



# **“PYRAMID”: THESIS PROJECT PRODUCTION JOURNAL**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2016 I began a Masters in Environmental Studies at York University. At the heart of my studies has been the significance of the transformative and healing qualities arising in response to the essays that I have read over the last year of my studies. My arts processes have enabled me to examine both my personal history through symbols and imagery, and artistic creative process itself. Creative process has been the main theme of all the texts, and the task for me has been to face and challenge their power over me through the manipulation of those symbols and images. The external act of manipulation has been mirrored in the internal shifting and transformation. I found a way to free myself of their power over me—smashing the safety of the coping mechanisms, the childhood imagery I had been playing with all those years that had comforted me and kept me safe but stagnant.

Looking at the healing that takes place through the process of creativity as a theory, a belief actually, central to my thesis, I have to mark the place I am at now, after having found a path to freedom from the traumas that had accompanied me through my life—70 years. When I expressed my gratitude to Peter, my supervisor, for mentoring me through this process, Peter pointed out that I had done the work myself. My creative process, the journey itself, was worked out in my journal, and that healing journey—creating and manipulating symbols through my art pieces, and the process of writing itself—helped me to smooth the traumas into a more placid place. I look back on this and realized that after years of looking for rescue from others, in doing this work, I had finally rescued myself. That surprised me!

### **New Change**

In 1997 I had worked to change my life by eliminating destructive patterns and found myself left with a blank landscape. I realize that with this new change I am back to a new empty space within which I must recreate myself. I suppose life could be seen as a constant state of re-inventing ourselves as our lives and our personal narratives shift and change. I have always thought that if you don't keep up, you fall behind. Staying in one place is not possible.

It's one thing to write about the healing transformation that artistic creativity catalyses, but to journal the actual subjective experience of this healing and transformation while in the midst of it is a rocky road, quite a bit more awkward a trajectory than a simple description would imply. It starts with digging up old patterns of behaviour and identifying the triggers, then incorporating the shifts in meaning of specific behaviour—sifting out the old coping mechanisms and dealing with the anxiety of facing triggering events without the comfort of these unhealthy coping mechanisms—with nothing, in fact. That is where I find myself.

I am reminded of my belief in ancestors and I wonder, thinking back to the years of my stagnation, and the constant efforts of my “intangible sources” to get my attention—if they were sending me little reminders that I have moved past my childhood symbols and waiting for me to notice and to catch up. I wonder, at this point, if there are forces that I chose to call ancestors, that are shaping me—if I (and everyone else!) am the product of the creativity of another entity on another plane of existence. Just a thought. Marionettes, us?

### **About Rescue**

I am truly hoping that this is last personal piece I need to write.

I discovered earlier in my journal-writing about the rescuer dynamic that is part of the complex of core components in my connection with others. This dynamic was pivotal to greater or lesser degrees in the way that I connected to people. Growing up, no one rescued me from the abuses of my childhood and so I needed rescue. But at the same time, I could not bear to see anyone suffer and I determined that I could—no, that I emphatically would do whatever I could to help anyone in need. It was a compulsion. Looking back, I suppose that over-functioning in my need to “fix” others helped to calm my anxiety.

Decades ago, after coming to the realization that this was not a healthy dynamic in my adult relationships, I decided that if I could not change, that I would at least put my need to rescue to good use. Fostering teenage girls seemed the right thing to do and I was good at it. Now I have many of these girls—my daughters from other mothers, now grown up and some with children of their own.

But there is a difference between caring for my girls and expecting they will still need me, indefinitely feeding my need to caretaker. Chauffeur them around when they needed to be



somewhere important was always a good opportunity to catch up and I was always happy to do that. But this seems to have come to an end. I was informed recently by Carlotta that at 28 years old, she told me impatiently, she knew how to take the TTC and, if necessary, since she has her drivers license, she can rent a Car! I responded that I guess she didn't need me anymore. Very sad, I was. And she said "Nooooo." Though my 41-year-old daughter still calls me to drive her to IKEA and I would drop everything to spend that time with her.

For the last three years I have taken care of my sick uncle, the last of my dad's brothers, as his health steadily declined. He died this past January 30. I cared for my uncle and I would not have changed a thing. These are just examples. I have to learn to separate the appropriate way of caring from the unnecessary, even inappropriate, "over-functioning."

Peter, my awesome mentor, had been sick for 2 months, and when we met in January he still looked rough around the edges. Of course, my Old Playbook need to "help" kicked in and I offered chicken soup and chastised him about not taking on too much. When he jokingly replied something like "Ok, Mum." I sort of slunk out embarrassed, feeling I had crossed some sort of boundary.

After a few weeks I emailed to see about meeting and Peter was still sick. How to respond...how to respond? I ran through a few anxiety-driven responses that I knew were wrong and I eventually settled on "I'm sorry to hear that." No fretting allowed.

That was the best response, and that was all I did. Sigh. Totally insufficient to do justice to how worried I had been about him.

And so by the time we set up a meeting, I started again:

Me 1: I can take chicken soup.

Me 2: No!!

Me 1: Ok, Ok, but matzo balls!

Me 2: NO!! Not even with Matzo balls!

Me 1: Ok, ok. No chicken soup. Maybe I can stop at Balzac and pick up a hot Lemon and ginger for him.

Me 2: Well that's not too bad. I guess.

And so I went to see my therapist and ran through this whole journal entry with her and when I got to the lemon drink she said “or...” and I knew that was my cue to go a bit further. I said, “Or I could take nothing.” and I caught her look of approval. After decades of talking to her, split second reactions don’t escape me.

I arrived for my meeting with Peter—who had been sick for two months! —and I had brought nothing. If over-functioning helps to calm my anxiety, bringing nothing to my meeting with Peter left me in the midst of a panic attack. I didn’t know how to do this. I felt totally stripped of everything that I had been. I didn’t have a clue who I was, if I couldn’t be the Me “helping, fixing things” that I had been my whole life—my Old Playbook consigned to the archives along with the baggage that had accompanied it. People don’t always need me to help. It’s true. Probably hardly ever.

Deep breath...

### **About Boundaries**

Boundaries are important to me. Peter is Professor and I am Student. This boundary has kept me safe and, more importantly, has allowed me to explore my own creative processes, whether wondrously unfolding or messily spewing out half formed efforts to contain chaos. This boundary allows me to engage naturally and spontaneously (though often self-consciously) with the guidance that Peter offers, without being concerned about whether Peter likes me or not. That is not even on the list of what is important to me in this study of creativity (though I can hope that I have not put him off too much). What is important is to be seen as having substance, as being credible and intelligent, and as counting—for something—to not be seen as inconsequential or meaningless. That is what is important. Peter said I could be a “Working Woman”—an identity that was all mine and didn’t leak out into other people’s space, like my “fixing” compulsion had. I think I will change that to “Working Artist.” This acknowledges, not just being busy, but being busy with activities that are meaningful and nurturing, and that I can share with others. And being busy is certainly a way of life for me. That felt like a really good start.

My friend Maja, who is an actor and playwright said that the nice thing about not knowing who you are is that you can be anyone! She said she does it all the time!

## JOURNAL

Now I am starting to journal the construction of my pyramid piece and as I approach this task I will examine each aspect of the process. And I will pay very close attention to my relationship with the materials, the tools, and steps I will need to take to make it say what I need it to say, to be sturdy, and to reach and connect with audience. And I will pay attention to transformation.

The most important skill I learned at the art schools I attended was problem-solving. The pieces that I did for Lisa's class [Figures 1 – 10] took a very long time. Longer than one would guess, looking at them. I have a good basic knowledge of materials and processes. I know how to problem-solve most everything I could encounter, but that doesn't mean that I have done it before, nor that I am fast, or know the best way. These pieces I did for Lisa took a long time because I was learning new media—the polymer, as well as new construction methods. Every new job that isn't straight forward wax carving, entails learning the medium, and that takes time.

The first figure—Oliver—took me 4 or 5 days. I didn't use a model but unintentionally he ended up looking sort of like Jared Kushner. The process of sculpting polymer involves heat-curing—that is baking it for about a ½ hour at a time. The individual figures can be baked up to 20 times—each time adding a bit, sanding things down, leaving the most fragile details till the end so that a solid core will support them. That all takes time.

By the time I did the last figure I knew what to do and I could get it done in a day or so.



FIGURE 1. Cart: goldplated with CZs (left); wax construction (right)



FIGURE 2. Constructing Lawrence



FIGURE 3. Lawrence filling the cart

The baby picture on the front of Lawrence's cart represents my feelings when I see a homeless person and I imagine them as babies and I wonder what life trajectory brought them to where they are now. I see the adult and the baby simultaneously



*FIGURE 4. Constructing Lucy and Charles*

I thought to add a mirror to Lucy's cart and as I was looking for an oval piece of mirror I came across an oval faceted crystal and I decided that the facets would reflect a complex and distorted image—better representation of the false facade of Lucy's persona.

I created these pieces separately but as I was stacking them to save table space I could see that stacking them as I did, the wealthy on top of the homeless, created the hierarchy that is the reality in society, with the homeless invisible to the wealthy. So I will display them stacked like this. The piece represents the juxtaposition between consumerism and commodification of art as acquisitions of the wealthy used to elevate them—represented by the pedestals being handed to them by the cashier/curator/art critic, Miguel, gold littering the floor around him—measured against the value of survival level possessions of the homeless as represented by the gold plated and jewel-encrusted shopping cart of the homeless man.

What if Lucy, Charles, Oliver, Miguel, and Lawrence all sat down and told each other their stories, their real stories? Their truths. As Grace Paley says, "People ought to live in mutual aid and concern, listening to one another's stories...I want to find out a way. Is there a way for people to tell stories to one another again and to bring one another into that kind of speaking



and listening and attending community?”<sup>1</sup> So what if Lucy and Charles and Oliver and Miguel sat down with Lawrence and they all told each other their stories, and they all really listened?



*FIGURE 5. Lucy, Oliver, and Charles checking out their art at Miguel's cash register. The sign by the cash register reads "Post-Modernism 50% Off"*

I have not been able to move past my unfinished pieces and now that they are finished I can finally get to my pyramid piece. I felt like the computer on Beeblebrox spaceship, Heart of Gold, from *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. When the ship was under attack, the computer

could not respond to protect them because it was busy trying to make a cup of tea for Arthur Dent. In my life that happens often.



*FIGURE 6. Stacking the separate pieces underscores the social hierarchy they represent.*



*FIGURE 7. The wealthy shopping for empty status.*



*FIGURE 8. Making a paper pattern for the construction of the Chinese food take-out container*



*FIGURE 9. Constructing the shopping carts*



*FIGURE 10. Completed, ready for plating*

**“It is a multi-layered process of thinking with things...” Peter Korn (2013)**

The art project that I am working on is a statement about hierarchies in society, about the injustices in the devaluation and the destruction of the natural environment in favour of artificial values and greed. The symbolism of the pyramid itself extends from ancient history and spiritual connections to the present day, where the pyramid continues to be a source of spiritual meaning and inspiration. From mystical meanings to utilitarian, and aesthetic design, the pyramid as a symbol has been widely used throughout history. The website Forever Conscious<sup>2</sup> refers to a range of meanings: from the spiritual belief imbued in Egyptian pyramids to native tipis, the pyramid shape is seen to connect the earth to higher consciousness, to be healing space, to channel energy. Pyramids are significant.

In my pyramid piece, the values I have assigned to the placement within the structure reflect my thesis directly. I believe that the appropriation of art by the elite to represent wealth and superiority is directly connected to the soul of art, the expression of the artist pillaged by the wealthy as the spoils of a war on society, a war on the planet itself. The elite occupy—have stolen—the top of the pyramid. Symbolically, as ancient societies believed, this position would represent the connection to higher consciousness. For my pyramid this is now a space occupied by the victors of this war—the wealthy. In my vision this space is represented by an impenetrable wall behind which those who have claimed victory hide their faces, their humanity, and any connection to the rest of the population lost but for their spoils of war—their looting of the souls of humanity—the art, the expressions of creativity that would connect people, commodified and sold to the highest bidder.

The bottom of my pyramid is occupied by the poorest of society. They are closest to the earth where the value of survival, of their existence, leaves them seen as the dregs of society. Those closest to earth should be those who are connected to all that is valuable in nature, but real values, human values have become contaminated, all but erased by the narrative of meritocracy, by capitalism, by the false values of greed and wealth. The current definitions of success fail to include caring for others and the spiritual connection that humanity can share with each other and with nature.

The pyramid drawers are made of teak. An interesting fact about teak, with unintentional relevance to the theme of exploitation of the environment, is that teak from old growth forests has all but disappeared. Due to over exploitation, the result of its durability and wide range of applications, the great demand for teak has led to replacing old growth teak with new sources of “plantation” teak, thought to be inferior to the old growth forests, though said to be catching up.<sup>3</sup>

The original teak wood drawers of the pyramid were not built to entirely fill the openings that they occupied. They were shorter than the depth of the piece by 2", and shallow, due to the raised “floor.” The only way to give my dioramas more needed space, more depth, was to replace the drawers with hand-built drawers that I could make out of metal. Pewter would have been more malleable, but copper or brass, even thin sheet, is strong. And metal can be worked with the precision necessary for fitting the drawers to the trapezoid shaped drawer openings in the pyramid. But the size of the sheets of metal used to construct the drawers requires tools that are much bigger than my jewellers’ tools. A bender or a large anvil would have been nice, and a bench shear—all tools I had access to at school. I have improvised tools as needed, and I have asked a friend who makes large metal sculptures to help me with bending the walls of the drawer using her metal bender and table shears.

The top triangle of the pyramid is not a drawer but a solid peak about 10" tall. As I am creating hierarchies in society this impenetrable peak was well-suited to represent the 1%, the gated communities. It was easy to envision it, a rhodium/platinum plated triangle with a polished black nickel gate. I gave this a geographical location, googling the wealthiest communities in North America and using that zip code on a plaque attached to the gate.

I have a conflicted relationship with metal. Though I am trained as a metal-worker/jeweller, I don’t actually like working with metal. It doesn’t “speak” to me, it doesn’t inspire me. It is functional, probably leading to a more lucrative profession than clay sculpture, which is what I have always loved. But I have learned metal techniques and for this piece, my pyramid piece, good knowledge of metal working techniques and a well-stocked studio of tools are essential.



## The Pyramid Piece



*FIGURE 11. Working on the church facade*



This painting is on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Medallion 6. I had to carve this medallion for the film FX2 in 1979. I still have the mold and it is perfect at the centre of the church window.

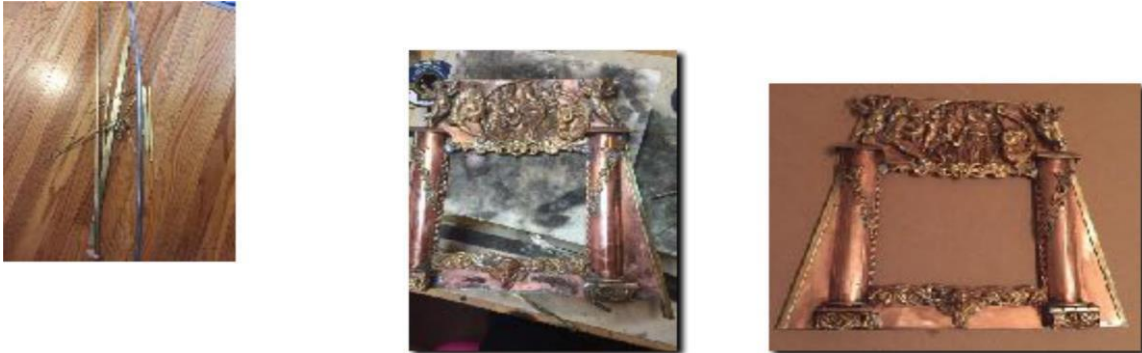


*FIGURE 12. The Sistine Chapel painting (left) and my carving (right)*

Six hours in the studio Sunday. Spent four hours, whatever it takes to not have to do any sawing, trying to manipulate different (lead and brass) 4mm channel wires I bought from the stained-glass store into a frame for the facade of the church drawer. I needed a channel wire that would frame the two plates and join them—one with the stained glass and one with the cover piece. I needed the edges to look finished and professional. Trying to find channel wire that would be the right dimensions, so I wouldn't have to saw the rectangular tubing that I bought. But after 4 hours of wasting time trying to get first the lead channel and then the brass channel to fit, in the end I had to saw in half, length-wise, the rectangular tubing. My shoulder was not happy.

So I brought home my gold plated front facade and debated soldering it to the plate with the stained glass window in it. I decided I had better do it before adding anything else to the layers that might be harmed by the heat of the torch. I was just putting it off because I am anxious about even heating up this assortment of components. Especially the stained-glass window

which I had already put a tiny hairline crack in when I was soldering it into the frame. I can disguise that one easily, but I didn't want to risk further damage.



*FIGURE 13. Framing the facade. Scraps from four hours of fooling around (left). Framing in process (centre) and complete (right)*

I stood the drawer on end and placed the front facade layers, one on top of the other. Fluxed the seam, already to solder them. Then I got up and cleaned the studio for about 1/2 hour. Then I went downstairs and dusted all the shelves and cleaned the bathroom floor. What else could I clean—putting off doing this. Really taking my time. Then I went back upstairs and looked around for music. Sisters of Soul. I needed a voice like KoKo Taylor to back me up.



*FIGURE 14. Soldering set-up*

Soldered it at the four corners—not the neatest job I have done—but nothing cracked. Breathed. Cleaned up the joins. Did some highlighting and put the drawer in.



*FIGURE 15. The façade*



*FIGURE 16. Attached and antiqued.*

## Carving Jesus



*FIGURE 17. Jesus figure for the altar in wax (left) and raw silver casting (right)*

I have been struggling with how to portray the values and the imagery for the church drawer of my diorama. As the front facade is, for the most part, handmade with the addition of some commercial stampings, I had started to assemble more commercial stampings for the interior of the church. It is collage work and I enjoy it. But I was not having much luck getting the right feeling. I cannot believe how long this has taken to envision. The bottom three drawers are already designed.

I finally decided that, to reflect the handwork of the outer facade and in particular the coin that is above the stained glass—Medallion 6, the priest Nathan and King David—from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel which I sculpted close to 40 years ago, that I should really just carve the central image to place on the wall behind the altar. Trying to combine handwork with commercially produced imagery is a balancing act. I don't have a problem utilizing manufactured products. It is not in conflict with my commitment to my own creativity. These manufactured pieces are statements in themselves and in some way connect my finished work to society, representing no more or less than the context of societal reality. However, my visual artistic statement must be consistent, and carving the main centre-piece for inside the church, behind the altar, became the only way to reflect the outside—on the inside. So I carved this Jesus and it didn't take me that long—a couple of days—not even 10 hours.

I have always, in the past, used soft sculpting wax for pieces with this degree of detail. The original Medallion 6 was entirely sculpted from soft wax. The piece I used for this church facade was a casting from a mold I made of my original. For my current project, this Jesus, I used hard wax and thought I could add more detail with soft wax once I had the basic shapes done. But the wax in this photo has been entirely carved from hard wax. I have been able to achieve quite a detailed study just using my wax pen, burs, riffle files, and gravers.

What felt right to me was to leave the graver marks on the surface details of the “drapery”—folds of the robe. I like the idea of the refined detail of the face and hands. But the robe felt right with the tool marks left in. In the past I have been careful to achieve a look as close as possible to reality. But this time I knew I wanted it to look hand-made—to have the obvious tool markings. This is a shift in expression for me. I do a good job of representational carving. I know there are many people who are better than me. I am not sure if I just give up too soon thinking, as I do, that I could pick away at it forever and still not be satisfied so I pick a point to call it done, and I am happy with my work.

I am particularly happy with this piece because the image, the expression was achieved without the use of tweaking with soft wax. This time I was more daring with my engraving tool and I could see what I was doing more clearly. It feels different than my previous methods. I’m not sure how to describe the difference. More direct, less cluttered. I guess that feels right. I am feeling braver. I don’t know how that works since I have never been “afraid” to tackle any carving but “bravery” is the word that comes to mind, so I am going to stick with it.

Sculpting soft wax is totally absorbing, fulfilling and involves more intimacy with the work. It is slow and—I will use the word “sensuous”—stroking a figure to life using only heat and the fine tip of a needle, one molten drop of wax at a time. It is slow work and I enjoy it so much that sometimes I wipe out a section and re-do just to re-do it. It is a forgiving process, change is fluid and feels good. It’s been a long time since I have poured that kind of love into a piece.

But hard carving wax is less forgiving. It requires knowing exactly what you need to do to achieve a particular look. Soft wax is more feeling. Hard wax is more “architectural.” You need a plan, you need control, and you need to be—yeah—brave.



Eyelid—1.5mm flat graver—two strokes—one gently angled up from the outer edge of the eye to the centre—one angled up from the inner edge of the eye to meet it. Controlling both the angle of the blade and the angle of the cut I can simultaneously shape the angle of the lid as well as the depth of lid to the eyeball. Two precise cuts right to left and left to right. Smooth them together with the edge of an exacto knife. You either get it right or you don't. I had planned to use soft wax to clean it up—but I don't need to! It looks good. For this carving I got it right! It felt different, as I said. Something has changed.

But the drapery—because I have to make this piece to represent church values and not my own values I did clean up the drapery somewhat. I didn't leave blatant tool marks in the folds. But still, I felt that it would be right at some time, to do just that. I like that!



*FIGURE 18. Hard wax tools (left); soft wax tools (right)*



## Trying to finish the Church Drawer

The ornate casting I am using came from a drawer pull. I was out walking Bease one day and there was a chest of drawers out for “scrap” pickup with these wonderful handles. I went home and got my screwdrivers and “rescued” them. Cause...you never know. And as it turns out, they work well in my church. How do people throw out such great stuff?



*FIGURE 19. Soldering the Church drawer*

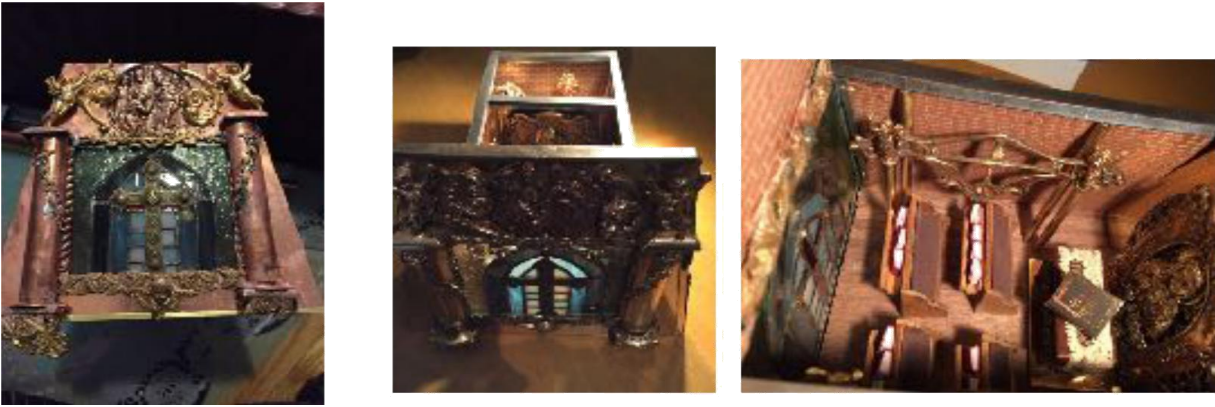


*FIGURE 20. Starting to solder wearing one of those paper coveralls and a mask (sigh)*

Progress on my pyramid. The benches were raw wood shelves I found at a craft wholesaler. I stained them and added the wood pockets at the back—for the bibles I had to glue in place to hide the heart cut-out. And cushion at the front. And I have stained the baseboards—will have to add them. And more gold coins in the back room. And then the “candle” sticks in the corners. Just need to add two figures, woman and man—parishioners sitting in the pews. Scarf on her head—bowed in reverence.



*FIGURE 21. Constructing the benches*



*FIGURE 22. Church façade and interior*

### **Under construction**

Constructing the church, the top drawer of my pyramid piece, I learned to start with the practical considerations—the need for precision in the construction so that the drawer itself would fit the space and, for the purpose of viewing, slide easily in and out. I learned to pay attention to the order that the components would be assembled, dependent on their characteristics—flammability, stability, and proximity to other elements and their characteristics. I learned to pay attention to consistency of the scale of components, and the materials—all practical considerations. And all had to allow for the fluidity of creative thought and action.

I also learned that in order to make the statement that was integral to fulfilling the goal of my piece—the statement that I was making with my construction—the symbols and imagery needed to efficiently convey the messages and needed to work together in order that each drawer contained the visual vocabulary of a complex statement. I needed to be very aware of determining images that made an impact on people’s awareness of the issues and the emotional core of the injustices that I was depicting. I felt that the imagery that I used worked well—simple statements presented in an easily read format.

The beautiful frame I made for the top edge [Figure 23 left] didn't fit into the drawer, even when I sanded down the edges, and so it was back to the drawing board. I tried to sand out the inside of the wall of the drawer opening, to make more space, but it would have taken me hours and hours. So, I tried different thinner channel wires, from pewter to brass. And I eventually settled on a "paper brick" that I am only sort of happy with. And I went up to a model-maker store and picked up yet another brass channel wire and I will try it later today.



*FIGURE 23. Framing the drawer (left and right); channel experiments (centre)*

I picked up some new rectangular tubing that I can cut one side of the tubing off and make a better channel wire! I don't know why the model-making stores don't have this! They have the tubing! How hard would it be?

Anyway, I sawed off 6" of one side of the tubing till my shoulders ached. I could probably pay a student to do this for me—but gotta watch my spending. But I was rewarded with a new option for finished the edges!! Yay!





*FIGURE 24. Church drawer with new channel wire installed*

Here it is (above) with the two horizontal lengths of new channel wire! It looks so much better than the paper brick. I'm happy! And I can put it aside for the moment knowing that at some point I can fix the top edges with new channel wire, now that I have a solution figured out.

This is the drawer [Figure 25] with the two figures—the huddled, praying parishioner in the pews and the child “swept under the carpet” in the back room with all the riches.



*FIGURE 25. Parishioners in the pews*

Comparing the original teak drawer and my constructed drawer, I couldn't imagine making a visual statement in that small cramped space. Not that the drawer I constructed is huge—but it is the size I envision my work in.



*FIGURE 26. The original teak drawer and the constructed one*

## Living room of a wealthy home

I have been a bit stuck on trying to finish the things I have started before I move on. It's time now. The next drawer down will also be complex, time-consuming and challenging. Most of the challenge is in creating the box itself, filling the box is the fun part.

Once again, I have started with a constructed copper drawer. The initial bending was done by Wendy using her metal bender. I tapped the bends to crisper angles with an angle dapping block. These are big pieces of metal and I learned from my church drawer that my mini-torch doesn't have the heat to bring the piece to a high enough temperature that I can depend solely on soldering to stably connect the sides to one another.



*FIGURE 27. Pattern making to construct a copper drawer*



*FIGURE 28. Corner construction*

With the corners soldered it was time to tackle the front piece. This front piece would have a frame and a window and depict the outside face of the building visible on the front in the pyramid. The inside of the front piece will have a curtain rod and curtains. I am looking forward to playing with window treatments on the inside of the front facade. The window would need to be framed using the brass channel wire, three sides soldered and one side left open so that the last thing I would need to do would be to slide in the glass.



*FIGURE 29. Constructing the mitered corners*

In order to make the drawer front which the window would be fastened to, I measured the drawer opening and created a paper pattern. The front facade needed to extend beyond the window to the outer edge of the drawers—to line up with the Church drawer.

The glass frame was wired to the window frame by soldering a piece of channel wire on the inside of the window frame that slides onto the edge of the floor of the room. I use the same technique of drilling holes to connect them and putting two pins in place to solder the connection. My little torch won't provide enough heat for more than that.





*FIGURE 30. Installing the channel wire to the frame*

I still have to repeat this process on the left and right side walls. Anticipation!



*FIGURE 31. Empty room in copper drawer*

## Some thoughts on reading woodworkers' journals

I have been reading the journals of two woodworkers, Peter Korn's (2013) *Why We Make Things and Why it Matters: The Education of a Craftsman* and Ross Laird's (2001) *Grain of Truth: The Ancient Lessons of Craft*. They have, in their books, both journals of their furniture-making processes and reflections on how they see the meaning of their work, personally and in the context of today's society. They both highlight their appreciation, their love of the materials and the processes, right down to the smallest detail in the joinery that they describe in intimate detail. Woodworkers love their craft. I have not found comparable journals by metal-workers. I haven't looked that hard though. Maybe woodworkers are better writers. I doubt that my stats prof would let me get away with that statement. But my ex-husband, a woodworker/industrial designer, is also a prolific writer and regularly submits his writing to a woodworking magazine.

Peter Korn refers to the ideas of handwork theorized by both John Ruskin and William Morris as "...the politics of work into a theory of production intended to counteract the evils of industrial capitalism. Their 'craftworker' would...make objects of aesthetic merit from start to finish in salubrious surroundings with personal responsibility for quality. Such improved conditions of labour would promote psychological health and produce better citizens."<sup>4</sup> It's a good theory but it has not come to fruition because for comparable costs of handwork vs factory manufactured mass production, handwork cannot compete. It ends up being only the wealthy who can afford it.

In addition to these books I am, at the moment, reading Henry Schaefer-Simmern's (1948) *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity: Its Basics, Processes, and Implications*. Schaefer-Simmern also specifically refers to the post-industrial revolution's numbing of the spirit of society, as personal contributions and personal statements are not as valued in society as that which might be called "conveniences," the new toys that are produced by machines and in factories.

Schaefer-Simmern argues that, "In mechanical manipulation, hands, feet, and eyes work relatively isolated from the core of man's interest, and the performance, therefore, is not related to his essential nature. Constant compulsory isolation of functions must inevitably endanger the individual's equilibrium."<sup>5</sup>

Considering the observations made by Schaefer-Simmern regarding the negative consequences of the schism between mind and body offers a fine segue into the theses of the journals of Peter Korn and Ross Laird that I have been reading. In their journals they also meld handwork with finding deeper meaning in their lives, and inspiration from the same connection of mind, body, and soul. They see how their furniture contributes to society and why the care taken in their work to produce objects for personal use is significant. It's that old saying that handmade pieces are made with love and that is one lesson I have taken away from these two writers. Lewis Hyde, in his book, *The Gift*, refers to the movement of "mana"—the spirit of the creator/craftperson/artist through society through the sharing of the works produced, which

draws each of its participants into the wider self. The creative spirit moves in a body or ego larger than that of any single person. Works of art are drawn from, and their bestowal nourishes, those parts of our being that are not entirely personal, parts that derive from nature, from the group and the race, from history and tradition, and from the spiritual world.<sup>6</sup>

That is what I feel when I am working—that connection. That intimate connection is a core value. The lessons these woodworkers have taken from their choice of vocation arise from their love of the wood they use to create their furniture. They put the same connection into their materials and processes that I put into my waxes.

~

I am happy now. There is nothing I need or want for myself. I seem to have everything I need—a stable home, a community and a family—meaningful work, making stuff, and school. A stable income would be nice, but I get by. There is nothing else on my list. All that is left of worth to the quality of my life is making stuff, and human values—fighting injustices in society. I am sure it isn't as simple as that, but fighting for human values is what moves me, fulfils me, more than a new pair of shoes or a new dress. Mind you—tools are still up there, feeding my need for making stuff.

Now that I am just a person, it is easier to relate to others without the baggage that I had carried around. Oh, I'm sure there is still baggage, but I have reached a comfortable plateau.

For the purpose of this journal, a relevant influence in my life was my ex-husband from decades ago—a woodworker and eventually an industrial designer garnering international respect. When I was younger my relationships were based primarily on needs and wants—and lesser so, on values. If I had been a smarter person at the time, I would have valued him for the major influence he had on my crafts practice.

By allowing me intimate audience to his creative process, I learned dedication to detail, pride of workmanship, and the “finishing touches” that can take as long as the rest of the construction, if you do it right. He shared with me his appreciation of the materials of his craft—all the different types of woods. I can still remember two of his favourites: Birdseye Maple and Pau Ferro. He introduced me to them, their qualities, colour, grain and scent, their beauty—all the considerations that went into maximizing the grain, the tones and the glass-smooth-to-the-touch, satin finish that glowed. I was so busy resenting him for being in my life that I barely noticed that I was soaking up every lesson that I could glean from the meticulous execution of the woodwork he produced.

And I work as carefully as he did, with one major difference. He loved the woods he worked with, and I am not that fond of metalwork. I was not a good student in my metal/jewellery class and chafed at the overly structured lessons that did not allow creativity or play. But I loved sculpting and carving wax. When I left Sheridan to go to OCA to try again to study sculpture, I was put off by the instructor's insistence that we perform precisely as he directed. If the life model was a plump woman, we had to sculpt her. When I brought in a photograph of a slimmer woman and went off into the corner of the room and worked on my clay, the instructor came by, glared at me, and packed handfuls of clay onto my sculpture. So, I went back to the metal studio where the instructor pretty much left me alone. I carved wax and he came by and chuckled. And when my metal work on the silver soldering bench got eaten up by all the scraps of lead solder left there—destroying my silver—I went off and rented a bench downtown and handed in my work to my instructor at the end of the semesters. He loved what I did and gave me good marks anyway. He left me alone. I work well that way.

In 1948 Henry Shaefer-Simmern argued that,

Acquisition and accumulation, both material and intellectual, have become predominant measures of value. Values have become more external...In present-day education, intellectual materialism is stressed. This impedes the unfolding of creative capacities, those that encourage ...harmonious development of [his] sensuous, emotional, intellectual, and physical powers...[leaving] ...only a partly educated and partly functioning entity.<sup>7</sup>

Shaefer-Simmern sees teaching methods that encourage students to develop the skills that follow the style of the instructor as stifling creativity because “external achievement is primarily taken into account, while the student’s personal conception is often neglected...[it] overlooks the assumption of inherent powers of artistic configuration as an attribute of human nature.”<sup>8</sup> This matters because “Art education that recognizes artistic activity as a general attribute of human nature and that aims at the unfolding and development of man’s latent creative abilities will then contribute its share to the great task which faces all of us, the resurrection of a humanized world.”<sup>9</sup>

I feel the differences in each and every wax variation, from soft malleable wax to hard wax that can be worked with machines and hand tools. Reproducing the wax pieces that I have put my soul into, in metal, leaves me with the task of rebirthing them from the fluidity of wax into a material that must reflect the feelings, the dedication and the love that I have imbued into my waxes—expressed in metals. So, I work the metal, which is hard and unforgiving, to honour the wax. I enjoy the challenge of bringing clarity to the fine detail—in metal—almost as much as in wax. I can appreciate the flawless mirror finish of a smooth polished piece of metalwork, but when I can afford it I am just as happy to pay someone else to achieve this perfection.

## **The Voice in the Pyramid**

My Pyramid piece is my voice. I find that I am past using my voice for my own deeply personal stories—“been there, done that.” My Pyramid piece can be a way for me to cope with my anxiety about injustices in society. My Pyramid piece can be my statement, the way I see status and hierarchies, built into the dioramas. The sides and back panels will be my “blackboard.” I may not have all the words I need, but my images will speak.

I have been thinking about how this piece will evolve. The drawers I can picture clearly in my mind. I know what I want to say, and I can see how I will say it. There will no doubt be changes as I work. As the constructions of the components will metamorphose from thought to object there will be changes along the way. If-then...shift, If-then...shift—that happens. And this can be the result of new information, new inspiration or just simply a technical necessity.

But the side panels and the back are still fluid concepts. I sort of know what the message is that I want to deliver. It is that we should allow ourselves to be creatively inspired and that this inspiration can be shared, and that the sharing of this inspiration can work to heal society. And the sides and back must also show the destruction of the environment and name those responsible for that destruction.

The final panel—9"x36"—is firm in my mind. I see a sheet of plexiglass 9"x 27" behind which will be a mass of oily residue, dead animals and the detritus of society—plastics and non-recycle-able debris. Above that would be the corporate head offices of the companies that are responsible for the literal mess we are in and the destruction of society and the planet itself.

There is one change though that came about as the result of my efforts to imagine the opposite panel to “death and destruction”—that panel is meant to reflect pristine nature and an inspiration for creativity. For that panel I had knocked back and forth the idea of building it myself, out of diorama shrubbery and polymer construction vs using a painting that may inspire people to want to draw this scene. I decided that a painting is already an interpretation so that wouldn't do. I needed a photograph (keeping in mind that, that is still an interpretation of the photographer's view). But I went ahead and purchased two photographs that would exactly fit the panel and I felt I had to choose one.



March 29, 2018. I met with Peter today and we talked about the side and back panels. Well, I talked a lot. The cafe was so noisy I could barely think. But my best defense in noisy situations—if I do all the talking I won't have to worry about hearing! Works well—for me. And so even when we moved out to the car to talk where it was quiet, it was too late, I was on a roll and just kept talking. Anyway—next time we can meet at AGO and it will be quieter, and I can relax.

But, I wanted to talk about the side panel with nature as inspiration. I wasn't sure if nature was enough to be inspirational! (seriously!!?) There is time to sort it out, but I thought about the poster with the single tree on the grassy hill and I thought I could add—maybe a small girl on a swing and some “toys” in the grass. I could add to the picture and maybe people would be inspired to pick something to draw. I thought that was a good idea.

### **In the studio**

Back to work on the next drawer down. I had decided to create the frame for the window using polymer and mica powder to create a faux stone building facade. I started just fooling around with colours and mica powders.

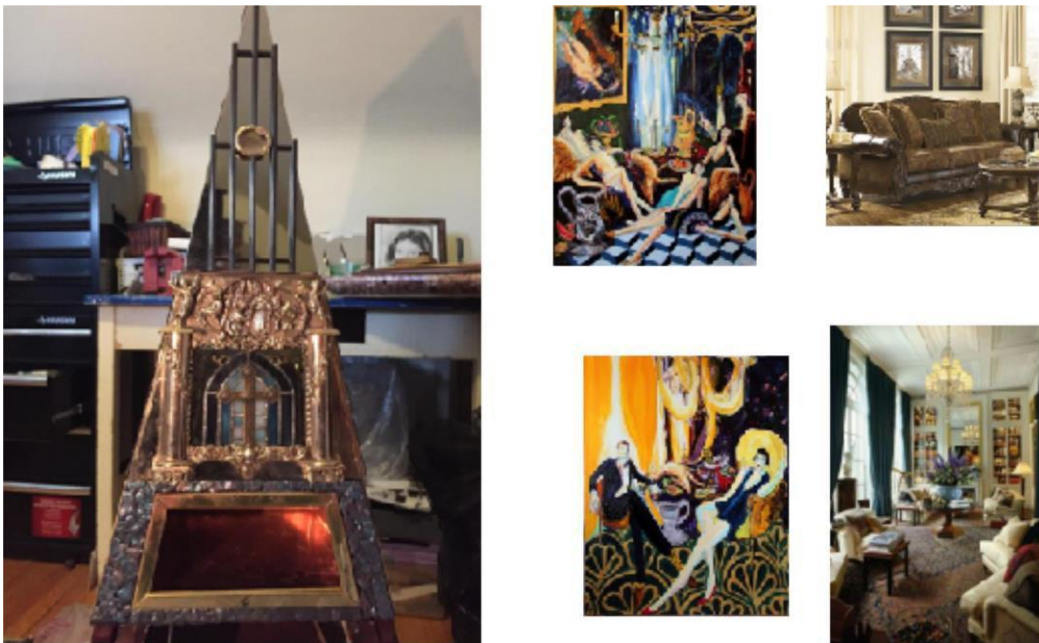


*FIGURE 32. Colours and mica powders torn into pieces*



*FIGURE 33. Mica and colouring applied to the polymer frame*

I like this!



*FIGURE 34. The Pyramid (left); potential colour palettes and decor*

The drawer is in place and I am considering colour palettes. Having chosen the front facade that is a colour and texture statement in itself, I am left needing to create the room in colours that won't fight with the facade. If I reflect the coloured metallic surface in the carpet, that could mean a carpet like the one on the right in Figure 34. I would probably need to make it from polymer and use a sliced cane with gold and a colour to match the window frame. I like the carpet in the bottom picture. Might try it and play with the colours. I like the

background in the middle picture [Figure 34]. Not sure if I should use muted colours or make a statement with—maybe blue carpet.

I need to make the drapery window treatment, and the drapes and carpet will have to be complementary colours. Once I have that colour scheme sorted out I will start with the floor and walls. The floor could also be dark wood. That would be nice, and it is less trouble since I can buy sheets of veneer and just glue them in place. Saving time would be good too. This drawer is already a month late according to my schedule.

I wanted to make this drawer fixed in place so that it cannot be opened. I don't imagine the people living here would welcome the intrusion of strangers. And I would like to have a ceiling light fixture that could be turned on at the back of the piece so that I could turn on the light to make the room visible. I had not planned to have figures in this room, but the art on the walls will feature people who could be the occupants of the room. The artwork will reflect the actual values of the occupants rather than the symbolic artwork that is meant to represent wealth and power. Might as well skip the "façade" and go straight to reality. I believe that there are wealthy people who actually like art—understand it and know what they like rather than what they are told to like by the art industry curators and critics.



*FIGURE 35. The perfect room*

I really like the back wall of this one! And the painting on the back wall could be Leona Helmsley! (Scary) Or this woman (below, right). The look of disdain is pretty good.



*FIGURE 36. Portrait inspirations: Leona Helmsley (left); this woman's look of disdain (right)*



## Filling every space

Every time Peter asks me a question, it ignites long and winding trails of thoughts that sometimes blossom into images, but more often lead to more thoughts. And so Peter questioned why I don't have a - I can't remember the exact word he used - but something like - why do I fill every surface and what about a space? And, oh!! that took me off on quite a journey.

For starters I hadn't even told him that I was thinking of painting the inside of the cabinet so that when all the drawers are pulled out there would be a painting inside! Talk about filling every space. And so I started to think about filling every space. It is sort of like my life, as a "reformed" workaholic. These days I do actually take time out for sitting in the park and reading, though I read books for school, so it isn't the same as relaxing. What do I do to relax...hm...oh, that's right...wax sculpture! That's relaxing. But not exactly doing nothing. Well, scrabble - hm, not having much luck with nothingness here.

My first ramble off in search of "space" took me back to the Jackson Pollock book and the space between the brush and the canvas. I remember thinking about that and filling that space with creative process - it was the space in which Pollock transformed the colour on his brush to the visual statement on his canvas. So space was an area of transformation.

Then I thought about 4'33", the John Cage composition that Peter had written about. Going back to look at that. Peter wrote, "...because emptiness is both empty and full, there is no silence." PT p. 47. I see that I started to look at this video comparing the periods of silence and the occurrences of sound to the practice of acupuncture - the needles drawing energy from point to point. And so here too, "space" can be a place of transformation. I am trying to sort out the side panel of my pyramid. It is meant to provide an image that will hopefully inspire audience to draw something - to contribute to the statement by contributing the transformative quality of creativity. The drawings would be tacked to the cork board on the back of the pyramid. Creative movement.

If transformation happens in the "empty" space, how would that work in my piece? I want to demonstrate the potential for creativity by inviting audience to engage. I'm a bit stuck. And so I emailed Peter to ask about what inspires people to draw and paint - since I don't do either. And one of the inspirations that Peter mentioned was the sensuality of "caressing" an object with the brush, and I had thought that really was all there was, because in my experience sculpting wax is all about the sensuality of stroking an image to life. It never occurred to me that there would be any other inspiration. But Peter mentioned a few other sources of inspiration that I will need to think about. Creating life. All acts of creation must be drawn from the same well... But how does that work for constructing?

And so on...for a couple of hours of making connection to "space".

FIGURE 37. Winding trails of thought

I am still wondering why people paint and draw. The Bain Co-op FaceBook page has requested art and photos of the co-op. I have dozens of photos of the co-op. I sometimes walk around and just take pictures. I do it because I love the co-op. I love the feeling of community, of belonging, the courtyards, and all the different voices that make up our family.

Peter said that “...capturing an image is like a homage to it...others find it comforting to pull something out of the passing of time.” I take photos of the co-op because I love the co-op—an homage—and I want to capture the qualities that I love, that make it home.

So in this way I can understand how painting and drawing can do that also.

### **Back to the wealthy living room drawer**



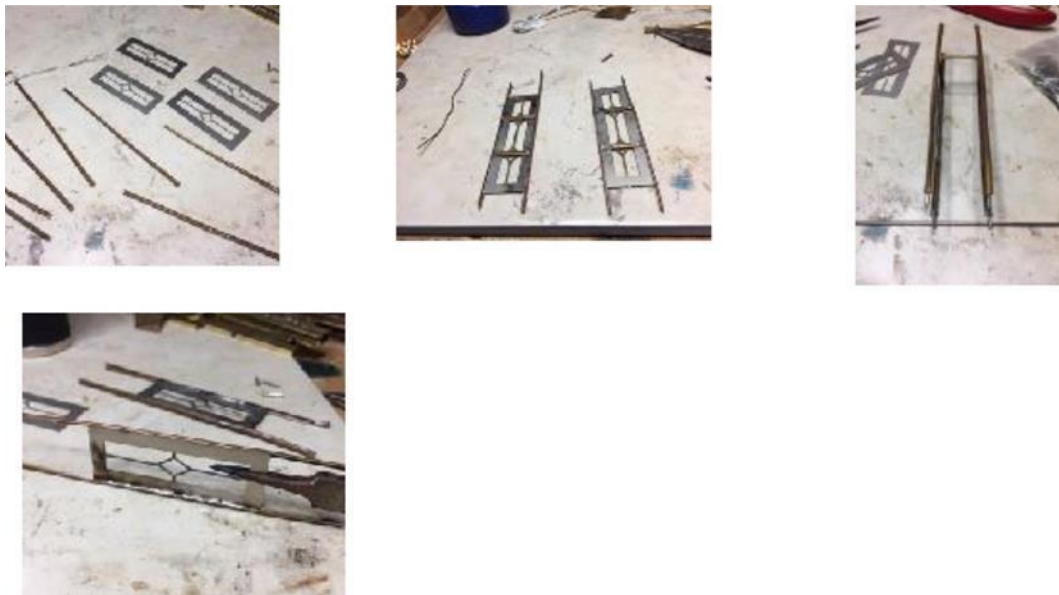
*FIGURE 38. Cutting the faux marble for the floor*

I made the connectors to attach the front facade to the drawer, clips that fit over the three edges—floor and walls—of the room and drilled through to be pinned secure.





*FIGURE 39. Clips to attach the facade (left); cutting the foam core for walls (right)*



*FIGURE 40. Constructing the standing shelf*

This will be painted black. I considered black nickel plating which would be a more professional A look, but the plater has a \$50 minimum and unless I can pull together a few other pieces for plating it would be too costly. Perhaps I can add gold plating to the picture frames. Possibility.



*FIGURE 41. Constructing the fireplace and mantelpiece (left, centre); creating a surface pattern (right)*

I used the same mica powder to colour the fireplace. I had to paint the black layer because the polymer black is a more charcoal colour. I use nail polish for everything smallish that needs a glossy finish. It comes in hundreds of colours with its own handy applicator. I have drawers full of nail polish—mostly reds and deep blues that I have had to use for all the police badges I have made for films.



*FIGURE 42. Colouring the mantelpiece parts*

The marble floor is just not doing it for me. Off to Staples for some inspiration. Found this folder! It's perfect! I cut out the front for my floor.



*FIGURE 43. "Flooring" from Staples*

But why do I build stuff? Working with soft wax is sensual, bringing to life the image I have in my mind. But building stuff is different. It's architectural. Not entirely without spontaneity, but far more intentional decisions.

When I considered how to construct the panel over the fireplace in the current room I am working on, I thought of using polymer. I would have to mix the colour to match the wallpaper that I chose, and then roll out a sheet. I needed an armature and checked out my collection of small cardboard jewellery boxes and picked one that was about the right size. I cut it up and shaped it to fit the fireplace, a process that took me right back to my childhood, in the basement of my mom's house, making cardboard dioramas out of shoe boxes.

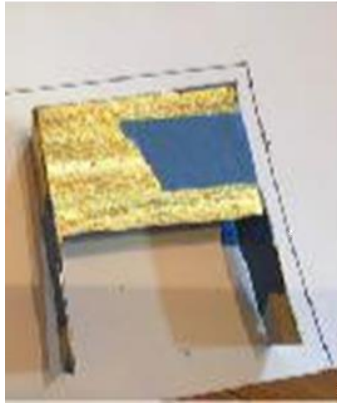


FIGURE 44. Constructing the panel over the fireplace



FIGURE 45. Floor (left); chimney-piece construction (centre, right)

Lookit that floor! Love it!

Getting there!



FIGURE 46. The living room, two views

I am debating not making the second shelf set for the left side of the fireplace. I like the floor lamp, and with chairs, a coffee table, and possibly a sofa, it is getting sort of busy. I think I will just do one shelf and angle it a bit. It still needs a sculpture. I am thinking of the Wall Street Bull! But maybe some trendy piece. Greek vase perhaps. Something Ethnic, Indigenous, or Oriental—speaking “conquest.”

I am going to board Bease for the weekend and try to get this done.

### **Structures of thought, life, cake**

I am writing this next piece with a purpose in mind—setting the stage I guess for a point that I hope to make about building things—meandering through a thought process. I need to re-read Frank Wilson’s *The Hand*. Henry Schaefer-Simmern describes the process of unfolding creativity. He identifies the steps of learning to draw—from unintentional shapes to intentional shapes. From stationary figures to portraying movement. From simple to complex, and from surface understanding of an image to finding deeper meaning—and being able to express that with pencil, paint or clay. I have not finished this book yet, but it mostly has to do with drawing and painting. I want to understand sculpture and construction and how those contribute to healing.

I am looking at the structure of my life.

April 10. It’s Fatima’s birthday! She got married and moved to Memphis years ago but we still celebrate her birthday. And Sue who is now called Shay, is in a plane on her way to Kathmandu for a second visit, taking time out from her job as a construction worker.

Carlotta has worked in restaurants since she moved out, very nice restaurants—the first one was a very trendy and expensive place where she was subject to racism, so she left. The current place is wonderful, but the owner is selling it, and so she applied for a job as a teller in a bank. And she got the job!!

Jocelyn is at U of T where she works as a counsellor. She put herself through university—BA and MSW—paid for it through part time work—and graduated a number of years ago. Tee is at work doing something exciting and important (all her jobs are)—not sure I (ever) understand what it is she actually does. Priya is most likely at home with her three kids—a son and twins, just born. She has a husband who adores her.

Sabrina is working at TDSB—just made permanent and full time. Sabrina and Priya came to my house separately but coincidentally grew up (till pre-teen) about 25 miles apart from each other in Berbice, Guyana. Sabrina is such a hard worker. She put herself through school working at Timmie's. She got a diploma as a legal secretary. She was not offered a job. I am positive it was because of racism. So she went back to school to learn accounting. She couldn't find a job so, still working at Timmie's, she started to volunteer at TDSB. She said that if she learned their data system, that when they needed to hire someone, she would be there and would have experience. This took a few years, but she stuck it out and was just given permanent, full time work. Yay Sabrina!

My two biological daughters are busy with their lives. My younger daughter Beth is working on building an international franchise of work-out programmes. She has over 2 million followers. She is, together with her husband, hugely successful—a workaholic. Learned that from me. She doesn't return phone calls, text messages or emails. She is as busy and inaccessible as I was when my kids were growing up. Sigh. But she does call me when she needs a lift to IKEA and I am grateful for that. I named her Beth because of the Kiss song.

“Beth” seemed just right for her father. Lyrics:

“ Beth I hear you calling

But I can't come home right now.

Me and the boys are playing

And we just can't find the sound ....”

Not that her father and I had a home together, we didn't. But he definitely had his priorities.



My older daughter, an actress, goes to auditions, does some acting, and for a living she does taxes—so she is very busy. She lived with her father once she finished university in Montreal. He hates me, and influenced her thinking of me, so she and I have difficulty finding connection. We are working on it. She seems happy, and I am glad for that!

All my kids are happy and healthy.

I am extraordinarily happy with my life—school and some work—not as much work as before 3D printers took over model-making. But happy just the same.

As I look at this assortment of people in my life, and at the things that make me happy, and I know that together, all of these young women and the events in their lives contribute to the structure in my life. The components from which we structure our lives shape who we are and how we navigate our paths in life. Based on what I have spontaneously chosen to create my identity, through important structures in my life, appears to be overwhelmingly “mom”. And I am seriously the least maternal person I know. I don’t even like babies!

I have chosen to highlight my relationships with all my kids. I wrote that piece about my foster kids first. Wrote quite a bit about them. I placed my biological kids at the bottom with me. I have created a structure that highlights my foster kids—as “products” of my influence. I am so proud of them. This short piece of writing opens from a good place.

I have included my biological kids together with me as a—foundation? —a base? I have written that piece in the order that I imagined it. I started with Fatima’s birthday. I am deeply attached to my foster kids. It always makes me happy when it is Fatima’s birthday and we can, as a family, still celebrate her—include her—even though she got married and moved to the US many years ago.

Foster kids came into my life with no roots or connection to me, and so there is nowhere to build, but up. A fresh canvas—though they all came from trauma—I could work with that. My biological kids—all their trauma came from me. Our relationships are not as clean and as positive as my relationships with my foster kids. And I have guilt that will not go away.

So let me strip away a layer of this diagram of relationships. I started with relationships that make me happy and proud. I feel good about these relationships—so I started from a positive position. I feel interwoven with my foster girls’ successes.

I moved from there to my biological daughters. I was a terrible mother—a workaholic and pretty much absent from their lives. They had baby sitters, and my mom and sister looked after them. Their fathers were not particularly involved with us for various reasons. I wasn’t unhappy about that. So I moved from positive to negative—relationships that leave me feeling guilty. I can never redo their childhood. I think they raised themselves and did a fine job but ...

This is an unresolved slice of my life, and filled with guilt, turmoil and anxiety. And I feel interwoven with their traumas.

Lastly, I added my own life—better than ever. It’s true. So, I started with pride and positivity, moved to shame, guilt and anxiety and then back to stability and contentment.

This is a structure in my life. It is, for the most part a sturdy structure made of up tangible and stable components but with that weak and faulty component, needing something but I’m not sure what. But the base is solid and secure—as secure as anything can be given the temporality of life.

If I strip this down even further, what colours would I see representing these feelings. If I did a pie chart of my life, what colours would I chose? But I want to look at structures, and why do we build things?? If I imagined building this structure of my life, what would it look like? If I wanted to heal from the guilt and confusion of the period of my daughters’ youth, since I can’t go back and re-do it—what visuals, symbols, would represent that period? What would be the manipulation that would help ease the turmoil of this period in my life—in the life of my family? How could building something work?

Peter proposed some reasons why people paint and draw. I am wanting to understand what happens when we make things, build things, manipulate objects, textures and colour—when

we form our own unique and personal pieces to create patterns, to structure/re-structure our lives in order to heal the faults that influence our lives, those weak aspects of the structure we create. If it were a cake there would be a layer of something coarse, or roses—beauty and thorns—in the middle of chocolate and icing. If it were a weaving there could be twigs, shards of broken pottery, woven into the fluid strands of wool. How to visualize this pattern—this structure of my life?

I have found a way to heal from trauma, through art, manipulating imagery, over the last year and I don't know how that happened, but it did. I only know that the external manipulations in my artwork reflected the internal patterns of trauma, and I am a person transformed. This isn't simply an observation, it is a subjective experience. I need to understand this.

If we leave these periods of trauma, of messy confusion, unaddressed, we will end up with a faulty structure—perhaps an angled, skewed structure, missed connections, and potential for collapse of the structure. One thing I understand is that keeping trauma trapped in your head will not help heal as absolutely as bringing the mind and body together in the healing through manipulation of objects—or paint or pencil. Any combination of expressions of our inner turmoil, organized and expressed externally through our artistic creativity, works to heal.

Layer cakes and weavings still knocking around in my head.

What can we learn? How can we grow through projecting our internal structure into an external structure—building, in every sense of the word, a life? Things to ponder.

I did a closet purge. Two huge paper garden waste bags full!! I rarely ever throw anything out. I have clothes that actually date back to the 60's and 70's that I haven't worn since then. And in this purge I got rid of every person I was, thought I was, wanted to be, could never be. I used to shop for two (at least) identities. One part of my wardrobe consisted of items of clothing that my mother would wear—would approve of. And these articles of clothing hung unworn in my closet for decades.

I would buy clothes that reflected my carnival kewpie persona—flouncy pinks and sparkles, red suede platform sandals. And I bought clothes that reflected the self-image that was born of my childhood sex abuse—and that informed me that I would only ever be of value to other

people as a sex object. So that wardrobe was cleavage-y and clingy. Well—I weighed 30lb less than I do now. So all of those “Me’s” are gone now. I gave the eclectic wardrobe away to women here at the co-op. They were thrilled. And I got appreciative neighbours, puppy sitting and dog-walking in return. Better than money.

I tried to do a purge of the three or four tubs of cloth ephemera that I collect, but I did not have much luck. They are all potential art pieces and we know how important that is! But I did do a major studio clean-up and rearrangement that makes me very happy! And I moved all of my polymer downstairs to the dining room table. So I can let my accountant know, when he does my taxes, that my apartment has expanded to over 50% studio!

~

I have been having terrible nightmares, dark writhing landscapes—deep amber, browns and black. In my nightmares Beasley is lost—runs away and I am desolate. My daughters are being horribly tortured. These dreams have been relentless and every time I wake up from one nightmare, I go back to sleep and another vision of horror grips me.

I have thought about this and I realized that my dreams represent my fears of what will happen to those I love if I am not overseeing everything. If I am not poised to jump in and rescue everyone, they will come to horrible ends. So I thought about this for a bit and calmed myself, coming to the realization that my children are all adults now and they are able to take care of themselves. I suppose.

And then Paul phoned (Beth’s dad) and he has been having problems with his hearing for a few months now so we have been talking a lot. He wanted to know about an audiologist—or someone who could help him. I suggested an old friend, Marshall Chasin, who has a practice called Musician’s Clinic, hearing health for musicians. Paul has seen Marshall in the past, so I suggested seeing him again. Paul asked for Marshall’s phone number and I googled it and gave it to Paul. He said, “I knew you would have it.” I told him I just googled it. He said “Oh”.

He needs a mother, I thought. And my insides twisted and burned, all conflicted.

But I offered to come with him to his appointment, thinking that I could explain what Marshall was talking about and help Paul make decisions based on what would be good for him rather

than what would be least expensive. Marshall is amazing and funny and totally capable of explaining stuff to Paul. Without me. Musicians' hearing is Marshall's specialty! I remember Marshall telling me that drummers with long hair have a natural 5 decibel baffle because of their hair! I know drummers with long hair! I wonder if Paul actually needs me there, or if I just need to be there to "help"?

Disentangling myself from my old way of being will be a process. What is appropriate and what is over-functioning?!! When I needed a mother and she was not there—I have become the mother I needed her to be!!

Oh good grief. Well that explains a lot. That thought that just floated to the surface. Made me bit weepy. Mind ful. Mindful. Mind full. If I cannot rescue people, what will become of them?

Terrible things will happen! (You know that's not true!) What will become of me? What am I left with?

Layer cakes and weaving. I can see the weaving coming apart—loose frayed strands.

### **In the studio, constructing the wealthy living room**

Four hours spent on Saturday soldering the shelf brackets and measuring, cutting and painting the wood trims for the mantle, the corners and top edges. Mistakes were made, fixed—I need to go and buy more wood.

I have mica sheets for the shelves. Today—Sunday—I will start to assemble the room. I am hoping I will have time to start on the picture frames.



*FIGURE 47. Wood trims for the mantel (left); soldering the shelf brackets (right)*

All that will be left to fill the room then, will be the furniture. Once that is done I want to consider making a lid for it. It will depend on how easily the drawer slides into the drawer hole—how much space I will have, and how I can make the lid. I want the top “roof,” in clear plexiglass, to interfere with people looking into the top of the room. I want it to say, in large wedding invite font “You are not invited.”

Frustrating day today. The pieces of wood that I cut yesterday, for the fireplace, that fit together beautifully, don't fit today. And I am out of the wood I was using. The store that sells it is not open till Tuesday. AND, I hate the colour of paint that I got custom mixed for the trim. Home Depot uses a computer scan to match the colours and it still looks terrible. It looked like it matched fine at Home Depot, but here at home it looks like a wishy washy blue next to the wallpaper, which has some green in it. So—for starters—the first thing I am going to do when I get that Carruthers Award deposit in May is to buy good lighting. Really good studio lighting. When I am working with metal it really doesn't make a difference. But for my dioramas I need to be able to confidently combine colours.



*FIGURE 48. Mantel mishap*

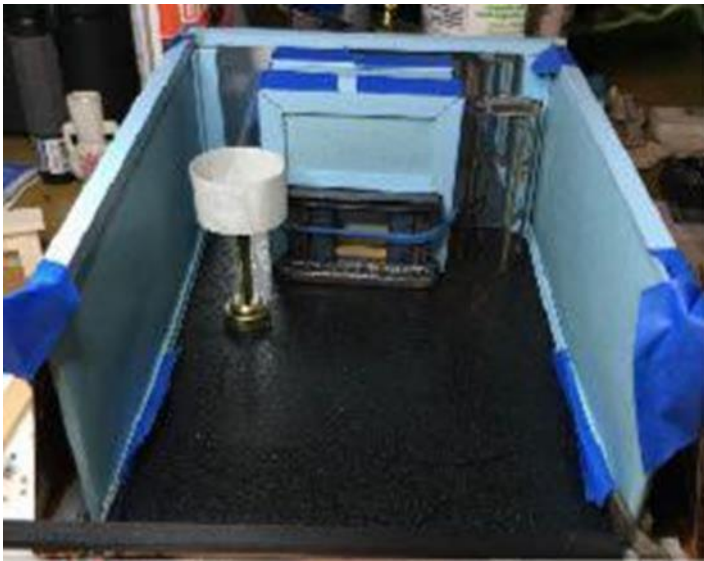
I have had to recut the top pieces of wood. Working with a cardboard armature was possibly not the best choice. It proved to be too flexible and shifted some, making precision fitting difficult. So I am not that happy with the fireplace and mantelpiece as it is not symmetrical.

Hoping that once the “artwork” is on the mantel it will not show as much. And I still don't like the colour of the wood paint. But it is a subtle difference and it's ok. Just not the ideal colour.



*FIGURE 49. Warpage from painting one-side-only*

The base-boards and top pieces are painted. They warped. I remember my ex-husband, the woodworker, used to say that in finishing wood, to prevent warping, you need to do the same to the bottom as the top.



*FIGURE 50. Living room assembled and taped*

Here it is all glued together and held in place with tape and self-locking tweezers. I haven't yet glued the fireplace down. The mirror at the back still has a plastic film covering it. And the back top trim is not yet glued since I still have to pull out the mirror to remove the film. Leaving that till close to the last step, to protect it from finger prints and scratches. I will glue the back sides and top trim today.



I had mulled over what to do for the coffee table. A few ideas were tossed around but then the package of mica slate was just sitting there, and I had all this mica powder that I had been using for my polymer, so I experimented and came up with this perfect table top!



*FIGURE 51. Coffee table components*

I neglected to photo-document the mica table top so I am just adding a photo of the components. I used mica sheets with mica powder sprinkled between each sheet. I set this into a rectangular brass setting and used pliers to crimp it closed. Then I painted it black and set it atop another of the rectangular settings.



*FIGURE 52. Coffee table assembled*

I was trying to figure out what to do for the legs and considered a number of options including cut semi-precious stone. But as I was looking for long jet drops in my pearl drawer, I came across these grey, vintage glass pearls. They would look perfect. All I needed to do was to make “seats” for them to glue into the bottom of the table.

I thought of making the “carpet” using the same technique of layering mica sheet with powder, but the drive from my plater in Scarborough (where I got my frames plated) over to the store that sold mica slate, was a good 45 minutes and nowhere near home. I decided to stop at a lapidary just down the street from the plater, to see if they had mica slate. They only had this biggish block of mica, but I was assured that I could slice it thin with a good blade. So—for \$10—I took it home and sliced it, and it was so perfect! Doesn’t even need colour.



FIGURE 53. Mica slate raw (left); living room rug (right)



FIGURE 54. Living room with rug and coffee table

Before I go any further I need to make sure it still fits.



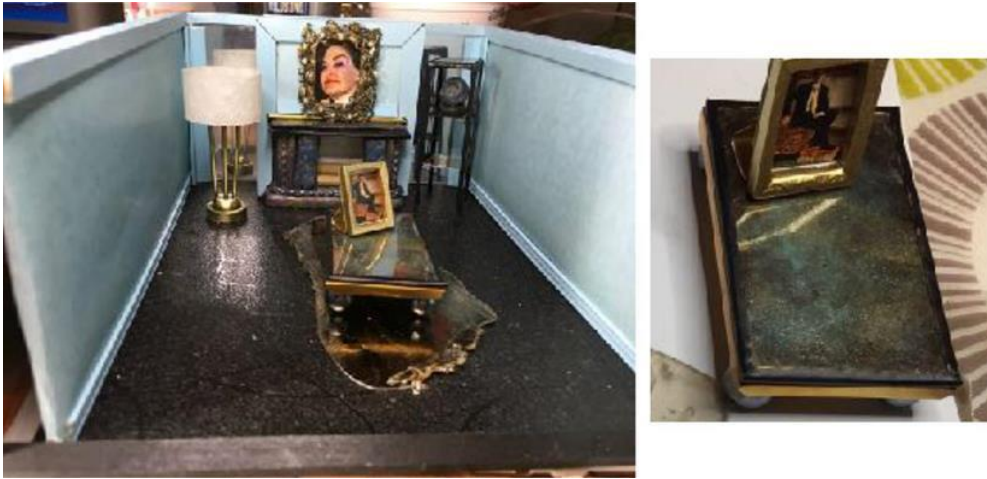
*FIGURE 55. Living room drawer in Pyramid*

Needed a bit of sanding down on the sides but it fits! Yay! I need to clean the floor. Finally time to take the film off the mirror and glue the back end trims.



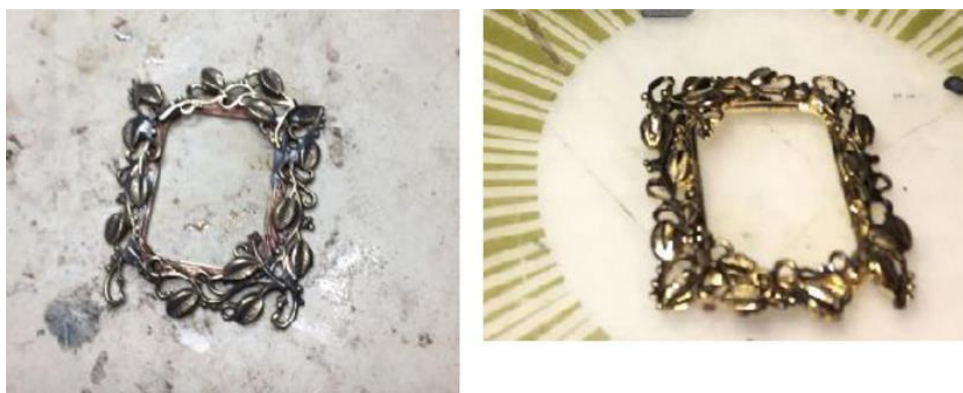
*FIGURE 56. Mirror wall*

## It's time to talk about art



*FIGURE 57. Living room (left): detail (right)*

This is the frame I made for the Leona Helmsley portrait which will hang over the fireplace. I knew that I wanted the frame to have the look of an art frame meant to frame an artwork. But I also intend that, though the frames will represent a traditional presentation of artwork, the “art” that the frames are displaying will symbolize the values of the patrons who treat art as acquisitions representing wealth. So Leona Helmsley heads up the room. It is reported that when she died, Christie’s auctioned off 500 lots of art from her residences, including sculptures, American silver, Russian and Chinese works of art. I think she deserves the place of honour in this little diorama.



*FIGURE 58. Leona Helmsley portrait frame: unfinished (left); gold plated (right)*



But that leaves me with walls to fill. Tiny walls, but still...

These are the pics that I have found to use. I did a google search using a number of different search words. I used “greed,” “elite” and a couple of others—can’t remember. I tried a few routes to get photos of wealthy individuals who looked like soul-less rich people and I was not really able to find exactly what I was looking for.



*FIGURE 59. Portrait possibilities*

## Disdain

I found women who had that look of disdain. That wasn't too difficult. And it is that attitude—the “looking down on” the rest of society—that the acquisition of fine art imbues the collectors. It is that expression that says “We are above you. We are more cultured, educated, smarter—more valued in society than the rest of you.” That is the look.

But finding men who have that arrogant mien seemed more difficult. I found the vintage drawings of bankers—one with a money bag in place of his head and the other drawing of the banker holding up a money bag. They say what I want them to say—that they are all about money. And I found the two images—the man's head peeking out from the pile of gold coins, and the small photo that I have framed like a family portrait, of a man sitting atop a pile of gold ingots. But what became apparent to me in looking for images to represent the values of the elite, is that it seems to be different for women than for men. Just the search results online, googling “greed”, googling “elite”, the search resulted in an assortment that seemed to assign values that were divided by gender. I'm not sure how to put this. The photos and paintings of women were useful. But the ones of men were mostly men and money, not men and attitude.

This got me thinking further. I like the pictures of the women—they said what I want them to say about perceived superiority and elitist attitudes. But what is it about wealthy men in society that attaches them to money, as displayed in the pictures I found, but doesn't seem to have any other physical expression—equivalent to the way women can hold a look of disdain. I am pretty sure that there is some explanation that is based on power in society. Very few wealthy women have the same power as wealthy men. And wealthy men don't need to show disdain if they wield power, perhaps. Two different perceived positions in society. How does women's perceived power and prestige different from men's power and prestige? Are wealthy elite men more connected to cash, money, and power—and wealthy elite women more connected to money and culture? Art dealers are said to be the “pimps” of the arts industry.

Not sure where to go with this.

I talked to my painter friend in the dog park—and put this question to him: “How would the attitude of wealthy men be portrayed in society if one image could say it all?” My friend suggested looking for images of grumpy men, or scornful men. Then he suggested “lofty” and



I googled that—he insisted I do it while we were in the park. I let him pick the picture. He picked Peter Munk—the mining “magnate” associated with Barrick Gold.



*FIGURE 60. Peter Munk*

When I got home I did a little research on him to make sure I wasn’t branding him unfairly. At first glance he was portrayed as a philanthropist who donated millions to worthy causes. But in looking a little deeper I found articles that fit more closely with the type of corporate capitalist manipulation that “donations” oversee. I found articles such as, “U of T students protest Munk donation”<sup>10</sup> and “Toronto’s buried history: the dark side of how mining built a city.” Students claimed donations to the university were not welcome as they came with associations which expose a society that supports the values and more importantly, the bank accounts of Munk and his peers. Furthermore, the money made from his mining company, Barrick, was made on huge human rights violations. It was reported in the Guardian that security guards at Barrick’s

Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea had also perpetrated multiple gang rapes—allegations that CEO Peter Munk dismissed by stating in an interview with the Globe and Mail that “gang rape is a cultural habit” in that country.” For Catherine Coumans, a research coordinator at the Ottawa-based NGO Mining Watch, the mining sector’s philanthropy in Toronto merely whitewashes the ignominious reality of the industry. The money that finances the Munk Cardiac Centre, for instance, is part of “this big display of benevolence in Toronto,” she says. “But the harm that was done around the world to bring that wealth together is just horrendous, and people don’t recognise that.”<sup>11</sup>

I think Munk works well enough. As much as his philanthropic endeavours elevate him in the public eye, there is still rot at the core. And all his money and all the art he can collect will not give him a soul, nor bleach that stain out. But Munk still doesn’t really fill the gap. I am looking for attitude—a gaze, a facial expression that says, “I’m rich and cultured and you’re

not.” The Munk picture does not do that. There is still something I need for the wall in this room. I have checked back with John Berger. I think I may find something in one of his YouTube videos that will give me the “value” I am looking for to fill the gap on the wall. But I think in the interest of getting it done I will just work towards finishing the room and I can always add a picture at any time. I need to figure out what I am missing.

This picture of Ronald Lauder is actually pretty good. He just bought that Klimt painting for eleventy million dollars. I will have to see if I can dig up some dirt on him. I’ll bet I can!



FIGURE 61. Ronald Lauder

And we have a winner!

The first google search came up with these headlines:

“Ronald Lauder praises Trump as ‘man of incredible insight’” and from MSNBC

“The World Jewish Congress’ Ron Lauder says there is not an anti-Semitic bone in Trump”!

This journal is not really the right place to do an in-depth study of the shady characters who use their ill-gotten wealth for questionable purposes that undoubtedly support hegemonic narratives of the superiority and privileges of the wealthy. And their art collections too! I just didn’t want to use his photo on the wall of shame if he somehow turned out to not be an asshole. But—we’re good. He goes on the wall.

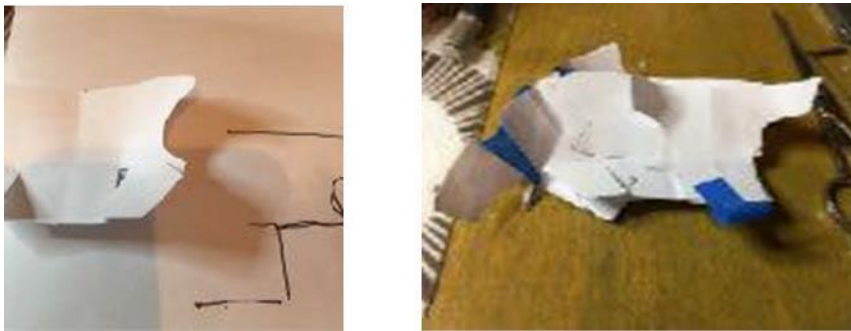
I am reading a new book, *The Persistence of Craft*. In the introduction, author Paul Greenhalgh says,

The etymology of craft relates it to power. The power to control one's own pattern of life, its shape and speed, to resist through the process of making and designing...its primary function to be to add to the quality of life, not solely to the economic advancement of those who exploit it.”<sup>12</sup>

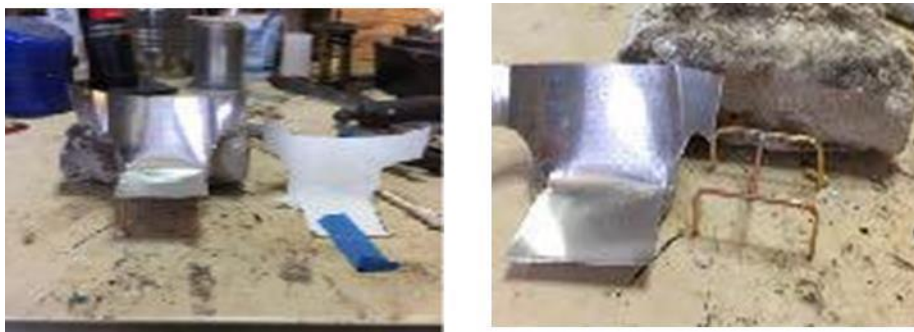
## **Making furniture**

And now back to my construction.

Everything is done but the chair and sofa and the drapes. I am starting on the chair. This series of photos demonstrates the steps to making the chair.



*FIGURE 62. First attempts at making the living room chair*



*FIGURE 63. Assorted efforts to get the chairs right*

Got one in paper that I like, and cut it out of tin, and added legs. Checked out the size of the chair in the room. Looks ok! The construction [Figure 65] was pretty straightforward, unlike the sofa!



*FIGURE 64. The chair in the living room*



*FIGURE 65. Constructing the living room chair*

The sofa, staying close to the original colour palette, was purple-y fabric with a nice sheen. I thought I could get the same effect if I mixed the colour and used a metallic mica powder to add that sheen. So here is my effort to get close to the colour in the reference photo. I am not trying to exactly duplicate this photo, but it is a reference for atmosphere and general colour range. I like the fact that the colour of the sofa stands out. Whether that will work in a tiny space - well - I would have to find that out.



*FIGURE 66. Mixing the sofa colour*

As with the chair, I made a tin armature. It was pretty basic. I am not sure about the colour of the sofa - it seems a little intense for the small space. It works in the large room. Anyway, I will keep working.



*FIGURE 67. Making the sofa; armature (left), cushion (right), the set (centre)*

Adding a cushion. Because, for some reason, I didn't make much of the purple clay, I have made a filler piece of a different colour, which I baked, for the cushion. This means that I can only cover the filler piece but I cannot do much with the size and shape without making a new filler, as that solid piece dictates the dimensions. I seem to be reluctant to fix that problem. The sofa has felt problematic to me since I started it. I am fighting with it and I'm not entirely sure why. But I have carried on with my plan despite not really liking it. I think that it doesn't really say anything about the occupants' taste. It is just a sofa. In the big room it makes a statement, but short of getting purple crushed velvet and using it as upholstery, I am not sure how to make the sofa "pop" and make the statement it makes in the reference photo [Figure 68].



*FIGURE 68. The perfect room*





*FIGURE 69. The less than perfect sofa*

This looks shabby! I can't use it!! All that work! Two days to make this and it looks like I could get away with using it for the bottom drawer - Poor and Homeless - it could just be a "dump". So I removed the cushions and went to pick up some buffs so I could clean up the damage left from prying out the cushions. I came home with some loose cotton buffs and this little red frame that I can stretch a flexible abrasive band across for sanding around corners! It's amazing!



*FIGURE 70. Rescue buffs and gadgets (left); sofa and sandpaper*



*FIGURE 71. Mica cushion possibility*



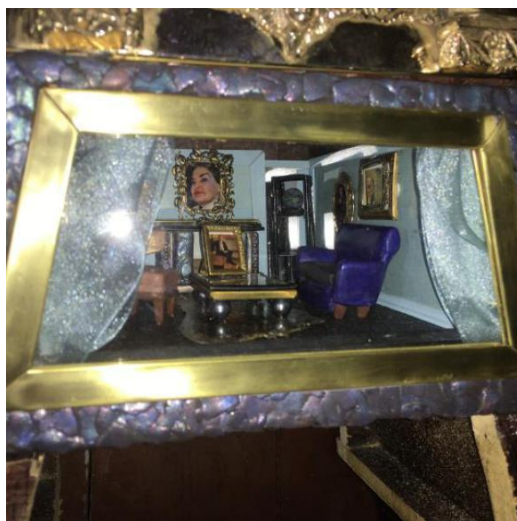
AND I have those mica powder experiments I did at the start! That could make a nice cushion for the sofa as well as linking it to the other mica powder features.

So this works!! Just gotta finish it properly—sanding and polishing.



*FIGURE 72. Living room interior with furniture*

Time to start to add the art. The left side looks well sorted out [Figure 72, right]. It is a painting of a woman with a look of disdain, a man up to his ears in gold coins, and a small pile of 500 dollar bills. On the coffee table is a man sitting atop a pile of gold ingots.



*FIGURE 73. Living room front view, with curtains (left); interior left side (right)*

The right side is a bit undetermined. So for the right side I have decided on these two. I originally made the frame on the left, for the fellow on the right, Ronald Lauder. Then I thought I would put Ronald in the small frame and layer it on top of the large frame - make it grander! But I liked the greed-head in the small frame quite a bit. So I put Ronald in the larger frame. He was a bit small so I thought to make a matte out of polished brass, but I had this gold pen and coloured in the matt instead. It is kind of crude and hand-drawn looking and it made me chuckle. It looks like a good revenge on him - to have just purchased that Klimt and to be pictured, framed with a messy hand-drawn matte. Gonna leave it like that for the moment. If it stops entertaining me I may have to make the brass matte.



*FIGURE 74. Living room art: greed head (left) and Ronald Lauder (right)*



*FIGURE 75. Living room drawer in place in the pyramid (left); interior, right side (right)*



FIGURE 76. Living room interior with the floor lamp turned on

### Being encouraged to focus

I met with Peter at AGO and the acoustics were perfect! It was quiet and there was space to sit and talk with no distractions! It was excellent. Makes a huge difference to my anxiety level. And so we talked. I guess I have been corralled in a bit. I have been down the rabbit hole following the path that I am hoping will lead to a revelation about the creative formation of order and organization and how that affects personal understanding and creative expression. As Henry Schaefer-Simmern discusses in his book, *The Unfolding of Artistic Creativity*, the way in which “...concrete experience leads toward formation of order and organization...”<sup>13</sup> has me examining my questions about internal architecture and it is fascinating reading the conclusions of his experiments in creativity with the three samples he uses “Defectives,” “Delinquents,” and “Business People.”

But even googling “order and organization” led me to *Abstraction in the formalization of organization theory*<sup>14</sup> Opening sentence of the Abstract: “In many organization theories, the interpretation frame is the most important part of the theory”! A PDF on Organization Theory! and I want to read that too. Every path I am tempted to followed, that I presented to Peter at our meeting, as an area of study, he would ask if that contributed to my Major Project and for the most part, these pieces do not particularly—though that could be argued if I had an extra 6 months. So I am being “encouraged” to focus and get this Project and Project Report finished on time! I will do my very best. These other areas of study will just have to wait.

We talked about my pyramid piece and I mentioned the process of “needle felting”, and of course Peter asked if it was going to contribute...etc. and I had sort of thought that it might be a technique that I could use to create the grass in the right side panel depicting nature. And so that was an ok thing to pursue. As I said—really narrowing this down and economizing my time so that I am solely focused on getting it done.

It’s been fun. I am not happy that it will come to an end. Feeling a bit anxious even—like— what then? Even though I will accomplish my goal, there seems to be so much more left unaddressed.

I am honed in on my pyramid. It is changing quite a bit. For starters, Peter’s wife, who had joined us, commented on my plan to have the easel and pencils, so people could draw. That is an option that I have discussed with Peter—asked for his input and considered his answers, but Elaine (hope I heard her name right) challenged me to think about the audience and what an audience might independently feel like contributing—never mind what I need them to do to fulfill my goal of making my piece interactive, to prove my point about shared creative expression connecting people to each other and to the environment. And she suggested that she might want to write something, and I thought about clay—and the visual of my pyramid piece accompanied by a child’s small pale wood school desk with “craft” stuff, writing paper and pencils, came to mind and altogether just getting a bit unwieldy in concept, and so I am stepping back a bit. But also keeping timing in mind. I don’t have a lot of time to tweak the concepts, or add too many new skill-sets, to complete this.

### **“What inspires you?”**

I decided this morning that the piece HAS TO be accompanied by the child’s school desk with craft supplies—paper, crayons, paint, plasticine, stuff—and a little sign “What inspires you?” displayed next to my piece!! I am so excited! It’s a great visual! I can tack a small drawing to the cork board just to get people thinking. Knowing me it will be a stick figure.



Anyway, I have asked my painter friend John Leonard, to paint the sky for my “nature” panel.

I am going to give “felting” a go and see what I can do with grass and the tree. I plan to make the girl on the swing using polymer and metal. And the toys in the grass will be a couple of pieces I have around.

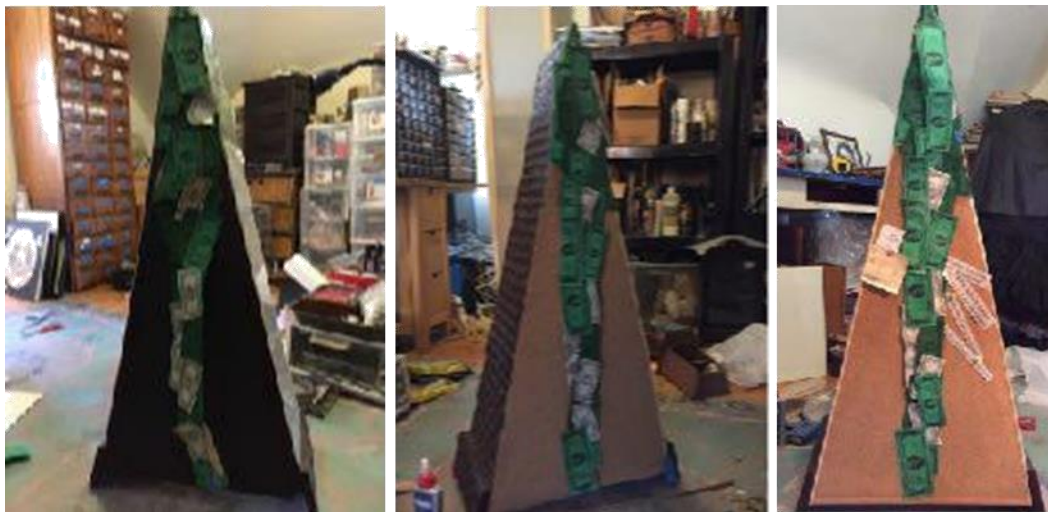
Feeling Great!!!

### **In the studio: Working on the back and side panels**



*FIGURE 77. Working on the back; cutting the foamcore*

I added the money wedge, the cork and wood trim, some “art” to the left side and some newspaper headlines to the right side.



*FIGURE 78. Money wedge, cork and wood trim, “art” and headlines*

### Side panel: Environmental destruction

So this was my new bright idea. The side pictured here—the right side of the pyramid, is the side that will depict the pollution of the environment, taking up  $\frac{2}{3}$  of this side, and the corporate head offices responsible for the environmental destruction built in the upper  $\frac{1}{3}$ . I had this poster that was originally supposed to be an option for the left side of the pyramid - something to inspire people to draw—but that side has changed and this poster was sitting around doing nothing. I thought it would make a good foundation for slopping the oil and dead stuff on. The plexiglass would be screwed in place over top of this polluted scene from nature. (the environment “screwed”) And then I would build the head offices at the top.



*FIGURE 79. Pyramid side view with the beauty of the environment poster, and drawer*



I have the photo of the beauty of the environment mounted on heavy cardboard. It is truly a beautiful photo. Going to feel very sad to dirty it up. I need to sort out how to represent oil leaking all over it. I have decided to sandwich the “oil” between two pieces of transparent acetate. That way the photo will still be unblemished, and the pollution will be contained. Unlike real life.

I need to think about how to depict the oil and I have discarded any product that smells, decomposes, runs, or dries. It needs to look liquid-like without being liquid. It needs to stay where it is without leaking. And it needs to be black.



*FIGURE 80. Colour experiment: Vaseline and shoe polish*

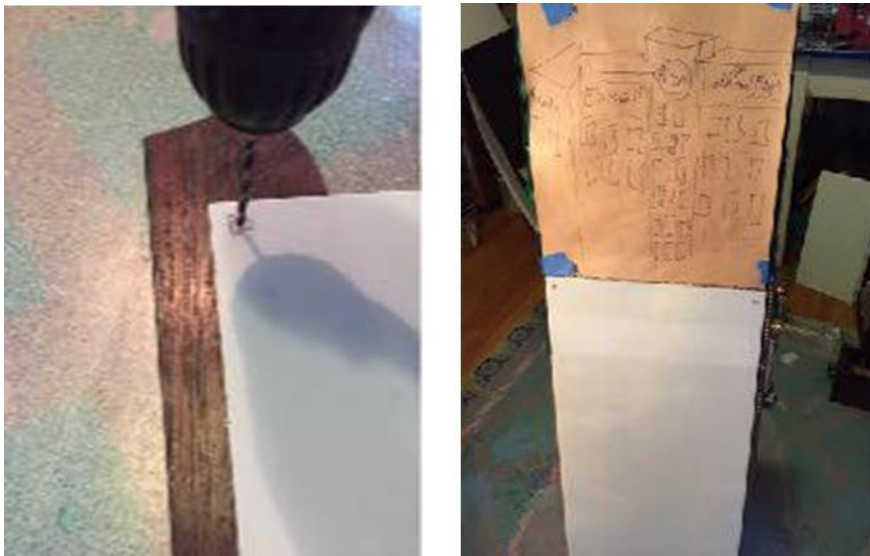
I decided that Vaseline should work. But how to turn it black?? I first tried black shoe polish. It looks spotty and not an even blend. Plus, within about 15 minutes I was sneezing and coughing. Threw that one out! My next experiment was with India ink. That was a disaster. I am going to try oil paint. That seems like it should work.



*FIGURE 81. Colour experiment: Vaseline and oil paint*

This is the Vaseline and oil paint [Figure 81]. I just want it to be black and to not get dry and crumbly. I did this experiment a few days ago and it is still malleable. Don't know what that means in the long run, but I am making an inner envelop for this part of the side panel. The inner envelope, which will have the oil spill and depict the damage of climate change, and environmental destruction, will be sealed on all sides and sandwiched between the plexiglass cover on top and the nature photo underneath. If it's sealed, the "oil" will hopefully not dry out. I did as much research as I could to see what Vaseline does over a long period. I couldn't find much info. But I did find an artist who makes art with motor oil! That would really stink.

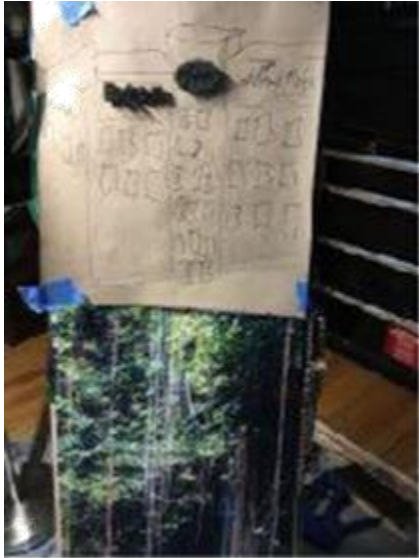
And it's too runny for my piece. I think the Vaseline should be ok, and the oil paint is just to tint—maybe a teaspoon to two tablespoons of Vaseline.



*FIGURE 82. Holes in plexiglass cover (left); preliminary street planning (right)*

I have drilled holes in the corners of the plexiglass—still with its protective cover. With the plexiglass placed, but not screwed in, I have loosely sketched the buildings that will be on top of the oil spill/climate change feature.

I have asked a friend of mine who does 3D printing to make the logos for the buildings. I will make the buildings in polymer. Before I bake them, I will make “seats” for the logos and glue them in once the buildings are baked. I have attached two of the logos and I am picking up the other two this afternoon.



*FIGURE 83. Making the oil spills*

Here I am starting to apply the “oil.” I am hesitant to really fill it totally, as I had envisioned it originally. The oil seems to mask my images and I don’t know what to do yet. I don’t want to use a solvent to clean up areas, because I don’t know how a solvent will react once I have sealed the envelope. I will wipe some oil off so that some of the fish and animals show, and I can add more plastic garbage to the black gunk afterwards



*FIGURE 84. Oil spill and creatures*

I had the imagery printed on both transparency as well as card stock, to see how the images would look against the forest backdrop, and the transparencies get lost, are barely visible over the deep green. I haven't decided yet if that is ok with me—or if there is a way to make it work. If I use the pictures on card stock I don't want the edges to show. They need to be amidst the destruction. I will have to play with it a bit today. I picked great images and I would like them to be readable.

Two other features that I will include will be the hourglass that Peter suggested and also—I keep getting images of eyes grouped like a school of fish somewhere near the top. I like the concept of “watching,” watchers see what is happening, so I will probably pick up some magazines from Value Village and cut out my “school” of eyes. The hourglass, I thought about it and I know that an actual 3D hourglass wouldn't fit the flat format, but I can cut an hourglass out of the acetate I have around. I think I will draw the outline in gold with a brown base and top—two sides with the sand sandwiched. I took Bease to the beach and picked up some sand so I can have the sand all but drained through to the bottom. It will be fun! Then I have to make the buildings from polymer above this mess.

If I can have that panel done by next week, then I will start on the next drawer—the suburban one. I want to finish the final panel, with the tree, but if I am “felting” the tree and grass, I have to wait for the felting workshop which isn't until the 29th of the month. Marilyn assures me that I can pretty much finish the basic tree and grass in one day! I can add detail afterward, so I am hoping it will just be a few days work. John painted the sky for me. I gave him chocolate. I will still have to make the little girl on the swing. So I should be pretty close to on-schedule. I am worried about finishing the drawers though. They will take a long time to do properly. I don't like hasty work, but I don't have much choice. And I still have to do the writing. At least with the writing I can just sit and write, I don't have to run out and buy supplies, or experiment with techniques.

On the left [Figure 85] is the initial picture without folding the top piece over. On the right I have started to add the oil around the photos of climate change destruction. And I have folded it to see how that looks. I need it to look compressed. I keep trying to make it look more organized and coherent, but it isn't supposed to look "pretty" and perhaps the messiness is actually a good message.



*FIGURE 85. Oil spills and climate destruction, two views*

I have decided that, at the bottom where the animals are, I will have to add some blood—join them with a trail of blood. I think I can get away with nail polish for that one.

I will have to start at the elephants, a trail of blood from their faces, joined to the tiger and camel. I can paint the tusks ivory. Need to feature more than just the industrial damage. The decimation of the animal population is another tragedy that the elite support for the purpose of status.



I am going to have to clean it up today. Taking some time to let the images evolve is pretty important. I am worried about time. The more I work on this feature—the destruction of the environment—the more issues I see that should be included. I will be limited by time, but this image is in an envelope and if there is time perhaps down the road, if I feel it becomes really important to tell a bigger story, I can replace this envelope with a different, more comprehensive one.

I spent a couple of hours yesterday trying to make the hourglass in acetate, and in the end I found that there was static in the acetate and it seemed to keep emptying the bottom sand up into the top of the hourglass. I could try to find an anti-static spray today, but I have also found some hourglass images online and one of them could work just on its own.



*FIGURE 86. .Hourglasses*

The one on the left could be printed on card stock and added to the pictures. The one on the right could be printed on transparency—two of them—and filled with sand. I could spray the anti-static first. The problem with this one—as with the one that I made, is that the sides have to be sealed and that interferes with the clean edge. I may just go for the top image. I like the “flame” colour. It implies urgency. There were some wonderful environmental hourglasses and if I had time I would make one of those.

So this is the panel finished! I am so freaking happy with it! This process feels like the closest I have come to “painting”, organizing a flat surface, finger-painting with the oil. That is part of



why I am so excited about this piece. It's not in a box! It's on the outside! I'm just bubbling with excitement!



*FIGURE 87. Oil spill panel, complete*

I got the “school” of eyes. It looks very good. I had the idea for the eyes as I was placing the small fish at the bottom of the stream. In my vision, the eyes were also grey tones and I had to find B & W photos that used the same colour values as the school of fish and I wondered about that connection. I imagine they relate in the way they dart about, move through water/air in the same way. At least that is how I “feel” them. Watching eyes/darting fish. Move through without affecting anything.

And I added the hour-glass that looks like it is in the fire. And I have the environment as it is devastated by climate change. And I have dead fish, and the animals hunted for status, connected by a trail of blood. I have tried to stick to environmental damage that underscores the contribution of wealth and status to the elite. Though, just about every aspect of corporate capitalism does that.

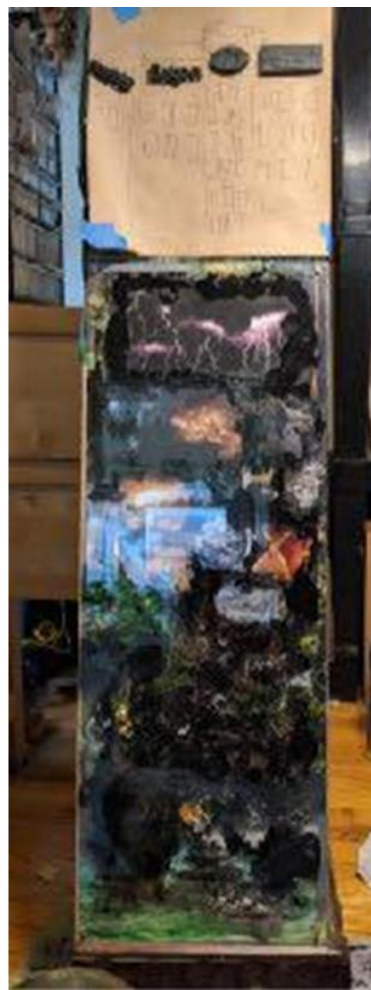


FIGURE 88. *Environment panel; mounted (right)*

There are a couple of weak areas in the double sided sticky tape that holds it together. It was hard to contain the Vaseline and paint and some of it ended up on the tape so that is isn't sticking—just a couple of areas—about 3" total. I have decided to patch these with duct tape. I was going to try to invisibly mend them, but I don't actually have a problem with using duct tape to hold things together. It's fine.

So, I just have to mount it on the side panel and screw in the plexiglass cover. Then I'll make the buildings, paint the logos and glue them in. Hope to have all this done by Tues or Wed.

### **A traipse through the creative process**

I have finished the Schaefer-Simmern book and I have learned quite a bit about his theory of the unfolding of creative activity. I understand and agree with his observations, conclusions and basic theory, for the most part, though I feel it is limited.

He sees the necessity to set aside the “rules of art”, that is—accepted technical methods of interpreting visual inspiration through the media of paint, pencil or clay activities. He proposes that, “...artistic activity is an autonomous operation, independent of conceptual calculation and abstract thinking, but based upon sensuous creation and ‘visual thinking’ of relationships of form.”<sup>15</sup> He disagrees with the “fixation” on “...the mass production of so-called artists...” trained in the accepted “... art-educational movement.” By this I think he is referring to, what he might see as becoming adept at “copying” from nature. I don't know that I agree with his views of creativity as being independent of “abstract” thinking. That doesn't seem right if I am understanding this.

In his experiments with the different populations he sets out to map the creative process unimpeded by formal educational training. He encourages his students to consider their own progress, to continually re-evaluate their work and to “make it better” until they feel it is “whole”. He is encouraging and supportive. His theory then, is loosely, that all people, no matter their intellectual level, age, class background, personal psychological make-up, career—all people possess innate creativity.

Creativity, in his view, seems to be a visual “unfolding” of order-making in artistic expression. Remembering Marion Milner had used that same analogy of “order-making”. For Schaefer-Simmern, he sees his students developing both a deeper understanding of visual information and the ability to recreate this depth of understanding through media—paint, pencil and clay. So his conclusions are the result of these experiments. He says that the unfolding of creativity is, “a natural attribute of man’s spiritual being...[and] innermost compulsion to proceed to clearer, and richer visual cognition by independent visual judgement of his work.”<sup>16</sup>

Schaefer-Simmern refers to the “...unbearable visual squalor of main street...the chaotic designs and shapes in most of our commodities...lower the level of our present civilization...”<sup>17</sup> This observation appears to me to be primarily attached to environmental design. He seems to feel that the “squalor” and “chaos” of our visual world creates a “deformed environment” that does not, he opines, even compare favourably to the visual culture of “primitive” people. This seems a bit thin to me since I believe that creativity, as a voice, has so much more potential to speak out and to connect people, than the design of “Main Street” and commodities. His need to find “product” for his process feels limited.

His study of process has aspects that I can relate to. His solution for the chaos is found in the unfolding of creative process itself:

The independent process of striving for definite order of form in the field of visual experience affects the individual as a psychophysical whole. Such striving helps to shape a more balanced personality by decisively furthering the organization or re-organization, the construction or re-construction of essential aspects of one’s total functioning...the results of such formative processes are of vital social importance in the present highly industrialized and mechanized civilization in which, more than ever, man needs an equalizing force for the development of his whole being.”<sup>18</sup>

This, he feels, will create more connection and more human values amongst the populations.

I agree that the process of creativity has an organizing and healing purpose in addition to producing art that connects the creator, through their voice, to others. But unless I have missed something, the concept of meaningful internal symbol formation is left out of his theory. One of the catalysts of my art-making has been the symbolic imagery that comes easily to me. I am always happy when some inexplicable image presents itself as perfect expression, only needing to be interpreted to glean the kernel of truth.

Consider this “setting the stage” for my pondering of symbolic formation. I remember last fall when Peter was not responding or setting up meetings with me—all the time I was dealing with deeply personal shit—and I kept trying to explain to myself what was going on, and why I felt abandoned, and I kept getting images of “training wheels,” like the kind on kids’ bikes. I felt like the training wheels were off and I was on my own. I wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or a scary thing—or both. But I eventually figured that, since my journal was all pretty personal, what could he really say, or contribute? It was my personal journey. And so I just carried on—the training wheels were off! This image really helped me get perspective on the function of mentorship and the responsibility to do the work that was mine alone. Symbolic imagery works well and is full of meaning.

## **Symbol formation**

Back to symbol formation. I had a dream last night. In my dream I was struggling to climb a set of stairs in a dark wood stairwell. The stairs were so steep and long that I could not even imagine where the start was. But I was three steps from the top. And I was really struggling not to fall backwards. It was scary, and I knew that if I could just grasp the bannister on my left I could pull myself up. My left hand was virtually immobile behind my back and I didn’t know how to free my arm to move and allow my hand to grasp the bannister. But I had a sense that it was happening—at glacial speed—but there was movement towards saving myself.

At the top of the stairwell was a baby-gate. I could see it there, and I knew that I had put it there at some point in time when I was up on the landing, to protect the baby from falling. It was firmly secured in place by multiple rounds of heavy-duty black tape, and tar. I knew it wouldn’t budge, but I figured once I got to the top I could step over it. I could picture my legs,

like in a cartoon, growing long enough. I was most worried about losing my balance and falling backward.

And here I was on the “wrong” side of the baby-gate. It was a tense and frightening dream and I woke still struggling to free my arm and pull myself up. Symbols. I woke up wondering what it meant. And after briefly thinking it was about my struggle to finish my pyramid piece, I got stuck on the “baby-gate” image and I realized it had to do with taking the really hard, and totally unfamiliar position of setting boundaries and protecting myself—like an adult. And doing it in a way that I was not a “victim”, nor in a position of powerlessness, but just taking a stand for my own self-protection in, what I hope, is a confident way.

Getting past the baby-gate to adulthood. That is what I feel is close to the last significant step of my transformation. Though, with every epiphany I think I am there—I find it is just another plateau.

So, symbols—Schaefer-Simmern’s theory doesn’t seem to me to include internal symbol formation and it is that internal activity that has, for me, provided such a healing aspect to my study, has moved me and transformed me. I agree with his theory, and yet I find it falls short, excluding a significant aspect of the value of creative process. It is symbol-making that has been the main source of creativity, my voice. Schaefer-Simmern leaves this out entirely in this book.

I see he has written another book, perhaps he gets to symbol formation in this book.—

*Consciousness of Artistic Form: A Comparison of the Visual, Gestalt Art Formations of Children, Adolescents, and Layman Adults with Historical Art, Folk Art, and Aboriginal Art*<sup>19</sup>

I am done reading for now and need to devote the rest of the semester to building my pyramid.

I think that the one really simple lesson that I have learned over the course of my studies is the act of paying attention. Skimming the surface leaves us unconnected to the substance of our lives. On a personal level, the one contribution that this past year and half has provided me is the lesson that everything I need is already within me, I just need to pay attention to the voice—even if I don’t understand it—yet. Where it comes from is still the mystery for me.





FIGURE 89. A blast from the past, a cartoon by John Leach—our drawing instructor—from our 1972 yearbook. My drawing class from Sheridan.

Simply viewing a product of creativity through the larger lens of the commodity market, without the ability and willingness to step apart from acquisition and appreciate and value both the expression and simultaneously to inhale the piece of the artist's soul shared through—Lewis Hyde's term—the “gift,” is merely an exercise of self-aggrandizement.

This is also what Schaefer-Simmern guides his students to achieve—a depth of vision drawn from internal pattern-making processes, processes that he sees as innate in everyone. And this ability to pay deeper attention, to both internal processes as well as external expression is the catalyst to the unfolding of creativity. This is how art should be taught in schools. Maybe it was, and I just wasn't paying attention!

## **The Buildings**

Starting on the buildings today. I have a picture in mind. I want to portray the head offices in an almost cartoonish image. I am not going for accuracy. Just rectangles with windows. Nothing fancy. I have googled the actual head offices of these companies and there are numbers of them in various locations. Some are sprawling one story manufacturing buildings, and some are low-rise or fancy, and modern looking. I just want a slice of cityscape—tall buildings with the logos on top.

I picked up white, grey and adobe polymer. I will likely do three of the four buildings in a cement look and one in brick. I have been thinking about the windows. I have this idea: I will make the armature for the buildings out of tin. They will be very low relief. Only the Peabody building on the left will be angled, the others just flat, front, mixed heights. I have a loose drawing.

So—the windows. I first just assumed that I would stamp rectangular window shapes into the clay before baking. I may still do that. But I did think about using clear acetate for the windows. I considered the window opening with the environment—the green trees—showing.

But that didn't seem right. I thought about using a tinted acetate, but I have no idea where to buy that. I am trying to be efficient with my time and not spend it shopping. BUT I remembered that, when I got the photocopies of the destruction of the environment, I got

transparencies done as well. What I will try first is to bake a building on the tin armature. I can separate the clay from the tin using parchment paper and remove the building from the tin after baking. Then I can put one of the transparencies over the tin and put the building back so that the windows will contain the images from the destruction of the environment. I don't know that the actual imagery will be clear, but I will see how effective that is. Could work well! Stay tuned.

I was just looking at that side panel and considering what to do about the gap that bulges on either side due to the stuff glued to the surface and I have had a brilliant idea! I can use IV tubing—or some sort of clear plastic tubing and create thermometers that can frame the edges. I can use a metal rod up the middle to represent the mercury. I can secure it by drilling a hole in the wood at the base and gluing it in place. I can use felting material that starts at white and gradually blend in shades of black and orange to represent the rising temperature so that I don't have to use a liquid. I could put these on one or both sides of the plexi.

I am excited about the idea of the thermometer, but I am not positive I will do it because I like the images without a frame of any kind. I am still thinking that I can stuff bits of foliage on the sides. Nothing too bushy but enough that the edges of the plexi provide a visual continuation of the images sandwiched between it and the surface of the pyramid. Perhaps I could make one thermometer for one side and bits of foliage for the other side.

I was also thinking of a thermometer as I was considering the windows in the building. I have the transparencies of the devastated environment, but I am not sure if I have enough for two of the buildings that would need it—Peabody and Exxon. For Pfizer I need to look up what the damage is. And for Lockheed Martin I would have to add human carnage. I included Lockheed-Martin, as war is a huge source of wealth for the elite. Trying to remember Marilyn Waring's film, *Who's Counting: Sex, Lies and Global Economics*, the film that changed my life, as she was explaining British economist, John Maynard Keynes' economic theory of "wartime prosperity", a time when everyone is working, and why there is always war somewhere on the planet. That film, from 1997, just as relevant now, maybe even more so, should be on every person's list of required viewing.

Anyway, back to the thermometer. I could have a photocopy made that could be placed behind the windows of one of the buildings. Still thinking about it. I plan to make the buildings today.



*FIGURE 90. Getting started (upper left); Peabody building (upper right); paper patterns (lower left); the original drawing (lower right)*

I forgot to photograph the tin armature cutting process but there is a tin armature under the polymer building facade in this photo. And the really exciting discovery, that I can cut the tin with a matte knife! Yay time-saving!



*FIGURE 91. Making the armature: tools (upper left); the baked building (upper right); painted Peabody*

I have started to add the windows—cutouts from the transparencies. from the start, up to this point—6 hours of work. Hopefully work will go a bit faster now that I have made the first one. That is usually how things go. If this panel takes till the end of the week I will still be on schedule. Well, the new revised schedule—end of project panic.

So, as I am thinking about the windows I realize that these images will make a statement and I am going to have to choose imagery with that in mind. I may be able to use some of what I have already got printed up, but I am looking for more images that are relevant to the corporations that I have highlighted here.

For Peabody—the coal industry—it is not difficult to find images of gas fires from the mines and sick miners. Exxon is the same—oil leaks, fires, oil-covered wildlife and dead whales—lots of images. Really depressing me.

I am looking for imagery for Pfizer. I found illegal “guinea pig” drug trials that have really damaged people. I have little piles of pills. I have to focus on why I chose Pfizer. I felt that I needed a pharmaceutical company because of the damage to humanity—the side effects, the fact that drug companies create customers and not cures. The opioid crisis. Doctors who get kick-backs, research that is funded by pharmaceutical companies—thinking of Nancy Olivieri who lost her job over her decision to share information with drug test subjects on the dangers of the drug they were testing. There is so much corruption and so little actual effort to end disease—more on disease management which makes more money. It is pretty despicable—but what imagery? I watch the ads on TV and the pharmaceuticals ads—start with a brief “poor you” followed by an excited “we can help!” and the visuals of happy people with a voice over of all the side-effects that could potentially be worse for you than the original problem, right up to leaving you dead!! And all the happy images in the world cannot drown out that list of side-effects. They are evil!!

And this one—selling water pics for cleaning your teeth— “Dentists all say that flossing is the most important thing you can do, but “string” flossing is a hassle.”—and every time I see that ad—I yell at my TV— “NO IT ISN’T”. That advertisers depend on presenting a problem → presenting their solution = sales. FFS.

Reminded of this— “Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone”—John Maynard Keynes.

I have had the photos for the windows printed up. I found some good war scenes and weapons for the Lockheed-Martin building. I would LOVE it if I could find some tiny action figures to



make small scenes in behind the windows. That would be excellent! Thinking of the chess set from the Louvre with tiny dioramas in glass cubes under the chess board. I could make the figures myself and that would be fun. I would only need an extra couple of months to do that. Well, if I feel like it I can still do that once school is finished.

Going to board Bease today and try to plow through getting the buildings done. I finished the tin armatures yesterday.



*FIGURE 92. Progress on the buildings*

I have done Peabody in the grey, and Exxon in the adobe colour. I keep seeing Pfizer in white and I haven't been too sure why. But white is the colour of pills. As I look at the arrangement of buildings I can see that the Pfizer building, bordered on both sides by the Exxon and L-M, is quite slim and probably no space for the windows and photos that I picked out. BUT this leaves the building to be a perfect shape for a pill! And so I have decided to make it as a pill! Very happy about that.



*FIGURE 92. The Pfizer building as a pill*

I still have to sand and polish Exxon and Pfizer. Will do that today.



*FIGURE 93. Sanding and polishing the buildings prior to installation*



*FIGURE 94. The buildings sanded and polished*

## **Offstage**

About two weeks ago I'd had a call from a production and they wanted a coin made—double sided silver dollar-ish coin that was, "...not supposed to look like the coin in Batman". (which I haven't seen) and they sent me a photo of a coin that looked exactly like a silver dollar and I googled it and they can be bought online for \$20. I didn't understand what they wanted me to

do. And the props master said that they wanted it made “from scratch”. Still confused. And it was to “play” on the 29th. And so I just waited for final “artwork” and on Tues of last week they said they were starting from brand new artwork and would send it along as soon as it was done and I said to the props guy that if it had font—or a double sided head that had to be identical on both sides—that would take a long time so if they wanted a rush job, those would be the image components to avoid. And so I didn’t hear back and finally by the end of the day Wednesday I knew that it was too late for me to make it.

Thurs at noon I got the artwork and it had both font and the double sided identical head coin—and huge! And the on-camera date was moved up to Monday 28th. And so, with no time at all I told him that I would do my best, but all he could have was a wax and he would have to sort out casting on his own. Actually, I started my response to him—that he was too late, and I couldn’t do it. And I was aware that I was angry and feeling “punitive” toward him. And I erased that and just agreed to do it—somehow.

I contacted my friend who does 3D printing and she was amazingly able to get me the font cut in wax for the next day!! Friday! I could pick it up in the morning. I picked it up. Props guy wanted to get it from me as soon as it was done, so I spent the day trying to channel Vanessa—who is way better at low-relief than I am. I did an ok job—both sides! A rush—in 7 hours. Messaged him and he said he would come pick it up and I waited and waited and finally he said he would come in the morning—Saturday at 9:00—as I was out all day at a weaving workshop. Saturday morning, I got up and ready, and had a panic attack!! Collapsed at the sink and had to sit on the floor till I could get up to go and lie down. And I wondered if it was my metal fume fever, because that is exactly what happens, and I tried to remember what products I had used—I wore latex gloves when I was sanding, didn’t think I had eaten anything that I hadn’t checked the ingredients—but with metal fume fever I get achy joints and can’t speak—and I didn’t have achy joints and I could speak—so I figured “panic”.

Props came to get the coin and I was able to talk to him. I came back in and wondered where that anxiety came from and I thought about my panic about getting my school piece done—and the fact that, working in film is like living in panic mode. I know that I do a good job and I always deliver on time—I just find a way—but that anxiety is how I get things done. And I am

tired. I am truly tired. If I have been living in a barely glazed-over state of panic to get things done—I don't want to do that anymore.

I am panicked about my piece for school. I haven't been sleeping well because I am worried that I won't have the time to do my best and make it perfect. After the 9:00 AM pick up I went to my weaving workshop. Got there late and was really a mess. I spent the day weaving and by the end of the day I felt calm and relaxed and happy. It was a good thing to do.

But Saturday night I couldn't sleep, so I got up around 2:00 AM and sanded Exxon till it looked way better than it had. And I went back to sleep around 4:30, feeling good.

I am having to do some hard thinking about what matters in life—well—my life. I am happy at Bain. I am happy making stuff. I like writing. And then what? School will end in the summer. I don't know how I will feel. I am tired of panic mode. My life is good and perhaps getting rid of panic mode would connect me with whatever is beneath my panic. Or maybe panic has just been a “coping” mechanism and I am in a place where I don't really need it anymore, that it has become more of a burden than a necessity.

Building the pyramid piece feels like a dance of discovery—a connection with the evolution of the creative—the “unfolding” to use Schaefer-Simmern's term. It feels good. I work away, and it evolves as I work, as I knew it would. And I still wonder where it all comes from. I was driving one of my foster daughters out to Hamilton yesterday and I was talking to her about symbol formation and wondering about it. Her off the cuff response was that we have all these feelings and thoughts swimming around inside and they can “coagulate” on their own to inform us in pictures. That makes perfect sense and I thought she was brilliant! And she went on a bit more, but I was driving, had to watch the road, and so I couldn't catch everything she said.

We were on our way to Hamilton to see my tenants about some work that needs to be done on the house. My daughter works in construction. And we got there, and we talked a bit, and they love living there and would like to buy the house. I have had to pay for the upkeep and the repairs and that keeps me poor but with a house I have.... a back-up plan. I thought about my need for that “investment” and about my over-wired existence, and I thought that selling them the house was not a bad idea. I would have some money to relax a bit—if that is even possible.

Thinking about Peter's reminder about "space". And my life of no space at all. Taking a day "off" is just a concept and not a plan.

So here I am—considering the ongoing transformation of my life. Can I just relax and allow happiness without all the "other stuff"? I think it's a good plan. Weaving was relaxing.

Tomorrow I am going for a felting workshop to make the tree for the other side panel and I am really looking forward to that.



*FIGURE 95. The tree inspiration*

This is the basic concept of the tree I plan to use—to "felt." Planning also where to have the swing with the little girl swinging in this wild tree. I can picture her. Because of all the allergies—the metal reactions that leave me unable to work for hours at a time—achy and lethargic—I feel like I would welcome a new creative direction. I need a creative community—a group of people who find meaning in creative lifestyle, not plugged in to the "gallery" scene or making stuff just for money or status—just people who like to make stuff. I don't know where to find that. Bain is certainly full of creative people. Well—not really the same thing. But I am finding new values and it feels good.

## Painting the buildings

Sanding and finishing my buildings. I have found something that I can't do! I'm really not happy about it! I can't paint! No, really—I can't. The Peabody sign, I used an oil paint pen—sort of like a Sharpie but with oil paint. And it worked great! “How hard can this be??” I thought. But the Exxon sign—two hours!! And I hate it and it's the wrong colour AND I don't know what to do about it! I tried a red spray paint that I had around and the paint all bubbled up like soap suds. So I quickly wiped it off. I tried the oil paint pen and the colour didn't show up on the black plastic (polymer). The blue had worked fine! So I used a white oil paint pen as a base and waited, impatiently, for it to dry. Then I added a coat of red oil paint and it was sort of ok—but messy and sort of on the coral side of red. And I was not happy, and I don't know what to do about it.

Two hours!!! And then when I tried to fit it into the space at the top of the building—I thought it was dry but it wasn't and I left finger prints on the surface. And I tried to smooth them out and—well—no—that didn't really work. So I put on another coat. And it looks crappy. And I don't want to use a solvent because I don't know which solvent will remove the paint, and not affect the plastic. I know they are different—but I am doing a bad job at painting. Well—I guess I can't do everything. Even with the polymer—though I am fairly new to it, I haven't mangled anything so badly that I am unhappy with it. It's not all perfect—far from it—but I am ok with it. You know—some things you can pick at forever and ...what's the point.

But paint!! It has to look smooth and even and be the right colour! My friend John painted the sky for me, for the other side panel. I always get him to paint stuff for me. I really didn't think I was gonna need help to paint the signs for the buildings!! Damn. Sigh. Something I can't do :( And I have to paint Pfizer gold. And then I have to paint Lockheed-Martin.) So I have spent the day sanding and finishing the three buildings—one left to make. Tomorrow I am doing the felting for the other side. Stay tuned!

These three photos are the start of Lockheed-Martin. I was cutting the polymer into chunks to condition it in the pasta roller to make it smooth and malleable, but I liked the chunks! I decided to build the facade up from rubble to smooth, and black to steely grey. In these photos I have chosen war devastation—people traumatized having lost everything—weeping in the rubble, guiding their children through the rubble. Terrible images. I have cut these



transparencies to size. (image 1, below left) I have tried out putting the soldiers on the tin (image 2, centre) and then covered the soldiers with the transparency (right). It works well. You can't see the soldiers well, but they are there.



*FIGURE 96. Lockheed-Martin section, soldiers (centre), transparency*

Here I have started to build up the walls. I have just placed the transparency on the rubble. Once the polymer construct is finished I will glue the soldiers in on the rubble and then place the transparencies on top and glue the small rocks that are pictured at the top of the tin armature, over top of the edges of the photos and glue these to the rubble and the photos to keep them in place. I plan to blend the black into the metallic colour for the next two windows, which will depict weapons alone. A lot of work. And I am worrying about painting the logo.



*FIGURE 96. Lockheed-Martin, transparency over rubble*

Here are the buildings. I am considering adding that touch of dripping oil to each of the windows in Exxon. I like the way it looks but I am starting to be concerned about overkill. The Pfizer pill looks good. It is missing the punch of the issue-related imagery that the other buildings display. I keep thinking about making it look like a capsule—with an acetate sleeve. If I could do that (thinking about vacuum forming acetate) then I could add the transparencies that I printed for Pfizer—just collaged onto the bottom half of the pill and cover with clear acetate.



*FIGURE 97. The buildings, almost done*

I have not yet glued the transparencies in place in the Lockheed-Martin building—nor the soldiers.

I am looking at the panel that is done—with the beautiful scene, destroyed, and I look at my buildings and I wonder if they are needed. A lot of work, and now I am not sure I want to use

them. As a statement they are important, but for impact, the panel would work just as well without them. Sad to say. So I am going to assemble the buildings on a separate piece—of metal I think—prop it up in place and wait for a bit to see what I think. If Peter and Lisa are coming to see it, I can get some feedback.

Meanwhile I am off my schedule by a few days. I will have the weekend to do the needle felting and that is relaxing. And start the last three boxes next week.

Now thinking about the buildings and the finished part of the panel.

Since I am reconsidering adding the buildings, I should have a look at what this piece is saying and how each of the components contributes to this statement. For a start, these industries are conscienceless. They exploit and destroy the environment and every living thing that gets in their way. They exploit humanity itself from sheer greed—creating false, empty-shell values, and undermining the spirituality and connectivity that nurtures.

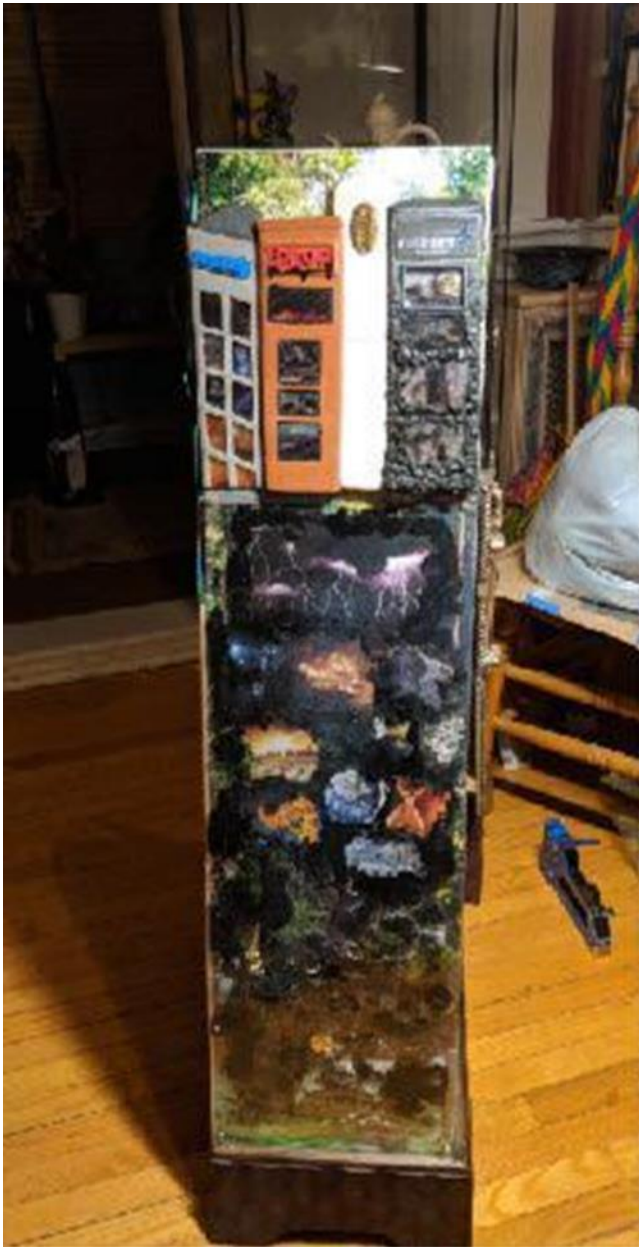
The panel on its own without the buildings has impact. It speaks well without words. But it is the physical presence of the buildings that provides the connection of the destroyed environment, through capitalism, to the wealthy. And it is this connection that is a fundamental aspect of the statement that I am making about the acquisition of art as being the

“spoils of war” for the wealthy elite who profit from this inhuman madness. So in this sense, the buildings need to stay. I wish they could just be a stand-alone piece since I like the way they work. But I like the environment on its own.

In terms of a cohesive statement, the buildings need to be a part of the bigger piece. But do they detract from the visual impact of the rest of the panel? Hmm. I will have to sit with this one for a bit. Whatever happened to my plan for “simple rectangles”?

June 3. I have finished the buildings and I have mounted them temporarily on a piece of tin that I can tack to the side panel in order to photograph the panel complete, as I had envisioned it. I am not happy with Exxon. I decided to try to add some “oil” to the window frames and I

can't find a product that will look like oil—shiny and fluid. I can't use the vaseline/oil paint for this because it's goopy, and the window frames are not enclosed. So apart from not being happy with Exxon, I think the buildings work well. I am just not convinced that they work well with the “environment” panel. They got to be bigger than I had imagined originally—and a more complex message than I had conceived of at the start.



*FIGURE 98. Environmental panel complete*

I hate that I don't have time to do my best. I can get it done, I guess, but I don't have time to make sure that it is technically up to my standards. If I had time I would re-do the Exxon building. Maybe not the whole thing, but I would do quite a bit to make it neater and more professional looking. Anyway—it is what it is. I like the Lockheed-Martin building quite a bit. But as I look at it sitting atop the environment it is over powering. Much bigger than I had planned. But I don't see how I can do it differently. It needs these details.

This is the start of the felted tree for the opposite side panel. I am doing the grass separately. It is more than half done. I will still need to make the little girl and the swing. (And do my tax prep for my accountant. Busy.)



*FIGURE 99. Felting the tree. Before felting (left); after soaking (centre); detail (right)*

The photo on the left shows the arrangement of wool before it was “felted.” The felting process involves wrapping it in a type of paper, binding it, and soaking it in soapy water. The picture on the right show it after soaking and with the addition of the start of a needle felted tree. I like the piece in the left photo better. I can play with it though and add wool that hasn't been soaked in soapy water. It will be fun!

**“When you look at the work of artists you see the world through their eyes”**

**—Robert Bateman**

June 8. I need to tell this story now, at this moment in time. I need to capture it as it is today because it is growing wild, taking on a life of its own. I need to track it, trace it to try to understand.

I have, for the moment, left my decision about whether to add the buildings to the panel with oil leaks and general environmental destruction. I hope to get some feedback from ...well... whoever might have an opinion. I would like to find a way to justify leaving the buildings as a separate, stand-alone contribution to the larger statement. The panel just packs a punch without the corporate head offices.

The reason I am still having difficulty leaving the corporations apart from the pyramid is that the buildings represent corporate capitalism and the source of wealth for the elite class. The buildings visually connect the conscienceless values, represented in the dioramas—within the drawers on the front of the pyramid—to the environmental destruction inflicted by these corporations.

As I am constructing this piece there is an evolving narrative that accompanies the imagery and highlights the symbolic statements. I am learning to pay more attention to the story I am “spinning” (fibre reference again!). As I work, things are shifting. I have seen my vision, my voice expressed through my artwork, evolve over the course of the last, almost two years.

When I started this piece, before I started school, I was motivated by my abhorrence for the appropriation of art by the elite, acquired to contribute to their status and sense of superiority over the rest of society. I was deeply disturbed by the airs that the wealthy put on, to raise themselves, and to devalue and shame those who they have determined could not appreciate art, nor afford art—the wealthy, whose money and taste, as determined by hegemonic ideology, elevated them. To me this is repugnant and damages the fabric of society leaving those deemed “less worthy” to struggle and to suffer. And there is a general acknowledgement that it is their own fault, and they don’t deserve more. Social Darwinism, another of the ideologies that shape our realities. This was my square one.



## **The Pyramid Drawers**

The piece I started to work on—the pyramid drawers—were initially meant to reflect only status in society. I had no plan beyond the drawers themselves. The dioramas in the drawers have been pretty much visually and symbolically consistent throughout the construction. I had started by picturing the top two drawers as representing the 1% wealthy and below that, the merely rich. The third drawer down was to be a suburban scene and the 4th drawer was to be a working-class kitchen. The bottom drawer I saw as an outdoor scene of the poor and homeless—tenement steps and graffitied brick.

I presented my pyramid concept during a class I took in first year, Public and Private Sphere, a ComCult course at Ryerson. After listening to my description of what I was proposing to do, the instructor, Isabella Pushka-Oldenhof, asked me what I had intended for the other three sides. Well, I hadn't even thought about that! Her question led me to consider a much larger statement than the one I had originally planned. That had produced a much more comprehensive examination of art and creativity in the context of wealth/elitism, power, corporate capitalism and the environment.

As I was thinking about how the rest of the piece would look, and what the statements would be, I began to mentally construct the piece as I had originally conceived of it. The other three panels started to take shape in my mind.

The construction details, as I have built the drawers so far, have stayed fairly true to my original vision and values, and consistent with my thesis statement. The one major change that came about in my conception, at the start of my studies, was to change the top drawer of the pyramid from representing the wealthy, to representing the church.

This shift happened at an art fair where I saw some small stained-glass windows. I was struck immediately by a visual of the church. I looked forward to sculpting the embellishments—the fancy columns and cupids, and the displayed wealth. All of this beauty would be juxtaposed against the ugliness, the hidden corruption of the sexual abuse of children by the clergy, and

the huge amassed fortunes in money and art. It would be a statement about faith stained by wealth, power, and corruption.

The peak at the top, solid wood with no drawer, would now become the 1% gated communities. This would sit atop the church. Beneath the church, the second drawer down, would be a wealthy family living room, and beneath that a suburban scene. The lower drawers depict the class status through the image of a working-class kitchen, and followed finally, by the poor and homeless at the bottom.

So far so good. The peak is a rhodium (platinum) plated triangle with a black gate and a plaque with the zip code of the wealthiest community in North America. My church features gold, and glitz, and art, and I even have faux candles made from battery operated lights with carved out white wax “sleeves” that fit over the bulbs, on either side of the altar. There are wood pews, and I have placed a woman sitting there, head bowed, wearing a kerchief. This is the public face of the church.

There is, in this scene, a back room. I didn’t even put a doorway which would suggest that people, the public, were, not simply barred, but unaware. It is a cloistered room hidden away from public view, and public knowledge. In this small room I have placed a mound of gold coins, a few pieces of art on the walls, and a carpet with a small child huddled, underneath a corner. There is a broom leaning against the wall, above the child. This scene says what I want it to say about power, corruption, and art—art as represented by the splendour of the surroundings. The corruption existing in hidden spaces.

The next drawer is a living room of wealthy art collectors. I designed this room with care to ensure that the decor would be sufficiently “designerly”—upper class-looking and that there was art on the walls. Because I am considering the appropriation of art for the purpose of symbolizing wealth and power and superiority, the “art” in the frames depicts the actual values that art represents to this class of people. I have, over the fireplace mantel, a framed painting of Leona Helmsley, art collector and business woman—once dubbed “The Queen of Mean”, by her staff and associates. I have a framed picture of Ronald Lauder who had just purchased a Gustav Klimt painting for a vast amount of money, and the haughty expression on his face, “I am better than all of you!”, standing in front of his acquisition, is absolutely perfect. The other

art frames display pictures of men and gold, fanned out bills, and women looking haughty. It's a good piece.

Because I have been worried about running out of time, I decided to do the sides and back panel because they will not take as much time as the drawers, which I anticipate having difficulty finishing on time. Surprisingly, the statements I have intended for these three surfaces have taken on a life of their own! Speech flows of its own accord.

My initial concept for the panel on the left (when the piece is viewed from the front) which I have considered to be the final panel, was originally envisioned as depicting a world drowning in oil and sludge, detritus enveloped in pollution. I had thought to apply this mess to the wood and to cover it over with a sheet of plexiglass. I had planned to have corporate head offices atop this devastation. It was, in retrospect, a simple visual.

As I started to assemble the visual components it felt necessary to change some of my construction plans. After a discussion with Peter about how to inspire people to want to draw, I discarded my plan for using the scene from nature poster that I had purchased, and it seemed perfect as a base upon which to create my oily pollution. It would add even more relevance to the scene as it would directly provide an image of the environment destroyed. So that was the first shift in my creative statement. This worked very well! I was really happy with how this panel turned out.

The corporate headquarters that were to top this scene also changed as I was working on them, and the windows in the buildings took on a reflection of the damage done by these corporate entities. Apart from Pfizer which was transformed from a structure to a medication/pill, the rest of the buildings contained their own individual realities and highlighted the impact of the conscienceless source of wealth for the elite. I may still be able to have Pfizer send its message also. But this panel construction was evolving as I was constructing it. It was a transformational process in the making, and the result of immersing myself in the message—translating it into symbols.

## The Back Panel

The back panel actually went very well. It also transformed from my original concept of having a representation of imagery that would symbolize some of the issues facing our planet. That concept is now represented on the side panel. The new concept for the back panel evolved from my work for Lisa Myers in IDS—the money wedge that divides people. I had the money wedge that I created, and I was able to utilize it in the back panel of my pyramid. It would function as a wedge between two cork boards, an invitation for people to contribute creatively, on one side, and politically on the other. I had tried to find pieces of cork that were about 1/2” thick and was unable to find that so I purchased thin rolls and applied the cork wedges to foam core so that art and newspaper headlines could still be tacked to the panel. Apart from a less than flat surface, I am very happy with this.

But now the panel on the right has taken shape. I was not sure what to do with this panel since my original intention of inviting people to draw pristine nature and contribute drawings dissolved and the nature photo was “repurposed.” I have this panel on the right to give voice. But what voice can that be? What will it say?

I was concerned about adding something handmade as to me that would be an interpretation—my interpretation of nature, and I had wanted it to be a pure image without going through a process and media that would make it art and remove it from nature by interpreting it through my own process, using arts materials. I had a photo that I had thought to use.



*FIGURE 100. Faraway tree*

This photo felt right to me. I could picture this photo on the side of the panel with a small girl swinging on a wooden swing from one of the lower branches. I could picture toys in the

grass. I knew I wanted to use a teddy bear—the same teddy bear I used for my Kewpie diorama—painted metallic blue. I also have a tin toy truck—something made by a street artist. I would add this also. But then I found this photo [Figure 95] of a tangled tree that filled the horizon, branches sweeping the ground. And I imagined my little girl on her swing, which would hang from one of these branches—the same little girl playing in this wild tangle of foliage. And I like that image. It felt like bravery to me. I decided that this image would work.

In a lot of my writing lately my concepts have been represented in textile terms and images such as “weaving” and “fabric” concepts. With this in mind there were classes being offered at a wool store in both weaving, and an interesting process called felting. I registered for both of these classes. I wanted the weaving class because I wanted to experience the feeling of physically “weaving” in order to put hand-motion and process together with creative conceptualization. I had taken weaving in foundation year at Sheridan, so it wasn’t entirely new, and I made a nice little piece. It felt calming and productive. So worth the money and the afternoon spent.

But a more important contribution to my creativity and the piece I am working on turned out to be the felting class. The wild tangled tree, I thought, would look amazing as a felted piece. I had never done felting before. I had actually never heard of it till my friend Marilyn—who has the wool store—suggested it. I had a look at some samples and I was excited about trying my hand at this technique.

My tree evolved. Sitting on the bed, slowly “pinning” the felt into shape. It felt like sculpture. I could control the emerging shapes with the needle. It felt not that different from soft wax sculpture, using a needle point to lay down detail. I really enjoy this! And there is no part of it that exposes me to dust and metal powders!



*FIGURE 101. Felted tree detail and complete panel.*

And so I got it to this point:



*FIGURE 102. The "branchy" tree*



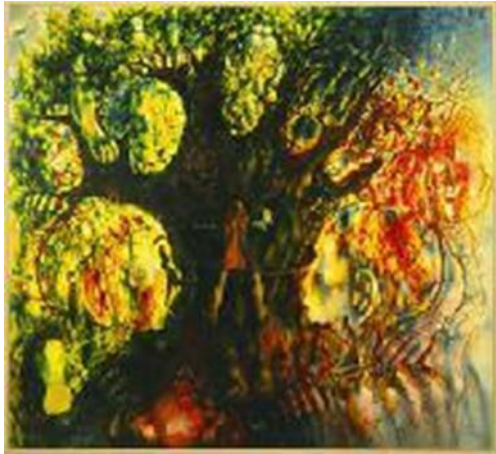
The branches were asymmetrical, and I didn't know what to do. I felt that the right side was too busy, but the left side didn't represent my feelings about how the tree should look, so I went to talk to my friend Nancy to try to sort out my dilemma.

Nancy observed that trees are not symmetrical, and she liked it the way it was. I tried to describe to her what my reaction was to the image. I tried to come up with one word that describes a full bushy tree and the best I could come up with is that one side is very "branchy"! I didn't think that "branchy" was the right word and I kept trying to find that word that I knew existed, that would describe my tree. But "branchy" it was—for the moment.

And so, just in case I could find a better word, I googled "branchy" and it seemed that "branchy" was indeed the right word! BUT additionally, "branchy" referred to "systems of ideas"!! Well! That was the start of a whole new understanding of this panel! I say "understanding" because imagery and symbols float to the surface of my mind from somewhere. And I have learned not to argue with this inner voice. What I have learned is to pay attention. And that is what I have done.

### **Pavel Tchelichew's tree**

I am reminded of Pavel Tchelichew's tree [Figure103]. The depth of imagery and symbolism, layer upon layer, I could delve into it forever. Well, I have been fascinated with it for 50 years now. To me his tree represents life in all its seasons, death, rebirth, transformation, growth, yearning, knowledge...the unknown...



*FIGURE 103. Pavel Tchelichew's tree*

If I think of the tree on my side panel as representing even a fraction of his tree, it would represent life, transformation, growth, knowledge...all of this. An asymmetrical tree offers much more for my mind to chew on. My little girl is swinging from a branch on the branchy side of the tree. I am pretty clear by now that I am the little girl—that I am playing in the branches of life—systems of ideas—my statement—my one small voice in the midst of horrendous suffering in the world.

And my image of this panel has been the tree, the little girl on the swing, always on the right side of the tree. I considered moving her to the left, less complicated side, but arguing with my inner image-maker is not a good idea. I need to pay attention. So she stays on the right side. There are toys in the grass. The teddy bear I have copied, the same teddy bear that I have in my kewpie doll diorama, lies in the grass beneath the tree, along with a toy truck. The sunroom where I have my kewpie dioramas displayed also has a display of my collection of toy trucks.

I am pondering this sudden insertion of myself so large in the telling of my story—both visually and symbolically. This is where I am starting to see my pyramid piece taking on a life of its own. I had not anticipated this.

Met with Peter today. Oh man, the pressure is on. It's a good thing I'm not trying to charm Peter with my sparkling social skills because my anxiety is sky high and I said really dorky things, as usual. And I can't rewind and edit. And it's not just Peter, I am being dorky with Nancy too. The closer I come to the finish of my studies, the dumber I feel, and so much more intimidated by the people around me who are smart. So—moving on—I have a ton of work and no time for fretting. I just have to get it done.

If this piece is, in part, about injustices, hierarchies, privilege, the war on the planet and the planet's inhabitants, motivated by conscienceless greed, then I have inserted myself as a small child playing in nature, as a large visual component.

My panel is finished. I have made the little girl/me in polymer. It was a hasty sculpt and I had only a couple of photos available from when I was that age. But I got the mass of frizz that my mother kept trying to straighten (she seriously ironed my hair! Took me to a hairdresser for chemical straightening till half my hair fell out!) and here she sits, this re-born little girl, with frizzy pom-pom pigtails, and it works quite well. And she didn't get ears because hearing didn't count. She sits on a wood swing hanging from a low branch on the tree—on the right side—the branchy side. This panel takes up quite a bit of visual and conceptual space within the larger narrative of the piece.



*FIGURE 104. Tree panel in progress*

What strikes me is the contrast between my previous dolls—my kewpie dolls and my carnival decor—and this new representation of myself—playing in a “branchy” tree—systems of ideas. Learning. I don’t have time for her baggage. Perhaps she has turned up minus the baggage!

I think about my early work—about being rooted in my childhood traumas and using my dolls as a coping mechanism. My dolls kept me at the carnival, having fun—until my traumas were safely, irretrievably buried and I had said everything I had to say...and so I stagnated for a couple of decades. And here I have a new doll now. And I hadn’t planned to invite her—she

just turned up—crashed the scene. She is my “one small voice” now. She is my response to the traumas and injustices from my childhood—the place I was stuck for most of my life. And she has felt the weight of all the injustices and all the suffering in the world and she has come to speak up. Well, good for her. But I still hadn’t planned to invite her.

And I still wonder what internal overseer has orchestrated this narrative. My hands respond, creating what needs to be created, using symbols that are fed to me. And I just keep working, and transformation happens through my work, to my work—simultaneously.

I wonder if she should be introduced at the start of my “guided tour”—perhaps the tour guide! When I look at how my pyramid has taken shape, and if she is the first to speak up, then everything else will be her voice. And that makes a lot of sense. My initial experiences of the world.

I think I will call her Penny cause she just turned up.

### **A few further thoughts about Penny**

I think that Penny turning up provides a major component of my thesis, and that is that creativity transforms us, heals us! This just hit me, and I could not have planned it better if I had consciously set out to visualize personal transformation!

My doll has transformed! She is playing in branches—systems of ideas! This panel adds the metamorphosis piece that connects creativity with healing, my argument that transformation happens through creative process! I am just stunned. I have proven my argument and having experienced this creative act—my pyramid piece—I have been transformed in the process.

This panel was not part of my original plan. AND I still have no idea how symbol formation works! In my mind, Penny just turned up! I didn’t invite her, I just responded to my inner choreographer, stopped arguing with her, and just worked away. And this panel says it all.



FIGURE 105. *Waiting for the little girl*

Another observation is that all my other panels represent destructive forces in society, with the source of the damage to the planet and its population occupying the top of the panels—the 1% at the top of the front panel—the hierarchies of status, the corporate head offices at the top of the environmental damage, and the wedge of money at the top of, and separating the issues from the artwork.

Penny is at the top of her panel—the only positive image of transformation in my pyramid! So I am just going to maintain her as the side panel. I am not going to burden her with the job of “tour guide”. I am not prepared to re-instill her baggage. BUT I don’t think she brought it!





FIGURE 106. The little girl, waiting for eyes



FIGURE 107. Rolling the iris



FIGURE108. Frizzy hair and pigtails



*FIGURE 109. Penny on the swing; detail (left)*



*FIGURE 110. Tree panel complete*

## **There are no pedestals, only training wheels.**

I need to write through this one to sort it out.

3:30 AM Monday June 18. I need to address my anxiety level. I am not sleeping. When I am not working, I am too freaked out to think. The closer it comes to the completion of my work, the smaller I feel, and as I grow smaller, everyone else grows larger around me. I am very anxious though, about the coming audience who will judge me and my work—my finished work. As if “finished” will happen. Well, “finished” for the purpose of my exam—yeah—but not really finished. And it won’t just be me and Peter, there will be strangers! And I can’t have Nancy there for support. I have to nudge myself into finding my strength. I have to remember that the training wheels are off—that I did the work myself and I am very happy with what I have accomplished. I am just going to have to keep that thought, every time I look to make others big so that I can stay small in my tiny rooms. Got to break out of that pattern.

~

And then there’s this:

Another source of anxiety comes from the situation in the US. So many people are suffering, and Trump is such an evil moron—with such power, it is frightening. He represents one faction of the powerful, elitist wealthy (not all wealthy people are evil sadists) who enjoy abusing others with impunity, without shame or conscience. That is a lesson I learned when I was a child—that there are different scales of balance, different definitions of “justice” for the wealthy. They can get away with everything—and they feel justified—and society enables this, and places value on accumulations of money and status, leaving morals and ethics aside. This is one of the issues at the core of my thesis, so as I am immersed in symbols and image-making, I shouldn’t be surprised that my anxiety is triggered on a daily basis. I think Penny has turned up in response to this. She has had experience. But she is transformed! She is hope!

And finally, I am having problems with my music. I have been listening to R&B since Bobby Bland and Jimmy Reed—when I was 12. Not working for me at the moment. Not even Zachery Richard. I need something new. I have tried Nina Simone—not bad. And more John

Renbourne. I need calming, not work music. I need support music—something I can blend into. I wish I knew more about classical music. It feels like something out there would absorb me and carry me. That's what I need at the moment.

And I finally settled on binge-watching Doctor Who while I work. It is reassuring to think that this alien in a blue box will come to earth and rescue us from the destruction being inflicted by Trump and his ilk. Sorry, classical music, your time will come.

~

### **Better Homes and Gardens**

Starting on the middle class, suburban back yard. My original vision had been a street extending out from the front window, with front yards on either side and cars in the driveways. This changed as I was playing with the image from the front of the pyramid—knowing that, for this room, the view was looking out from inside—so that the window was viewed from inside the room, and the view, looking down the street, wasn't really making sense to me, scale-wise. The window that was being looked out of would have been massive compared to the sizes of the houses and cars. So this became a back yard. I knew I could still make it relevant.



*FIGURE 111. Sawing and gluing the window frame*

The drawer has had the bottom and back cut out to allow more space for my back yard. I have cut a tin floor and back and screwed it in place.





*FIGURE 112. Checking to make sure the glass is slotted in all the way*



*FIGURE 113. Tin floor first attempt*

When I tried to fit it into the drawer hole it would not slide all the way in. I tried trimming some edges and I even cut off the tin panel at the back and it was still a problem. So, I took this off and cut it down so that the floor fit into the cut out rather than covering it.

Shown is the second floor I tried. With the tin folded up and over the remaining cut wood edges I tried to work with adding the “grass” and was having some difficulty with the edges of the terry cloth and adding the foliage. After a day of playing with it, I discarded this floor as well.



Could another floor work?



*FIGURE 114. Second and third attempts at tin flooring*

And yet another floor!

I have added shrubs, a deck, and what will be a planter in the window. The “earth” is made from polymer. The pattern is for a foam core floor that will be covered with green grass (terrycloth)



*FIGURE 115. Pattern for foamcore floor*



*FIGURE 116. Mixing foliage and white glue to make shrubbery*



*FIGURE 117. Terry cloth lawn*



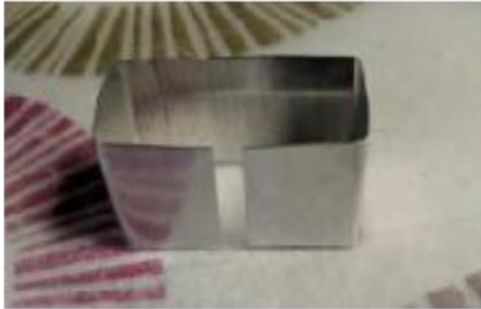
*FIGURE 118. Gluing and clamping popsicle stick fence*



*FIGURE 119. Gluing the planter and the deck*



*FIGURE 120. Back fence, popsicle sticks and polymer*



*FIGURE 121. Making the barbecue*

I will need to screw the window to the drawer. Here I have drilled the holes and inserted pegs to keep the window frame in place, so I can check out the fitting in the pyramid [Figure 122].





*FIGURE 122. Installing the frame*





*FIGURE 123. Waiting for the lawn*

Just waiting for a child's wading pool, attaching the window, curtains, and piece of art—something for the window sill.



*FIGURE 124. Waiting for wading pool and decor*

The middle class don't have the money to invest in art and so their art acquisitions appear to be determined by personal taste, rather than the criteria of the elite art "industry." When I googled "middle class art" many links were to Folk Art. My "expertise" of middle class art is solely based on growing up in a middle-class family during the 50s. My father, an architect, collected art from different cultures. We had Cuban art (and music), African and Haitian sculpture, prints of art classics, and purchases from local artists. All of my parents' friends were middle class and surrounded themselves as my parents did with the popular art of the time, similar to my parents' choices. My connection to visual culture was influenced by my upbringing in this milieu—art, architecture, and design.

The upper-class collectors buy art that they like AND that is worth a lot of money, that provides both economic as well as social capital. Middle class buy art, not for its resale value, but for personal reasons. I imagine the personal reasons will vary significantly and that there may be no one statement that can be made about "typical" art collected by the middle class.

The fact that there were many references to Folk Art on my google search, has led me to include folk art, the small sculpture, in this piece. Without any studying of art trends whatsoever, I am not able to comment from a sociological perspective about middle class values and the power relationship of white Western middle class collecting Folk and indigenous art, but I did note that my family—and typically the families that were part of my parent's social circle, did collect art from other indigenous cultures, and folk art. It "felt" to me, at the time, to be an interest in social and cultural diversity. But I have also made the curtains from cloth that is a print of a famous painting—a sort of tongue-in-cheek poke at the commodification of valuable art—so everyone can have a Monet hanging in their living room.

Something that I need to add here. This piece, the whole statement, has evolved in my imagination over a couple of years. It has changed quite a bit since the beginning. At the start it was just the drawers—just the dioramas. Making dioramas is something that has always felt deeply meaningful to me, even when I was just playing around. These small rooms were home and every one of them contributed to my safety and my ability to organize my life and myself in it.

As I imagined my pyramid piece, as it grew visually and conceptually, there was a strict order to the construction. I planned a natural progression of my statement. The drawers would be constructed from the top down—starting with the wealthiest and the most destructive to the environment and the population, to my mind. The rooms would be constructed from the top of the hierarchy down to the poor and homeless.

Then the three panels would start to take shape. They would be added once the drawers were finished. If I were constructing a sentence, the nouns and verbs—adjectives and adverbs needed to be added in grammatical order to make sense to me, and this was my statement's order of construction.

But as the semester is catching up on me, I decided to construct the back and side panels. I knew they wouldn't take as long as the drawers but would fill significant visual space. It would look more finished as I submit my journal entries. That would help my deadline anxiety. The church drawer took 1½ years. The next drawer down took 2 months, so I was worried. I changed the order of construction and I was aware that I was speaking out of turn, that I was interjecting issues and mixing messages in my mind as I shifted from the drawers to large (for me) panels with open, low relief detail. These would go quickly, I felt, and then I could get back to my comfort zone in the small rooms.

But a funny thing happened as I was making the large panels. I LOVED what I was making. I loved the opportunity to fill a large flat surface with multi-media imagery. It was physically a very different type of engagement with my work. And the panels spoke in a syntax that was broader and more straightforward than my old standby, kitsch imagery gathered from meandering through the contents of my small boxes.

And now I have finished those three panels and have started to work on my dioramas. I find that the exhilaration that had always accompanied the start of a new box, was turned down a notch, and I didn't feel like I had returned "home" from a foreign land, but almost a little disappointed to have left my new terrain. This is another unanticipated outcome.

## Kitsch

I have had to give some thought to how art has adorned the lives of the middle class and working class. The bottom drawer, poor and homeless, I have always envisioned with graffiti.

I don't know why I didn't think of this aspect of choosing the art, before now. If I am adding art to the drawers, I need that art to be an accurate reflection of each status' values and taste.

As I research what types of art are popular with the middle class—for those who appreciate art—I feel that there has needed to be some sort of sociological connection made for the choice of art in each of the drawers. And I don't have time to research that. If I skim the surface briefly, producing no real evidence of anything of significance, it doesn't seem to do it justice.

The working class will have kitsch...maybe a black velvet painting of Elvis? (oh so dated!) Or one of those Margaret Keane big-eyed little girls. I have a tiny collection of cast, plated white metal souvenir ash trays—the kind with Niagara Falls or a NYC skyline, painted with inks. Clement Greenberg has written about kitsch. I'll bet there are more essays out there.

Why is it important to me? hmm. Well, because I like kitsch! Kitsch takes a twist on creativity. I always get a chuckle out of it. It's not “expressive art”, but maybe a part of material culture—it has a function—represents something or other. I imagine that, at its inception it is merely meant as an appealing commodity, a bratty younger child in the fine art, craft, and folk-art family. It is almost a poke at the pretensions of its smarter siblings.

So, the backyard, middle class drawer is almost done. I have ordered, online, a Monet ‘Waterlilies’ scarf that I will use for the curtains. The colours work well with the other drawers. Coordinating the total facade of the pyramid requires ensuring that there is consistency over the colour palette. I have managed, I believe, well enough. This drawer—the backyard scene looks good from the top. The wood frame for the window is painted sort of aqua. I like the colour quite a bit. Once I add the curtains it will blend a bit more with the window above it. I think I may also add wallpaper to the outer wood frame that extends from the window frame.

There is one unanticipated problem. The drawers for the top two dioramas were made of copper in order to allow more space to work in. Making my drawer gave me an extra  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of height. In order to save time, I have decided to use the existing wood drawers for the bottom three rooms. Using the existing drawers cuts the front facade visual by that  $\frac{1}{2}$ "

and that makes a significant difference when the drawer is placed in the pyramid. I didn't anticipate that since the glass for the windows are all the same height.



*FIGURE 125. The Pyramid drawers' height differences*

The extra ½" for the "wealthy" room has been the result of being able to start the window frame from the bottom of the copper box which sits directly on the drawer opening. So I have more overall height to work with. The wood drawers, apart from the additional height of ½" of wood—are slightly raised from the bottom of the drawer. This makes quite a bit of difference.

I'm not sure what to do.

If I use the existing drawers for the other two dioramas, then the bottom three drawers will not have the visual impact of the top two. Though, in reality, this would be an accurate representation of these classes of the population—to be less visible than the wealthy, it still bothers me that I can see straight into the room of the wealthy, and I cannot see straight into the backyard scene of the middle class. It may be because of the fence—but I cannot see the yard through the open gate.

I am wondering if there is some way to slice up the wood drawer so that I can save time bending the angles, but still have that depth. I don't think I can because the floor of the wood box is a bit more than a ½" higher than the outside bottom of the drawer. If I cut out the entire bottom I will be back at spending time making and fitting ½ the drawer. I can live with the backyard being more difficult to see out into, but I want the kitchen to show.

I had originally thought to make these bottom drawers in foam core. I may still try that. I would have to make sure that foam core could be sturdy enough. Well, that will be my day's ponder. The maintenance man here can cut the drawers for me, but I need to figure out how I want them cut. The bottom drawer doesn't matter that much because the window will be sooted-over, and the inside will not be visible at all without pulling out the drawer.

I could make the bottom drawer next, instead of the kitchen and give myself a bit more time to think about how the drawer itself will be created, but I don't think I can handle disturbing the sequence of construction one more time.



June 26. Slept on it—sort of—didn't sleep well. Had a scary dream about the dangers that lurk outside my locked bedroom door wandering the halls of "my house". Woke up still locked in my room. Scared.

And after going through all the political posts on my FB page, the visual that the top three statuses—the 1%, the church and the wealthy—resting atop the middle class, working poor, and poor and homeless started to look like it represented the weight of the upper echelons of power "crushing" the bottom three. And—though this is a conceptual compromise, it actually says a lot more than my original statement.

The bottom drawer—poor and homeless was never going to be visible from the outside. This class has always been invisible in society and in order to see them it is necessary to intentionally look for them. So, the window space to view them is not necessary. And I can live with the back garden of the middle class being half hidden without opening the drawer. But the working-class kitchen has been a scene that I have looked forward to creating and looked forward to how it would look in the bigger picture. I am unsure how to proceed and time is limited.

But the visual of the upper classes crushing the lower classes also speaks clearly. If I had time I would try a few variations. I just have to pick one and go with it. I can play later.

**Crafts: the choice to spend \$62 to make something you could buy for \$12.**

So I need to make the wading pool for the backyard. I made one from translucent Fimo hoping it would look plastic-y but it didn't, so I painted it blue and applied a clear varnish to try to make it shine more. It was only minimally better, but I thought I would go with it. Then I tried to fill it with that instant water product—heat and pour. It didn't pour evenly, and it welled up.

So I hate it.

I went to Home Depot and picked up some clear plastic tubing—2 sizes. I thought I could insert the smaller size inside the larger one in order that it not kink when I bend it into a circle. The smaller size was a tight fit. I could see it would fit with a lubricant. I thought of Vaseline.

Then I thought of colouring the Vaseline with oil paint so that the inner tubing would be a nice colour—maybe blue. So I bought some oil paint Sharpies with different colours. And while I was there I picked up a couple of metallic oil paint Sharpies. And I picked up a fresh tube of Goop, and some sanding sponges. Total \$62. And all I wanted to do was to make the wading pool. Sigh. I may just make it in polymer.

So I remade the wading pool in “polymer”. I had a nice lump of aqua and I rolled a length of coil, bent it into a small circle, rolled a flat piece for the bottom and popped it in the oven while I went down to maintenance to get Ian to cut the remaining two drawers.

When I got back I went to the oven and all there was there was a puddle. sigh. It must have been some of that tacky stuff that is used for tacking paper together, that got packed inadvertently into my polymer bags. So I started again and made the wading pool from a block of polymer that I was positive was actual polymer. And I used some mixed scrap and made a beach ball that looks like a globe! And they came out beautifully! I gave them a couple of coats of lacquer and later today I will add the water. All that is left to do is the curtains and sort out some wallpaper.



*FIGURE 126. Wading pool rejects*

Clear tubing with metal wire on the right and failed, painted translucent polymer on the left. I didn't photograph the melted pool of tacky glue. Sigh

I made the “folk art” piece—a cat. I like it so much just the way it is that I hate to have to paint it. [Figure 127]

I removed the planter as it took up too much visual space. I added flowery foliage to the rough-cut top edge of the drawer. Looks way better.



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*FIGURE 127. "Folk-Art" cat*

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*FIGURE 128. Middle class drawer in place*

The scarf I ordered from Amazon has not arrived, but I have this umbrella that I picked up when I visited the Getty Museum in Los Angeles 15 years ago. It is broken, the ribs are bent and broken, and the handle fell off years ago. It is in my “you never know” collection and I am glad I saved it. Looks like my curtain will be cut from my old umbrella.

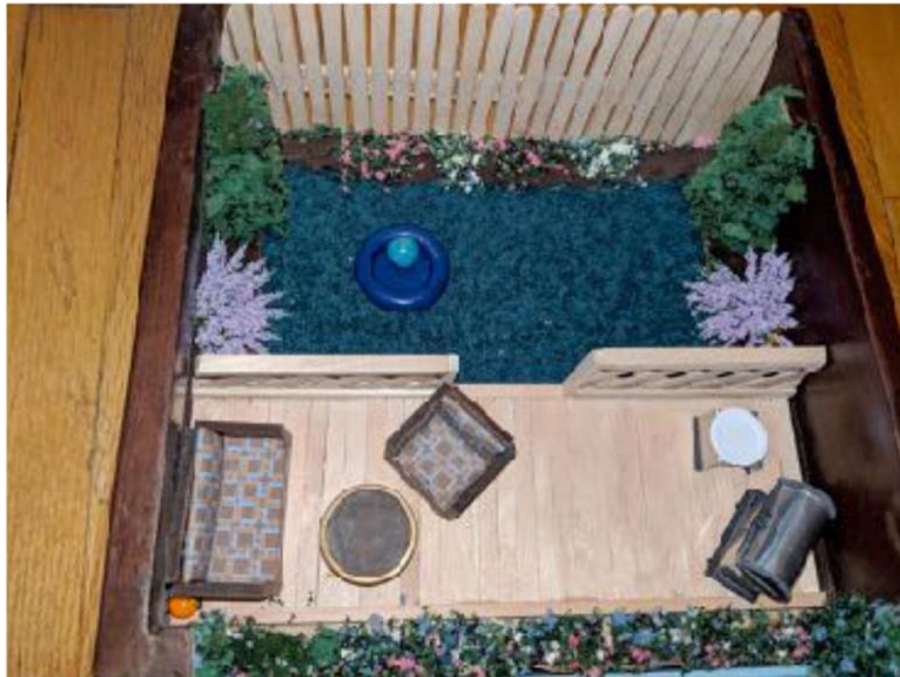


FIGURE 129. Pyramid, Monet umbrella (top); wading pool and lawn in place (bottom)



## Kitchen of the working class

This is what I am starting with:



FIGURE 129. Starting point for Working class kitchen drawer

The glass here is slotted into the drawer itself, unlike the previous drawers where I have added the glass as a front panel. For this drawer—the kitchen—it will be an apartment window and having the glass set directly into the drawer allows me a window well. The building facade will be brick and the window frame will be cement blocks. Far different from the room facade of the wealthy—with its mica-powdered stones.



FIGURE 130. Construction of window well



Today I am going up to the Tiny Doll House store to find a window for my kitchen drawer. I saw a window that should fit, at their online catalogue. I used their measurements to have Ian cut this opening in the box and I hope they have the same window in stock. Ian will be on holiday from tomorrow on so this is my one chance to get my drawer sliced. (I'm a gambler, oh yes) Saves me a ton of time though. I will have to make the door as there are no doors the right size.



*FIGURE 131. Measuring the opening in the front piece for the window*

I measured both sides to make sure the front piece was centred properly before I glued it and then screwed it in place.

The window fits perfectly!

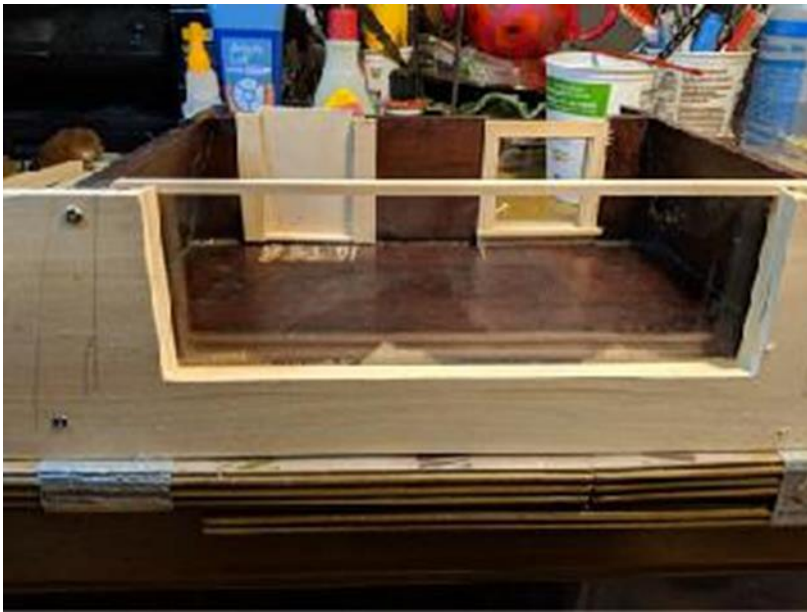


*FIGURE 132. Kitchen window in place*



*FIGURE 133. Gluing the window well*

The facade is screwed in place, the window and door are placed—but not fastened. I still have to add the wallpaper.



*FIGURE 134. Facade installed, window and door in place, waiting for wallpaper*

I originally made this table for the backyard patio but it was too big [Figure 135]. It works perfectly for the kitchen. The surface is polymer faux wood. I used the same piece of polymer for the little round table that I did end up using on the backyard patio.



*FIGURE 135. Becoming the kitchen table*

Up to this point has been three days work! Speedy! It makes a difference when I am not spending a lot of time making and fitting the basic drawer itself.



*FIGURE 136. Kitchen drawer and table*

I have extended the floor beyond the original back wall of the drawer. I plan to add a hallway outside the door. I have added a bannister to the hallway. More pictures of this space, to come.



*FIGURE 136. Kitchen window and bannister*

Beasley is going to play with her friend Larry, for the day, so that I can plough through work. I am hoping to get it all done, but for the stove, fridge, sink, and chairs for the table. We are very sad because Larry has cancer and may not last the summer. He's an old boy—12 years.



*FIGURE 137. Larry and Beasley*

I have been thinking about my choices for the drawers. The working poor—the kitchen, my original visual was the kitchen from the Honeymooners. For me this family represented the

working class. Kitchens represented the primary space that their lives played out. Alice cooked, and Ralph went to work as a bus driver, and Norton visited—comprising their social life. It all happened here. When I think of this class of people and the contribution they make to my total statement, I see that the working poor, without the money to connect to others through activities and events that involve cash and mobility—tickets purchased—dinners out, traveling to cultural events—these people’s lives are more interconnected. Norton’s visit brought experiences beyond Ralph and Alice’s lives so what he contributed expanded their understanding, if minimally, of others’ lives.



*FIGURE 138. The Honeymooners’ kitchen with Norton, Ralph, and Alice*

Looking at my pyramid in order—the top 1% value privacy, existing on a plane above everyone else, invisible to the rest of society—no witnesses to their rape of the planet and their “hoarding disease”, and the selfish cruelty of their skewed values.

The church could be defined by the opulence that I imagine is meant to symbolize the connection to god. From the history of gold, it was thought to have divine connections—to be the skin of god.<sup>20</sup> And so this connection continues to influence the accumulations of gold and wealth for the church. Thus—my church drawer takes full advantage with these golden architectural details. And this special connection to god, through wealth, masks the damage wrought by the predatory pedophilia of the clergy, hidden in a back room—swept under the carpet.

The drawer of the wealthy—a living room—symbolizes the room in which the wealthy show off their arts acquisitions to their peers, their identities as wealthy and powerful people, cemented through their home decor. As if any other human values don't matter—wealth and power—this is what they need people to see.

And the middle class—in my pyramid piece I had envisioned this room as a view from the inside looking out. The only change was from a neighbourhood view to a more personal backyard view—a tableau that includes social space for adults and play space for children. Both my original concept and the current tableau are meant to highlight the middle-class value of showing off their “real estate”. My original vision for this room would have been to show off the neighbourhood that the residents could afford to buy into. So even the family backyard shows off space—ownership, land and land value.

The middle class is disappearing. If you were to ask these people how they saw themselves, they would most likely see themselves as middle class, but mortgages and credit card debts might mask the fact that these people may be closer to working-poor than they would care to acknowledge.

As we move down the pyramid, closer to survival level living, people's values may shift more from establishing status through expensive and symbolic acquisitions, to—really all that is left to them—the human value of connections with others. This is why the Kramdens and Norton sit in the kitchen—where everything that is important in their lives is discussed, is highlighted through their connections with each other, and values established that connect people rather than the disconnection that ensues from assigning monetary value, rather than basic human values, to everything.

The kitchen is a woman's space. Food is cooked here, nourishment, caring, sharing, socializing—it all happens here. In a patriarchal society, these are considered to be the “soft” values, and not considered as significant as status signifiers with monetary value.

In the original series, Ralph regularly threatens Alice with physical abuse and in this series that is seen as “funny”. But Alice is written as a strong woman and it is clear that she is a stronger



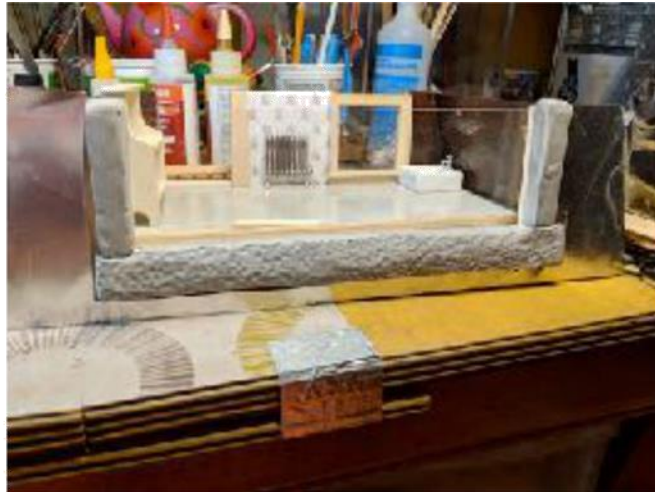
character than Ralph. And, as I have mentioned, this takes place in the kitchen, the realm of women. Room for study there.

It would be irresponsible and completely inaccurate, to base any sort of conclusion about family life, on this TV series from half a century ago, but kitchens in poor families have not changed in their significance. I have used this kitchen to represent the hub of family life, connections and human values.



*FIGURE 139. Cement window frame (left); gluing the hinges (right)*

The hinged door in place. The window and the radiator are purchases. Just no time to make everything from scratch. But the hinges on the door are important. I could not find a door to fit, so I made this one with board and popsicle sticks. Those sure do come in handy! I have added the cement (polymer) window frame here [Figure 140] and cut out a tin pattern as a base for the brick wall.



*FIGURE 140. Door mounted on hinges (left); progress on the kitchen (right)*

Having a working hinge on the door reflects the value of community and connection. To me, making sure that I include a working door allows for socializing. People come and go. Something that I have observed over my life—70 years now—is that the fewer material possessions people accumulate, the more community connection is valued, is integral to people's quality of life.

When I lived on the street in the 1960's, our little group was the world—our world—and we had strength because we were a tight group—looked out for each other, kept track of each other. We had nothing at all, except each other. The shift in values from money and power at the top, to human connection at the bottom—this is all wrong. Human connection, untainted by status anxiety, is far more crucial to the health of the population and the planet. My pyramid reflects a reality in which money and power are at the top, are the symbols of success. But it is a false reality, it is a different dictionary, because in the end, all the money and power in the world will not protect these people from the real consequences of the damage they do to themselves, the population and the planet.

I have been pondering how to decorate this space. My vision of it has gone from showing poverty through images that depict a run-down hovel-like space. But as I am working on it, I can see that I am stereotyping, and I need to get away from that. I was originally thinking

about staining and lacquering all the wood. This would, to my mind, demonstrate the inhabitants living in an apartment that the landlord—in this case, likely a corporation owning multiple buildings—would have done the ‘finishing’ of the apartments to all be identical. And that tenants would have no economic means or desire to personalize their space—or maybe they would not be allowed to. But I thought that, getting past the stereotype, these tenants could paint and wallpaper their apartment. They may not be able to change the linoleum, but they can pick a nice flower wallpaper and paint the trim as well. So I think I have moved past the dark stained wood, and I will have them paint the wood trim a cream colour. It will look nicer, and just because they are poor—well—working poor, doesn’t mean they have no self-esteem, that they would want to find a way to put their identity, their personal preferences into their surroundings. Not just take it as it is. So I am happy with that choice of using paint, and picking a paint colour.

The brick facade is a lot of work. Started July 1—should be done tomorrow. Tuesday I can buy paint.



*FIGURE 141. Mixing clay for the bricks*



*FIGURE 142. Bricks and the tin pattern (left); rolling out the clay to make bricks(right)*

The bricks and the “mortar” will be sanded and finished with a leather buff—not a shine—but smoother. And add some soot to the mortar.



*FIGURE 143. Bricks arranged round the tin pattern.*

I still have to sort out a little bit of kitsch for the kitchen. I must not forget curtains. A reminder for myself. My goal is to have this room done for the end of the week—the 7th.

July 3. The front facade is not yet glued in place.



*FIGURE 144. The kitchen façade ready to fasten into place*

As I have been working on this room it has taken on significance that I hadn't anticipated (I am finding a lot of unanticipated discoveries in the construction of this piece). This room is meant to represent a residence for the "working poor." I had initially thought about representing poverty with messy and distressed visual elements. But as I was building this room it felt as though the statement I was making was not in line with the way the room was evolving. I had started to think about decrepit tenement buildings and slum living. But as I was making this room, I had to stand back and look at how it was taking form. I knew that I didn't want to stereotype poor working people and so the kitchen is a nice kitchen, decorated on a shoe string.

I thought about location, community—and I pictured those big old houses in High Park or Parkdale that had been divided up into rooming houses and apartments. I had friends who lived in one of these apartments in High Park. She worked at the Beer store—working poor.

And I realized that I would consider myself to be "working poor," though I have not had very much work the last year or two—so more unemployed. But if this was a kitchen that I would decorate—or any of my friends might add their personal touch—it becomes a statement closer to home—literally.



The red brick is the same as the red brick of the coop housing where I live. I don't really have a kitchen, but if I did, it would be comfortable and inviting. So that is how I am assembling this kitchen. And since it's my kitchen it will have kitsch—definitely poking fun at the pretensions of high art.



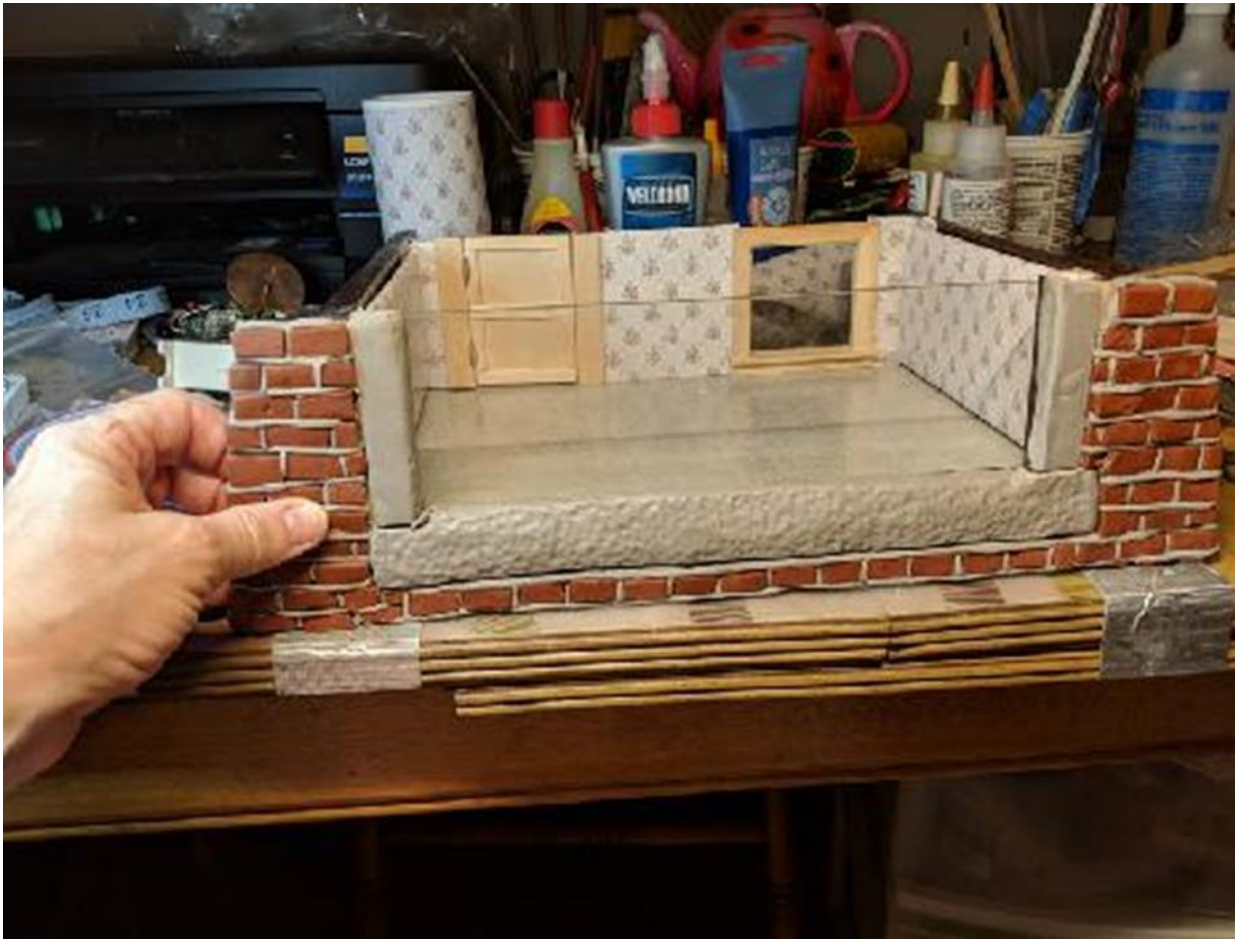
*Figure 145. Foamcore cut as base for wallpaper*

Well I had admitted before that I can't paint, but here is another confession—I am terrible at wrapping—gift wrapping—any wrapping. Here I have wrapped the walls. [Figure 146]



*FIGURE 146. Walls wrapped in wallpaper*





*FIGURE 147. Progress on Working-class kitchen façade and interior*

Getting there.

I have painted the door, a small shelf, the baseboards and crown molding, stained the wood and added the hall bannister.



*FIGURE 148. Staining the components of the kitchen interior*



*FIGURE 149. The hall bannister*



*FIGURE 150. Waiting for kitchen appliances and fixtures.*

Tomorrow I will have an empty room to fill—ready for the stove, fridge and sink with counter top. Still planning to have this room finished on the weekend. I want to get the front facade of the bottom drawer done and once that is done—next week—I will write my report. It's not that long. And I have been doing all this in an apartment with no air conditioning. I should get extra marks. :)



*Figure 151. Kitchen glued, taped, and clamped*

Starting to think about the stove. I will have to make the burner rings—the stainless that surrounds the burners. I don't know if I have time to make them in metal. Can't remember how I did it the last time. And I will need a piece of glass for the oven door. And I will need to make tin armatures.

Drawer in place. Checking to make sure the crown molding doesn't scrape the bottom of the drawer above. But it still fits! Excellent!



*FIGURE 152. The Kitchen drawer fits*





*FIGURE 153. Kitchen with paper patterns for the sink, stove and fridge.*



*FIGURE 154. Testing kitchen layouts*

Moving things around. I will make up the fridge, stove and sink and play a bit with placement when they are done.

\*Interrupting the kitchen construction! I see that Amazon has cancelled my order for the Monet “Water Lilies” scarf so I have just used my umbrella to make the curtains for my “middle class” living room [Figure 155].

The kitchen is in place and the Monet curtains up for the living room.

Next, the tin armatures for the fridge, stove, and sink are covered with polymer and baked. They have to be sanded and polished.

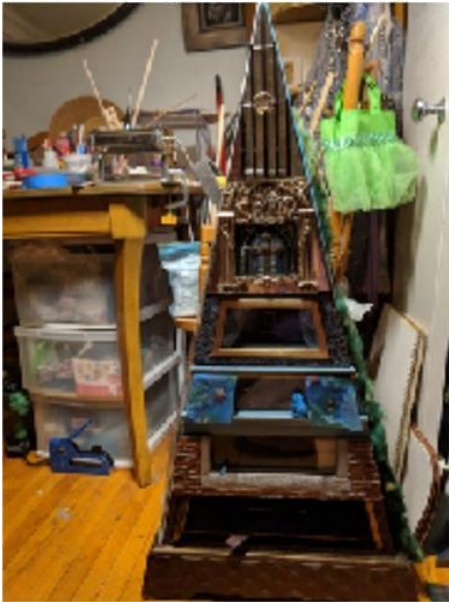
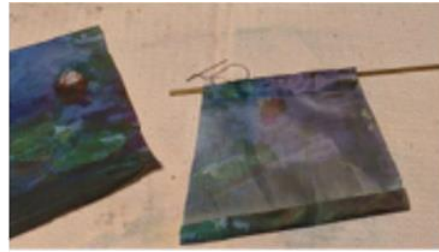


FIGURE 155. Monet's umbrella becomes curtains

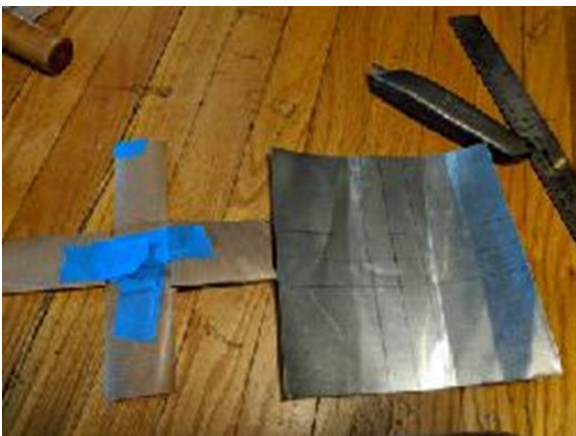


FIGURE 156. Forming the tin armature for the fridge



FIGURE 157. Tin armatures in place for appliances



FIGURE 158. Polymer layer on appliances baked and polished (above); installed in kitchen (below)



Everything is in place. It needs curtains. This room is the one that I relate to most of all the spaces. I can fill it up and it feels “homey” to me. I have added personal touches that I did could not add to the other rooms. Once I had added art, food, a book, and even the view from my window, I felt that I should add something to the “middle class” drawer - so I added a donut and a hot dog. [Figure 159, right]

With the kitchen drawer I feel that I have, once more, managed to insert myself into my total statement. I guess this is my “voice” after all. Working Poor.

So I made stools for the table. I used scrabble tiles and purchased the spindles.



*FIGURE 159. Making stools for the kitchen with scrabble tiles and spindles (left); interior (right)*

There is the kitsch on the wall on the left - plastic flowers with rhinestones. And I have a Rhinestone Cowboy to add also. It’s just tiny - not even an inch - and it will go on the wall on the other side of the coat hangers.



*FIGURE 160. Kitchen interior (left); Rhinestone Cowboy (right)*



*FIGURE 161. Kitchen window view: trees and a path to the road*



*FIGURE 162. View of the kitchen from the back, with bike, before the curtains were added*

I had planned to finish up the kitchen and then make the front window for the poor and homeless. I had thought to have a photo of that, and all of my writing done to submit by 15th at the latest. As I was thinking about this bottom drawer and considering how I would write it up in my report, I had an epiphany! The bottom drawer will have the glass front, as the other drawers do, but because the poor and homeless are invisible in society, unless they are begging on the street, I planned to soot-over the window so that the inside of the drawer was

not visible. I had planned a small street scene for this tableau that would only be visible when the drawer was pulled out.

But as I pictured the whole pyramid, I realized that the bottom drawer would make a complete statement even if it didn't open! If the poor and homeless are invisible, then they cannot be seen! As I view the pyramid I see the top 1%, an impenetrable peak—gated community—the wealthy overseers of our global economy. We don't get transparency. They manipulate us from their own plane, as if we are merely marionettes, working to make them richer.

As I am picturing in my mind the top of the hierarchy—invisible to the rest of society—and the bottom of the hierarchy, also, as a population, invisible to the rest of society—this makes a very meaningful juxtaposition. I like the concept of top and bottom sharing the invisibility. The top are hidden from view because they shun the light, doing their dirty business amongst themselves. The bottom are hidden because they are society's shame, they are the people who have not been able to thrive, who have stumbled, who have had misfortune and oppression heaped upon them—and all the safety networks—meagrely funded—have not lifted them up from poverty. And social Darwinism—“survival of the fittest”, the belief that the poor deserve this lifestyle, that it is their own fault and they would be doing themselves and the rest of us a good service if they die off.

These statements from New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring sum up the consequences of our economic system on the poorest and most vulnerable of society.

It's perfectly obvious that the people who are visible to you as contributors to the economy are the people who will be visible when you make policy. If you are not visible as a producer in a nation's economy, then you are going to be invisible in the distribution of benefits.<sup>21</sup>

The [economic] system includes everything that goes through the marketplace.

Everything which has a cash generating capacity. In other words, the system recognizes no value other than money, regardless of how that money is made. This means there is no value to peace. This means there is no value to the preservation of natural resources for future generations. This means there is no value to unpaid work, including the unpaid work of reproducing human life, including the unpaid work of women who feed and nurture their own families. This system cannot respond to values

it refuses to recognize. This system leaves out the work of half the population of the planet, and the planet itself.<sup>22</sup>

It is the cause of massive poverty, illness and death of millions of women and children. And it is encouraging environmental disaster. This is an economic system that can eventually kill us all.<sup>23</sup>

So the bottom drawer will remain shut. It will have a facade of sooted glass and brick. The brick will have graffiti—the only voice, the creative outpouring of the poor and homeless. I need to think about what that voice will be. Will it be angry? Will it be rebellious? Hurting? Coping? Images? Words? Single statement or multiple messages?

The message I have decided on will reflect the voicelessness of the poor and homeless. They have no value, they exist in the darkened tableau, with no connection to the people who contribute to the nation's economy. And so, I will paint the left side with empty quotation marks, in black — voiceless. And I will paint in the lower right-hand side, in yellow, “The End is Incite” — a call for change.

The construction of the bottom drawer was pretty straightforward. I cut paper patterns that I used to cut the wood base for the front facade of the drawer. I cut a tin plate based on the same paper pattern on which to build the brick wall. Everything was going along smoothly until I fit the drawer into the opening in the pyramid. It was crooked!

I measured everything (figure 162) and all the measurements were accurate so there should not have been an angle at the front of drawer. The only other variable would be the fit. I have had this problem from the start and probably due to the pyramid being dropped on its peak when I first got it (not by me—not naming names) and it cracked all the way down the back. So—as I have with all the drawers I have felt that I am accommodating the shift that was a result of the crack. This drawer is no different. So after sanding down the sides and still not getting it to fit properly, I just bit the bullet and glued two popsicle sticks to the one side that appeared shorter. That worked perfectly and now the drawer fits well. [Figure 164]

I had planned to soot over the window to hide the population of the drawer but numerous attempts at making soot were not successful and my neighbour is not having a wood fire for a few weeks. So I decided that a piece of black acetate behind the window, would work. Ah—the chore of finding black acetate. I tried to find that when I wanted it for the floor for the

“wealthy” drawer. I was unsuccessful then and so far I have been unsuccessful for this window. I am going to give it one more try this morning and then I will just have to do with shiny card stock. The card stock I found has a bit of texture and I am not happy about that but I don’t know what else to do. Maybe someday I will find a sheet of black acetate. I can order a box of them from Staples for \$52 but I am not \$52 worth of committed for this window.



FIGURE 163. Front façade construction





*FIGURE 164. Making the façade fit*



*FIGURE 165. Mixing clay for the bricks*



And finally the finished—but for the graffiti—piece.



*FIGURE 166. Pyramid awaiting graffiti*

The pyramid starts at the top, a platinum peak. The church add opulence and the Wealthy Collectors drawers add style and class. The Middle-class drawer starts to show some humanity - there is a cat - there are children implied —a BBQ, a hot dog and a donut imply that people are not far off.

The Working Poor Kitchen has the most human touches. The art on the wall chosen purely for personal taste, the bike by the door, a scarf casually tossed on the coat hanger, a frying pan on the stove. All of these demonstrate humanity and a life lived without making any impact at all in the lives of the wealthy - apart from spending hard earned money on necessities of life, creating identity through personal touch rather than symbolic riches—art.

The colour palette moved from platinum to gold, from gold to semi-precious stone, shades of aqua connecting the wealthy to the middle class. By the time we arrive at the working poor, we are introduced to this class through a brick facade - there are no connecting features to the classes above the kitchen.

The people implied in the Middle-class backyard live in a tableau that is designed from the pages of a “Style” magazine, from the stores that cater to a population who purchase designer furniture and accessories.

The Working Poor have no money for that, and their living spaces are much more personal, more unique to their taste and their budget. The gaps from tableau to tableau shift the focus from power and wealth, increasingly down to the personal statements - and finally to the invisibility of the poor and homeless - nothing there —just the small voice —the graffiti — the writing on the wall.

As I am coming to the end of this journal I feel it is important to remember that there are societies that are making a difference. Some Scandinavian countries have shifted to “care economics”. The systems they have in place oversee human values and promote a caring society—one that is economically viable. I believe that a society that places human values at the core of their mandates would be a society in which the value of creative process would truly thrive.

From the World Economic Forum:

Neuroscientific studies show that we have many different motivational systems. We can be motivated by power and achievement, by consumption and wanting; but we are also motivated just as deeply by care and systems of affiliation. These have evolved to allow us to form stable relationships, to build trust and to take care of children. Once we realise these motivational systems are common to all humans, and most are even shared with animals, the world starts to look very different.<sup>24</sup>

If care and systems of affiliation are motivational systems that are undervalued in current world economics, imagine what the world would look like if these were the dominant values determining legislation and policy making!

~

Two years of work has produced a visual creative statement — an artwork that accomplishes both the visual presentation of the hierarchies of status, as well as their arts acquisitions. Those at the top acquire art purchased with dirty money — wealth earned at cost of the environment...and the soul itself. I have displayed, in my tableaux the art acquired by the middle class and working poor, reflecting more personal taste. And if art is voice, I have, at the bottom of my pyramid, given a small voice, a call to action, to the voiceless.

This artwork displays the destruction of the environment. It allows for interaction with the audience. And finally, though I had thought that I was making a political statement, a piece that was not a personal expression, I have managed to include myself, Penny, the “bad Penny” who has turned up on her road to healing, playing in the branches of learning, and living a pretty good life in the co-op. Yes, I did that! I didn’t plan that, but it happened anyway.

Creativity is like that — unpredictable, unfolding on its own terms.

The construction of this piece was also a source of healing and transformation for me. Frank Wilson, in his book *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture*, refers to the transformation that occurs between the hand and the mind, “The hand speaks to the brain as surely as the brain speaks to the hand.”<sup>25</sup> There is a metamorphosis that occurs through this mind/hand connection. And the process of construction, on the handwork end of it, can only happen when the internal architecture is organized. And this is a calming process that not only allows for creativity but organizes the mind itself. And this is healing.



Child's school desk with art and craft supplies - accompany my pyramid.

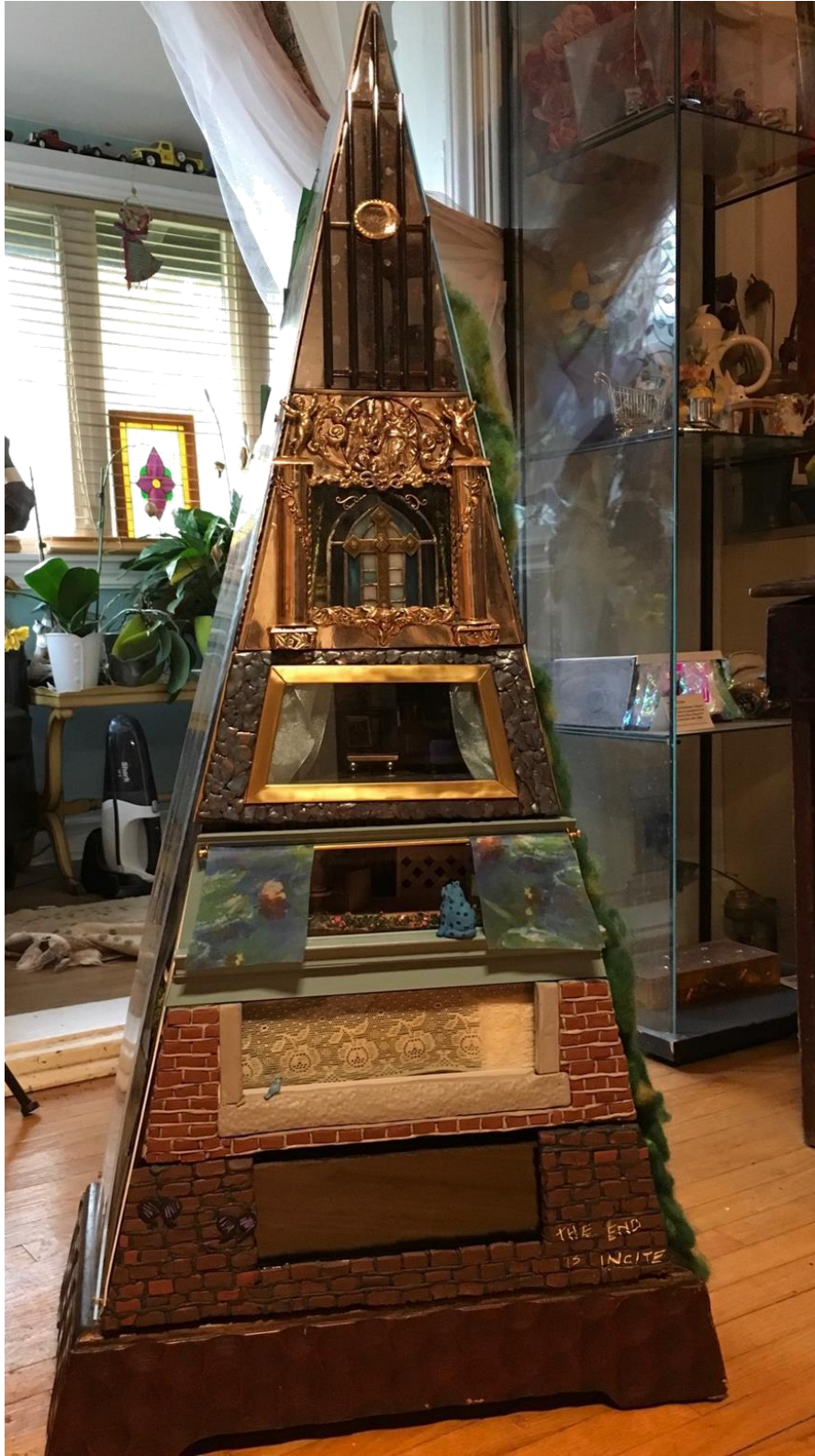


Figure 167. Pyramid complete



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Paley, p 82

<sup>2</sup><http://foreverconscious.com/sacred-meaning-pyramid>. Retrieved 6/29/2018

<sup>3</sup><https://www.canadianwoodworking.com/woods-know-teak>. Retrieved 6/29/18

<sup>4</sup> p 35

<sup>5</sup> p 3

<sup>6</sup> p 197-8

<sup>7</sup> p 3

<sup>8</sup> p 6

<sup>9</sup> p 201

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.thestar.com/life/parent/2011/04/07/u\\_of\\_t\\_students\\_protest\\_munk\\_donation.html](https://www.thestar.com/life/parent/2011/04/07/u_of_t_students_protest_munk_donation.html). Retrieved 6/30/18. .

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/mar/03/toronto-hidden-history-how-city-built-mining>. Retrieved 6/30/18.

<sup>12</sup> Greenhalgh, Paul (ed.). *The Persistence of Craft*. A & C Black. London. Rutgers University Press 2002. p 8

<sup>13</sup> P 185

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<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/754b/e96b0abc282de1e8a5cc1ed62d32b414c157.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> p198

<sup>16</sup> p198

<sup>17</sup> pp200-1

<sup>18</sup> <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.ca/&httpsredir=1&article=1072&context=jstae> “The Sociological Implications of Henry Schaefer-Simmern’s Theory and Research Leading Toward an Integral Theory of Art Education” (Roy E. Abrahamson jstae, vol 7, 1987). p199

<sup>19</sup> (2003). Schaefer-Simmern. H., Abrahamson, R.E., Fein, S. Gertrude Schaefer-Simmern Trust (Publisher)



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<sup>20</sup> Jon Mann, “A Brief History of Gold in Art, from Ancient Egyptian Burial Masks to Jeff Koons,” Oct 19, 2017. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-history-gold-art-ancient-egyptian-burial-masks-jeff-koons>. Retrieved 7/11/18

<sup>21</sup> *Who’s Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics*. Video. Terre Nash 1995 | 1 h 34 min. NFB. 27:50—27:52

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 50:50

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 52:38

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/01/how-to-build-a-caring-economy/>

<sup>25</sup> p 60