

Forms of Influence Statement

Kara Walker states in her episode that her work is consumed by history. Mine on the other hand is consumed by personal history; they are always based on my reaction to another individual's attitude, action or work. The influence I obtained from "A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby" is that it is iconic and that it has a relatively large scale.

My concept is developed from a song by singer-songwriter Thomas Borchert called "Auf schlafenden Walen" (see appendix). It tells the story of a man who rejects the loudness of the city and wanted to be alone. He always dreams of the sea, and one day he drives away. He throws away his clothes and lies awake on the sleeping whale in deep water. I feel that the most expressive lines are „Er war kaum noch hier und fast schon dort“ and „Er sehnte sich so nach Ewigkeit, unendlich weit weg von Raum und Zeit“. (He was hardly here and nearly there/ he desires eternity so, endlessly away from time and space). My idea is to portray the ideas from this song using a ceramic sculpture: a man lying on a whale, free from any burden.

There are a lot of technical difficulties that I have encountered. I learned that to prevent the sculpture from exploding I must create a paper core, and it is hard to make a core which has an even surface and that keeps its shape when being compressed by clay. The second challenge is that the property of trail mix makes it difficult to add wet clay to dried clay; cracks almost always form on the surface, and might become worse after I tried to fix them. I learned that it is better to do the building in a humid environment, applying water spray from time to time, and cover up the whole work with plastic film to prevent fast evaporation. The third challenge is that dried clay is very fragile. The two fins and the tail have fell off multiple times. Trevor taught me to attach the broken pieces using vinegar and clay bands. The fourth challenge is that when firing work on this scale,

cracks may appear in unexpected places. Louise said that I can mend them with epoxy and nail polish, and later I used acrylic on the surface.

Another major challenge is making the figure. Since I haven't mastered human anatomy, it is not easy to sculpt out the figure which has a complex pose. I searched for a lot of reference pictures and tried to make it look right from multiple angles.

I spent two days and a night making the figure on top of the whale, but just after I finished making it, as I sent the whale into the kiln for a second time, when I was not watching, it fell to the ground and was smashed completely. Since it is beyond repair, I picked up the largest remaining piece (the torso with an arm attached) and applied underglaze, hoping that it would still convey the original meaning. If the man in the song has escaped form, but is still "on his way", then this might be what his freedom would look like. The underglaze comes in two color: ocean blue and blood red, signifying a love of nature and a force of life.

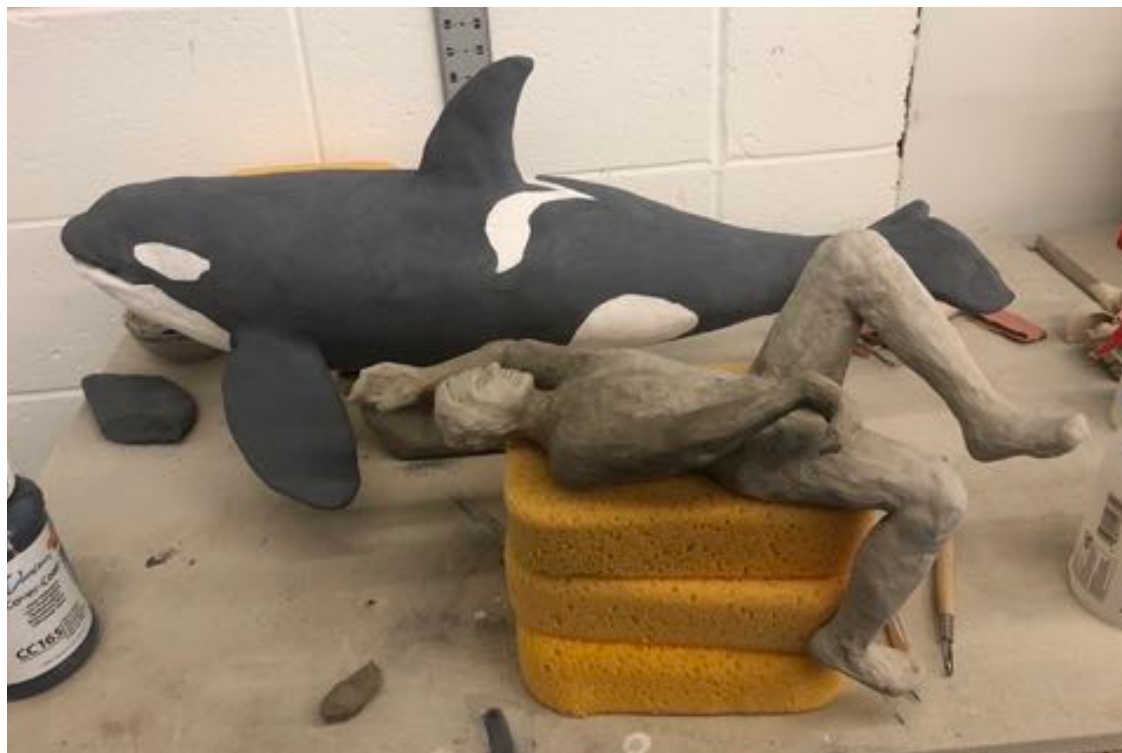


Figure 1. Figure before it is smashed



Figure 2. Top view



Figure 3. Side view



Figure 4. Top view



Figure 5. Front view

Appendix:

Auf schlafenden Walen
Er träumte die ganze Zeit vom Meer.
Er wollte die Einsamkeit so sehr.
Die tobende Stadt war ihm zu laut.
Er schmeckte das Salz auf seiner Haut.
Am Donnerstagabend fuhr er fort.
Er war kaum noch hier und fast schon dort.
Tief unten im Wasser und hellwach.
Auf schlafenden Walen durch die Nacht.

Die Wellen hoch über ihm war'n still,
vielleicht war es Mai oder April.
Hier hatte die Schwere keine Macht.
Es schaukelt nur ganz sacht.
Auf schlafenden Walen durch die Nacht.

Er fühlte sich müde und verspannt.
Den ganzen Tag sinnlos rumgerannt.
Er sehnte sich so nach Ewigkeit,
unendlich weit weg von Raum und Zeit.

Die lästige Kleidung warf er fort.
Er war kaum noch hier und fast schon dort.
Tief unten im Wasser und hellwach.
Auf schlafenden Walen durch die Nacht.

Er hört wie im Hausflur jemand lacht,
doch er hat sich auf den Weg gemacht.
Und dann schaukelt er ganz sacht,
auf schlafenden Walen durch die Nacht.