

THE EFFECTS OF LIFE EXPERIENCES

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by

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## THE EFFECTS OF LIFE EXPERIENCES

“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”

--*George Bernard Shaw*

My thesis title presents a series of pieces that have transformed from the basic, natural form to one that is tougher, stronger, and more abstract. My work is defined by my interest in nature. It always finds its way into me. When I started my thesis project, I imagined it in my mind as one environment full of abstracted objects inspired by my life.

Previously, when I started my graduate study, my thoughts and ideas emphasized making something beautiful. Something functional can be used as a decorative piece, but I felt that is not what I was looking for anymore. Something shifted within me. I was ready to go deeper within. I realized beautiful, shiny, and smooth forms were not what I wanted any more. Now I want to make something that really has meaning to me. Something I can use to vent pressures.

My new thoughts about the project derived from the story of my life, which has been full of a lot of events and experiences. I have been through many obstacles and tough situations in my life: whether studying abroad while having a new baby, adjusting to the new culture that is totally different than mine, traveling away from home for long time, leaving my family while my mother was ill, or losing my mother-in-law, after she had been treated for a year and a half before passing. That was the most painful situation for my husband and me.

These hard situations literally changed me. These situations made me realize my priorities and what is important in life. It encouraged me to move forward in this new direction. I believe that positive changes don't happen just as a result of sheer will, but at the appropriate time. So I started a new direction in my life and my work. The idea of my recent work presents these changes. How I challenged myself, and how I worked hard to adjust. I reinforce my ability to use my life experiences as a catalyst for positive change by using them as inspiration.

My work is inspired by many influential artists in the ceramic world. Noriko Kuresumi, Yo Akiyama, Christopher Adams, and the most memorable artist for me Alexandra Engelfriet. I am inspired by her methods to build my body of work. What I do find the most interesting is using the clay as a tool to empty the repressed energies and pressures. My pieces come from organic shapes. Most of them were built by squeezing the clay and carving it to give the piece the organic shape at the end. Sometimes, I just cut an amount of clay and throw it on the floor until it dries a little then reform it into an organic shape that has a rough texture as a result of the cutting and throwing. On the other hand, my largest sculptures are completely coil-built (Fig. 6). After I made the large organic shape, I started to build the texture in some spots but not all over the piece. I want to make sure my sculptures had the taste of contrast.

My pieces spontaneously started to record the story of my life: away from the soft and shiny surfaces and toward more organic shapes and textures. These organic forms are considered as a mirror that reflects the changes that happened in my life.

My work has a variety of matte colors. I wanted the colors to be more natural. I used colors that I found in nature during the sea trips that my father and I used to take since I was four years old. So I choose soft, natural, matte, and earthy colors for each piece depending on the size and the form. Also, I created textures that represent strength. A coarse texture emphasizes the subject. That surface has been used as protection from life's obstacles that have forced it to change and find ways to survive. This tough texture represents the strength and the change. It illustrates how these abstract forms developed a new skin. How it changed. Also, it illustrates the process during the transition from smooth, shiny surface to the abstract rough texture under life pressures.

When I was working on my thesis project, I was looking for other ways to make my pieces look stronger. I felt each piece individually was not strong enough. So, I imagined if these pieces combined to promote each other. I started from that corner by creating new, stronger pieces that were more stable. Each part of them is a necessary and integral part of the whole. I can tell by seeing them leaning on each other. The piece derives its strength from being formed from a group. I can see the interaction between the smaller pieces, beginning to shape their environment. Mostly, they all depict one scene, which is looking for strength and survival.

The flexibility of the clay helped to make the project possible. My pieces started in small sizes and kept growing into different sizes and positions. One piece is climbing on the wall (Fig.7). It developed rough skin, and a coarse texture started growing. It's trying to survive by growing on some place that made it noticeable and



hard to ignore for one purpose, which is separation from dependence and beginning to be self-reliant.

That led to the sculptures that I made as a result of being tired of dependence, and I decided to stop searching for something to derive my strength from. These sculptural pieces are standing by themselves without any supports. They don't need to be in a group, but they still have the choice to decide whether to be in a group or not. Also the most important thing is that they represent my development—the change in my personality of becoming more independent. It still has the organic shape. Also, it contains parts coming out in different directions (Fig. 4, 5) but it has one heart, one base that keeps the piece standing.

These two sculptures combine coarse texture and soft, smooth surface. The strength appears in this contrast. It represents the ability to combine two different adjectives in one body. This is the power secret in these pieces. They're strong, standing, and combine two opposite surfaces. These two pieces have their own story. They chronicle the process of my changes during the time I have been in ceramic program.

My thesis project was my first step forward to a new direction. It represents the whole change and an adjustment process. There is a huge difference between my thoughts, ideas, and my work when I started in this program than what I had in my thesis exhibition. It looked like summary for my life experiences that embodied in these organic shapes during my period of study. What I am proud of is that this is the only time in my life I don't have any second thoughts about my subject. I knew what I felt at that time and the appropriate way to translate this feeling through my

work. All of that is illustrated by the abstraction, roughness of texture. These pieces faced life obstacles. They found a way to define themselves by being in a group, developing a new, stronger skin that makes you nervous when you just look at it, or the freedom from all these protection methods and the ability to be strong enough to stand by themselves in one body of work. These forms contain two different kinds of skin. They (I) learned how to be strong and kind at the same time. They combine very opposite adjectives in one form, which makes them the most powerful pieces in the show. They represent the independence that has developed in my personality and reflects in my work.

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

My thesis exhibition's works are formed with different methods of hand building. Some of my pieces carved from block of clay. Also, I created others by cutting a little amount of clay by hands. Then, throw it on the floor or any other base that made before to avoid the flatness in the bottom of the piece. Then, I keep squeezing the clay until it hold together, but be careful not to knead it hard so I lose the rough texture that has been created during the cutting process. After it dried a little I squeezed it again in different directions to create an organic shape that had no base, which gave me a chance to install it in many different ways.

Finally, the largest sculptures basically are coil-building techniques. After I built the organic form I added the rough texture on different parts of the piece but not all over the piece. The reason for this combination is to create the contrast that emphasizes the subject.

In this project I explored the stain colors. I mixed 50% of (any stain color) with 50% Gerstley Borate. Also, I was careful about the thickness of the color, the darkness spots, shadows, light, and the negative spaces. Sometimes, I added an acrylic colors to the piece as a final touch.

I used one clay body in this project, which is the white stoneware.

The clay body:

35% Kaolin (EPK)

35% Gold Art

20% Ball Clay (OM4)

10% Holmes

1/ Scoop of:

Nepheline Syenite

Wollast

Silica



Figure 1.

Installation View



Figure 2.

The Contrast

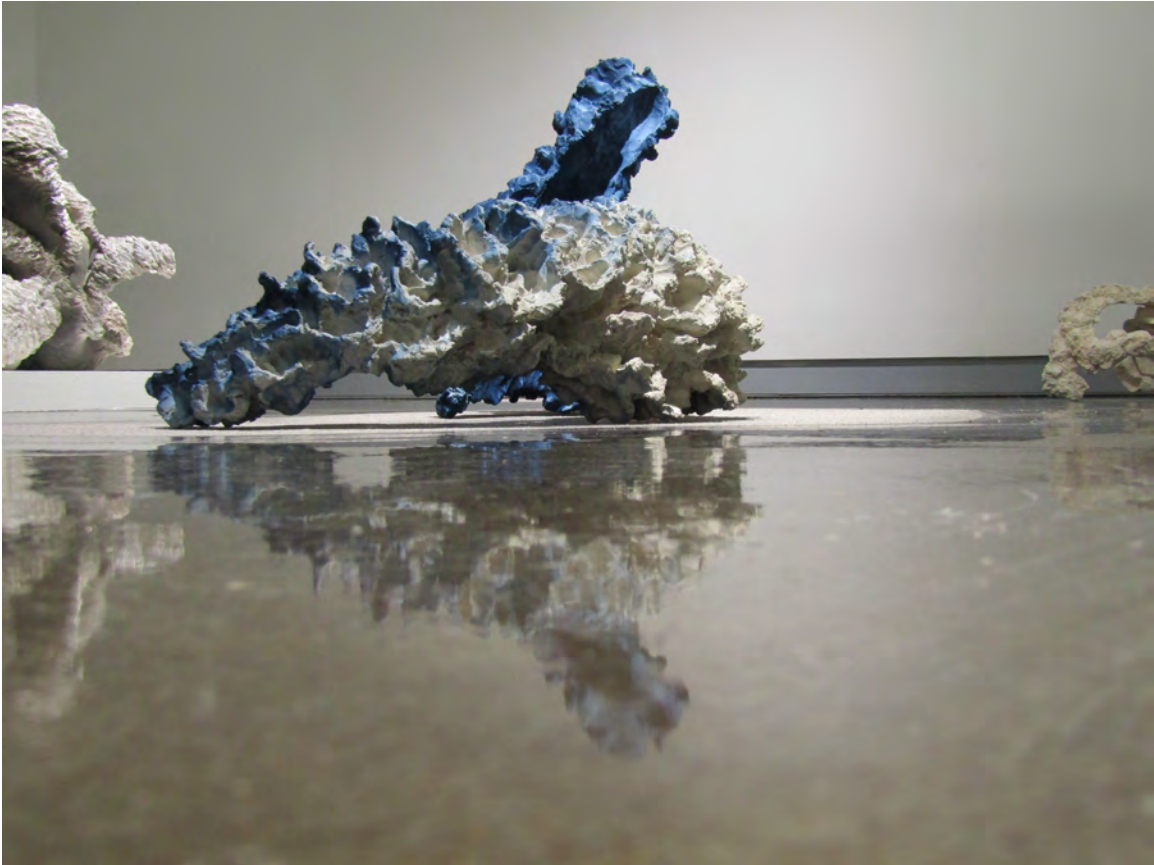


Figure 3.

The Contrast (*different angle*)



Figure 4.

The Independence (1)





Figure 5.

The independence (2)



Figure 6.

The independence (1)  
&  
The independence (2)



Figure 7.

*Climbing*





Figure 8.

Group (1)

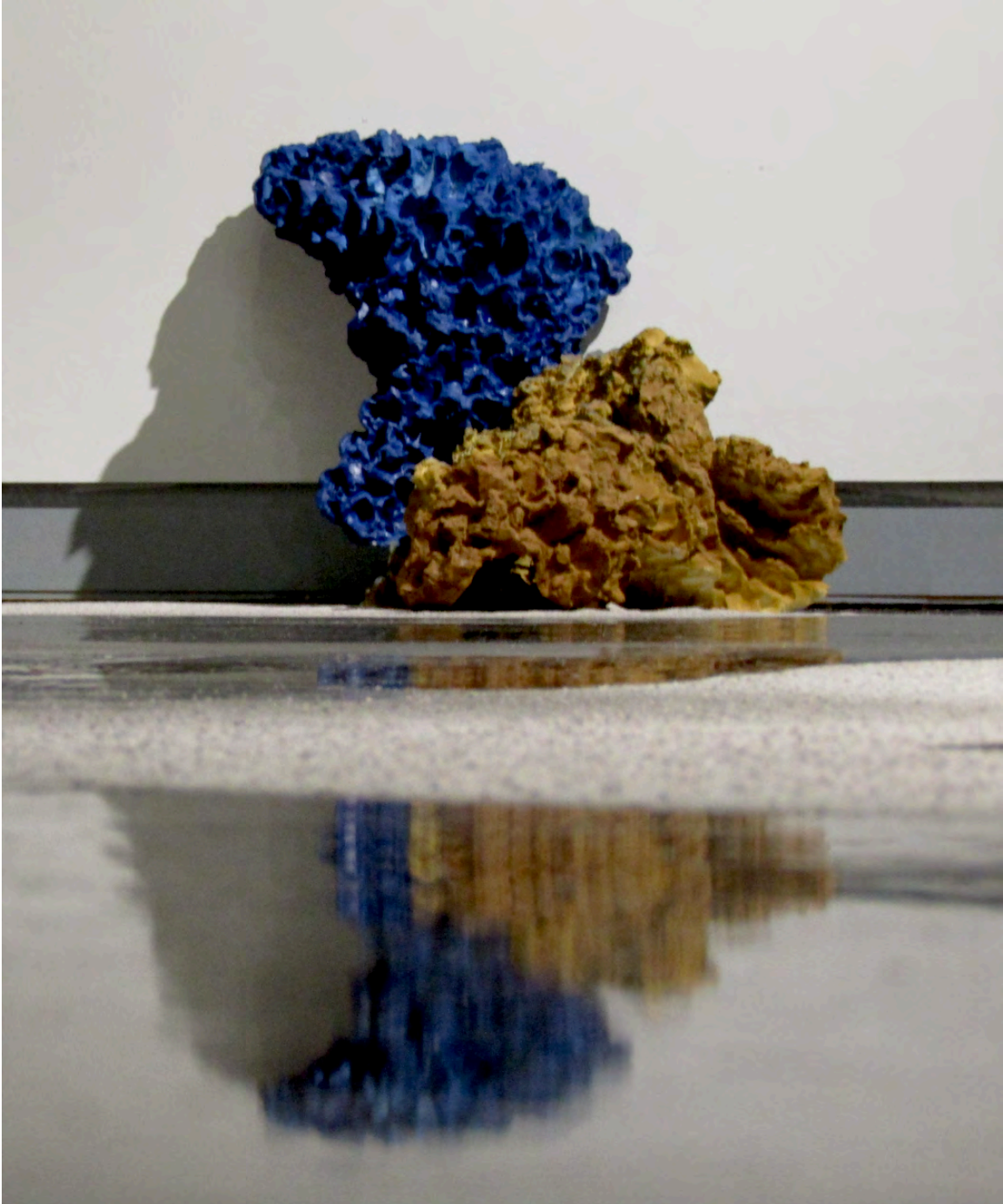


Figure 9.

Group (2)

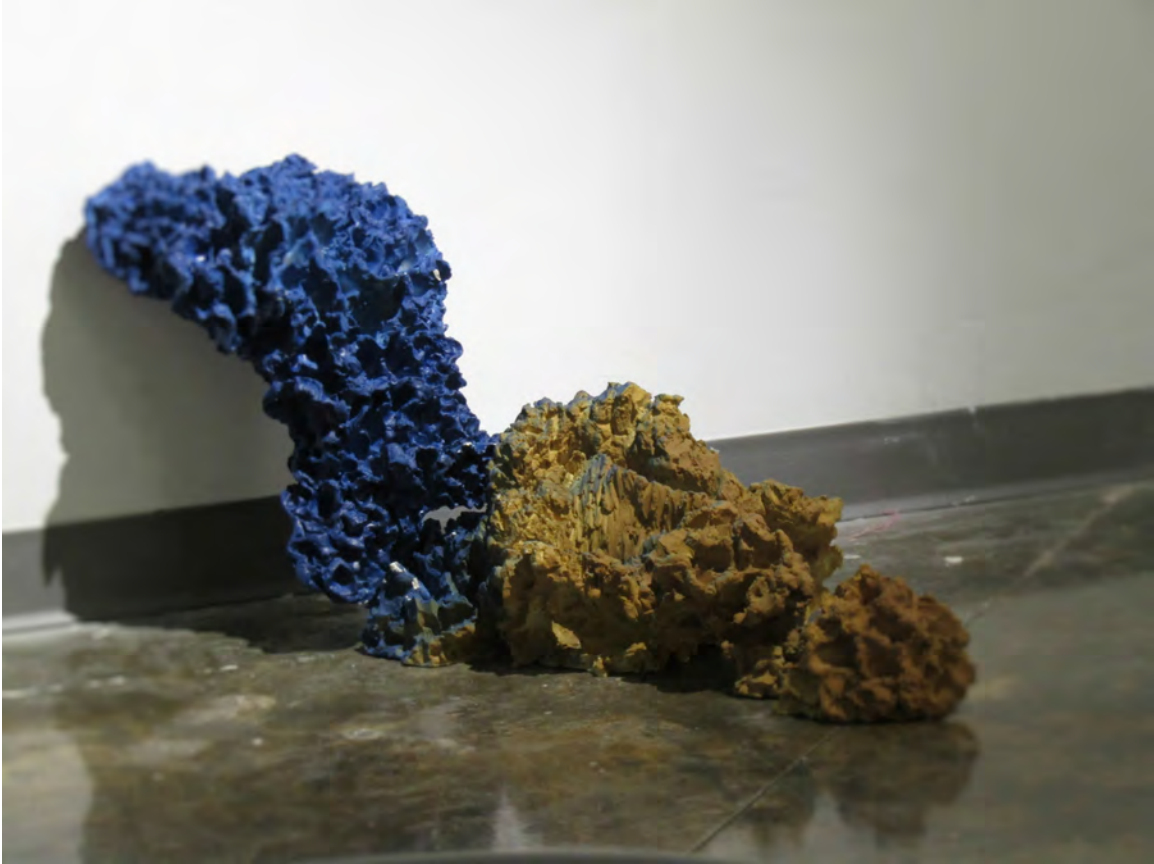


Figure 10.

Group (2)  
*(different angle)*



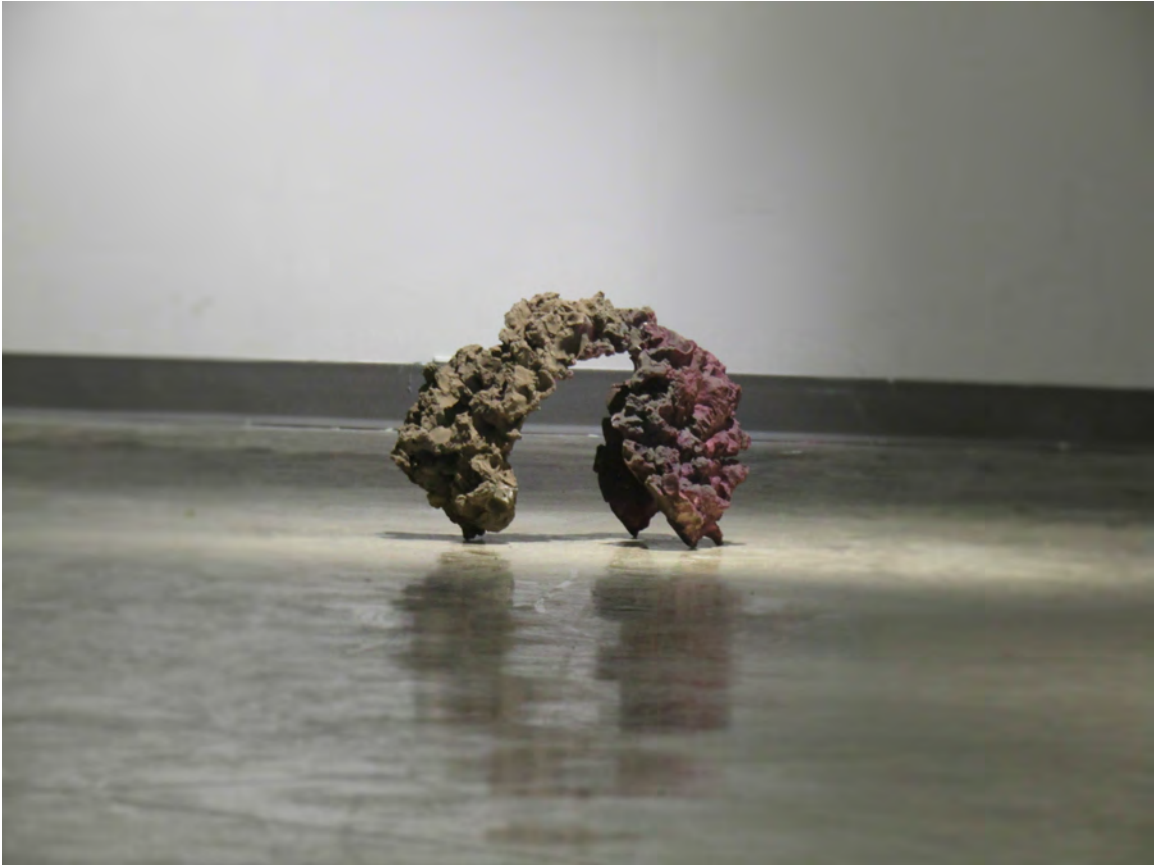


Figure 11.

Group (3)



Figure 12.

Group (3)  
*(different angle)*



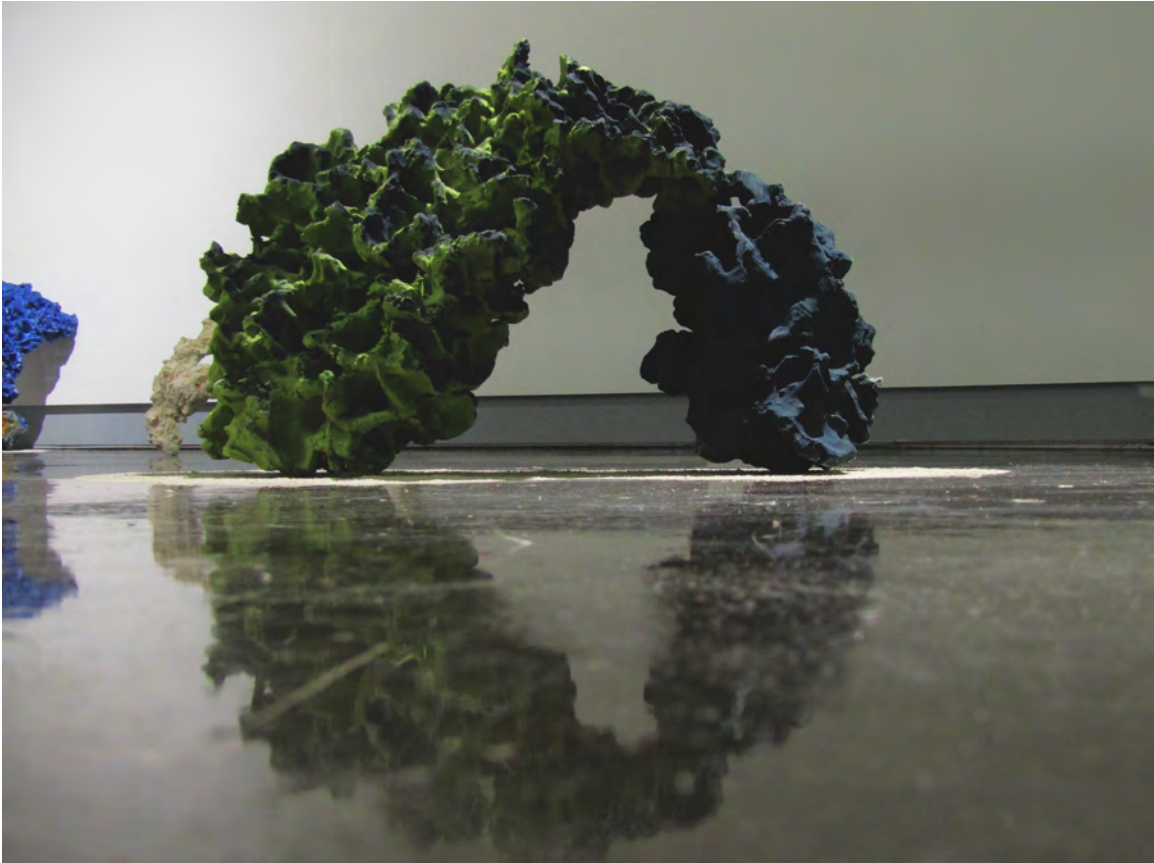


Figure 13.

Group (4)



Figure 14.  
Barely Standing



Figure 15.

Colorless



Figure 16.  
Colorless  
(*different angle*)