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### Consequence of human greed

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# **ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
THE COLLEGE OF IMAGING ART AND SCIENCES  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

**CONSEQUENCE OF HUMAN GREED**

**BY  
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**DATE: OCTOBER 1999**

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis aimed at creating a sculpture that expresses my concerns about human nature and its impact upon our natural world. My work employed, either figuratively or abstractly, such images as: mountain, tree, exploded stone and human figure. I feel the proper setting for my sculpture is outdoors so that the viewer can see how it relates to the environment.

## My View of Art

Relying on what you see and neglecting living your soul is like touching upon only the surface of a form. If we are to gain spacing cognition of a form, we must shed the light of our soul on all creations on be earth and, in return, be prepared to absorb the light emitting from both the visible and the invisible. (HaYoung, 1979, p14)

- Rabindranath Tagore -

Painting has its own life, which comes from the soul of the painter. (HaYoung 1979, p11)

- Van Gogh (Letter to Theo, 439) -

A work of art must be created by the soul, for the soul has to a presentation of it and food for it. Art is a soul language through which human beings feel and think and by which human nature is expressed. However, it does not mean that formative art should be denied. It means if a formative image cannot carry any interest in art, a manifestation of human spirit, such image only ends up as being unproductive. A work of art should be the essence of human soul into which the whole life is melted; the crystallization gained from pondering and purifying a given life condition and ultimately be shared by all human beings.

## Concept

The theme and title of my sculpture is "Consequence of Human Greed." Through this work, personally I attempted to raise a question about my conflict and fears regarding the economic crisis and social collapse that my country, Korea had to experience.

I was hardest hit by the Asian economic crisis just as I started work on my thesis. I was struggling to cope with this financial hardship. Caught by guilty feelings, I thought that my greed led me to this. I believed that the financial crisis was caused by my own personal desire, and that I had deserted my duty to my family.

This work was a breakthrough for myself trying to get away from all of the agonies. Under the theme of "Consequence of Human Greed", I tried to embody phenomena driven by agony and pain with workings of earth. In this regard, clay was an ideal medium for me because the nature of it helped alleviate my explosive feelings.

## Artistic Influence

Throughout the whole process of my working, Vincent van Gogh, Isamu Noguchi, Stephen Destaebler and Richard A. Hirsch have been main sources of inspiration.

First, Vincent Van Gogh has inspired me with his expressionistic style. I asked myself a question, what is art. This is the question I kept asking myself. I found the answer in Van Gogh's paintings. The great artist has the unique way of describing his emotions. He had searched for an outlet for his passion and his own way of expressing himself served this purpose. Subsequently, his works are never confined by formality and freely represent what's inside of him. In his painting "Wheat Field with Cypresses", (Van Gogh ,1990, p62) the wheat field looks like the stormy sea; cypresses soar from the earth like wild flame; hillside and clouds are like waves. Every single touch of the painting is alive therefore it makes a rhythmic movement. This approach has huge influence on my work.

Second, Isamu Noguchi greatly influenced my philosophy of forming. He sought a new form, and he produced a slew of works that are full of philosophic and aesthetic symbolism of orientalism. (Sam Hanter, p41) Combined with Eastern thoughts and Western formalism, his abstract sculptures transcend their simple forms and deliver great cosmic force.

Third, a great ceramist, Stephen Destaebler is also a direct influence. Primitiveness of ceramics and natural friendliness of Staebler's view of life led me to incorporate the unique quality of clay to my work. He makes spirituality an important factor in applying religious features like holiness and solemnity to his sculptures. As an expressionist, Destaebler takes a direct approach to clay that shows the quintessence of conceptual clay art. He is skeptical about the reality where modern science and technology separate human from nature. According to him, human beings can be re-assimilated into nature when they are exposed to a freshly new atmosphere created by an inartificial medium. His works are a reminder of biblical analogy between man and clay-"man from dust returns to dust", which conveys

the idea that human beings are only a part of Mother Nature and that we have to embrace the natural cycle of life.

Last but not least, I express my gratitude to Professor Richard Hirsch. His well-balanced teaching of oriental and occidental ideas enabled me to enhance quality of my work. He helped open my eyes to see the beauty of space. Besides, he gave me a precious advice : When in Rome, do as the Romans do". All his guidance clearly showed me the direction my work should follow. Technically, my work is treated with terra sigillata coating and polishing, which were also used by professor Hirsch for his clay works.

## Description

I created a sculpture that has seven parts for my thesis exhibition. The interconnected 7 pieces visualize the theme "Human Greed." I presented the image of earth as a raw and organic material full of vigor so that it can breathe life into lifeless things. As expressionists give life to their works with casual brush strokes, I created natural and spontaneous forms, which can absorb the energy transferred from myself. Each figure symbolizes the look of myself or the world which has been changed by human desire. #1 piece is a pure white rectangle. Its integral form and pure white color demonstrate perfection and purity as those of a newly born baby. #2 through #6 display chronological stages of deterioration. They send a message that greed undermines the existence of humanity and the world bit by bit. The destruction mechanism is that internal force of desire bursts out and deforms outer frames and their colors gradually fade from white to yellow. At #7 broken pieces are scattered on the ground and the color turns black.

Originally I planned to construct the objects of over 2 meters high, but the size had to be reduced so that they could fit into the kiln. The adjustment, anyway, seemed enough to satisfy the viewer. I also changed my mind on glaze. All pieces had to go through a single firing at 1100°C.

I used terra sigillata and spray technique to keep the original color. Mold technique, coiling and hand building were chosen for forming.

#1 sculpture was done through mold technique. First I made a 2 cm-thick clay mold and left it slightly dry and then cut it into the intended size. After that, I made a scar on the edge and used plasterer's file. In assembling the pieces I applied slip for viscosity.

After further drying, I put the finishing touches to the surface with tools so that the pieces have perfect rectangular forms. Finally I sprayed pure white terra sigillata on the surface.

For #2, the same technique as with #1 was used, but there was one different step. Before finally putting a lid on the piece, slight



pressure was applied on the interior wall of the front using a long stick so that small cracks could be created on the surface. And then, black glaze was sprayed over those cracks. Leaving the black cracks as they were, I wiped the piece to remove the black and sprayed light yellow terra sigillata over the whole surface.

In cases of #3 through #5, I adopted the same molding technique as well. With #5, I went through several corrections due to some difficulties in shaping. After the final modification, I could appreciate the beauty of perfect forms. For #6, using mold technique I made two rectangular forms and attached them each other. The pieces of clay were toughly parted by hand, so the texture of the broken parts is rough and jagged. This roughness efficiently reflects the very state of my mind at that time. For disconnected surface I treated with black glaze and for the body I sprayed black glaze first and removed some of it later by applying yellow terra sigillata. #7 is made up of broken little rectangles and small pieces formed by hand and the entire group were treated with black glaze.

There was no problem in drying, which took around 30 days. All of them were fired in oxidation at 1100°C.

## Conclusion

I found my soul again by creating this sculpture. Clay that has no shape or form became like a mirror image of myself. The title of my sculpture "Consequence of Human greed", seemed to fit very well into the theme and imagery of war. In fact, the sculpture was accepted for the public collection of the Rochester War Memorial and is on permanent display there. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my Chief Advisor, Professor Richard Hirsch and to my classmates who helped me with my thesis sculpture.



## Technical Information

Sculpture clay body (used in all pieces)	
Hawthorne fire clay	30
Red art	6
Ball clay	10
Fine mesh grog	15
Medium mesh grog	5
Coarse mesh grog	15
	100 %
Black glaze	
Nep-sye	24.6
Gerstley borate	15.2
Barium carbonate	17.8
Flint	24.6
E. P. K.	8.1
Lithium carbonate	9.7
Manganese Dioxide	10
Black copper	2.0
Black iron	4.0
Black cobalt	5.0
	100 %
Yellow Terra Sigillata	
Water	800
Ball clay (OM4)	180
Vanadium Pentoxide	10
Calgon	10
Frit 3110	5

### Directions for Preparing Terra Sigillata

Mix and ball mill for 24hours and settle for 48hours. Apply about two coats of Terra Sigillata with a brush, rub the surface with soft cotton cloth before it gets dry and it burnishes in one direction only. Fire the burnished piece to cone 0.4 once.

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#1





#2



#3





#4



#5





#6





#7





#8

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