12-2011

Magic Meat

Adam Stewart
Clemson University, stewarttodd@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses
Part of the Fine Arts Commons

Recommended Citation
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/1269

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
MAGIC MEAT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Art
Visual Art

by
Adam Todd Stewart
December 2011

Accepted by:
Professor Dave Detrich, Committee Chair
Assistant Professor Christina Hung
Assistant Professor Anderson Wrangle
ABSTRACT

Have you ever been really secure in what it means to be? If not, it’s ok. If so, don’t be delusional. Either way, I have created a series of devices that present the challenges of self-division and fluctuation, and reveals this complicated human characteristic not as a product of being broken, fractured, and dysfunctional, but as an advantageous ability to adopt complex multiple perspectives, sometimes simultaneously.

These devices can be thought of as “gym equipment” to exercise the more immaterial, invisible portions of ourselves. Strengthening the connections between physicality and the mental/emotional aspects of our bodies demonstrates an ability to exist as a physical, psychic, and social instrument. Through direct physical engagement users are made aware of how their desire to investigate each device further leads to self-examination, and the felt effects each device administers. With this shift in focus more internal dialogues occur, discussing to what degree a specific individual is autonomous (if at all), and to what extent we are contingent upon the characteristics of the spaces we inhabit (particularly our interactions with others). As this dynamic takes place in a shared social space (gym, gallery, park, mall) those willing and open to interact with the devices can find themselves momentarily held in a liminal space between the device they decided to interact with, and the group that is now observing their very public performance of private doubt and discovery.

If you decide to physically participate with these unusual objects you will find yourself in a variety of positions. These “positions” can be thought of as physical postures, mental perspectives, and social standings. As you occupy these devices, undergoing various forms of transformation, remember that feelings of lack of control or instability are present and analogous to other interactions and relationships that we become involved in daily. The strangeness of these objects, and the peculiarities of the tasks they solicit push and pull the emotions often felt when encountering something different and external to ourselves to amusing extremes. Doing so equips those who
participate with a desire to further understand how they define themselves. These experiences may be habit forming.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>TOUCHING YOURSELF</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>THE PROBLEM WITH THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>SETTING THE STAGE: THEATRICALITY AND ACCESS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>POWER TOOLS FOR MAKING AND CONNECTING SELVES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>NEANDERTHAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>THE PINK PERSUADER FOR THE FULL BODY SQUASH</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>THE UPSA-DAISICAL CORE HOIST</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>CONCLUSION: ASKING OTHERS FOR SELF-HELP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>How to <em>Neanderthal</em></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>How to <em>Full Body Squash with the Pink Persuader</em></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>How to <em>Upsa-Daisical Core Hoist</em></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
TOUCHING YOURSELF

Human bodies are tangible things. Go ahead and touch your arm, jaw, calf, palm of your hand, etc., and you will easily find proof of this thought. But that is not all we are. While you were exploring this intimately familiar object you experienced a variety of sensations depending on location of touch, what you used to touch that location, and the amount of pressure that you applied. These sensual, tickling, painful, or comforting sensations are consequences of your physical engagement with your own body, and are an easy example of the simultaneity of being both concrete and immaterial.

Although we understand our bodies as corporeal, and recognize that we feel the effects of the immaterial (such as emotion brought on by communication with others or spiritual entities), our beings are contingent upon a vast amount of circumstances both interior (unique, private, and hidden) and exterior (shared, public, and observable).

By simply touching yourself you are alerted to other parts of yourself. Acknowledging these others means recognizing what Claire Bishop would deem a “de-centered subject” (130). De-centralization of subjects refers to the refusal to adhere to the hierarchal positioning of a singular, whole, ideal, perspective. Being made of so many parts it may be difficult to think of one’s self as centered, especially as phenomenology tells us that each part should have its own perspective. We can be capable of diverse perspectives; I however, question our awareness of different perspectives and our methods of selection. Some parts may be harder to grasp than your wrist, hair, or ankle, but wouldn’t you like to try.
CHAPTER TWO
THE PROBLEM WITH THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

It is really difficult having to be so many different things. Why do we do it? During the course of any day I have to contend with getting my tall, gangly, uncoordinated body through, around, and over a myriad of obstacles that either get in my way or are placed there. While being bound to my body I am barraged by thoughts and emotions triggered by interactions with spaces, objects, and people, past present, and possibly future. Other human beings surprisingly pose the most confusing interactions because despite their overall generalized similarities to my own body their actions and reactions to me differ wildly from my own reactions to stimuli. This complex “I” is then contingent upon circumstance yet has autonomous aspects. And since these circumstances are constantly changing, pinning down anything that we can describe as lasting, as essential to our individual being, is frustratingly slippery.

The plot I describe above indicates that there is not enough room in the duality of the Cartesian mind body problem for all our parts if we pick them up and drop them, scattering them throughout the course of our lives. This “problem” is a problem of consciousness. If you are having a conscious experience, then there is something it is like to be you. When “being” is understood as a process, as a continued erratic construction, the concept of having to “be” can become a crisis unless the act becomes less demanding. To accept your connection to so many other beings, and the mutability you share with those beings can be liberating and empowering.
In keeping with the consideration of being as an act of construction, I represent human bodies as unique pieces of equipment. Like a tool, more specifically a power tool, the human body is steadfastly physical, surging with immaterial energy, and capable of expanding limits and enhancing power through its relationships to others. Rather than fix the position of the human body in strategies of “either this or that”, which eventually leads to privileging and established hierarchies, I propose that the intense connectivity critical to humanness be considered through three general categories resulting in humans as physical, psychic, and social instruments.

**PHYSICAL**

By bumping into other things we simultaneously deal with and attempt to understand our environments and ourselves. Interaction leads to an examination of distinct qualities and behaviors of others, and a recognition of the affects these things have on us. In this way the human body seems incredibly porous, as the exterior world enters it through feelings; that which experiences are defined by. Feelings seep in along the interoceptive (stimulation from organs, glands, and vessels), proprioceptive (stimulation from muscles, joints, and tendons), and exteroceptive (stimulation from seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling) senses. The balancing between proprioception, or the ability to internally feel one’s own body, and exteroception, our ability to observe exterior information, can be precarious as feelings of control and vulnerability hinge upon our use of these systems to make sense of stimuli that we encounter. In my work I focus on these two sense systems in order to reveal the body as
What the muscle memory of the proprioceptive senses cannot access the exteroceptive system engages and vice versa.

Just like our own bodies, other things that we encounter have qualities we cannot access. We understand other things through our interaction and previous experience with them and things similar to them. I contend that relying completely on retinal involvement with others is faulty and yet we regard it as a superior form of acquiring knowledge. The attitude that seeing is believing is still validated despite a lessening in trust of images. Object-Oriented Philosopher Graham Harman describes a great example of objects existing beyond appearances.

… currently accessible features of a thing do not tell the whole story about it. The tent is more than an appearance, because it is so many appearances at once to many different creatures. Beyond that, it is even more than all of these appearances put together, because it might harbor qualities that no current observers are equipped to detect, as if they were all nothing but snakes slithering across an undiscovered tomb. (Harman 17)

**PSYCHIC**

Whether pinching ourselves into consciousness, mending a cut, or understanding the eventuality of one day existing as a corpse our physical attributes are trustworthy and reliable. It is how a body deals with and understands itself as conscious, overcomes pain, and deals with the knowledge of mortality that adds a troublesome addition to existence as merely physical. Plenty of institutions make strong arguments for additional portions of our being that must not be physical. Academies focus on intellect, religion sees our
bodies as a hollow share to be filled with spirit, and psychology records our interactions as observable response data to stimuli. I understand this to be a lessening of the value of matter. Attitudes supporting a separation between mind and body see material as dumb and awaiting manipulation. I give matter the credit it feel it is due.

Although the impact of the forms that I create is primarily physical the exposure of the influence of these forms is dependent on the cooperation of participants. Methods of introspection and self-analysis link the operation of my devices to strategies found within psychoanalysis, self-help, massage therapy, or acupuncture and other alternative medicines. The willingness for viewers to become more actively involved with my devices puts a large amount of responsibility in their hands. This is important to me so that the work operates as a give and take amongst humans and non-humans rather than the forced manipulation of humans by others that might align the experiences with torture and exploitation. Individuals should work with the devices to act out compulsions and desires for change. My devices make empowered individuals, not victims.

The devices I create focus on a number of distinct zones of the body; back, crotch, head, even the body in it’s entirety. In this way a direct affect can be applied and considered while a larger narrative emerges as individuals move from device to device in a manner similar to an obstacle course or gym. This overarching narrative is similar in structure to developments and common experiences familiar to all humans. The devices are positioned as a chain of development. This narrative progresses in a manner similar to the narratives of evolution, puberty, Freudian psychosexual development, Erickson’s psychosocial stages, and the human life cycle. Through these actions, self-awareness rubs
up against self-consciousness, pushing forward an intense exploration of others and ourselves.

SOCIAL

The crux of my project depends on the openness and willingness of individuals to engage with possibly scary, anxiety inducing circumstances. Individuals have to explore unknown aspects of themselves in a dramatic, physical, and novel way, and this must be done in a social space. Those who risk embarrassment by participating with the devices exist in an intermediary position. They find themselves between the devices they decided to further a relationship with, and those unwilling or not yet able to do so; the crowd. Each decision made by an individual leads to the construction of a particular role, but a role that can change as new decisions are made. The connectivity created through the shared space surrounding the entire performance can lead a viewer to become a participant, a witness to become an example, and a crowd to become a support group or mob.

Each interaction between an individual and my devices is a public performance. These performances are divided between the individually tactile and the collectively retinal. What is produced are relationships. The primary (interactive) and secondary (spectatorial) relationships reveal the levels of access available within this shared space.

I have designed my devices to be enticing enough that individuals want to investigate the actions each object affords because they feel something else is present, something that cannot be taken in by simply viewing. This anticipation for feeling, for
affect, lures individuals into entering a relationship based on function. Discovering how a device works is a direct recognition of the source of felt sensation. The sensations produced help individuals construct new understanding of the devices based on similar findings in previous experiences they have had in their life. Although the experiences the devices deliver are pulled from common experience everyone could possibly share (being born, masturbating, cowering) the way in which each individual interprets and understands these sensations through their own distinct previous experiences could not be more diverse. This understanding could not happen without the willingness of an individual to engage in a tactile relation with the device.

Interacting with the devices exposes sensory developments through the expression of behavior. This expression demonstrates a direct connection to the devices, and connects observers to the performer and the performance. Although this secondary relationship of spectatorship, motivating or preventing individuals to perform, spectatorship engages solely through the retinal, allowing only partial access. What individuals gain through the act of watching is an estimate of possible outcomes and behaviors that the devices may induce. In much the same way, a crowd could either support or interfere with an individuals decision to further engage with the devices. How a willing individual reacts to the experience can influence members of the crowd to participate or refrain. This oculocentrism of the crowd fuels suspicion about the validity of knowledge gained through sight alone. No matter what preconceived ideas of correct behavior are formed, in deciding how to act with these devices an individual will never know until they try, and another viewer will become an engaged participant.
CHAPTER THREE
SETTING THE STAGE: THEATRICALITY AND ACCESS

Working with tools necessitates both performance and practice. Every process carried out with the aid of a tool is a performance. Action is necessary, and an understanding of abilities as well as limits is pivotal to performing a task safely and accomplishing a goal. Along with this comes practice. Practice is involved in two distinct forms of acquiring knowledge. Specific ideas are put into practice as you use a tool in a manner that you believe will yield a specific result. This course of action allows the abstract (a concept, design, choreographed maneuver) to develop into something tangible. The repetition of a performance is also practice. The amazing thing about this form of learning is the range of knowledge acquired. The more you work with a specific tool, and the consistency with which you use that tool for a particular process the more aware you become of what you are capable of, what you are not capable of, what you are capable of with that tool, what that tool affords (in terms of efficiency and production), and most importantly the unique idiosyncrasies of your relationship to that tool (how it works for you).

Tools are social objects. Obviously they can stand alone, static and collecting dust, but a complicity with the human is a straightforward and direct aspect of their being. This complicity is a characteristic of Minimal Art that Michael Fried understood and criticized. In his essay *Art and Objecthood*, Fried declares that the experience of encountering a piece of minimalist sculpture is:
basically a theatrical effect or quality – a kind of stage presence. It is a function not just of the obtrusiveness and, often, even aggressiveness of literalist (minimalist) [sic] work, but of the special complicity that that work extorts from the beholder. Something is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take into account, that he (she) [sic] take it seriously – and when the fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of the work and, so to speak, in acting accordingly. (Freid 155)

Theatricality was a major problem for Fried. He saw this type of work aggressively distancing viewers, writing it “makes the beholder a subject and the piece in question … an object.” (Freid 154)

Theatricality does not have to be thought of as distencing. The shared social space created by plinthless minimal sculpture was the first step towards relational forms of art objects. This give and take relationship, where viewers become participants has increasingly developed since the advent of Minimalism. Artist Carsten Holler creates works that ask viewers to become subjects. Holler’s works function as devices and experiments that stimulate and affect those who encounter them. These experiences introduce doubt as a means of questioning our established preconceived assumptions and ideals via perception, which is revealed as:

Something mutable and slippery: not the function of a detached gaze upon the world from a centered consciousness, but integral to the entire body and nervous system, a function that can be wrong-footed at a moment’s notice. (Bishop 48.)
In my own work I use the theatricality of Minimalism and its ability to shift the focus of individuals between objects and themselves as a means of gaining access to the parts of ourselves that may otherwise go unnoticed. It is through cause and effect relationships that we may discover our ideas of self are contingent upon external and internal conditions. By physically engaging with objects in a social space our connection to those objects, ourselves, and those who observe us are momentarily strengthened.
CHAPTER FOUR

POWER TOOLS FOR MAKING AND CONNECTING SELVES

As a sculptor my understanding of material is tactile, and my access to things I encounter and select to work with is furthered by lessons learned through physical interaction. I can think of no better research into the elusive characteristics of matter than the relationships that I enter into with the diverse materials that I choose to build my sculpture from. I source materials from construction distributors and home improvement stores, and work with these materials (steel, plywood, assorted hardware, silicones, etc.) in a way that showcases the act of construction. Proof of construction and assembly is a document of the performance of making, and an index of steps leading to the finished device. Acknowledging this preceding relationship will indicate a process of work and development that could be continued through use. This narrative that the devices contain and make available for continuation speaks to the necessity for interaction with the sculptures. It keeps them from being seen as crystallized ideas, best kept at a distance.

The act of making becomes a testing of limits, both my own and the material I am working with. My working method is hands on, and thinking and doing become synonymous. Working with tools, attempting new processes, and physically manipulating material make the hypothetical tangible. In many cases preparatory design and problem solving can only go so far. Once physical labor is begun solutions and new functional/aesthetic directions appear from surprising sources.

My emphasis on physicality is highlighted through the forms that I create, the contexts they refer to, and the functions they afford. The structures of my devices are
established within the context of industrial equipment for use in construction. The design of tools and machines such as the automatic carwash and engine hoist are simplified and altered to fit the human frame, pushing them into the context of gym equipment. By pulling from these related contexts, devices are aligned with related yet contrasting histories of technologically embodied physical power. Construction equipment is designed and built to alleviate the difficulties and strain of physical tasks. In a related and parallel development, the history of gym equipment is the human need to infuse and expand the capacity for energy into the physical form in an efficient, measured, and rational way. On one hand, work is rationalized and made efficient to save time, labor, and expand the amount of work an individual can accomplish. On the other hand people liberated from many forms of manual labor must seek an outlet for an inborn need for physicality. Dr. Gustav Zander, the Swedish acrobat turned holistic medical practitioner, designed numerous early forms of gym equipment that “stressed the interconnectivity of nature, machine, and physical energy.”(De La Pena 80) During the Industrial Revolution, Dr. Zander’s machines allowed a burgeoning middle class to enhance their body’s capacity for energy, and furthered their ability to use that energy to a level corresponding with their supposedly increasing intellect. Dr. Zander’s machines are clear examples of how such devices inevitably connect the physical, psychic, and social.

Industrial machines and gym equipment actually make what is incapable by the human body capable. This capacity for utility enhancement is harnessed in my own devices but repurposed with the goal of complicating our self-awareness. By investigating these familiar forms further, the human body is enticed by hints of
familiarity and a desire for utility. This understanding is actually being turned in on itself as the action carried out with each device precedes your consciousness of that machine’s effect on you physically, psychically, and socially.

When someone uses one of my devices they are acting upon a desire to investigate what they may feel is present within that particular object while not being able to see it. This sensing of something mysteriously concealed and incapable of being accessed through vision alone strongly parallels the feeling of fracture that we recognize within ourselves.

Use of such a device quickly reveals that what is being shaped, formed, and acted upon is you. By being willing and open to interacting with something strange an individual’s focus on discovering more about the device turns into an urgent need to know whether these feelings were forced on you, or revealed in you. The structured, mechanical forms these devices express points to a process of efficient intellectual thought (similar to the kind of thought necessary for their construction). In contrast to the strict geometry (and mode of thinking it points to), the colorful areas that are tailored to specific parts of the human body add elements of play. Torn between serious, orderly pondering and whimsical moments of reflection users become confused by the effects of these different modalities. These devices make clear just how complex we are at any given time, but complicate how we think about ourselves and our desire for an explanation in the first place.
CHAPTER FIVE

NEANDERTHAL

Is it possible that evolution is a cumulative process rather than a series of successive steps of improvement? I often wonder what we leave behind and what we continue to carry with us through successive generations. I cannot help but feel certain impulsive frustration that I feel are Cro-Magnon tendencies come over me anytime I attempt to move heavy objects because I have a poor lifting posture. Is being frustrated while assuming a hunched posture all it takes to send me, or anyone else, freefalling back down the evolutionary ladder; weight, resistance, grunts and groans as muscle damage approaches?

Neanderthal is a device designed to reveal the inner beast in all of us through posture, sensory stimulation, and action. This piece of Paleolithic gym equipment takes the form of a boulder. It presents itself as an object of substantial size and apparent weight, firmly planted in the space it occupies. Although naturalistic at first glance, the surface texture and functional details quickly reveal the boulder to be a constructed object, something familiar to zoo habitats and miniature golf courses. The hand-eroded rock, the spongy foam moss, and the furry mound beg the hands to understand information that the eyes can only assume. It is this discovery by hand that prompts further involvement. The handlebar running through the boulder is the key to an object with a specific use and point of interaction. The leather grips dare you to pit your strength against the stubborn mass. If you accept this provocation your next step is to assume the position. Hunched over, you firmly grasp the handles letting your fingers
constrict around their circumference wringing them until the sound of skin on skin is audible. The tension you apply to the handlebars is felt all the way up your arms, into your shoulders and down your back. And it is in your back where the connection to *Neanderthal* begins. The furry protuberance that held your attention moments earlier is pushing against your crotch, displacing your hips a considerable distance back from a centered vertical stance. This knuckle-dragging posture aligns you physically with our ancient, club wielding cousins. Despite being slightly off balance, you are intrigued by the unknown weight of the device. Go ahead try to lift it. The severe girth of *Neanderthal*, paired with the contortions of your body around it makes only the act of wiggling it on its foundation possible. Do not let this dissuade you, you may feel it budging, and besides people are starting to watch. For added leverage you take advantage of the leather face cradle that oddly juts from the top of the device. This gladiatorial-massage-parlor-helmet conforms perfectly to your face as you press into it forcefully feeling its spongy innards mushing around your face. Although momentarily relaxing, even comfortable, there is a task at hand. With this additional leverage you bear down, grind teeth, and notice your brow furrowed, pushed down to the point of being in your line of sight. To what degree are these changes affecting you? You are unable to observe the physical transformations taking place, but you are definitely feeling the effects. Perhaps the comfort of the bodily fittings (the concavity of the head rest, the crotch-rocketesque ergonomics of the furry mound, and the well worn work glove texture of the handle bar grips), makes the discomfort of the action being solicited, the frustration of the inability to move this stubborn other, and the self consciousness associated with public
unleashing such private act of reactive emotions feel oddly natural. Maybe they are, and maybe they aren’t. Like the majority of synthetic material that the *Neanderthal* is constructed from the experience you are having is one of likeness not actuality.
Does anyone actually remember being born? It seems like a rather important experience, yet personally I can’t recall any detail of that particular moment. It seems like something hinted at through the continued leaving behind of comfortable situations that we encounter throughout our lives. That kind of separation, acknowledgement of drastic change in our lives may not always be as profound as our first emergence into the world, but we undergo change constantly nonetheless. What if you could reconnect to that moment of being made new, of emerging, again? Take the necessary steps towards a re-emergence? Would you want to? What if I told you that this experience was actually quite comfortable? Change may never come so easily.

Standing at eight feet tall the Pink Persuader is a piece of equipment that embodies contradiction. What would otherwise be an oppressive obstacle acting as a boundary between spaces, invites passage through its fleshy, swirling folds. The carnal allurement of the Pink Persuader boldly declares its sexuality. The vaginal squeegee forms supported by its industrial steel scaffolding calls to mind a variety of other references, from coral reefs to bubblegum, but it is the interaction that it entices that direct thought and feeling to the bodily, erotic, and sensual. By moving in and out of this organic gateway the whole body becomes stimulated in what is called The Full Body Squash. The variety of different textures that consolidate the rollers ensure that the same stimulation of passing through is never experienced the same way twice. This revolving
door of textures delivers subtle changes that affect you and how you understand the
device through felt sensation. The possibility for abundant new experiences, both of the
device and yourself, prompts repeated action that could be habit forming. With each
passage through the tight, fleshy, gates further realization of the entire body’s ability to
obtain knowledge is achieved.

As you continue to use the *Pink Persuader* and repeatedly undergo *The Full Body
Squash* you will come to the conclusion that aside from the plethora of inviting textures it
is the pressure exerted by the device upon your body as you push through it that has the
most startling affect and associations with the experience of being birthed. The
administration of pressure to affect the body psychologically as well as physically is
strongly influenced by the research of Dr. Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin’s *squeeze
machine* was developed by her while still in high school as a means of calming stress
brought on by her hypersensitivity. The machine consists of a pair of hinged panels
supporting thick, squishy padding that contract around an individual lying or squatting
laterally in between them. The user is able to control the amount of pressure administered
by the device through a complex control board connected to an air compressor by means
of hoses and valves. This device allows pressure stimulation similar to a hug to be felt by
users without the stress brought on by extreme closeness and intimacy of another human.
Dr. Grandin first understood the effects that pressure could have on the psyche by
observing the behavior of cattle in the inoculation chutes of corrals at her aunt’s ranch.
(Grandin 23)
My Pink Persuader for the Full Body Squash is deeply indebted to Dr. Grandin’s *squeeze machine* for its elimination of other people in the production of bear hugs. The direct connection between mind and body that occurs within such devices is foundational to my concepts of the human body as a well-joined assemblage of parts, physical, psychic, and social. Where the processes of my device and Dr. Grandin’s diverge is in the social performance.

Obviously someone suffering from extreme hypersensitivity, to the point of eliminating the need for someone else in the production of hugs, would want to perform such a task in the privacy of their own homes. Such is the case with Dr. Grandin and her device. While at home individuals who use the *squeeze machine* are allowed to calmly relieve stress at their own pace and degree of pressure. (Sacks 295) If such a device were placed in a public setting, compulsions to perform and the voyeuristic demands of onlookers would apply a different kind of pressure to individuals as they decide to use the device or not. It is this type of felt pressure, a form of peer pressure that my device radicalizes.

If you find yourself pulled towards the Pink Persuader it is from your desire to know more. If you find yourself pushed it may be by gaze of others. You may feel conflict between interior and social compulsions. Being push pulled can be confusing, but it is important to realize that this confusion is present in a lot of decisions we make. Not only can you find yourself faltering at forks in life paths, but just as easily in how you choose to understand yourself. Am I this, or am I that? As the stress from such decisions increases, keep moving as you make contact with the organic rollers of the Pink
*Persuader.* With persistence, you will find yourself deeply entrenched in the *Full Body Squash* and its unanticipated pressurized comfort. Linger there, feel its effects, and think about how easily you changed. The physicality of the interaction with the device swept all of the stress that propelled you into this situation away, much like automatic car wash rollers that it was based upon. As you emerge on the other side take notice of how those observing you react. What they are reacting to is the changes you have undergone. Although your journey was short, the effect was dramatic. The blood rushing back to your extremities is similar to the realization of your connection to everyone around you. If this proves to be too much, don’t worry; a chance for change is just behind you. Just turn around and proceed through the squishy mass. Rinse and Repeat.

The use of my equipment is a social process, one of things relating to things (bodies to other objects, the physical to the psychic, and our bodies to other bodies). To reach further connections it is necessary that the performances accompanying the objects I construct are played out in a public space. The mixed reactions brought about through physical engagement point out and accentuate our ambivalence towards objects, ourselves, and the situations produced by interactions. Such interactions destabilize us revealing a myriad of possibilities for us to choose who we are. The problem lies in our inability to choose any one type, to locate so much of ourselves in any one fractured part. The best solution is to accept fragmentation and shift between the many perspectives presented when necessary.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE UPSA-DAISICAL CORE HOIST

In our shared common experience, puberty is where self-awareness is rubbed against self-consciousness. Enticing people to re-experience feelings associated with puberty is not an easy task. The clumsy, awkward, confusion that surrounds that extended moment of not quite being sure who you are or what is expected of you, but having to perform confidently a charade of adulthood sounds like agony. It is a time that most of us would rather forget. All teenagers are strange, to some degree; insects are strange too, at least to us. If I gave you a choice between jumping back into puberty, or undergoing a metamorphosis similar to that of a beautifully emerging butterfly which would you choose? No one ever suspects the butterfly.

The first things you will notice about the *Upsa-Daisical Core Hoist* are the vibrant green components. From fluorescent lime green to lagoon teal the variety of hues place this device immediately in the realm of the alien. The abdomen-like bulb jutting from its center is rather intimidating and aggressive, but at the same time it’s height, and the noticeable addition of a saddle horn invite you closer. Allurement is a known tactic of many insects for catching their prey. Whether you are aware of it or not, your curiosity, and possibly the egging on of an eager audience, are drawing you closer to the first steps of drastic change. With your body straddling the unusual, dripping, green bulb you grip the protruding saddle horn and lower yourself onto the bulb. Assuming a squatted, hunched forward position, your body becomes a coiled spring of potential
energy. You quickly discover the slick, ergonomic, foam grip handle. This is what that stored energy was destined for.

The handle that you clutch is attached to a lever extending to a 12-ton hydraulic jack. As you raise and lower the handle the bulbous seat that you are straddling raises. Your rate of ascension depends on how urgently you perform this action. Whether you deliver sudden, agitated bursts or slow, methodical strokes does not affect the jerky, mechanical movement of your elevation. This type of development can be easily described as awkward. The position of your body in relationship to the pumping performance you are carrying out reveals itself to be masturbatory. The anxiety produced by realizing the embarrassing role you have cast yourself in is pronounced, but the audience that has gathered coaxes you to continue your journey.

As you continue your ascent, growing in height, uncurling, and extending your legs you will also notice that you are quickly approaching an overhanging mass. This foamy stalactite, torn between appearing as a hornet’s nest and a mushroom cloud becomes a destination, a site to reach and inspect closer. With your head tilted back, perhaps your jaw loosely hanging open, you continue pumping and moving ever closer to this inverted apex.

You may not have even noticed it, but at some point you lost contact with the ground, as the device swept you off your feet. It would be easy to assume that such felt sensations would precede transcendental moments, but your strict focus on the task at hand, and the persistent reminder of the mechanics providing these feelings keeps you bound in your body and firmly seated. You move closer to the mass hanging overhead.
What started as a destination now proves to be an obstacle. The silicone-dipped tips of
the growth tickle the top of your head, but with each additional pump pressure increases.
Is this thing in your space or are you in its. Finding yourself completely suspended in the
air, trapped, being pinched from your crotch to your head you renegotiate the position of
your head in space. Pressure released you would feel comfortable if it were not for the
growing audience that has watched the whole event unfold. To jump down would mean
admitting self-consciousness, demonstrate that you are not momentarily appearing how
you would like to appear to be, that your not in control. You can’t let your peers down so
you must continue up.

With an extended series of strokes, and boxer-like maneuvering of your head, you
reach maximum height. Elevated slightly higher than everyone around you, you have
reached your climax. Whether you feel triumphant, defeated, or a weird combination of
both, you do not have long to consider your position. The only way you can realize that
you have reached the top is upon your return back to the ground. A release mechanism is
initiated once you move a few pumps past parallel to the ground. The low whine of air
being pushed from the valve of the jack is the soundtrack of your safe landing. Sit for a
moment. That was probably more involved than you initially thought. As you dismount
take time to make eye contact with all those who ogled you, after all they partially shared
the experience with you. From anywhere between approximately 4 to 12 minutes,
depending on how eagerly you performed you were an example, a standard of behavior.
Think of how freely you expressed a broad range of emotions in such a small amount of
time. Before you walk away take a moment to reset the release mechanism, almost like a handshake. Be kind, rewind.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: ASKING OTHERS FOR SELF-HELP

I wrote this thesis to perform much like the rest of my work does: multifunctional. As a thesis it provides further context to support my work. As a manual or guide it can either build anticipation for what to expect (mental preparation), or act as a reference for possible solutions to confusions (troubleshooting). If you haven’t tried one of these devices yet I hope this text entices your curiosity enough to persuade you to, if you have had the opportunity to engage with my work I hope you have found enough information to come to your own conclusions about the experience you had. That experience is yours, you earned it.

The most necessary requirement to gain as much knowledge and awareness from the devices is a willingness to totally give in and an openness to fully receive as much information from the experience as possible. This is done with your entire body, with a focused concentration on your own personal limits. Be aware that not all of the sensations you experience in exchange with these devices are pleasurable. The Neanderthal stinks, The Upsa-Daisical Core Hoist is intimidating, and while The Pink Persuader is generally rewarding disappointment may occur from never getting to relive that first experience with it. Resistance and antagonism are quick means of exposing vulnerabilities.

Acknowledging vulnerability is a confession of limits to others, but more importantly to yourself. Physical characteristics (height, weight, physique, gender, age, race), physical abilities (strength, coordination, reach, balance, flexibility), emotional sensitivity and abilities to deal with varying amounts of distress, mental ability and capacity (personal
perspective, modes of thinking, creativity), social skills (first impressions, dealing with other people, expressing yourself, exhibiting levels of confidence, leading, following), these are all factors that make any personal experience unique to your own individual being. That is as autonomous as we can hope to get. There are certain things about ourselves that only we are privileged to. There are many things about each of ourselves that we will never know. I hope that many people will use my devices, and that they help people locate themselves as a part of something collective greater than themselves. That being said it is just as equally important to understand that any particular part is irreproducible. To be you is your experience. To be like you is everyone else’s problem.
WORKS CITED


Figure 1.1: How to Neanderthal
Figure 2.1: How to *Full Body Squash* with the *Pink Persuader*
Figure 3.1: How to Ursa-Daisical Core Hoist