Clay, Judy Radul, and Jin-me Yoon.

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The author of this Project would like to reassure the reader that the Project Statement is substantially shorter in length than the accompanying appendix. The Master of Fine Arts degree undertaken at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University, emphasizes artistic creation, which the Statement serves to describe, and the accompanying materials document. The appendix, undertaken as academic research during the tenure of this degree, serves to present the critical thought undergone prior to, and during, the creation of the artwork.

Chapter 1.

Thesis Statement: *Holographic Universe*

1.1. Project Description

Holographic Universe is an installation of plaster and vinyl sculptures of various sizes, each coated with layers of resin and paint and exhibited on plinths or suspended from the ceiling. The vinyl pieces are either in direct contact with the free-standing sculptures or suspended nearby, where they can be used as a 'screen' through which to view the other works. The installation addresses two themes that have emerged in my ongoing practice: visual ambiguity and monumentality.

The plaster structures began as recycled clusters of metal wire. I maintained the configurations of the original bundles, which were convoluted and non-representational, as a way to randomize the shapes of the works. I coated the armatures with plaster gauze, which I then incompletely covered with wet plaster of varying viscosity, and later, a layer of transparent resin. On some pieces, I applied glittering nail polish in an all-over pattern using short, irregular brushstrokes. I treated one sculpture with evenly airbrushed holographic paint, and covered another with sparkle-embedded resin. To make the 'screens', I airbrushed lacquer and nail polish onto large rectangles of transparent vinyl. I applied the colour at various angles, so that the wrinkles and folds in the vinyl were captured by the negative space in the painted areas. I then cut the vinyl sheets into a 'camouflage net' pattern and coated them with resin. The screens are suspended from the ceiling with light pink/light blue nylon sewing thread.

The components of the surfaces of the sculptures and the accompanying vinyl panels are meant to produce or enhance visual ambiguity regarding the form and purpose of each piece. The viewer can explore this ambiguity by choosing to stand in

different locations or observe the work from different angles: as the viewer moves, textures emerge, colours change, sparkles glitter, and interference and holographic effects are brought into and out of view.

Each additional layer of material serves to continue the process of randomization: by creating opportunities for unexpected perceptual events to occur, the visual uncertainty of the piece is amplified. The layers of reflective, textured, and patterned surfaces interrupt the form of the sculpture, revealing the properties of the material below via gaps in the surface. This causes the essence of each sculpture to seem to be shimmering, shifting in and out of comprehension like the point of transition between different angles of a holographic print. The vinyl screens add another layer, as the viewer can choose to add more complexity, another degree of separation from the actual source of the visual effect. Thus, the visual experience of the installation is dependent on the active perception, the subjective choices, of the viewer.

1.2. Background

I came to the MFA program with a background in behavioural neuroscience, and brought with me an interest in pattern detection and rhythm synchronization. Appropriately, my first projects at SFU were explorations of pattern and matrices, which involved repetition and the application of uniform treatments on multiple objects, in series. I created artwork as if I were conducting experiments. Throughout my time in the program, I gradually began to discover the possibilities of creating more open and ambiguous works, by taking a greater element of personal responsibility in the form and surfaces that I used. An important event for realizing this potentiality was a visit to an abandoned gold mine on Bowen Island, which contains crystals that have been growing for approximately 150 years. Surrounded by complete darkness, the young crystals can be seen only with flashlights. Depending on the light type and angle that the viewer chooses, the effect may range from slimy looking globs of opaque orange and white to tiny pools of rainbow liquid to thousands of tiny glittering points in the darkness. The forms seen in the cave are echoed in the plaster forms in "Holographic Universe" – rocks and crystals – as a symbolic materialization of the potentiality of perception.

In *The Holographic Universe*, Michael Talbot (1992) examines the work of physicist David Bohm and neurophysiologist Karl Pribram, who both independently proposed holographic theories of the universe. Talbot considers the way that a holographic model could explain paranormal and mystical phenomena, specifically based on the idea that the physical properties of the universe are directly influenced by our perception of them. For instance, an electron may appear as a particle only when we focus on it, and otherwise behave as a wave. While Talbot's work is often described as pseudo-science or science fiction, his theory of the holographic universe presents an interesting role for subjectivity in a scientific framework. I have learned, as a former neuroscientist, that perception is much more subjective than the traditions of science suggest, in spite of the common goal of scientific objectivity. In my installation, I have attempted to accentuate the idea that perception is active by emphasizing visual ambiguity, and providing the viewer with different angles and possibilities for experiencing my work. In doing so, I wish to communicate the value of confusion: intentionally placing oneself in a space of perceptual uncertainty may encourage new ways of thinking, new interpretations¹. With Nietzsche, I believe that artistic behaviour is one of the few places in life where we can be truly active (i.e. creating new ideas), instead of reactive (i.e. responding to existing ideas). In my case, the choice to emphasize intuitive and embodied types of cognition in my creative process has granted me access to new ideas about my own experience of reality. By attempting to disregard learned systems of interpretation, I have become more aware of the continuity between myself and the environment, and have gained a deeper understanding of the role of embodiment in cognition. This awareness is echoed in the creation of my sculptures, which, in turn, invite viewers to experiment with visually ambiguous stimuli.

¹ Turning off all light sources in the cave (described in the first section) produced complete darkness, which was a rare perceptual experience where confusion and uncertainty accompanied excitement and the thrill of potentiality. The rock and crystal appeared where I looked, as if my flashlight beam had actually composed them out of the dark void, based on my active perception. In this sense, I experienced Talbot's idea of a holographic universe. I titled the exhibition 'Holographic Universe' to present this concept to viewers, but did not want to assert that the works comprised an entire universe (or complete set, as this project is ongoing), and thus omitted the article from the title.

1.3. Monuments to Monuments

I have presented the sculptures in *Holographic Universe* in a formal style, consistent with that of monuments or valuable artworks: objects set atop plinths, arranged in a pattern that creates distinct walkways. However, the pieces were roughly made with cheap and sensational materials, some of which will degrade over time (i.e. plaster), and others that, despite their use in the surfaces of monumental structures (i.e. resin or lacquer), have been applied in a way that is inadequate for protection. This contrast between the works and their mode of presentation emphasizes the bright colours, playful shapes, and almost comedic effects, thus relaying a sense of optimism or naivety, as if the sculptures aspire to monumentality despite lacking critical elements that signify longevity and gravitas. In a sense, these sculptures serve as monuments to monuments: a demonstration of respect for the power that art objects have to effectively communicate intensely poignant sentiments, whether about a time, place, event, or person, or more abstract idea, via form, size, materials, and other features. That the works lack representational form speaks to their potentiality: as art objects, the possibilities of expression, of connotation and meaning, are expansive. The visually ambiguous surface treatments and the viewing options offered by the screens give viewers agency, thus heightening the possibilities of meaning.

The texture of the plaster on the sculptures is indicative of an energetic mode of construction: as plaster hardens the viscosity changes, and evidence of the different viscosities can be seen on different sections of each piece. This effect suggests urgency, an expression of the need to generate an object, or an acceptance of necessary provisionality. Perhaps I needed to create something that will reserve a space for the symbolic 'art object', assert the importance of the communicative value of sculpture and traditional forms of physical art on the basis of subjective experience, or 'individual commitments', as per Thomas Hirschhorn in an interview with Okwui Enwezor:

Spaces that contemporary art occupies are spaces for reclaiming the world, which I believe contemporary art must do. As an artist, I want to work in relationship to and in the world I inhabit. Contemporary art is a strong force, because it can repossess the world according to the bias of individual commitments.

(as cited in The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000, p. 32)

Similar motivations have led me to experiment with assigning importance and asserting value via artistic choices (i.e. material, form, and placement). For instance, I have used reflective or glittery surface treatments to attribute value to found objects, experimented with groups of shapes that are vaguely symbolic of important texts, and constructed decorative 'fringes', which can be used to adorn sculptures and plinths. All of these actions were carried out in a way that intentionally betrays the implied assertion of importance. As a result, the works often appear at first pathetic, naive, vulnerable, 'feminine', unrefined, and comedic. For instance, my use of glitter and nail polish is indicative of my discomfort with the connotations of 'feminine' aesthetics. Similarly, my use of holographic paint is reminiscent of the aesthetic of a now-dated technological innovation. These choices reflect my interest in the connection between aesthetics and shifting systems of value.

1.4. References

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In *Thomas Hirschhorn: Jumbo spoons and big cake, the Art Institute of Chicago: Flugplatz Welt/World airport, the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago* (pp. 26-35). Chicago, IL: Author. (Exhibition Catalogue)

Chapter 2.

Project Documentation



Figure 1. Sydney Koke. *Holographic Universe*. 2013. Plaster, gauze, wire, vinyl, resin, lacquer, nail polish, thread, glitter, plasticine. (Installation view).



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Figure 8. Sydney Koke. Holographic Universe. 2013. Plaster, gauze, wire, vinyl, resin, lacquer, nail polish, thread, glitter, plasticine. (Installation view).

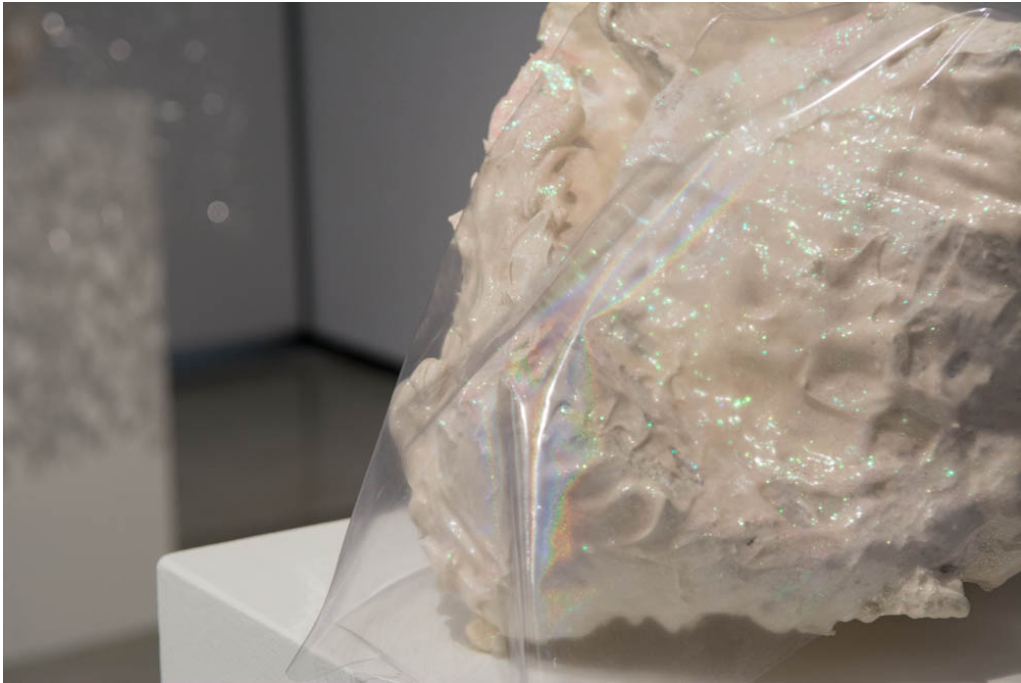


Figure 9. Sydney Koke. Holographic Universe. 2013. Plaster, gauze, wire, vinyl, resin, lacquer, nail polish, thread, glitter, plasticine. (Installation view).



Figure 10. Sydney Koke. *Holographic Universe*. 2013. Plaster, gauze, wire, vinyl, resin, lacquer, nail polish, thread, glitter, plasticine. (Installation view).



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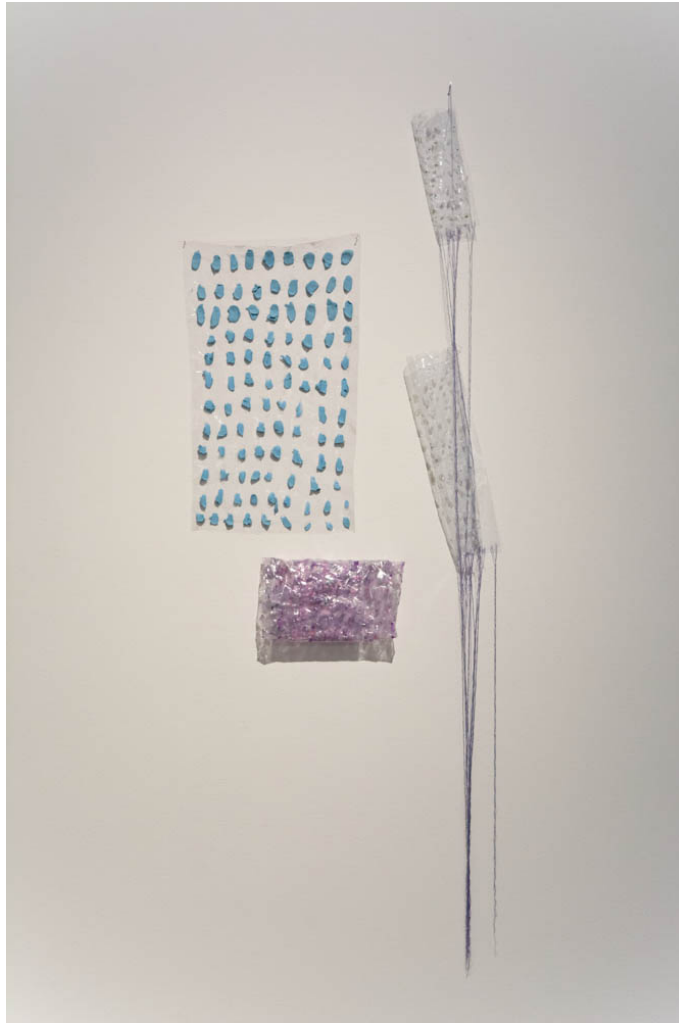


Figure 19. Sydney Koke. *Holographic Universe*. 2013. Plaster, gauze, wire, vinyl, resin, lacquer, nail polish, thread, glitter, plasticine. (Installation view).

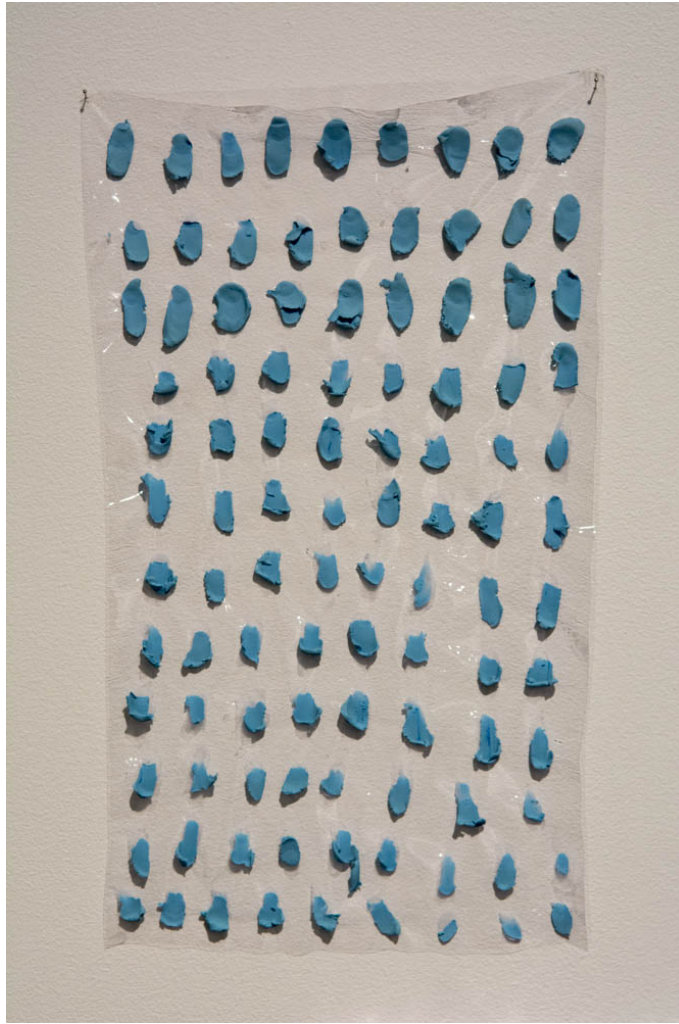


Figure 20. Sydney Koke. *Holographic Universe*. 2013. Plaster, gauze, wire, vinyl, resin, lacquer, nail polish, thread, glitter, plasticine. (Installation view).

Appendix A.

The Secret Texture of Values: Nietzsche's Life of the Artist and Claire Fontaine's Human Strike

In this paper I will explore the possibility of locating freedom through art making. Aided by the writings of the philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze, and the artist collective Claire Fontaine, I will consider the possibilities of resisting hierarchy through an emphasis on subjective experience in artistic creation. Both Lynda Benglis and Karla Black appear to resist notions of status and importance through an emphasis on materiality and intuition. By examining their work in light of theories generated by the philosophers listed above, I will consider how art can be a way to resist the impact of oppressive societal structures, such as patriarchy and capitalism, on basic cognitive and perceptual processes, and to cultivate freedom.

In the book *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze shows how Nietzsche's ideas about consciousness/unconsciousness and the active/reactive relate to Nietzsche's philosophy of art and artists. Deleuze begins by discussing Nietzsche's contrast between the conscious and unconscious. For Nietzsche, many essential functions can be performed in a sub-conscious state, such as thinking, feeling, and acting. Specifically, Nietzsche conceives of consciousness as the product of hierarchy, where the consciousness of one being exists specifically in relation to the consciousness of that of a superior, to which the first is subordinated or incorporated (Deleuze, 1962, p.39). For Nietzsche, the need for conscious thought is specific to instances involving hierarchy, and otherwise may not be present. Consciousness is defined more in relation to value, specifically instances of hierarchy and superiority, than in relation to exteriority from oneself (p.39). Thus, a distinction is made between the type of thought that occurs as a product of one's personal thoughts and emotions as opposed to the type of thinking that is elicited by exposure to power dynamics within relationships with people or systems of differing status. Perhaps it is the distinct lack of hierarchical connotation that leads Nietzsche to value the unconscious, as well as the relationship between art and unconscious, as I will discuss.

Nietzsche's view of hierarchy in conscious and unconscious thought is related to his concept of active and reactive forces. Active forces are those in a body that are superior or dominant, while reactive forces are those that are inferior or dominated (Deleuze, 1962, p.40). Reactive forces are described as those that serve mechanical and utilitarian functions; they act as the "*regulations*" that express the influence of the inferior and dominated forces (p.41). Active forces, conversely, are less tied to practical concerns. They are characterized by spontaneity, creativity, passion, ambition, and expansivity (p.42). A reactive force might be produced in a situation where an individual is conscious of their status being threatened or questioned in relation to another individual; for instance, an action that maintains the place of an individual in the status quo. An active force is unrelated to concerns about the status of an individual in relation to others; it is more likely to be linked with freedom and self-agency. For instance, an active force may be an act of self-expression that is motivated by unconscious, or intuitive, thoughts and feelings.

Active forces are more difficult to characterize than reactive forces because they are by nature not conscious (Deleuze, 1962). "The great activity is unconscious," (p. 39) says Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, consciousness is essentially reactive, as it is based on the relation of certain reactive forces to the active forces that dominate them. However, a societal emphasis on consciousness over unconsciousness (in Deleuze's view) leaves us with a minimal understanding of the potential of the body and its capacity for action, despite the importance of active forces within the body as intrinsic to the definition and the great potential of the self (p. 41).

Nietzsche clearly values active forces over reactive forces. In Nietzsche's conception of the 'will to power', appropriating, possessing, subjugating, dominating, and "the power of transformation" are characteristics of active force (Deleuze, 1962, p. 42). Although Nietzsche chooses aggressive terms to describe these characteristics, it is possible to interpret "power" here to mean 'agency' or 'free will'. Thus, the notion of 'the will to power', which is Nietzsche's concept of the main driving force of humans, may more closely reflect the desire to obtain freedom and personal agency than the desire to have more power or greater status than others. The 'will to power' is connected to the unconscious in Nietzsche's philosophy of art.

Nietzsche considers art from the perspective of the artist, instead of the perspective of the viewer. Thus, Nietzsche’s philosophy of art is a philosophy of creation, an aesthetics of creation (Deleuze, 1962, p. 102). Nietzsche conceptualizes art as something that can stimulate the will to power (p. 102). However, for Nietzsche, the will to power can only be affirmative in relation to active forces in an active life (p. 102). One interpretation of this is that something can only be affirmative if it produces agency or freedom independent of status. According to Deleuze, the activity of the life of the artist “serves as a stimulant to the affirmation contained in the work of art itself, to the will to power of the artist as artist” (p. 102). Art made through the freedom of the artist may in turn release the powers of the beholder.

Thus, according to Nietzsche, art is one of the only places in life where it is possible to be active instead of reactive. Deleuze equates Nietzsche’s notion of artists with those who seek truth, and those who are “the inventors of new possibilities of life” (Deleuze, 1962, p.102). It is intriguing then, that Nietzsche values the unconscious and the role of the unconscious in the creation of art. In a chart comparing the types of forces and mechanisms that govern different types of people in Nietzsche’s philosophy, Deleuze lists active forces and “dreams and intoxication” as types of forces that govern the artist. This suggests that Nietzsche’s philosophy of art supports the role of intuitive and subjective perception and cognition in art making. See excerpt of the chart below (table 1):

Table 1. Excerpt from chart on page 146 of “Nietzsche and Philosophy” by Gilles Deleuze.

Type	Variety of Type	Mechanism	Principle	Product	Quality of the Will to Power
Active Type: The Master (active forces prevail over reactive forces; reactive forces are acted)	Dream and Intoxication	The excitants of life, the stimulants of the will to power	Apollo and Dionysus	The Artist	Affirmation

Nietzsche’s idea of art validates art that is active, but not art that is reactive. Thus, as Deleuze explains, Nietzsche’s view is fundamentally critical of every reactive conception of art (Deleuze, 1962, p.102). In this framework, artwork that is conceptually

focused on institutional critique would be considered reactive, because it is based on a conscious response to an existing hierarchical system. Thus, this type of art does not serve an affirmative function. Many contemporary artworks challenge or criticize the institution of art, both consciously and unconsciously. The distinction between them, in Nietzsche's view, may be found in the resistance to or acceptance of hierarchy. While a conscious and deliberate resistance to hierarchy may seem to be the most straightforward way of addressing difficult power struggles that affect the individual in society through art, an unconscious approach may be more effective in locating freedom from oppressive systems.

There are many approaches to creating art that challenges or disregards status. For instance, in her "Knot" series, Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) uses informal materials that denote craft, child-like construction, and playfulness (See figures 1-3). With this series she appears to exempt herself from the status and reputation driven art world of the 1970's, by choosing cheap materials and a rough finish over the clean and formal presentation that was characteristic of minimalism. While it is debatable whether these choices were intentional as a search for the novel or as a challenge to the existing art world, the works seem highly personal and vulnerable in a way that suggests a freedom from these concerns, or a giving in to the inevitability of judgment and a subsequent decision to work intuitively. There is a sense of self trust or agency suggested by the level of vulnerability in the works, given that Benglis uses highly 'feminine' (i.e., colourful, glittery) and 'cheap' materials, she risks losing respect from her male peers. Although it is impossible to truly say what thought processes underlie Benglis' approach, the originality and boldness of her works suggests that active forces are at play, perhaps driven by the Nietzschean notion of the unconscious.

Why value the ideas and impulses that are generated by more fundamental cognitive processes such as those related to basic perception, and are inspired by unconscious states such as "dream and intoxication" (Deleuze, 1962, p. 102)? These types of thought processes are more closely affiliated with our basic perceptions and physical bodies, and so perhaps they can teach us more about the complex state of our own human condition. Growing up with many layers of complex social and economic hierarchies means that we are taught to process information using many levels of interpretation. These interpretive lenses include even the most basic aspects of

perception, as has been described by Deleuze² (Deleuze, 1986) as well as demonstrated by modern neuroscience³ (Logothetis & Schall, 1989). Instead of filtering information through these layers, it may be possible to grasp new interpretations by bypassing these systems and focusing instead on ongoing processes that take place within the unconscious and subconscious mind, such as intuitions and associations, as well as in the body. The intuitive is very knowledgeable: it represents a different way of accessing information that is gained through life experience, and thus, it can reveal new perspectives.

Emphasizing Nietzsche's idea of the unconscious in art can be a way of resisting the hierarchical structures that are imposed by constructed notions of family, identity, education, work, government, culture, and economy. Art can be easily included in ideas about work and the capitalist economy, especially with the contemporary market-driven concept of producing things that are "new". However, art can also be a way to question these systems by enabling one to engage in thought processes that are distant from learned interpretation. This may result in opportunities to create in a way that offers freedom or at least clarity about the influence of hierarchy and the capitalist economy on basic perceptual and cognitive systems.

Claire Fontaine⁴ presents notions of resistance and independence that engage similar forces to those comprising Nietzsche's idea of the life of the artist: through emphasizing unconscious and active forces, one is able to resist hierarchy in a very personal and subjective way. In her document "Human Strike has already begun" Claire Fontaine emphasizes the importance of adopting ways of thinking and acting based on personal preference, and encourages individuals to ignore societal constraints and expectations that are harmful or restrictive.

² In Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, he considers the varying degrees of subjectivity relayed by different points of view implied by the camera.

³ Logothetis and Schall demonstrated that for some neurons, activity related to interpreting visual motion was relative to the subjective perception of movement. Thus, these neurons may mediate the perceptual experience of a moving object.

⁴ Claire Fontaine is an artist collective who refers to herself as a single female entity.

Claire Fontaine (2007) resists defining or guiding the Human Strike. It is a personal movement, and cannot be prescribed, managed, or directed. The Human Strike means resisting submission to the power of others by challenging and opposing a societal philosophy of management. Instead of building a new system to oppose the existing one, Claire Fontaine highlights the importance of the unknown in resistance; the “material presence of potentiality” (p. 3). She is also careful to assert that the Human Strike is not to be understood as a mission, or program, but instead as an action that, though questioning the sources of power and practicing non-compliance, reveals hidden political elements in life (p. 2). It is precisely this resistance to definition that gives the Human Strike weight, as well as protection from being co-opted, instrumentalised, and commodified, as it is difficult to appropriate something that resists definition.

Claire Fontaine is critical of the way in which the capitalist system restricts freedom and forces people to instrumentalise themselves, to commodify their actions. “The reflex of refusing any present that doesn’t come with the guarantee of a reassuring future is the very mechanism of the slavery we are caught in and that we must break” (Claire Fontaine, 2007, p.1). The system of capitalism is based on a series of formulas that equate capital with the fundamental essentials of life, such as money and time, money and space, money and food, and money and bodies (p.2). Despite existing within the capitalist system, the art world, as a “purely aesthetic space”, has the potential to critique the general organization of society, and particularly, the organization of work (p.11). In identifying art as separate from the organization of society and the organization of work, Claire Fontaine appears to be suggesting two things. First, making art can be an implicitly political act: one can critique systems of organization in society and of systems of work by engaging in activities that draw on motivations other than those that drive these systems, such as status and capital. Indeed, “the libidinal economy, the secret texture of values, lifestyles and desires hidden by the political economy are the real plain [sic] of consistency of this revolt” (p.1). Artistic activities, which are often non-instrumentalised and thus able to be passionate and exploratory, may offer freedom from oppressive systems by completely disregarding the goals of these systems. This notion is connected to Nietzsche’s idea of active forces, where he emphasizes that the motivations of the artist are unique; distinct in society based on their active character. Second, meaning in art can be external to structures of power or capital: it can be

derived from perceptual and affective experiences; the Nietzschean unconscious. Expressed through active forces, this meaning may be developed independently of hierarchical structures, and thus provide a sense of freedom for both the artist and the viewer.

In “Imperceptible Abstractions” Claire Fontaine claims that we can only perceive our own potentiality if we sincerely allow ourselves to recognize it as a possible reality, beyond the limitations imposed on us by the capitalist economy. “A new form of abstraction awaits us, which has nothing to do with that of the society of exchange, but has to do with the life without models that the coming practices of freedom will reveal to us” (Claire Fontaine, 2012, p.5). In anticipating this liberation, Claire Fontaine seems to be describing a new way of thinking. As the Human Strike is personal, free, and non-prescribed, it appears to be connected with the Nietzschean ideas of the unconscious and active force.

While Claire Fontaine is reluctant to describe the characteristics of the Human Strike, I believe that many artists and thinkers have been finding emancipation from oppressive systems through a focus on personal and intuitive action. For instance, artists and thinkers in twentieth-century avant-garde movements, such as Dada, Surrealism, and Fluxus, resisted instrumentalization by focusing on making art in a way that exists outside of the rigid boundaries of the social and economic systems of their times. By choosing to think in ways that are not necessarily valued as part of the capitalist system, members of these movements were able to resist cognitive oppression. Thus, individuals may engage in creative activities for the purpose of finding freedom, by emphasizing actions that involve active force, and valuing the Nietzschean concept of the unconscious mind. However, the aesthetics of the above-mentioned movements, especially surrealism, have since been commodified (Lütticken, 2010), necessitating a new approach.

With the intensification of capitalism and the increasingly intrusive nature of marketing techniques, new artistic movements are quickly appropriated and instrumentalised for commercial means. While it is not possible to be truly sure of the intentions of an artist when viewing their work, one can infer a focus on personal freedom or intuition in their process (as opposed to status or capital) based on the

communicative nature of the artwork; the phenomenological effects upon the viewer, and the position of the work in art history. Karla Black (b. 1972) is a sculptor whose works often include everyday materials that are not usually encountered in fine art, such as hair products, cosmetics, and bath salts (see Figures 4 and 5). Her sculptures appear to take shape through experimentation and various processes of layering, building, and draping her materials, suggesting an artistic process that is highly intuitive or unconscious. The experience of her work produces a tactile sensation for the viewer, likely in part due to her use of materials that are often placed on the body in daily life, such as cosmetics and lotion. Black appears to be communicating something both personal and political about identity through her understated use of feminine colours, forms, and materials (i.e. feminine body products) and her unconventional format. Similarly to Lynda Benglis, Black's work invites a challenge to the idea of value or worth within the art world by generating works that are constructed from non-conventional materials, especially those that are often associated with waste, such as plastic, cellophane wrap, and cosmetics. Additionally, her sculptures and installations are generally very site-specific and extremely fragile. However, her work does not seem like a reaction: it appears gentler, as a composition of materials that are familiar on a very visceral level, and have beauty in their own contexts. Her boldness in creating with gentle shapes and materials on such a large scale is what makes her work surprising: the size of her work is indicative of her level of confidence, and perhaps of her use of active forces to affirm her own intuitive ideas.

I have chosen two artists who appear to seek freedom and affirm creative forces through their intuitive and active use of form, material, and presentation in their creative practices. Likewise, it seems possible for all artists to engage in creative behaviour as a meaningful action within their own Human Strike. Personal liberation, however fleeting, is highly specific to each artist: it is impossible to know the motivations behind a work of art beyond receiving a sense of freedom or personal agency when experiencing the work. This response is highly specific to the individual viewer, to the extent that they can relate to seeking freedom from the same structures or systems that the artist resists. The possibility of making art as a way to gain freedom from hierarchical systems is contingent on the use of systems of value and meaning that are not part of the language of capitalism. However, if the ideas of Nietzsche and Claire Fontaine are combined, it is

clear that these new systems must 1) rely on non-hierarchical ways of thinking and feeling and 2) be completely personal and subjective. This emphasis on subjectivity is key to the Nietzschean unconscious and Claire Fontaine's Human Strike, yet does not grant isolation from the world – creative actions will necessarily draw on lived experience within current political and social climates. As intuition is shaped by individual experiences and knowledge, the associations and decisions that accompany creative production are certainly informed by this source. It therefore does not seem possible to make art that is truly irrational or meaningless. Conversely, the act of seeking knowledge is likely to deepen individual awareness about the political nature of personal, subjective experience. This, in turn, will broaden the possibilities of intuitive creation, and provide more opportunities for freedom.



Figure 211. Lynda Benglis, Sparkle Knot V. 1972 Acrylic paint and sparkles on plaster, cotton bunting and aluminum screen. 106.7 x 63.5 x 33 cm

Source. http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/nathan/lynda-benglis-new-museum-2-11-11_detail.asp?picnum=11



Figure 22. Lynda Benglis. Untitled (From Sparkle Knot Series). 1972. Cotton bunting, plaster, paint, glitter over aluminum screen. 40 x 18 x 14 inches

Source. [http:// http://www.locksgallery.com/images.php?awid=53](http://www.locksgallery.com/images.php?awid=53)



Figure 23. Lynda Benglis. Lagniappe Luck. 1976-77. Chicken wire, cotton, plaster, gesso, sparkle, elmers glue and clear acrylic; 116.8 x 91.5 x 33 cm

Source. <http://www.art21.org/images/lynda-benglis/lagniappe-luck-1976-77>

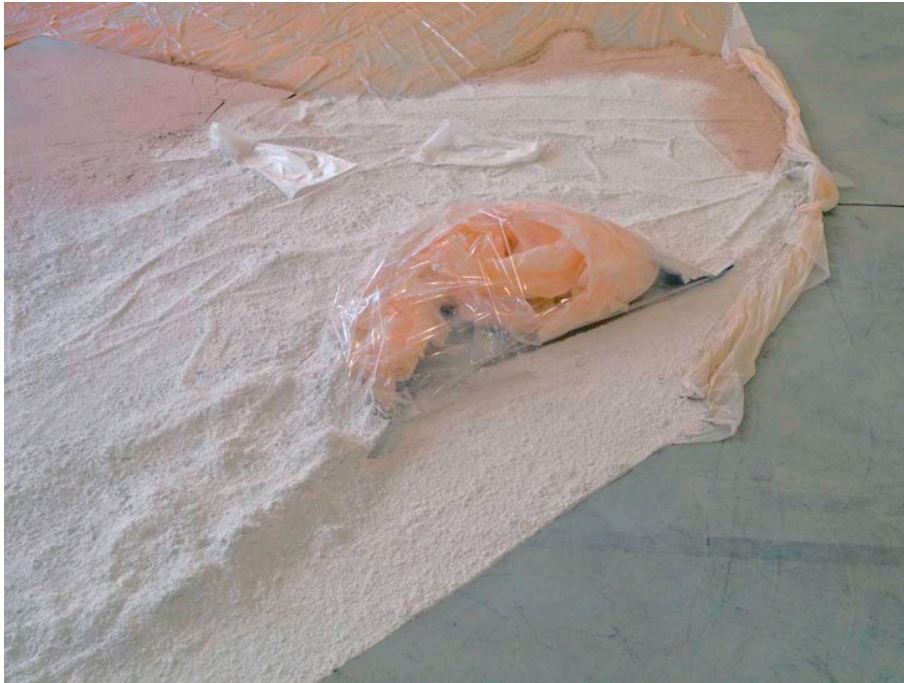


Figure 24. Karla Black. Expressions are hurting, move outside (and details). 2008. Cellophane, sellotape, petroleum jelly, paint, plaster powder, glass, polythene bags, concealer stick, lipgloss, hair conditioner, bath cream, tracing paper, glitter hair spray, lipstick. Dimensions variable



Figure 25. Karla Black. Don't Adapt, Detach. 2009. Cellophane, paint, adhesive tape, spray deodorant, foot spray, glitter eyeliner, hair gel. 100 x 235 x 260 cm

Source. http://www.migrosmuseum.ch/en/exhibitions/exhibition-details/?tx_museumplus%5Bexhib%5D=417

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