

# CONSIDER THE LUMP

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MFA 2014 Thesis Exhibition: ALL THIS HAPPENED MORE OR LESS  
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## Abstract

*Consider the Lump* is a body of sculptural (de)compositions that regurgitates a daily life that is loud, immediate, fragmented. The work is reactionary in content, form, and process. Value is found through the practice of slowing down to collect what is often disregarded: detritus along the road side, the abandoned table in an alley, the lump of plaster in the bottom of a bucket. These remains are broken down then materials such as resin, epoxy, tar, latex, and mud are pushed and poured to adhere these ruins to create new forms. Inspiration is drawn from chance, the states of things often held together by tension and vulnerability, moments of absurdity. Coming out of a conversation of sculpture from Art Povera and Dada to Pop and Postmodern, *Consider the Lump* are siphoned assembled moments.

*For my daughter Sage, I hope you always follow your dreams. For my family who continue to encourage me to do so. And for Denny Griffith, who made this dream possible.*

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to my loving parents whose support has brought me so far. My incredible loving partner Mark Gonzalez for being my rock. My darling daughter Alexis Sage with her sharp sense of humor, intelligence, and independence has given me comfort in spending long hours with my head in a book or hands in plaster. My brother Adam for being a such a huge artistic inspiration to me since we were young. My brilliant sister Paige, my best editor and friend. So glad we have gone through this together: our Masters' and motherhood. Paige's partner Marcus for all his support. My nephew Anthony who always raises my spirits. My brother Aaron, sister-in-law Jessi, and niece Reed for being so good to me.

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- The Root -

If I could compromise your attention, please. It's up for a lot of competition, I know. Right now! War, stock market, Kohl's sale, car insurance ad, school stabbing, what's for dinner?, Ukraine, flight 370, Israel, Palm Sunday, fracking, Kate Middleton, Miley Cyrus, Monsanto, hate crimes, Ralf Lauren handbags.

The body of work presented in my thesis exhibition, titled *Consider the Lump*, are cobbled concoctions that simulate the ways we ingest the demands of our time: the objects, images, and information thrown at us in every direction. They are collages and assemblages that require the act of collecting, decomposing, and reinventing. The works swallow the daily bombardment of stuff and regurgitate new forms that react against it: sensitive, with muscle.



Figure 1. Kimberly M. Webb, *Consider the Lump* Installation Image by Fredrik Marsh, 2014, Canzani Gallery

### - The Process -

I muster materials from the abstracted world full of discarded matter collaged before me. What happened that brought these things here? When did they lose attention and value? Was it a need for the new? The ease of the throw away culture we live in? The objects include news articles and printed pages, too, as they also represents a history reduced to language, inked letters that will or will not be forgotten. Our news is often censored, subjectively delivered and meshed together to fit into a justified rectangle of text on paper.

My act of collecting is sometimes random by what I look down or up to see, sometimes driven by the physical make-up of the material, or what I pass by daily, an over abundance of objects. As I slow down and pay attention to all these visuals, I find a value in a way of seeing: a closer inspection. I get a rush of discovery, a high for the way that compositions happen by chance. Just as Robert Smithson saw aesthetic potential in what he referred to as “the boring: pavements, holes, trenches, mounds, heaps, paths, ditches, roads, terraces, etc.”<sup>1</sup> I am drawn to these forms.

The accumulation is not always entirely physical or tangible. I pull over to capture (de)compositions laying out by the curb, such as carpet rolled with a mattress on top. But sometimes I don’t take the physical materials. They are appealing to me in the (de) composition that they exist in right then and there. I move on but don’t stop thinking about the formal qualities of the materials and placement. This is how every day, every encounter becomes a considered, creative act. It’s a thrilling, even funny way to reject the vicious daily grind that I despise: an urgent, loud, busy immediate way of life that

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1. Robert Smithson, “Entropy and New Monuments”, in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, University of California Press, Ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 13.

lacks sensitivity. By collecting, I stop a disappearance, I retract the unconcerned detritus and retain something.



Figure 2. Robert Smithson, *Asphalt Rundown*, 1969, Rome, Italy



Figure 3. Found sculpture on East Torrence Road, 2014, Mattress and Carpet



Figure 4. Found Sculpture in Parking Lot, 2014, Metal, Paint, Asphalt

What happens next is a way of letting go of control. I always struggle with it. It may be the most challenging part for me, after searching and finding appreciation in an object and then returning to it with an ax. To trust myself to make a decision that I won't be able to undo. In my studio I throw, smash, tear, and chop what I've collected- to give it new life. It's a form of cutting a library for my collages. Decomposing, breaking down, and removing is as much a creative act for me as composing. Once I'm into the destruction, it's liberating. To no longer treat these absurd objects with a preciousness but to be brave and risk their life. The act is empowering. No rules. No expectations.

John Stezaker decided in the early 70's that he no longer wanted to add to the world of images, but to intervene with what was already there. He referred to seeing early on an "apocalyptic possibility for art: that it could be reduced to a process of subtracting from the media image."<sup>2</sup>

The studio itself reinvents the objects, giving them a new context. The now fragmented chair, table, mattress, foam, leather, tea bag, concrete blob all obtain markings in their new environment. In the studio I see these as raw materials as if they have never been seen before. I am very interested in displacement and what that can do for one's mind. Last year I created simple space interventions that I hoped would put a small speed bump in someone's everyday routine such as an ottoman at a bus stop, balloons in an elevator, a small image of a pizza slice in a figure's hand on a sign. I'm not trying to save the world by these gestures but hope to inspire a break from the bleak.

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2. John Stezaker, interviewed by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Lynda Morris, *The UnMonumental Picture*, (New York: Merrell 2007), 116.



Figure 5. Kimberly M. Webb, *Space Intervention: Pizza*, 2013

In the studio the objects are displaced, and when I walk in again the way they fall or bend often create forms that I want to freeze and enhance. So I made some forms that way. A large wire sheet was cut and laid down to support another experiment, and the way it curled the next day was the perfect small gesture. I put it upright, pushed and covered it with plaster, then resin, creating a stoppage of a moment, and called it *Sway*.



Figure 6. Kimberly M. Webb, *Sway*, 2013, Wire, Plaster, Resin

And then there is the piecing together, the assemblage. There is a richness, moving back and forth with the physicality of the work: dragging it off the street to the studio, mixing dry with wet, cold to hot, malleable to hard- and then it's set. States of transformation can be theatrical. I find great satisfaction in pushing and smearing the work into new forms. Lucy Lippard wrote, "There is a certain pleasure in proving oneself against perfection, or the order that runs the world, despoiling neat edges and angles with homemade or natural procedures that relate back to the body and personal experience." <sup>3</sup>

#### - The Things -

Let me start with *Puh*, 2014, Latex and Wood. The long, narrow latex dangles down from a fifteen foot wall in Canzani Gallery with two or so feet to spare. The overage spills onto the floor, already christened with shoe imprints from the opening reception. The latex is thick, almost an inch in the middle, and thins out along the horizontal sides that don't spread much more than two inches. *Puh* is cast from wooden table legs found in my alley. Imprints from the wood, dirt, and plaster are imbedded within the latex object seizing its making marks. The lathed wooden legs used to form the mold for *Puh* alternate in long round curves to tighter rings and back to the rectangle. I adhered the legs together to form a relatively straight line and covered them with plaster. I poured the latex into the plaster mold, defying the directions of the required thin painted coating application. Then I doubled the length specifically for the gallery wall.

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3. Qtd. in Mark Godfrey, "Phyllida Barlow's Sculptural Imagination", *Objects for... and Other Things: Phyllida Barlow* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2003) 24-5.



Figure 7. Kimberly M. Webb, *Puh*, 2014, Latex, Wood

The wall that the flaccid form drops down from does not reach the ceiling. On top of the wall rests a four by six foot piece of dark weathered wood with two short table legs (more like feet) adhered to each side with no embellishments but worn black paint. Chase Bowman referred to this wooden piece as “the alter” when it leaned against my studio wall. In that context it existed as a bench that required a wall to stand, so made a rather pathetic bench or alter. In Caznani it is situated on top of the wall with the legs facing down. The left leg is just inches away from the top of the relatively centered fleshy, creamy off white rubber. The other leg stretches across the front of the thin adjacent wall, the wall one may encounter early on when walking into the gallery. The piece is subtle, like the title and pronunciation (sounds like a soft “p”). The white latex against the white wall and the dark wood with the black ceiling as a backdrop make a soft request for a second look but many pass right by and some have left their markings by the tread of their soles.

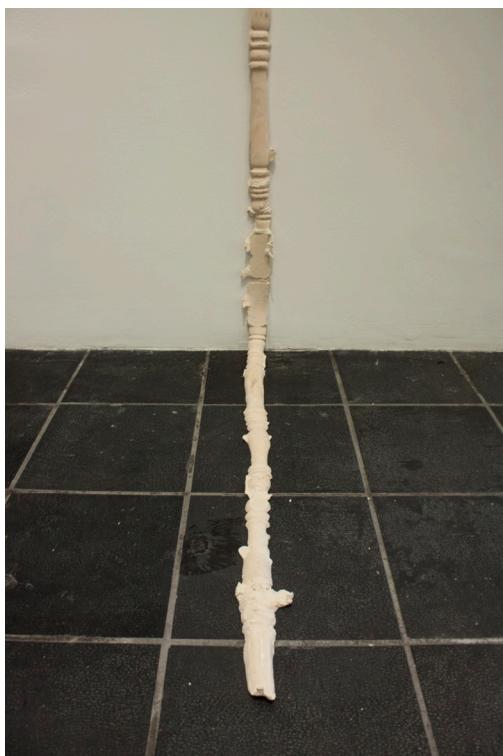


Figure 8. Kimberly M. Webb, *Puh (detail)*, 2014, Latex, Wood



Figure 9. Kimberly M. Webb, *Puh (detail)*, 2014, Latex, Wood

*Jenny's Head Fell Off*, 2014, Pieces from a ditch. This piece is harder to walk by and not see. Its colors may not be loud but a 3 x 4 x 4' gray lump on the pallet is hard to miss. She is a hot object, with many crevices and indentations caused from pushing the epoxy foam onto a pile of broken down acquirements. Phyllida Barlow said "An object loaded with the all too visible signs of the act of making, can repulse through its desperate need to attract. It becomes an object of emotional blackmail, persuading us to feel for it because it shows so clearly the marks, wounds perhaps, caused through its struggle to come into existence."<sup>4</sup>



Figure 10. Kimberly M. Webb, *Jenny's Head Fell Off*, 2014, Pieces from a Ditch

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4. Phyllida Barlow, "The Sneeze of Louise," *Objects for . . . and Other Things: Phyllida Barlow* (London: Black Dog, 2004), 45.

I struggled with this sculpture. I tried many materials to adhere her and give her the perfect “skin”. I finally came across the magical foam that is so lightweight that it will float in water. It has a beautiful wet clay look which feeds my need to situate a stoppage. It involved laboriously mixing small hand-sized portions for long periods of time. All of the sculptures demanded time to be slowed down in very different ways. I left parts within *Jenny’s Head Fell Off* exposed to reveal a porcelain slip covered bag of detritus, plaster clumps, and table legs similar to the lathed ones that made *Puh*. There are holes exposing foam, wax, wire, the daily news, a baby mattress, and a self-hardening clay originally thought to cover it all.

I have a fascination with piles, mounds, lumps. It may be the randomness or the shaping done by gravity, the concentrated mass, or the countless considerations of form and juxtapositions within. With this pile, I wanted to allow for a lack of control in developing the form. The materials guided the form. I placed a large assortment from my studio “library” of saved fragmented parts to make sculptures with and piled them up. Then I adhered the pile with various adhesives until finding the Free Form Air Epoxy. I covered the piece enough to generate a mysterious form and have a couple but not too many moments of discovery, revealing hints of the underbelly. Exposing the sad remains. *Jenny’s Head Fell Off* is funny and sad, active and still.

Jenny is nobody and everybody.

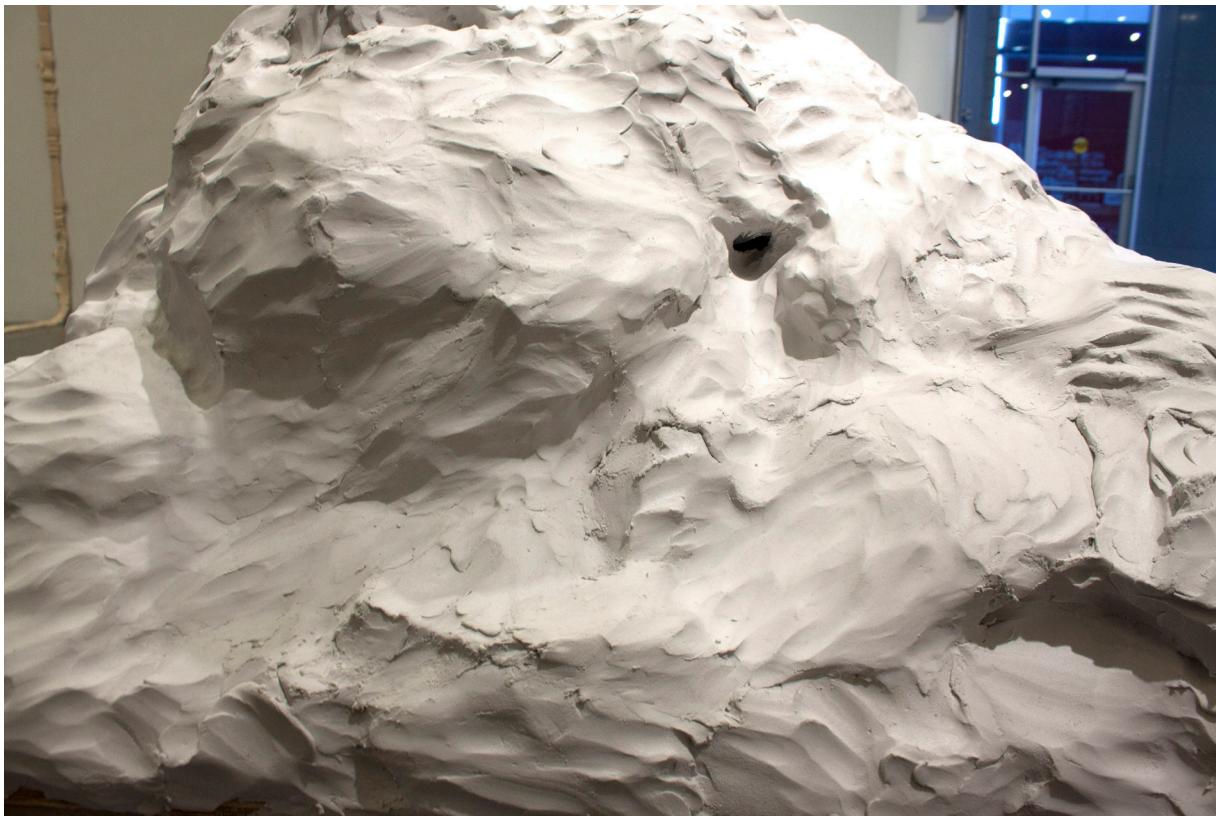


Figure 11. Kimberly M. Webb, *Jenny's Head Fell Off* (detail), 2014, Pieces from a Ditch



Figure 12. Kimberly M. Webb, *Jenny's Head Fell Off* (detail), 2014, Pieces from a Ditch

*Some Stuff*, 2014, Core Sample of Studio Debris, began around October of 2013. The form is the series' most siphoned, abjected assemblage. It is compacted with layers and layers of studio debris spanning from October to February or 4 x 4 x 136". It is laid upon a clean white triangular shelf at waist level, as if it were in a museum of natural artifacts. But that is what it is indeed: a natural artifact of time, my time, failed experiments, material struggles, remnants of the unused. Tamara Mann referred to it as "a way of taking the physical world's temperature."<sup>5</sup>



Figure 13. Kimberly M. Webb, *Some Stuff*, 2014, Core Sample of Studio Debris

I began to create the abject by wanting to make a condensed line of smashed materials representing all and nothing. I took a cardboard tube out of the trash, cut it open, rubbed vaseline all over the insides, taped it back together, set it up vertically and over the course of five months dropped, poured, and smashed materials down it.

5. Tamara Mann, in conversation with the author, April 25, 2014.

Repeat the remix. From a distance the pillar has a unified look, color, presence; but upon close inspection it is filled with hair, dirt, plaster, coffee grinds, concrete, resin, rubber, paper, wire, wood, banana peels, metal, latex, clay, screws, and more. It is a byproduct of the studio. As John Yau said “A way of passing time and therefore shaping it” “Putting together a broken world.”<sup>6</sup> Terry Smith said “Every sculpture is a matter of time.”<sup>7</sup>



Figure 14. Kimberly M. Webb, *Some Stuff (detail)*, 2014, Core Sample of Studio Debris

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6. John Yau, (presentation, *My Crippled Friend*, CCAD, Columbus, OH, October 11, 2013).

7. Terry Smith, (presentation, *Sculpture X Symposium*, CCAD, Columbus, OH, October 12, 2013).



Figure 15. Kimberly M. Webb, *Some Stuff*, 2014, Core Sample of Studio Debris

### - How Come -

The title of the body of work, *Consider the Lump*, was inspired after reading “Consider the Lobster,” by David Foster Wallace. I wanted to use the context (the gallery) the way that David Foster Wallace used his venue (*Gourmet Magazine*) to flip viewer’s expectations. *Consider the Lump* and “Consider the Lobster” both present a sensitive point of view to contemplate value; this responds to the often insensitive ways value shifts through habitual human activity. My anti-shiny, anti-form works do not tell you what to do or what to think but suggest a closer look and offer a soft request from viewers: to consider what is in front of you.

It's hard not to get caught in the fast moving current and not see what is directly in front of you. William Burroughs called it “the naked lunch of consumption,” the feeling of paranoia induced by “really looking” at what is in front of us in our daily lives.<sup>8</sup> This way of being, way of seeing, drives my way of making. For a long time, my objective of going back to school to work on my Master's was to create a healthy, sustainable practice. But now, at the very last hour, I realize that I can't follow the rules of the 9 to 5. I am always working and never working. My work is reactionary and the planning makes me less interested. To not go through a typical daily grind is what attracts me to being an artist. I want to rip apart the expectations and confinements of the rat race that I despise and that many people pay no attention to.

Acceleration is in high throttle. At this very moment (11:15 pm April 13, 2014) 7,226,323,696 people live on planet earth and it's rising every second. In 1970, there

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8. John Stezaker, interviewed by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Lynda Morris, *The UnMonumental Picture*, (New York: Merrell 2007), 116.

were roughly half as many people in the world as there are now.<sup>9</sup> A constant yank comes from all directions, asking us to buy consumer goods, religious beliefs, political dispositions. Sadly, the politics in today's "art world" aren't much different. Many big galleries are driven by big money, by buyers. Gross. Much like Mark Bradford, my drive begins with the frustration and anger of "a dissatisfaction with representation"; "Nobody wants to talk about the shit in our house."<sup>10</sup> Excavating out the shit is where the honest representation of a culture is at. My work is a way to process what is going on: drag it down, mull it over, and hurl it out.

Collage and assemblage are funny mediums, like a dark comedy. They piece together the absurd. But all of our media does that, as does our history and our daily attentions. It's all one big collage of perception. It's such a perfect way of reflecting on the world. Confronting a chaos with a hodgepodge of fragments from whatever you come across. The remix.

#### - Some Context -

Of course this way of making and working is informed by a history of makers; so many help inform my work. Researching and viewing the works of other makers undoubtedly quenches a passion I have for visual art. Drawing inspiration from other makers is possibly equal to the energy I feel in the making. I am extremely interested in the conversation of sculpture. Louise Bourgeois and Jenine Antoni have a way of muscling material that I find seductive. Bourgeois' abstract forms such as *Clutching*

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9. "Current World Population," *WorldOMeters*, April 13, 2014, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/wp.php>.

10. Mark Bradford, interviewed by Eugine Joo, *The UnMonumental Picture*, (New York: Merrell 2007), 24-5.

(1962) and *Avenza Revisited II* (1968-1969) have a rough, deformed, unsettling constitution. They are sensuous and provoking. Repealing and attracting me at the same time. Antoni's *Saddle* (2000), *Gnaw* (1992), and *Eureka* (1993) harmonize such a poetic material and body play. The physicality of the material is essential for my way of working. I need to work in the round.



Figure 16. Louise Bourgeois, *Avenza Revisited II* (1968-1969)



Figure 17. Jenine Antoni, *Saddle* (2000)

During my undergraduate studies at OSU, I worked with historian Stephen Melville in 2005. His art history class “Art Since 1945” was modified to entirely dissect Helen Molesworth’s exhibition at the Wexner Center for the Arts *Part Object Part Sculpture (POPS)*. Good timing. *POPS* was the Wexner’s inaugural exhibition after its massive renovation that showcased post WWII artists working post industrial revolution

to bring the work back to the repetitions of the body, where their touch did not vanish into a varnish. I found the work stirring: by Robert Rauschenberg, Eva Hesse, Marcel Broodthaers, Louise Bourgeois, Cy Twombly, Gabriel Orozco, Jasper Johns, and Marcel Duchamp among others. I spent three to five days a week studying the work during the exhibition's running.

Rauschenberg's combines of the 50's have been especially meaningful to me. His modest materials express his economy of means and are weaved within the threads of his day to day. He was interested in a "coequal value of objects"<sup>11</sup> and disrupted a quick and easy value classification by his wrappings and manipulations. Rauschenberg was politically playful with his combines. He even threw his pieces in a river when a critic declared that they should be.



Figure 18. Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled* (1954)

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11. Rosalind Krauss, "Robert Rauschenberg," *Part Object Part Sculpture*, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State U, 2006), 93.

And then there is Cy Twombly. His white assemblages that I am so drawn to began in the 50's. He and Rauschenberg were close. Twombly's use of white in making these monochromatic sculptures humbles the assemblages by unifying them into the softest whisper. And that's all they need to be. They certainly vary and retain making marks, rust, weather and do not attempt to be pristine. They have a straight forward, raw, simplicity that I find beautifully poetic. Or, as Michael Goodson said to me: "Cy Twombly is like the work of baby God".<sup>12</sup>



Figure 19. Cy Twombly, *Untitled* (1953)

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12. Michael Goodson, Conversation with the author, November 1, 2013.

Two years after Part Object Part Sculpture, an extremely important exhibition was held at the New Museum: *UnMonumental: The Objects in the 21st Century*. Rather than an exhibition of makers working in the past, this conversation was of contemporary makers. These artists, however, were certainly affected and influenced by the work made in the 50's and beyond by Twombly, Johns, Rauschenberg, Hesse, and the others that Molesworth choreographed in *POPS* at Wexner Center for the Arts. Coincidentally, *UnMonumental* was the inaugural exhibition at the New Museum curated by Richard Flood, Laura Hoptman, and Massimiliano Gioni. Artists included in this exhibition included Urs Fischer, Claire Fontaine, Rachel Harrison, Elliot Hundley, Jim Lambie, Rebecca Warren, and many others. These artists also sourced from their surroundings to recontextualize and assemble splintered forms.

The essays in *UnMonumental's* catalogue have been some of the most concise writings I have found that exemplify what the medium of assemblage/collage/montage are today and their significance. Richard Flood opens the conversation with "Not about Mel Gibson" where he confronts and condemns the "ongoing orgy of bad history" to storytellers such as Mel Gibson.<sup>13</sup> Flood, the New Museum's Chief Curator wrote about the importance of artist that respond to our times. He calls it a world of "half gestures." And proclaims:

What is immediately contemporary is sculpture that does its best to insinuate itself into the texture of the world [ . . . ] It's a nervous time and artist respond to it [ . . . ] Our time demands the anti-masterpiece - things that are cobbled, pushed, and

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13. Richard Flood, "Not About Mel Gibson," *UnMonumental: The Object in the 21st Century*, (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007), 10.

prodded into a state of suspended animation [. . .] Work that reflects the world - stubby, short attention span, brutish uncomfortable, anxious run parallel to life objects with knots of nerve endings [. . .] Reality is a collage composed of whatever grabs our attention and the competition is limitless (10-13).<sup>14</sup>

Laura Hoptman's essay "Going to Pieces in the 21st Century" steers her readers back into the antecedent work of the Dadaists and Neo Avant-Garde that clearly cultivated the work practiced today. She describes the work that is a "result of the excess of choice and the new paradigms that have arisen to deal with it" in useful analogies: "Think of the do-it-yourselfer in a basement with a glue gun. Think of a DJ. Think of a search engine."<sup>15</sup>

Massimiliano Gioni's "Ask the Dusk" essay points out that the word vandalism's roots come from the French Revolution (1794), in which monuments and paintings were destroyed in an attempt to remove remembrance. Artists in *UnMonumental* are responding to this way of life they know, working in unassuming ways and sizes in a "schizophrenic division between the desire to dissolve into the world and the need to fortify their own borders" where they "proudly proclaim fragility."<sup>16</sup>

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14. Flood, "Mel Gibson," 10-13.

15. Laura Hoptman, "Going to Pieces in the 21st Century," *UnMonumental: The Object in the 21st Century*, (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007), 129-138.

16. Massimiliano Gioni, "Ask the Dusk," *UnMonumental: The Object in the 21st Century*, (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007), 64-76.

- Recalcitrant Culmination -

The works presented in my thesis *Consider the Lump* are a lot like the small, gestural, space interventions mentioned earlier: they aren't trying to save the world, just offer a break from the bleak. *Consider the lump* is like the pieces within it: everything and nothing. The remix.



Kimberly M. Webb, *Some Stuff (detail)*, 2014

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