

Colette Bernard

BFA Sculpture and Integrated Practices

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Extended Thesis Statement

As a Sculpture and Integrated Practices major here at Pratt, I made it my personal goal to work with both traditional and new digital fabrication tools. I began my career at Pratt learning manual labor skills such as woodworking, welding, mold making; later to combine these skills with digital techniques like 3D printing, laser cutting, and CNC. The facilities that Pratt offers allowed me to have access to a variety of machines, which has translated into various works of mine. After taking Ashley Marcovitz's Digital Tools for Object Makers course, I felt like I had found my missing puzzle piece to making a cohesive body of work after combining those skills with the traditional ones that Daniel Buckingham, Professor of Sculpture prepared me with as an underclassman.

My thesis work, Mounds, is Inspired by the geometry of wild crawfish mounds found in my home state of Louisiana. Crawfish create burrows in muddy, grassy areas that are often referred to as "huts". I replicated their shape using Rhino to create a model, and brought them to life via ceramic 3D printing. This duality of using technology to mimic an organic figure conjoins the virtual with the physical reality, since I used the digital process of 3D printing to replicate a natural object.

While working on my thesis using the 3D ceramic printer, I shared a lot of my progress on social media. One of my videos of the machine at work caused a spark of discourse with people arguing in the comments about whether or not my sculpture was considered real art,

stating “this isn’t real art, the robot made it for you”. Despite the fact that I have to build the model, tell the printer where to go, do all the cleanup afterwards, and the glazing... It reminds me a lot of the argument a lot of traditional artists say, that “digital art isn’t real art - because a machine did it for you, the computer did the work”. But new technology is simply just another tool. It’s a vehicle from having an idea, to having something made. By that same logic, I wondered if they think printmakers aren’t real artists for using a printing press to make 50x the amount of prints than if they were to do it by hand. I found it interesting seeing this same discussion that started over a hundred years ago in early Modernism repeat itself through hundreds of comments under my post online.