

Nutritional Groove

Terminal Project Report

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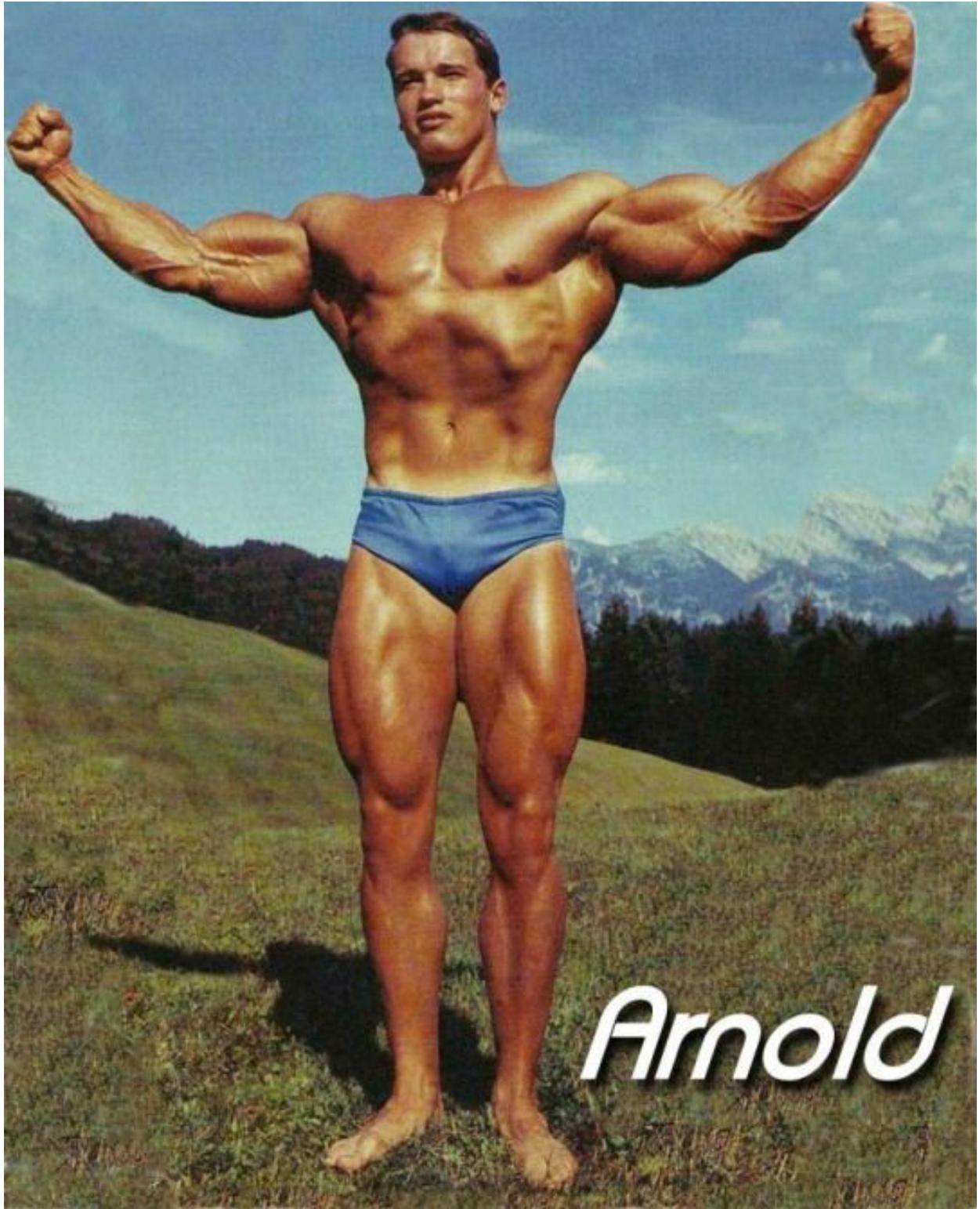
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Thank you to my friends, family, and committee for their support and guidance through this process.



Young Arnold posing against the Alps.

Pumping Up

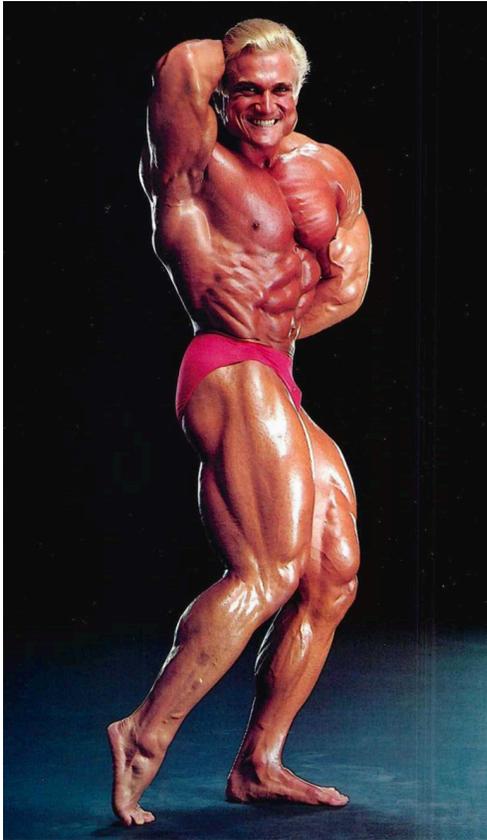
*The Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding*¹ reaches a philosophical climax when describing how to pose opposite a landscape. Arnold Schwarzenegger gives aspiring bodybuilders advice towards the ultimate photo pose: appear larger than the mountain range behind you. Muscle definition should be such that swollen arms, chest, and legs give the illusion of seamlessly blending with the range. The camera should be positioned low to the ground, minimizing the mountain, and allowing the chiseled pectorals to emerge in its wake.

I am drawn to cultural peculiarities that act out a desire for longevity. Pumping iron, celebrating the harvest bounty, reading one's natal chart. These tap into a rhythm of life, a celebration of the body that hopes to tap into something larger than itself. The work presented in my thesis shares this interest and sensibility- pathos, humor, futility, aspiration. Futility is inherent in the pursuit of any activity that attempts to extend life. The perfection involved in appearing larger than a geological feature is just that- appearance. The bodybuilding ideal, a symmetrical mass of muscles on muscles, is achievable for only a brief period. Bodies, materials, and colors fade. Entropy is a given, but the image is what lasts.

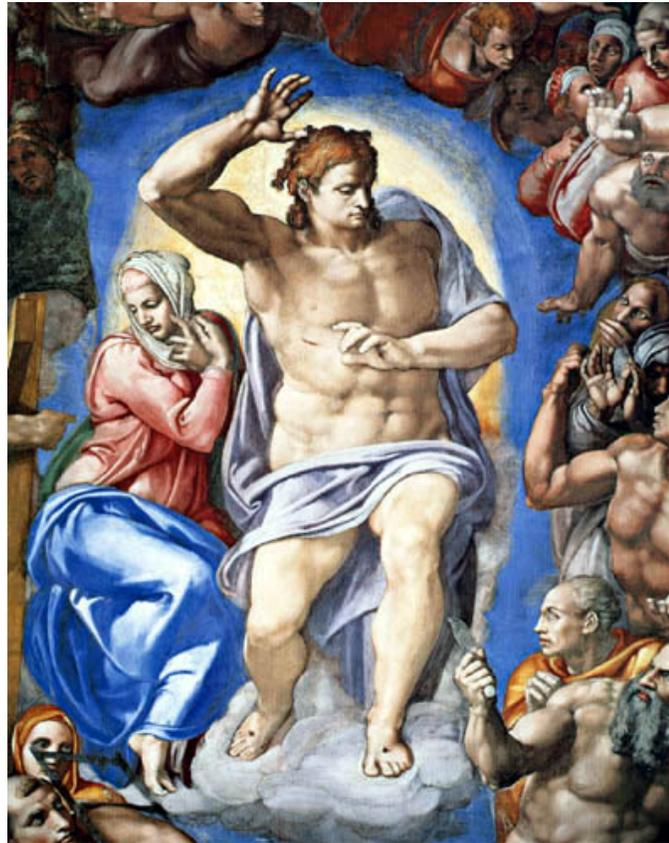
With the image of Arnold's physique as the idealized bodybuilder blazed in the public imagination, competitors who developed their musculature beyond this point surpassed the perceived perfection, extending the canon of form. The norms, defined by Arnold's muscles, that determine the bodybuilder's success have since been elongated, contorted, and exaggerated, resembling a Mannerist figure. Not only does

¹ Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bill Dobbins. *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding: The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised*. New York.: Simon & Schuster, 1999. 95-97, 104.

this body expand the idea of what shapes the human form can take, it expands the embodied experience of the bodybuilder. If it weren't for the repetitious dedication needed to achieve such a physique, this molding of the body could easily be viewed as play.



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Once a form exceeds the margins it's established of size, can inanimate objects become surrogate bodies? Normal sizes exist for every sort of thing: the human body, cars, vegetables, food portions, whatever. Beyond these established size margins, where do these things bleed into other "defined boundaries? When the body is posed

² Tom Platz featured in *The Encyclopedia of Bodybuilding's* "Bodybuilding Hall of Fame". *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding*. New York, Simon & Schuster. 107.

³ Michelangelo. *The Last Judgement*. 1535-1541. The Sistine Chapel, The Vatican.

in front of a mountain, it becomes an extension of the landscape. When the body overcomes landscape, as illustrated in Arnold's photographs, the background and foreground merge until they are as close as becoming the same form as they visually can. What language does the body need to develop to fully merge with its surroundings? How can a sculpture utilize the language of the body to the point of being something other than itself? I think of my sculptures as both bodies and backgrounds. Materials that entered my studio as discrete objects find purpose within a greater network of installation. My hope is that elements of my work bleed into other "defined boundaries," empathies shift between the viewer, other viewers, the building, the sculpture as a surrogate, and the sculpture as a prop.

Squash, 2015-2017



Vibes Don't Quit, 2016, Dimensions variable, Squash, potatoes, plant, glass, plaster, stone, paint, foam, vitamin E oil.

In discussing the materiality of figurative sculpture throughout history, Ralph Rugoff⁴ states, “Reluctant to embrace our condition as mortal material beings, we have historically honored the sculpted figure as an ideal surrogate impervious to the passing of time [...] Like every ideal form, then, classical sculpture inevitably calls to mind its degenerate twin.” Anything outside of the rigid definition of the ideal- anything with the potential of rotting, leaking, stinking- is within the territory of degeneracy. Depending on the materials present, a piece can be a talisman or the

⁴ Ralph Rugoff, ed., *The Human Factor: The Figure in Contemporary Sculpture* (London: Hayward, 2014), 16-19.

being that might need it. I added a large squash to my material repertoire in November of 2015. In the sculpture *Vibes Don't Quit*, it was featured in a tableau of stable materials such as plaster, glass, and stone, and less stable materials such as potatoes and a plant removed from its pot. The varied transformation of these materials over the span of a month emphasized the squash's stasis. If placed on a timeline, the potatoes would go first, then the plant... much later the squash. Then the plaster—the foam would last for hundreds of years. In the immediate timeframe of an exhibition, where the viewer could see a material like the potatoes ripe one week, sprouting the next, and leaking rot the week after that, the squash's material stability seemed more akin to the plaster, the painted foam, or even the concrete floor. Its internal decay undetectable to the eye, the unchanging squash creates an anxiety with the viewer surrounding corporeality. Is it really a vegetable (like the potatoes) if it didn't stain its pedestal?

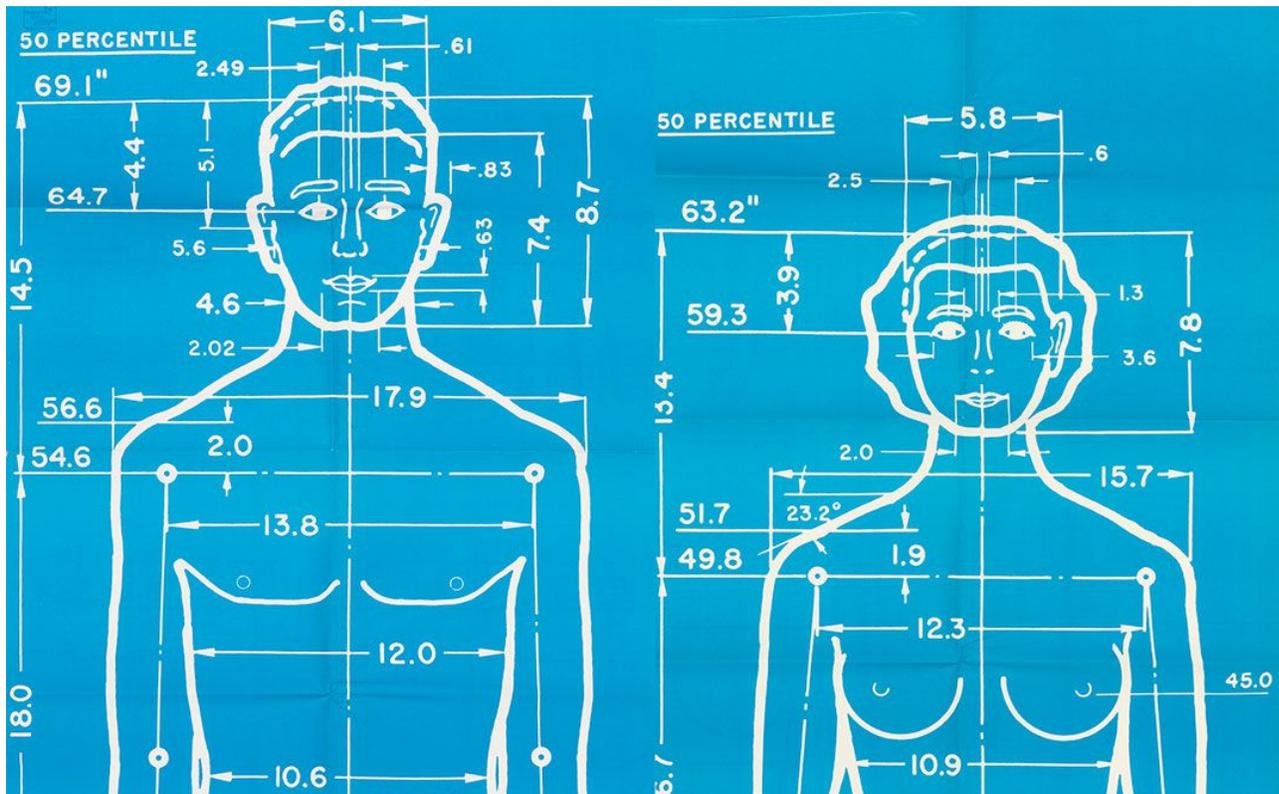
For two and a half years, this squash lived on the shelves and floor of my studio, participating in various sculptural formations. Its materiality was on partial view at *Disjecta*. Positioned next to a manicurist's teaching hand on a pillow covered steel-frame pedestal, the squash was tucked underneath a sage toned satin sheet. In this iteration, the assemblage evoked a body at rest, reinforced by the teaching hand's pink glitter manicure peeking over the sheet. This iteration was the degenerate twin to *Vibes Don't Quit*. In contrast to the all-inorganic parts that made up this piece, the squash, a year older at this point, became a question. The failure was palpable— the question was not the fact of its materiality, but when the skin would slowly rupture to externalize the ongoing internal deterioration. In removing the foam, plaster, clay, and stone of the *Vibes* piece, the squash became the surrogate for the body through both form and material. Paired with the manicure hand as its partner, the squash and its

companion fit comfortably into the role of surrogate body. Fully in its roll as the degenerative twin, entropy ensued and the squash rotted by the end of the exhibition.



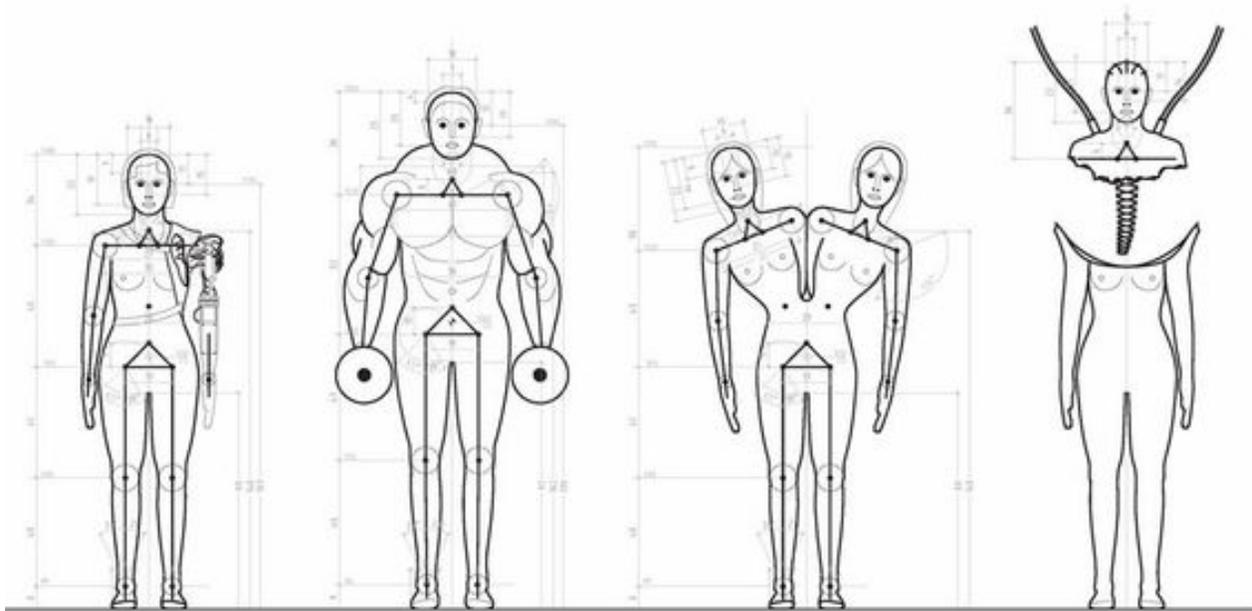
Satin Sleeper, 2017, 3' x 1.5' x 6', Squash, satin sheet, pillow, steel.

Outside Ergonomics



Henry Dreyfuss Associates, *Joe and Josephine*, 1969.

The field of ergonomics was largely influenced by hypothetical human beings. Joe and Josephine, brainchildren of the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss, were drawings made using the measurements and movements of the average consumer. Their fictional bodies, with no true source, became the standard for production of objects and interiors. *Architects Data*, another seminal ergonomics text uses Dreyfuss' data to design alternative products and environments accommodating the needs of conjoined twins, bodybuilders, people with multiple arms, etc. These different bodies provide insight as to how any body could interact with its environment and vice versa.



Thomas Carpentier, *L'homme, mesures de toutes choses*, 2012.

Can ergonomics extend to objects other than the human body? Much of my work attempts to ask this question by probing the space around it. I am interested in how standardization, needs, and reality can warp the physical and perceived environment. Each piece presented in my thesis features either a surrogate body, dismembered body, or the explicit lack of a body. Notably, *Untitled*, a pair of sunglasses with the right lens poked out attached to an eight-foot-long macramé eyeglass chain, suggests a body tall enough to accommodate it. *Frog Eye*, a ceramic eye that once belonged to a macramé frog, is adhered to a pipe fitting roughly twenty feet from the gallery floor. Without *Frog Eye*, the missing glasses lens in *Untitled* could suggest a derelict accessory, something perhaps stepped on or punched out, hindering the wearer's ability to see in full green. Once both objects are detected, the missing lens becomes something of a knowing wink to *Frog Eye's* existence. The two pieces share the wall; acting as autonomous figures. A missing lens, an unpaired eye. These things beg for the other but are separated by a wide swath of wall.



Untitled, 2017, .5' x 8', Eyeglasses, watercolor, macramé.



Frog Eye, 2017, 3" x 3" x 2.5", Ceramic.

Odd Nutrition



Eternal Flame for Heaven's Gate, 2017, The Master Cleanse, xanthan gum, foam, sand, found ceramic vase, enamel.

The contrast between organic and inorganic materiality in my work can be alternately viewed as food or not food. My interest in material as sustenance as well as surface and form, creates a symbiotic relationship between the viewer and the work.

Imagining a scenario where stuck viewers are forced to eat the artwork or more realistically, how they interface with the metabolizing materials through their senses, I have used fruits, snacks, and meal replacements in numerous works particularly with Xanthan gum. This powder is used in food production to coagulate liquids. When used in excess it suspends the liquid in a brittle solid. *Eternal Flame for Heaven's Gate*,

one of my thesis works, is comprised of a xanthan gum and Master Cleanse ribboning out of a large, found handmade ceramic vase. Heaven's Gate was a 1990s cult that terminated via group suicide ritualistically consumed the Master Cleanse for months at a time.



Soft and Juicy Mango Chain, 2017, 8' long, Dried mango, thread.

I'm drawn to materials that share an innate sensuality with the body. Dried mangos likeness to skin informed the exploration that led to the creation of a chain. The process of sewing together lengths of the mango is an exploration in that material—chain can allude to industry, bondage, and jewelry- the materiality of the mango substitutes the toughness of steel chain to create its organic double. This supple

iteration of an industrial material, allows it to grip the support beam of the building accentuating the beam's rigidity and highlighting the chain's corporeal materiality.

Silver Pine Mica, 2006-2009



2009 Toyota Prius painted Silver Pine Mica

I look for materials in everyday locations- grocery stores, thrift stores, the side of the road. “Material” is used loosely here- in addition to tangible matter, I place color in this category. I use color throughout an exhibition, as a unifier for otherwise tenuous threads of ideas, material, and scale. Green plays this role in my thesis work, both as a color that was added to a material (paint) and the material’s natural hue (carrot tops). Multiple sculptures in my thesis work use derivatives of Silver Pine Mica, an automotive paint used on ‘Toyota Prius’ from 2006-2009. Hovering between khaki and sage green, Silver Pine Mica embodied the environmental optimism of Prius buyers in the late 2000s who in large viewed the car as a symbol of their politics rather than one element in a holistic approach to carbon neutrality. This aspirational optimism is mirrored in the piece *Silver Pine Mica Tower*, a twenty-foot tower of foam,

sand, and latex paint. The color is matched off a sample of Silver Pine Mica automotive paint and is the computer's closest approximation. The sculpture's implied precariousness mirrors the attitudes of environmental consumerism at the time- as both the tallest object in the room and the only non-representational sculpture in my thesis, *Silver Pine Mica Tower* becomes a symbol of empty aspiration.

My thesis work probes aspiration in search of fertile territory where pathos lies. Through materiality, humor, and decay, the total installation develops into a landscape that the viewer blends into; just as Arnold blends into the mountain range. The lifespans of the squash and the viewer exist within a similar timeframe when compared to the longevity of paint, sand, or foam, allowing the human body to be considered as matter and narrate their material composition.



Silver Pine Mica Tower, 2017, 20' x 2.5' x 2.5', Latex paint, sand, foam.

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