

Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich, #8_Cafe' 541 Column, published March 20, 2020

MATERIAL GIRL

I like getting my hands dirty. I like gushy, drippy, indulgent and sparkly things.

Our five senses work in concert to construct our relationship with our environment, others and ourselves. They trigger responses experienced both emotionally and physically—whether, sensual, playful, curious, contrary or somber—and they impact and support every aspect of our existence and perception. This is the stuff we are made of and this is the stuff art is made of.

No external subject is needed to communicate the various facets of our shared humanity apart from the textures, colors, weight and form of the materials manipulated and transformed in an artist's hands and imagination. In this age of seemingly endless innovation, obsolescence and cultural prevarication the honesty of manipulated materials, both hand-generated and digital, anchors us in our own physicality and existence.

I met Mahima Kapoor, at a Ucross Foundation residency in Wyoming and was struck by her rich and formidable paper-based work. Based in New Delhi, India, Kapoor considers her process and the media she makes with as content, with the physical spaces she makes in being an integral part of the work's experience. When engaging with Kapoor's non-objective and large-scale painted collages, the viewer instantly feels immersed and enveloped within a world of textures, patterns and vibrant colors that alternate between subtle shifts and dynamic gestures across their shaped and often three-dimensional forms. These are works not to be contained by a frame or the regiment of right angles. The towering and expansive paper forms skew one's sense of scale and a feeling of playfulness and wonder ensues. Thin wire is often integrated into the works' form and accentuates the implied rhythms and volumes like a drawn line. Synchronicities between the viewer's spatial and sensory perceptions create an experience at once intimate, and vast.

It's been said that creativity is the ability to make something out of nothing. True enough, with the imagination's ability to envision and manifest that, which does not currently exist. However, the realization of those ideas necessitates energy, effort and, well...stuff. Layers of intention are activated and given agency through the rich and varied use of both conventional and unexpected materials, and new technologies.

Eugene artist, Lillian Almeida, navigates materials like an explorer seeking new worlds. Her curiosity leads her deep into uncharted terrain to discover forms that resonate with emotion and implication. Using a variety of physical and hand-manipulated materials as well as digital applications, Almeida's relentless pursuit of authentic experience exemplifies her practice. In *Unspeakable Paper 2: Diminution*, a looping video of still photographs and video clips, Almeida documents the changes to the wire and paper forms that, in my mind anthropomorphizes and relates to self. The forms' reduction and (spoiler alert) eventual absence is unexpected and the use of materials as metaphor, moving.

We live in a time of cultural extremes that swing between obscene excess and anxiety-producing austerity. When considering this opposing reality, the concept of materiality should not be confused with materialism; materiality in art refers to the character and composition of matter that includes tactile, intellectual and spiritual engagement while materialism references a consumer-driven value assigned to items based on their commodification and use.

As a working artist, I'm curious how the practice of making art positions itself and its carbon footprint amid the real world concerns surrounding resource use and waste. I routinely ask myself if there is still value, given the numerous challenges already faced in this new century, for the persistence of hand-generated expressions and more "things"?

Yep.

587 words

Links:

<https://hyperallergic.com/470101/mahima-kapoor-international-art-career-massart-mfa/>

almeidastudio.com

Image Information for Mahima Kapoor:

"Tongue"

7' x 4' x 4'

acrylic on paper, metal

Image Information for Lillian Almeida:

"Diminution"

Varying size

Paper, wire

MAHIMA KAPOOR – Tongue



LILLIAN ALMEIDA – Diminution

