Jimmy, Jimbo, Jimmer
Jim
James

By

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A Report Submitted to the Lamar Dodd School of Art
of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Athens, Georgia
2003
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DATE
I can still remember a time in my life when I wasn’t scared, but there’s more of a feeling than memory, an intuitive cognition of the change in my universe. When I was six someone that should have been my protector betrayed my child’s trust and in moments created a lonely liar that saw a severe, suspicious world. I grew up ninth in a large family of ten kids, with loving parents, a fairly stable life, and a secret that kept me a foreigner. My rapist was also my brother and we lived off and on in the same house. This environment promoted my emotionally distant canon for life. The precept that our parents hold a shield of safety over us no longer held sway as the dangers could be with in. My security and stability laid in being removed, so I remained in the distance.

From the age of six I have understood man’s interaction in a different way than most people. I acted as acceptably as I possibly could, gaining skills in deception and redirecting people’s attention, as I viewed the undercurrents of humanities involvement from well behind my veil. This knowledge has given me a sense of the under-belly, of the dark and shadowed beneath our smiling faces. Through this voyeuristic lens images and their relationships have come to be the substance of my present work.

One of the clearest thoughts of childhood is sitting in the nurses office during recess, sometimes reading books, sometimes with nothing to do, to evade contact. My first taste of release from this self imposed exile was a
positive reaction to the things I could make with my hands when I was fifteen. From that moment, I relentlessly sought technical abilities to make beautiful objects. Admirable items seeking approval, but devoid of truth and personal investment by their maker. I created shapely places to hide. I recently exposed the secret that was a poison to it’s keeper and the loss of my companion has prompted a search for more in my life, more than being alone, more than making beautiful objects, more than affirmation. I realized I had the right to reveal myself.

I began graduate school to discover a language to communicate how I understand the world in which I live. My decision to work the way I do is to give myself the time to comprehend what I am making. My sculptural macrocosms are meant to question, expose, reflect, and hide. I strive for a depth of meaning as well as space. I want the viewer to be a voyeur, to be shown too much and sometimes not enough. The imagery is drawn from my past, the world today, and possibilities, focusing primarily on how we treat each other, and the fears of being human. The depicted images, from the portrait of my newborn nephew after he died, to the physical obsessions of men and women, evolve from a personal need to meditate on them. Over the several months I work on a cup, I hope to develop a piece that is provocative to the viewer and involves them in my world.

The nucleus of this idea formed when I saw the master works of
artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries in Italy. The art works of Ghiberti, Donatello, Signorelli, Leonardo Da Vinci, and Michelangelo were previously viewed in texts, and understood only partially. When beheld in the flesh they were more mysterious but more was revealed. I came away with some impression of what gave these works their timelessness. The commitment, intellect, skill, and passion could be sensed when standing in the Tribuna of the Galleria dell’Accademia in Florence viewing Michelangelo’s slave sculptures. This experience prompted my attempt to capture in a small way that sensibility.

Technically my thesis research has taken years now to refine. Each cup has hundreds of hours of carving and thought, and each one surpasses the last in complexity. The unfired porcelain cup is fired to a low temperature to make the clay stable enough to withstand the pressure of carving and to hold the edge of every line. When the carving is finished the cup is stained to articulate the detail. The cup is fired again to stabilize the color, glazed within, and fired to a higher temperature. This renders the porcelain vitreous and gives the inside of the cup a crystalline surface. The final firings are to a very low temperature with lusters of platinum and gold to highlight certain areas.

When we awake we reach for a drink. When without a cup we form one from our hands. Is there another object so universally important and
so overlooked? Is there another object that we are so intimately involved with? We hold it, caress it, bring it to our mouths. The cups commonality allows us a sense of comfort when faced with one. I hope to draw the viewer close with security of form and scale, and repel with preciousness and imagery. To create a dynamic relationship between patron and piece I utilize the pull of an appealing feature melding into an abhorrent one. Akin to the prongs on the barrel of a music box the images that surround the cup are devised to strike cords in each individual. They are a collage of images with a personal aura, who’s ultimate story is written by the audience. In my absence, I want this work to communicate what words always fall short of capturing, a sensitivity in meaning.
Prisoner "Atlantis"  
Awakening Prisoner  
The Bearded Prisoner

The Tribuna - Galleria dell'Accademia (Florence, Italy)
It's Serious

(Detail)