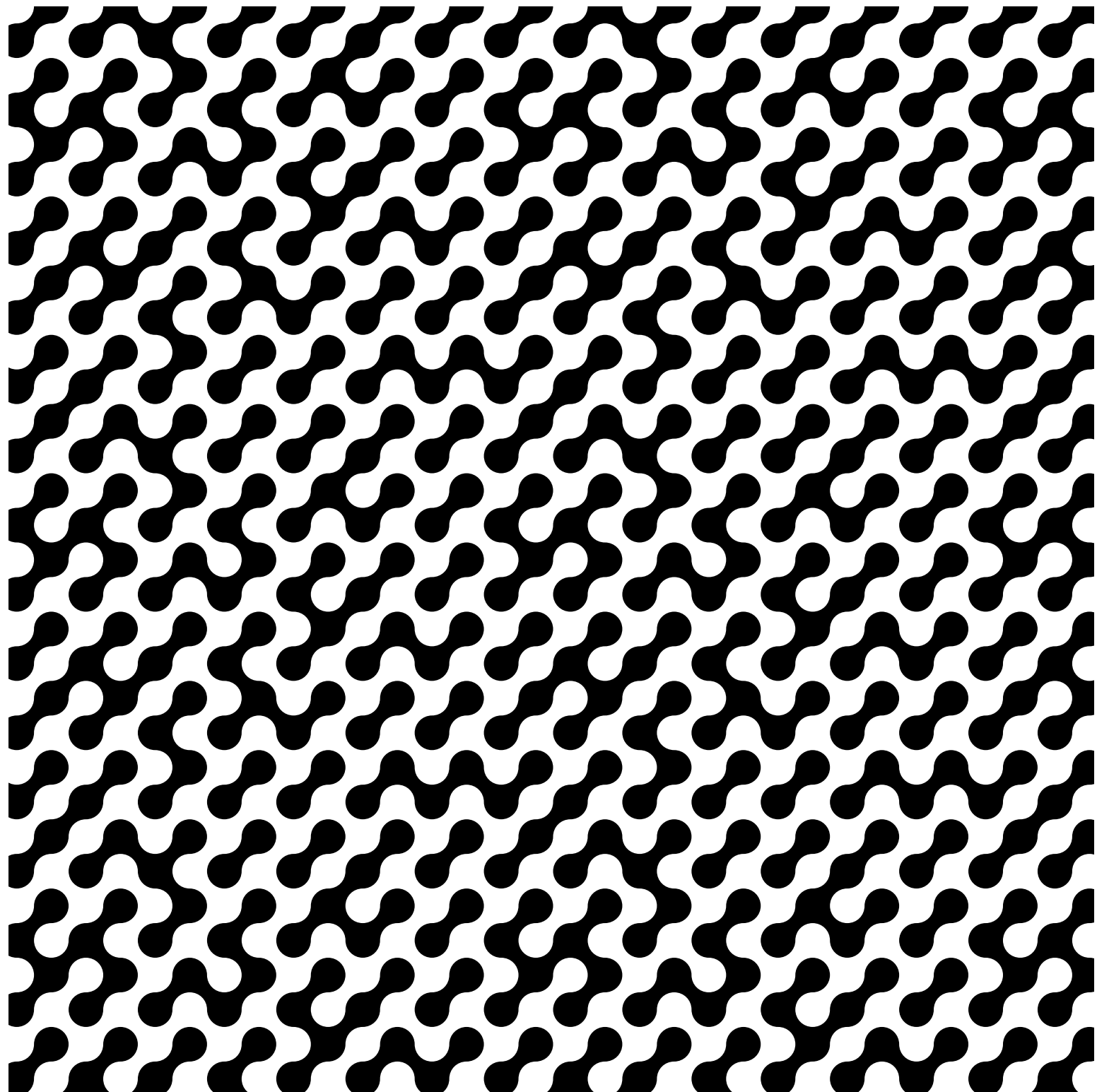




TERRACOTTA COLAB;

Work from the 2017-2018 architectural terracotta and digital fabrication residency at
the Maryland Institute College of Art.



MARYLAND
INSTITUTE
COLLEGE
OF ART



A C K N O W L E D G M E N T

This project would not exist without the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bolton Hill Improvement Association and MICA's Office of Advancements. Special thanks to Gwynne Keathley for her support of this project and, in particular, to Katie Faulstich, Eric Olson, Anna Danz, and Christine Pentino. I would like to thank Ryan McKibbin for his extensive support of the terracotta project residents in the digital fabrication studios during the residency, and Jason Vaughan from the Baltimore Heritage Area for his work leading walking tours with us. I'd also like to thank all my friends and colleagues in the ceramics department at MICA; more specifically, David East, Sarah Barnes, David Hein and Sinem Oren. David East laid the groundwork for these types of ceramic research initiatives at MICA and has been so kind and generous in his spirit and experience. Thank You all for your work on this project!

ABOUT THE RESIDENCY



In the summer of 2017 and winter on 2018, the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) ceramics department hosted a series of events exploring the intersection of historical architectural terracotta with collaborative design practices, innovative tools, and new fabrication techniques. The projects centered around the Bolton Hill Architectural Terracotta Residency in Ceramics, a residency that allowed 4 national and international ceramic artists (Mat Karas, Seth Payne, Tom Schmidt and Kala Stein) to develop terracotta works. This catalog documents the works produced during the residency, as well as thoughts on the matter of the above theme from the participating artists. Also included is an essay from art and design historian Ezra Shales. Ezra participated in the project as an advisor and presenter at the final Symposium in the winter of 2018.

In addition to documenting artworks produced during the residency, this catalog documents other related events including walking tours (organized in conjunction with the

Baltimore National Heritage Area), studio visits, workshops and symposia. Images have been included in this document. These events were at the heart of this project as they helped introduce the neighborhood to resident artists, and allowed artists to talk to the public about how they were being inspired by the local architecture and history. Works-in-progress were open to the public during the studio visits, allowing first hand encounters of various aspects of the ceramic process. The resident artist also helped facilitate a tile-making workshop with kids from the Jubilee arts summer school program (Summer 2017) and the Mount Royal Elementary and Middle School (Spring 2018). The workshop introduced kids to making tile using historical wood-mold casting techniques, and basic surfacing techniques.



What a different view it is from the driver's seat! An art historian can interpret Chris Burden's performance, *Honest Labor* (1979), in which he dug a ditch over three or four days, as a vivid rejection of his own participation in commodity production.¹ But how did the students in Vancouver see him, his hosts who had expected Burden to be a visiting artist and to provide traditionally critiques and an "artist's talk," instead of a performance? Did they feel he was accepting payment but ducking his responsibility or that he was liberating them from the routine of education? The photographic evidence --now commodified "art"-- that depicts the lone artist as the artful digger are singularly austere scenes, suggesting the artist worked alone in barren land. Whether you perceive Burden as giving to the students or as taking from them, as an opportunist digging into everyday life or an absurdist dodging predictable art school formula, depends on how you imagine the students existing as a part of the event. I would like to be able to time-travel to interview the students in the aftermath, to sit down with them over coffee, and draw up notes on their feelings as spectators and participants and attempt to probe beneath their polite Canadian veneers.

When do we feel that we are working together and when do we feel we are marking a territory, facing off against the world? In a sense, this is precisely the issue with Burden's *Honest Labor*. Do we see Burden as an insider, operating territorially to consolidate his own purity? Or is he extending the Western ideal of the solitary genius, the artist works alone at the ethereal level of godliness? In contrast, the designer and craftsperson are bound to terrestrial matters and materials, never far from the tradesmen, mechanics and mere operators. While getting rid of child labor and the pejorative phrase 'primitive art,' we still maintain this evolutionary ladder of intelligence based on who gets to work alone and who needs to learn how to 'play well with others.' Cultural objects made in collectives are anonymous expressions, and generally categorized as 'ethnic,' which is to say the 'natural history' in anthropological terrain. Art made in manufactories is generally not regarded institutionally as 'fine art' by museums, even if consumers eagerly acquire Navajo weavings made in Mexican factories, for instance, or bamboo baskets woven in Vietnam for IKEA. 'Plays well with others' is a mark of obedience; it is kindergarten rubric not valued thereafter.

¹ Helen Molesworth, *Work Ethic* (Baltimore Museum of Art and Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 25-50, 115.

Aggressive production is a hallmark of the art world and academy that is worth rethinking. We operate territorially instead of really engaging in collaboration. The much-vaunted turn to ‘social practice’ or ‘relational’ work has not yet solved its likeness between artist-as-choreographer and the participating public as unpaid dancers. (On a side note, it has been interesting as an art-school inhabitant to watch the degree to which male students gleefully grabbed onto Nicolas Bourriaud’s ‘relational aesthetics’ as a rationale to play king-of-the-hill and turn classmates into underlings. The proportion of males seeking power has been notable in my unscientific observations.)

The articulation of landscape as barren in *Honest Labor* is also worth perceiving historically. From the first, Englishmen defined America as up for grabs because Native American inhabitation was perceived to be temporary and nomadic. Aristocracy had owned all land. To elect to see Burden ditch-digging solo on a “vacant lot” is to perpetuate an entitlement that the land was empty before he inscribed it with meaning. This is a peculiarly Western European vision of land as primed canvas or a blank page. In a sense the ‘honesty’ of Burden’s action depends as much upon perceiving the rupture of the land in a vacuum. How many of Burden’s

Vancouver students might have seen that land in relation to indigenous society and the displacement of what Canadians call First People?

The two most common perspectives in the photographic documentation of Burden in *Honest Labor* frame him either from a worm’s eye view within the ditch or from ground level alongside it. The artist’s status is similarly either above us or below, depending on earthbound identity. The view from within the bottom of the ditch turns him into a heroic manly silhouette, his pickaxe raised aloft and his face obscure. The artist becomes a ‘man of action,’ with his wheelbarrow beside him. Way in the distance is a large institutional-type building, perhaps a public housing high-rise or a hospital. The ditch becomes a line framed by his legs, proportionally akin to his own body’s dimensions. And yet the foreshortening of the lens transfigures the gap between his legs into resembling a chasm. Is he riving the land in two, sundering it like only gods do in myths? The view from ground level, above the pit, reveals the ditch is barely more than waist-wide, and the conceptual artist in black turtleneck resembles a gravedigger or some other lowly job. The status of any solo laborer depends on our vantage and frame.

The longstanding debate over ethical superiority in the contrast between manual and mental labor surely inspired Burden to title his performance. Helen Molesworth’s exhibition and catalog *Work Ethic* elaborates the numerous artists who longed to be seen as ‘regular guys’ – blue-collar workers-- in postwar America². The machismo of Jackson Pollock in work clothes in the 1950s begat Richard Serra posing as Hephaestus hurling hot lead in the 1960s, which begat Chris Burden ditch digging in the 1970s. Artists such as Lynda Benglis, Hannah Wilke, Martha Rosler, Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Adrian Piper challenged and satirically undermined this cliché of manly labor but on it went: few American artists wanted to be photographed as a gentleman or genteel lady (with rare exceptions such as the Brit David Hockney).

Was Burden himself engaging in satire and reenacting John Ruskin’s 1874 curriculum at Oxford University, in which the newly minted professor enlisted a slew of Balliol College’s most progressive and liberal students to traverse the boundaries of their class-bound roles and dig a ditch alongside a local road to prevent flooding? One of Ruskin’s admiring students was Oscar

Wilde, who had previously planted flowers with Ruskin. This was the first university-employed art historian in England, the first to be recognized as an academic field of study, moving away from the classroom or museum to actually hit the road. Wilde felt lucky to be entrusted with “Mr. Ruskin’s especial wheelbarrow.”³ If Ruskin was taking considerable risk alienating himself from his colleagues and students (and he was the object of public ridicule), Burden decided to keep the photographic lens on himself and to not transform the performance into a group project. How many students at Vancouver’s Emily Carr College of Art and Simon Fraser University, his audience, actually attended the performance wondering if they should have brought their own shovels and pickaxes? Would Burden have chased them from the trench as if it were his own private foxhole or welcomed them alongside as colleagues in arms, fighting the good fight together? Did the art students stand around looking at him dumbstruck or did they ask fundamental art-school questions, like ‘what sort of tool do you like the best?’ and ‘do you think you are being original?’ According to Burden, a few offered to help but gave up after trying for a few minutes. This

² Ibid.

³ Mark Frost, *The Lost Companions and John Ruskin’s Guild of St George: A Revisionary History* (London: Anthem Press, 2014), 88-90.

FACING WORK



TOGETHER

unconfirmed legend only extends his manliness and exemplary identity as a working-class laborer.

Surely there is a future to-be-written dissertation (or baker's dozen) that will pick at the corpse of Chris Burden and other individual artists, but as a historian of craft and design I have tended to dwell on workmanship that happens today in the factory, where many hands collaborate on collated labor to produce things that require numerous specialized skills, things such as pianos and toilets. These might be banal moments of artifice but they are also things that no individual can successfully make alone to the existing standard. Most books and scholars have described craft as a solitary affair in opposition to the factory, but to do so is to re-inscribe class lines rather than following the actual contours of skill and work. I do not blame the art historians themselves entirely: from day one of our educations, we are taught that individuality matters. We are taught to have our own individual pieces of paper marked with singular signatures or identity and authorship. When are we taught to build together aside from building sand castles on the beach? We are always told to seek originality in our authorship except when we build sandy turrets, when it is acceptable to recreate a cliché fortress. Why it is that to be a 'cog in a machine' is to describe low-status drudgery

instead of like working towards a common cause? Might it feel good to be part of a well-oiled machine, interlocked with other gears, other humans, with a singular purpose? If the eighteenth century visualized collaboration as a beehive, the nineteenth century seems to have turned that image into a scientific parable about subjugation and hierarchical roles. My sense is that historians have acres of untouched topics in the field of design and craft, as my own topics of interest, such as the role of laborers in the Empire State Building, have been obvious and yet ignored. In most narratives, the Empire State Building is described as technological and entrepreneurial wonder –but I argue that it was more overtly regarded as manual construction and an effort at building a collective identity that merged corporate interests with public sentiment.

Art school is a strange mixture of utopian and dystopian images of labor, and each school has its own history in trying to visualize its own identity. Students are told to be comrades and to work well together but also encouraged to idealizing standing alone, triumphant. The same goes for the 'teachers' or 'professionals.' Are we representative of materials and specializations or do we form a 'team'? The pervasive norms of individualism and individualization make group projects much less common than grope

projects, my initial typo. The lingering destructive aspects of post-1960s individual liberation from sexual mores are becoming clear with the #metoo movement in 2018. So it will be interesting to ponder at what point, if ever, individualization will cease to be the yardstick. What if teams conducted all instruction at art schools, instead of individual maestros? What if students were told they would only receive grades as groups, and not individuals? Would that be facing work together in a more realistic sense, more akin to actual work scenarios in professional theatres and performances and installations?

To return to the initial rhetorical question, of asking what it means to be the driver of a car or a passenger inside, I would only add that the pleasure of contributing to this catalog has been to work alongside former students and talk alongside them as colleagues today. It has been a pleasure to witness Kala Stein, Mat Karas, Seth Payne and Tom Schmidt relocate to MICA and retool in relation to Bolton Hill --not seeing a blank canvas, but fully cognizant of underlying racial and class warfare and the contemporary removal of Confederate statuary-- and see them rethink their medium of ceramic in relation to 3D scanning and printing, computer numeric controlled milling of molds, and laser-sintering glaze. Having stumbled directly out of an archive where

I was looking at photographs of the Wannopee factory workers in New Milford, Connecticut, to seeing Kala, Mat, Tom and Seth pick up one other's molds and prototypes and engage in shoptalk, I feel like I am seeing an alternate possibility for educational inquiry. Cooperation, revelry, and social companionship are palpable in photographs of the Wannopee factory, where ceramic insulators and artistic objects were made, as are differences in class and distinctions in gender. The Connecticut factory was probably more racially diverse and gender balanced than any other in the United States in 1900, and likely more racially diverse than many art schools than or now.

To 'Face Work Together' is to get out of our automobile-driver paradigm or master-student, boss-underling relationship. We dress this up with other words, like 'collaboration,' 'community engagement,' 'cooperation,' and 'teamwork,' sometimes to please funding sources, sometimes with good intentions and yet at others to mask our obvious shortcomings. Kala, Mat, Tom, Seth and I share a language, ceramic (although they are practitioners and I am not). We each speak the tongue distinctly, and our numerous overlaps are shaped by aesthetic tastes, geographic experiences, and social milieus more than any singular distinction. I understand Seth to be organizing

drinking mugs into a nuclear unit, Kala to be abstracting ornament into vases and slicing vases into modular forms, Mat and Tom to be abstracting spatial relations from outer space and perceptual misperceptions into tactile question marks. They are a disparate bunch of clayworkers, not an assembly line, and yet because they do share a common language and are always intent to integrate novel technologies into their toolkits, they are able to troubleshoot for one other. As a short-term incubator, such an experiment is essential in order to generate new modes of doing

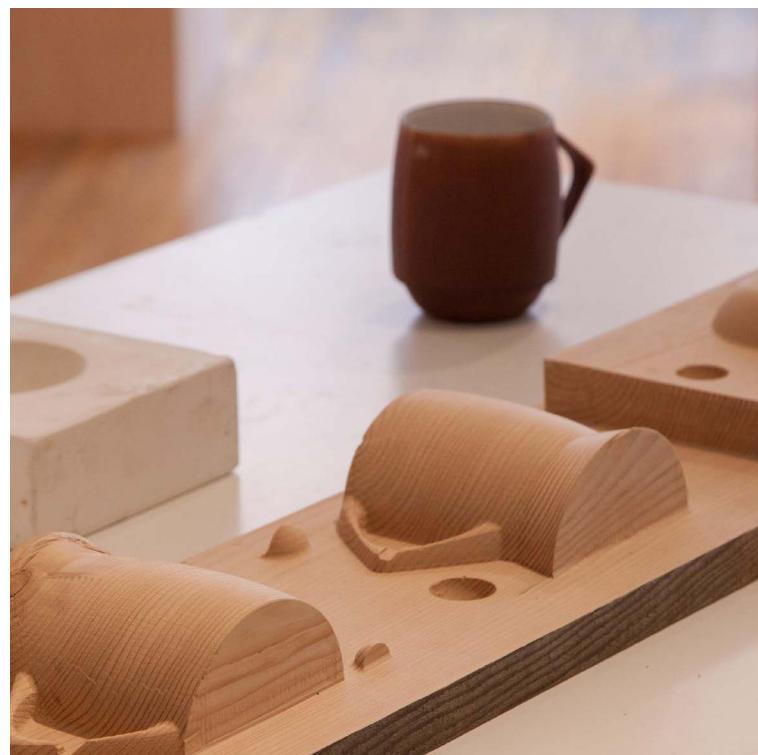
individual labor together. The next steps are to actually land in Bolton Hill, to compromise and lose authorship entirely, and to enlarge the workshop floor so that more hands of more stripes and walks of life manipulate the clay and connect this fundamental material back to their brick walls, tile roofs, bathrooms and other spheres of everyday life. We share these ambitions or ideals as a cohort. We have a long way to go before we can dig ourselves out of our archetypal and individualized ditches; our great hope and expectation must be that our students see beyond such trenches.



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT
KALA STEIN 32

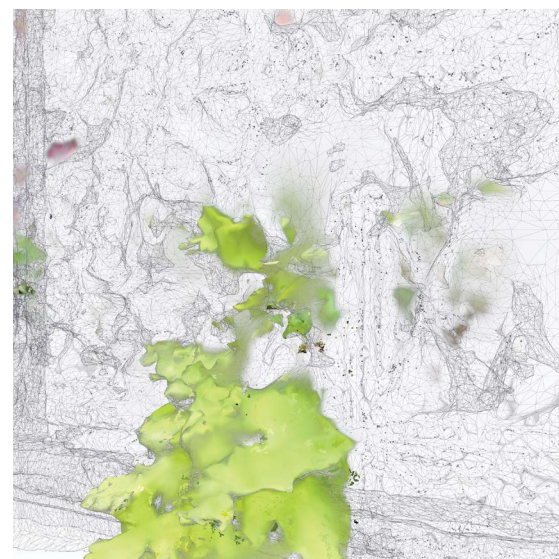


ARTIST SPOTLIGHT
SETH PAYNE 26



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT
MAT KARAS 18

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT
THOMAS SCHMIDT 42



2018 NCECA
CONFERENCE 48





Revolved Vessel, in progress / Earthenware



KALA STEIN

BOLTON HILL

Our collaborative team (the Co-Lab Tom, Mat, Seth and I) came to Bolton Hill, a neighborhood listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with the challenge of using its late 19th century terracotta architecture, along with new technologies at the MICA Fab Lab, as a springboard for our work. Each of us interpreted this challenge differently by reacting to or being inspired by particular elements of the neighborhood, the terracotta, the socio-political history, the tools at hand, and personal motivations. Our collaboration was at its best when we were brainstorming and troubleshooting problems, a process made easy as we tapped into our shared experiences from our Alfred graduate days.

Working as a Co-Lab through these stages of designing, making, and evaluation expedited problem solving as we worked together to resolve tests and experiments. In this incubator-studio scenario the collaborative model proved to be valuable to pooling diverse perspectives with a deep well of collective knowledge as we worked together to dig clay and create new tools in during our three week residency.

PROCESS & SYSTEMS

Ceramic processes have long been dictated by the inherent qualities of materials. The hand skills necessary to render clay with articulation require a keen sense of what to do and when to do it. There is a directness and simplicity—a primal quality—to creating objects in clay by hand. Through that slow and intense process I feel part of the long lineage of makers who came before me, and I feel validated by the longevity of the medium. In creating systems for my process, I try to be functional, efficient, organized and sustainable. I pay attention to the individual steps of the process to create a unified, strategic approach to making. Introducing new tools and technologies into my studio practice, such as the laser cutter and 3D printer, influence the systems with opportunities as well as restraints that change the end result. I want my work to show the processes in one way or another, to reflect the tool and/or the material used to make the piece.

Digital design may sound like a shortcut to output. But learning the software was one of the biggest challenges I faced in the residency. We determined that ‘rapid prototyping’ was a misnomer for more reasons than one. For example, we knew what tool we would reach for in the

studio to do a particular task, but to find the equivalent tool in the software was less intuitive, or to know what order to use them in for the correct result. Another example is milling or printing time- each of the three parts that make up the Tectonic Vessel model took an average of fifteen hours to print.

I understand objects and design new objects with a clear understanding of weight, volume, and dimension in relation to my body and the space around me. While designing on the computer, I confronted the paradoxical absence of dimensional material and couldn’t rely on my sensibility as I typically would. From digital to tactile, image to model, model to mold, mold to cast, there are always unexpected results to evaluate, accept, and analyze whether in the digital or tactile modality.

TECTONIC VESSEL

Tectonic Vessel was designed through the software Rhino. [Fig. 1] For the model, one sixteenth of a revolved form was rendered and printed on a Prusa i3 3D printer in three separate parts that were glued together after they were printed. [Fig. 2] I integrated hardware into the model that allowed acrylic panels to attach directly to the outside of the model. [Fig. 3] The resulting ‘mold machine’ is both

the model as well as the coddle system in which to pour the plaster; that helped me maintain precision and work quickly to cast sixteen of the same mold parts. Additionally, the dense, non-porous printed plastic model and acrylic panels served as excellent material to cast plaster against.

Like the architectural unit of the brick, the single unit in Tectonic Vessel relates to the notion that with repetition, a larger form is generated. [Fig. 4] The segmented form’s pattern is derived from the repeated elements, which constitute the form itself. Setosu Yanagi stated, “Pattern is not merely exaggeration, but an enhancing of what is true.” [Fig. 5]

UTOPIAN PLACES & PUBLIC FURNITURE

The Bolton Hill neighborhood is adorned with ornamental cast iron flower boxes and gates made by Krug & Son Ironworks in Baltimore. This foundry opened in 1810 and is recognized as the oldest continuously operating blacksmith shop in the United States. The ornate ironwork in Bolton Hill stands out against the backdrop of the brick buildings. I was taken by this juxtaposition of ornamental iron with structural terracotta brick and photographed numerous iron features in Bolton Hill.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Fig. 1

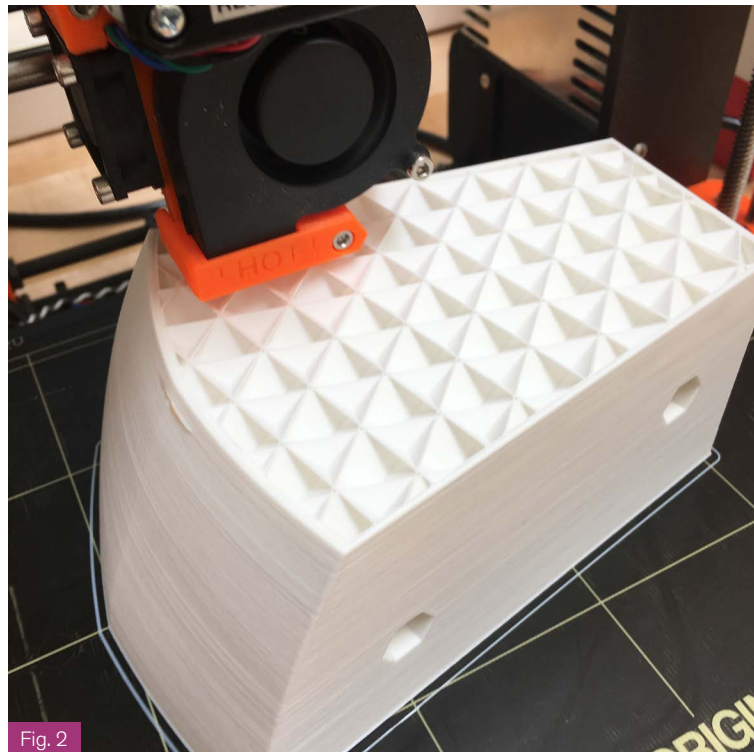


Fig. 2

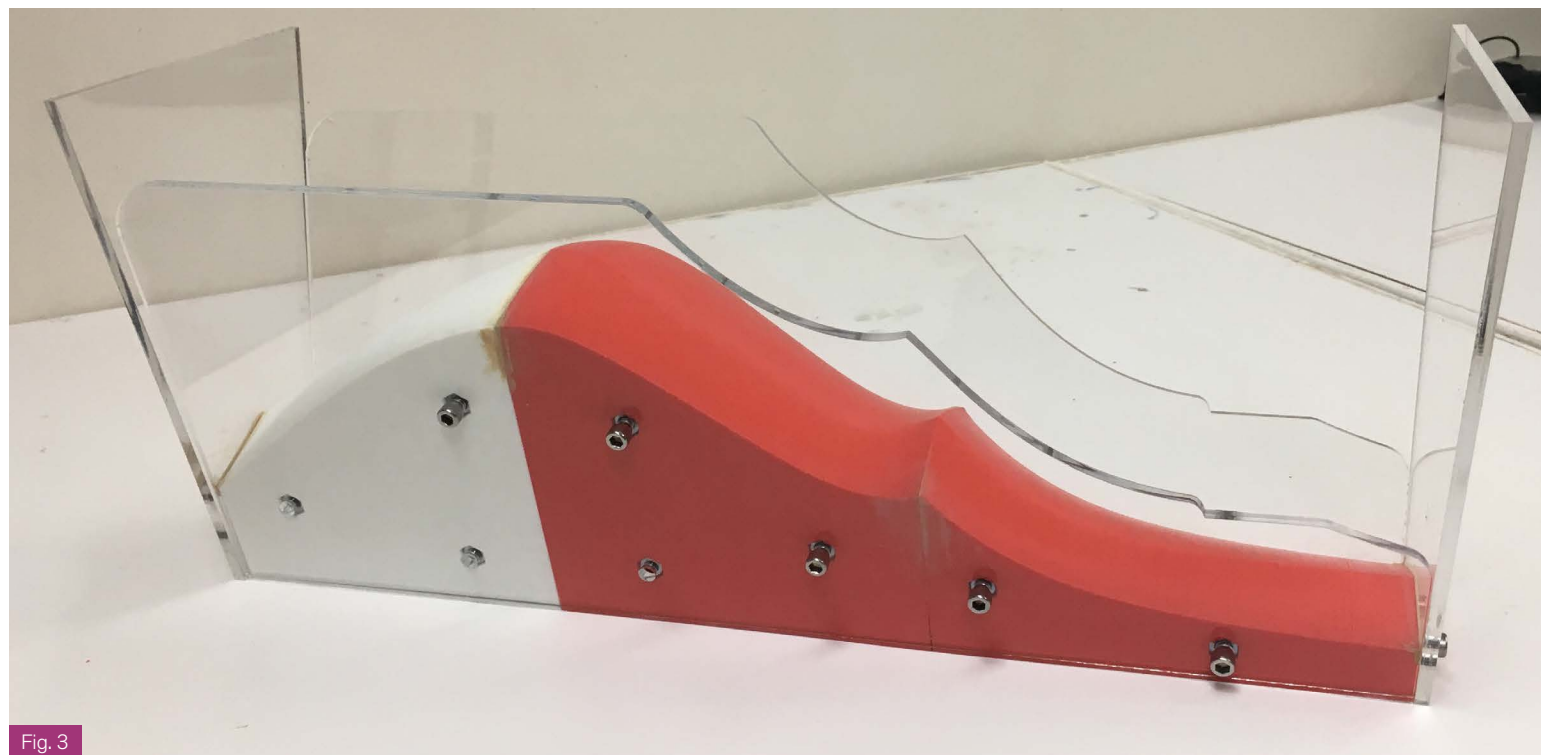


Fig. 3

KALA STEIN



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

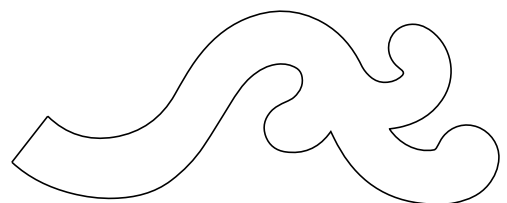
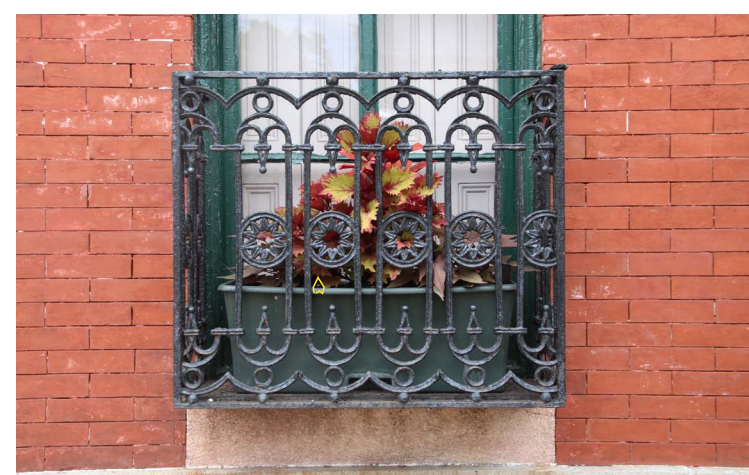


Fig. 7

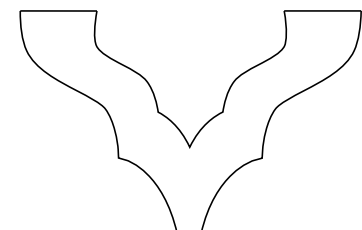
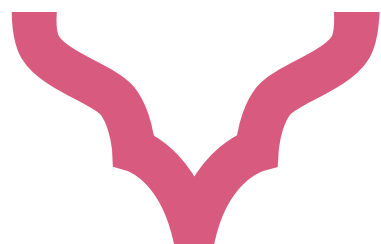


Fig. 8

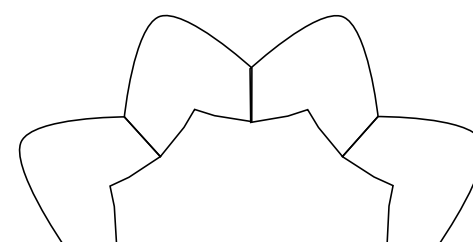
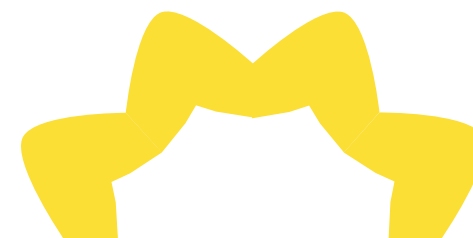


Fig. 9

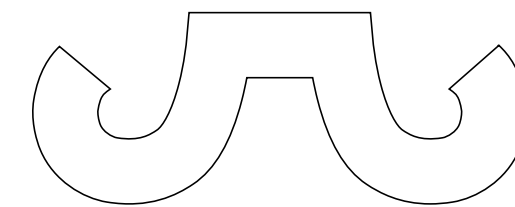
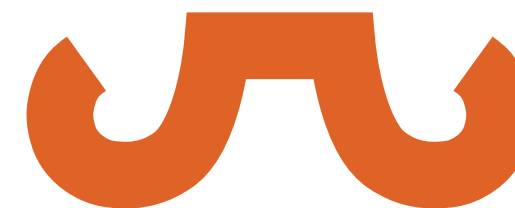


Fig. 10

Isolating segments of the ornament using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, I created simplified silhouettes to cut out of plywood with a laser cutter to make extruder dies that fit a basic clay extruder. [Fig.6] [Fig. 7-10]

The extruded pieces were twisted and rendered into maquettes for Public Furniture. If realized, the fragmented ornament would be massive, the size of a couch or larger to become furniture or playground objects where adults and children can engage with these enlarged ornamental fragments for play, commune, or rest. The forms avoid a strict designation of function, ornament, or architecture multi-functioning as benches, shelters, lounges, or slides. [Fig. 11]

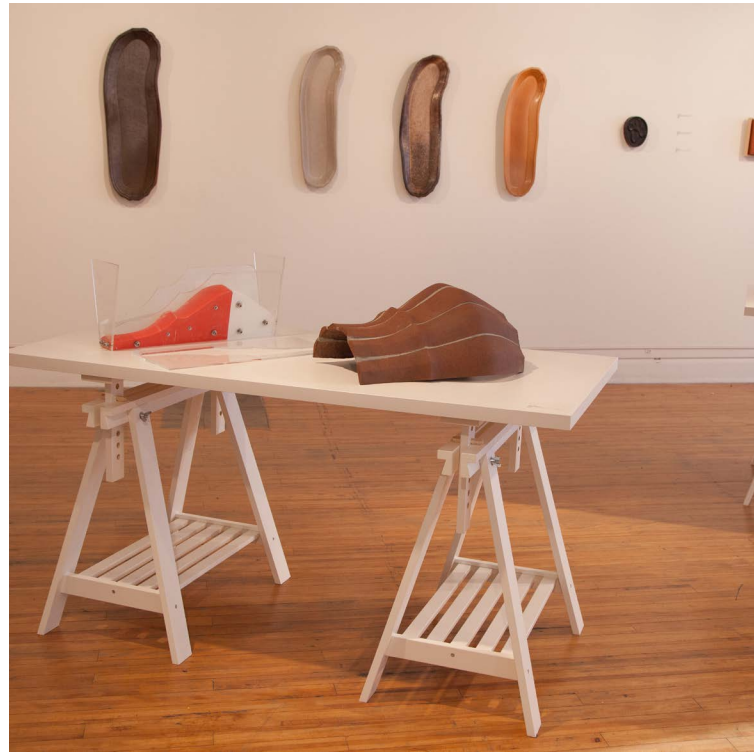
By plucking fragments from ornament on nearby buildings, I have created pieces that reference the place they adorn. The loop between source and site embeds a sentiment into the work that rationalizes its existence even though the scale shift and fragmented nature makes Public Furniture seem absurd and strange.

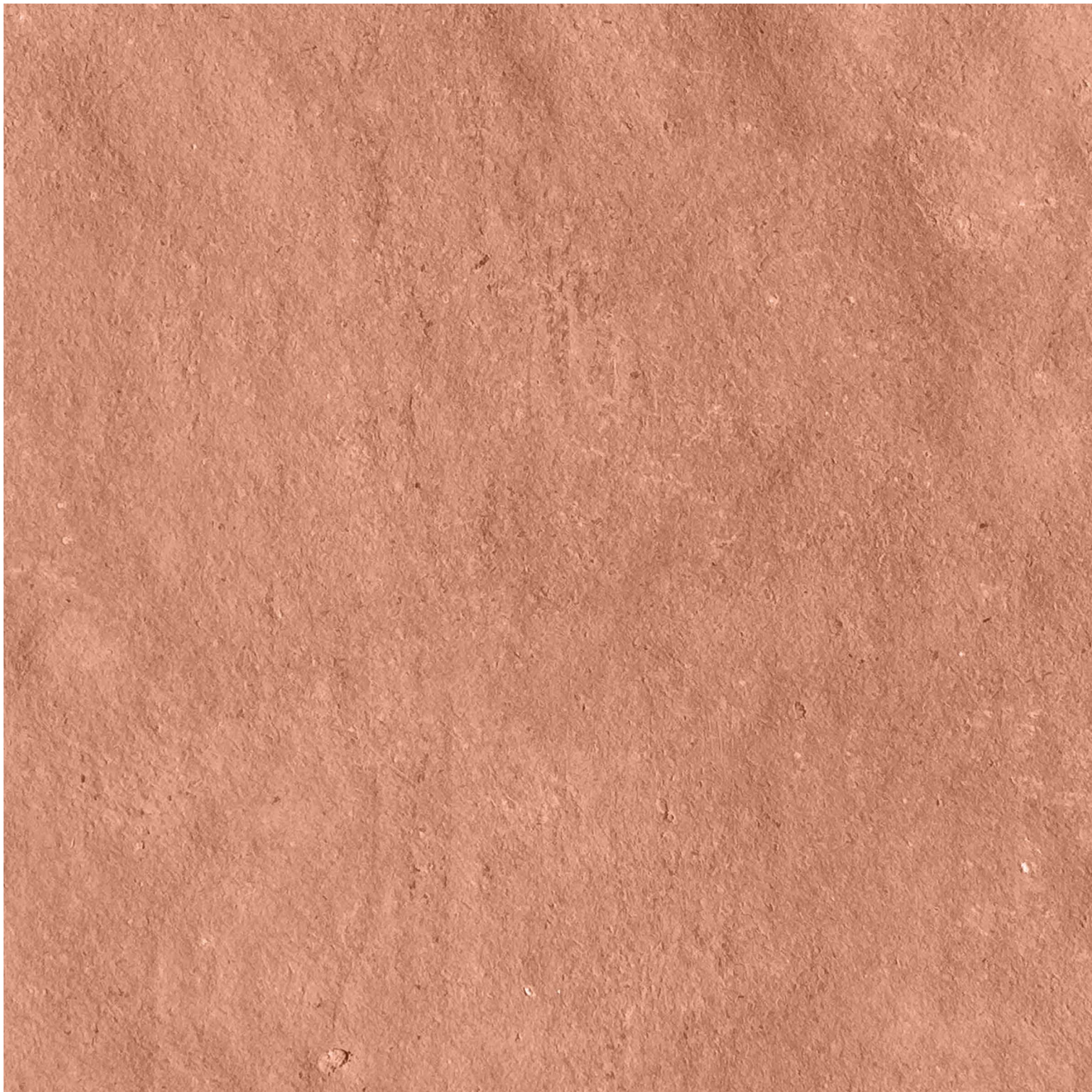
The brief time we lived at Kramer House, situated on the edge of Rutter's Mill Park in the Bolton Hill

neighborhood, drove home for me the importance of public spaces in urban settings. Rutter's Mill park is a landscape that suggests what existed before the city was built. It reminds us of the natural world and the importance of creating safe places for respite and play. Designing furniture for a utopian place situated against a historical backdrop of poverty and racial unrest may be idealistic and politicized, but the gesture is sincere and rooted in my experience in Bolton Hill.



Fig. 11





MARYLAND
INSTITUTE
COLLEGE
OF ART



**National
Endowment
for the Arts**
arts.gov