

## Abstract

Leslie Shirah. SENSORY REMINISCENCES. (under the direction of Hanna Jubran) School of Art and Design, East Carolina University, Sculpture Area, 2011.

This report is based on my thesis exhibition, inspired by memories of my childhood. The foundation of this body of work involves reconstructing and reviving the sensory perceptions of materials, processes, and colors from my recollections as a youth. Growing up in a small town in Alabama provided emotional and visual stimuli from two major sources: the activities of my personal bond with family members, who still serve as the core of my strength and persistence, and a dependence upon and an appreciation of nature's resources. In the desire to understand the pervasive impact of my emotional and visual recollections as well as to comprehend how sensory reactions operate in the brain, I conducted research of scientific illustrations of the limbic system. I was able to form an understanding of how material, process, and emotion are experienced through the recollection of memory. This report is information about the sculptures and their creation.

SENSORY REMINISCENCES

A Report of a Creative Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Art and Design

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture

by

Leslie Shirah

April 2011

SENSORY REMINISCENCES

by

Leslie Shirah

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS

---

Hanna Jubran

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

---

Carl Billingsley

---

Robin Haller

---

Sharon Pruitt, PhD

DIRECTOR OF

SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN

---

Michael H. Drought

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

---

Paul Gemperline, PhD

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my family and friends, without them, I would not have made it where I am today. The patience and support of both Hanna Jubran and Carl Billingsley was tremendous. I thank them with the utmost sincerity.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PLATES .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	vi
CHAPTER 1 .....	2
UNFURL.....	4
VULNERABLE MEAT.....	6
UNTIL SPRINTIME .....	9
WASHED ASHORE .....	12
PATHS OF RYTHMN PLAYING AN INTERNAL SONG .....	14
SHELLED.....	16
WILL THIS TURN MY HANDS RED?.....	19
FEEDING MEMORIES .....	22
RECOLLECTION THROUGH SENSORY REACTION .....	24
REMINISCENCES.....	26
HIPPOCAMPUS.....	28
EVOLVING STITCH.....	31
CONCLUSION.....	33
NOTES.....	34
BIBLIAGRAPHY.....	35

## LIST OF PLATES

PLATE 1 (Unfurl) .....	3
PLATE 2 (Vulnerable Meat) .....	5
PLATE 3 (Until Springtime) .....	8
PLATE 4 (Washed Ashore) .....	11
PLATE 5 (Paths of Rhythm Playing an Internal Song) .....	13
PLATE 6 (Shelled) .....	15
PLATE 7 (Will This Turn My Hands Red?) .....	18
PLATE 8 (Feeding Memories) .....	21
PLATE 9 (Recollection through Sensory Reaction) .....	23
PLATE 10 (Reminiscences) .....	25
PLATE 11 (Hippocampus) .....	27
PLATE 12 (Evolving Stitch) .....	30

## INTRODUCTION

This body of work began as experiments with materials and processes to create a visual representation of personal memories. I researched how these specific processes and materials evoked memories from my childhood. This resulted in a collection of mixed-media sculptures providing an insight into my personal memories and how I understand them.

Sensory<sup>1</sup> perception and the reactions that occur in the brain become sensory memory.<sup>2</sup> These memories are stored in the limbic system.<sup>3</sup> This system provides a place where memories can be stored, recalled, and emotionally connected to a particular familiarity. However, my sculptures facilitate a place where my memories are evoked and shaped into a physical and tangible form, exposing and re-surfacing in a new context.

Memories can be elusive, hidden, but suddenly be brought back through our senses. The exterior of the sculptures have a protective, but accessible layer, creating a container to house these memories. With a glimpse of the visual cues hidden within the sculptures, associations arise with not only my memories, but perhaps re-surface others recollections. The interiors of the sculptures create a whole or complete construction, a memory forgotten but then recalled with a visual cue. The interior and exterior are important in conveying this idea of storage and what lies within me as a vessel, carrier of memory.

These vessels refer to the idea that I carry my memories and knowledge through a lineage. Family bonds are transferred through vessels, passing from one container to another, each family member adding something different to the line. Each work provides visual cues causing these recollections to re-surface.<sup>4</sup> The components that create this reaction include the

senses, particularly sight, smell, and touch. The exploration into these perceptions had an effect on my choice of material, process, and color.

The concepts that drive these sculptures are transcribed through various materials. Experiments in connecting different materials are used to obtain a cohesive body of sculpture. The fabrication of steel and cast aluminum is used as an armature to house the fragile and soft materials such as wool, handmade paper, yarn, and soap. In an attempt to incorporate these soft media into the metal structures, hand and machine stitching are used. Exploring contrasting colors creates a vibrant movement of line and spatial relationships.

Intuition plays a large role in the creation of the sculptures. I experimented with systems of units and connections. These units of various materials form a link between each part as a network of repetitive movement. Parallels arise between the systematic uses of units to complete the idea of these personal memories in a physical representation. However, the brain creates a system of units to create a complete memory recorded by the sensory receptors.<sup>5</sup>

Common household activities in my childhood became a source of inspiration for the art processes I use in my sculptures. Some of the processes I use include paper-making, soap-casting, and stitching. These re-surface my personal memories. Each individual component interacts to form a memory recollected through sensory interaction.



PLATE 1

*Unfurl*

Welded steel, silicon adhesive, acrylic paint,  
wet-felted wool, hand and machine stitching. 65 x 32 x 17 inches

## UNFURL

*Unfurl* began as an exploration through texture, color, and the memories they revealed.

The title *Unfurl* was formulated because of the relationship of melding the hard and soft materials of steel and wool. This relationship needed to be harmonious, because this sculpture represents the concept of seeds to a womb or a plant, and it shows the cycle of life by using pod-like forms ready to drop to the earth, swollen with seeds of regeneration.

Steel rods are chosen as the material to fabricate the armature, both for its structural support and linear quality. This repetition of line flows from the bottom to the top. I use silicon adhesive for its textural quality and paintable surface. This material bonded to the steel and created a textured surface that resembled an appearance of gnarly muscle-like tissue.

Red, orange, and yellow tones create a vibrant movement of color around the piece. These colors work harmoniously within the linear components of the sculpture and contrast slightly with the soft felted forms within.

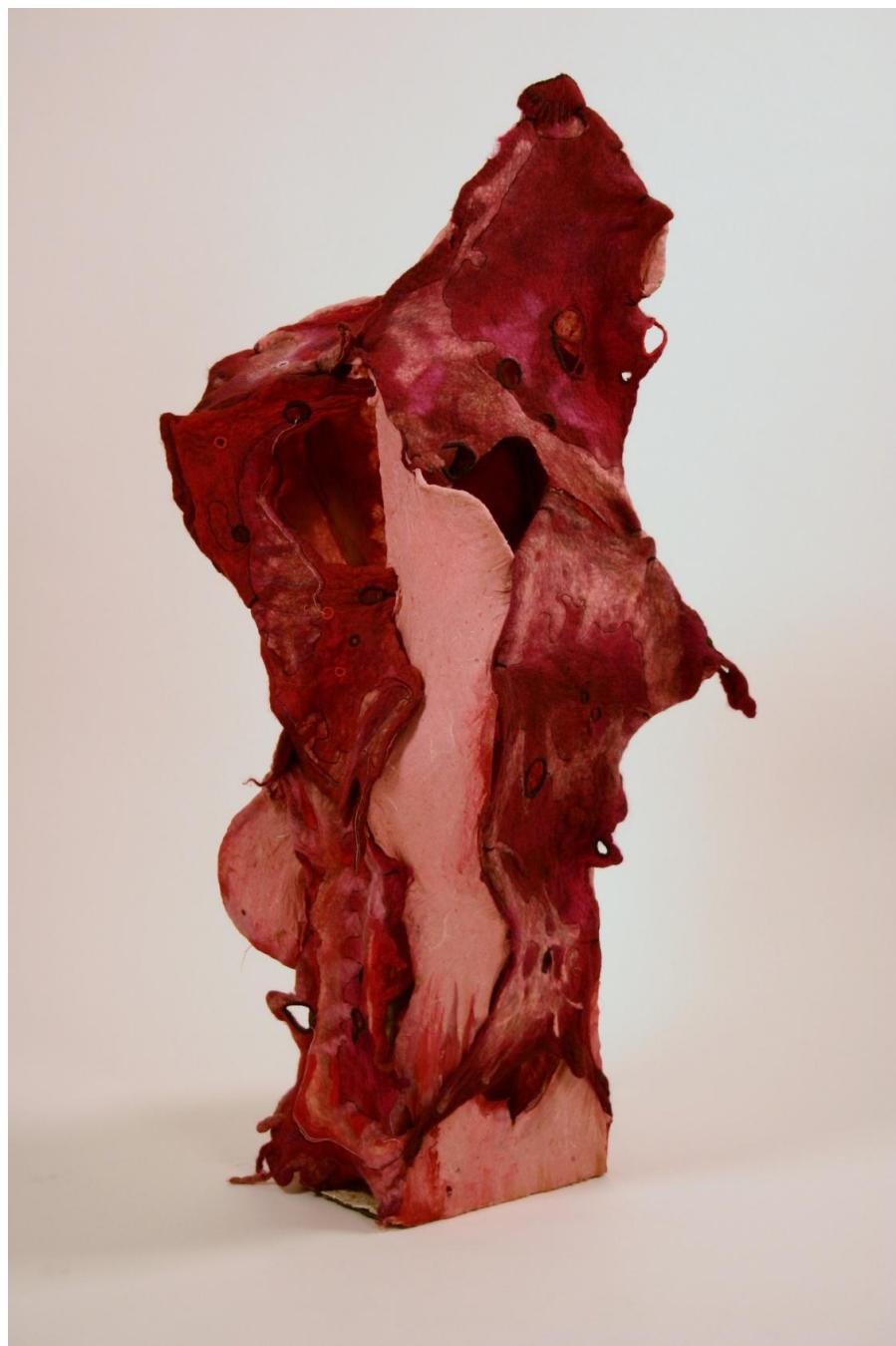


PLATE 2

*Vulnerable Meat*

Welded steel, hemp, hand-made paper with pigmented kozo,  
abaca, and cotton fibers, wet felted wool with machine and  
hand embroidery stitching.

48 x 25 x 17 inches

## VULNERABLE MEAT

The sculpture is based on my memory of field dressing deer. The scale is a literal representation of the size of the deer carcass after it had been skinned, gutted, and had its limbs removed. The main skeletal structure is welded steel. Various diameters of steel rods were used throughout the structure. The rods were bent individually; each one with abrupt changes and organic curves creating a structure that appears crippled or broken. The steel skeleton was wrapped in kozo and hemp fibers to give it a combination of a furry and bone like appearance that is reminiscent of the coat of the deer before it is stripped.

Wool was chosen for its softness and the ability to incorporate various shades of red, pink, white, and blue applied in thin layers. These layers were felted to create a depth and the appearance of raw flesh. Both machine and hand stitching were added to the surface of these felted planes to create patterned lines, representing veins, as well as fat tissue. Stitching portrays veins and tears as they would appear in the flesh of a deer that is being processed. The felted sheets were cut and machine stitched, stuffed, and then appliquéd with additional stitching. Felted and stuffed objects were placed within the interior of the steel armature to represent deer entrails. These felts of wool were also left in sheet form, cut, and stretched across the skeletal armature.

In an addition to the felted planes, handmade paper was used to cover the armature. The handmade paper is a combination of various fibers of kozo, polyester, and cotton. Red pigment was added to the cotton fiber. Mixing these fibers together and pulling handmade sheets create a surface that has a visceral quality with a slight glistening effect from the polyester fiber. The

natural color of the kozo and its long fibers that are marbled in the sheets of paper reminded me of the fat grains in the raw flesh of the deer.

The concept of this work relates to the color red and my associations with it. Watching my father during this time of the year hunt, and process deer, was a regular occurrence. When my father gutted it open to drain the blood, steam would rise from the deer's body. Next, the skin would be stripped from the flesh. Colors, textures, and surfaces of the skinned deer fascinated me. Our family took part in processing the deer for cold storage. My brother and I took great pride in assisting my father.

Feelings of pride and happiness re-surfaced through this memory. It reminds me of home, warmth, and also vulnerability. Being away from my family, I find myself vulnerable, sometimes uncomfortable in my own skin, wanting to strip it off and grow a much stronger one.



PLATE 3

*Until Springtime*

Hand-made abaca paper and

mixed-media

89 x 39 x 12 inches

## UNTIL SPRINGTIME

This work is based on a memory of the southern catalpa tree. These trees were planted by my grandfather. He used this tree to harvest the catalpa caterpillar. He used this caterpillar for his fish bait. My father carried on this seasonal occurrence with his children. Not only did this beautiful tree attract the sphinx moth, which later transformed into the caterpillar we used for fishing, it also produced lovely white bell shaped blossoms in the summer and long cigar shaped seed pods. These pods are green in the summer, and mature in autumn, by turning brown, and splitting open lengthwise to let their seeds fall in spring. The seed pod generally stayed attached to the tree limb over winter.

The sculpture is constructed of pod forms that were created using steel mesh wire instead of steel rods because it is lightweight, flexible, and durable. The mesh wire was light enough to be suspended, but still structurally secure for other materials to be applied to the surface. Large vertical tapered forms were cut from the wire mesh and cold connected together, forming the pods. The steel mesh was covered with a layer of burlap to secure the individual catkins that were collected locally from river birch trees and used on the external surface of the pods. The catkins are the actual seeds of the river birch tree and were selected for their interesting textural quality but also for the fact that they were literal seed pods.

Burlap was applied in layers on the inside and outside of the pod form. Sheets were pulled from the abaca fibers and attached wet with careful precision to allow for openings that would hold the catkins. When dry, the openings in the abaca paper revealed the burlap and each catkin could be separately inserted and sealed with white natural beeswax. The wax was also used to saturate the paper for a transparent effect that was purely aesthetic.

During the application of the catkins a memory of the catalpa caterpillar resurfaced in my mind. This particular caterpillar has a host wasp that lays eggs into the caterpillar's body. The larvae from this wasp would emerge from the living caterpillar. This memory is the inspiration for the use of the catkins which resemble the larvae emerging from the caterpillar's body.

The opening on the pod was outlined with brown wool and sealed with wax. The seed pod from the actual catalpa tree splits open in the spring and reveal a hairy substance on the inside. This fibrous material from the tree's cigar shaped seed pods is represented by both the brown wool and the loose hemp fibers used in the sculpture.

The interior of the sculpture contains these representations of the brown cigar shaped seed pods that hang from a barren tree branch imbedded inside of it. The brown pod-like forms were made using the felting process. Their natural appearance was achieved by creating a layered depth of color using various shades of brown and yellow wool. These tufts of wool were felted into coils, shaped while wet, and formed to parallel the natural appearance and scale of the actual tree's seed pod.

*Until Springtime* pays homage to this amazing tree that cultivated memories of family and transformation. The sculpture's pod-like shape is reminiscent of a cocoon. This is not a literal representation of a cocoon of a catalpa caterpillar, but a metaphorical one. The cocoon holds within it, the memory of this tree, and the bond it created within my family.



PLATE 4

*Washed Ashore*

Handmade abaca paper, wire, wool yarn, wool,  
and burned patterns.

13 x 15 x 9 inches

## WASHED ASHORE

Memories of waves crashing ashore and the sea in the summer time inspired this work.

This sculpture is based on organisms of the sea. The internal armature is constructed out of steel wire. The wire is wrapped using variegated wool yarn of browns, fleshy pinks, natural tans, blues, and greens. Pink represents the inside of a sea shell and its possible occupants. Blue wool applied in thin tufts creates the illusion of the ocean water and its shimmering surface.

The application of handmade sheets of abaca is applied wet to enclose the armature, and to manipulate, creating texture and puckering. When dry, the abaca turned out to be the perfect color I envisioned for this piece.

Patterns etched across the surface of the sculpture lead the viewer's eye around it and reveal an environment within. Using a heated needle tool to puncture the handmade abaca paper creates these patterns that cover the sculpture. The decision to burn these marks rather than stitch them was a new way to incorporate linear patterns in my work. The careful burning on this surface creates a brown and slightly yellow coloration around the smooth openings. The natural color of the abaca combined with the subtlety of the burned sections works well with my concept and creates a visual association with something worn and aged.

During the summer our family would visit my Uncle's house at the beach. The weathered appearance of this piece resembles the coral, broken sea shells, and sand dollars that would wash ashore in the surf. They would be bleached by the sun and weathered by the constant crashing of waves against the gritty sand. These once living things, active and in motion, are now weathered and washed ashore. Memories become weathered, people pass on, and life is in constant motion like the sea.



PLATE 5

*Paths of Rhythm Playing an Internal Song*

Bradford Pear branches, wool, burned handmade

abaca and kozo paper.

48 x 45 x 26 inches

## PATHS OF RYTHMN PLAYING AN INTERNAL SONG

This work is inspired by the pure enjoyment of making. Working with branches, handling and smelling them, and enjoying the texture sends my senses back to memories of working with branches as a child. I would collect different branches around my grandparents' property and assemble them. These constructions were a way to explore the outdoors by picking up fallen branches and breaking young saplings from the trees. As the limbs were broken from their branches my senses were exposed to the aromatic smell of the freshly stripped bark.

The process of constructing the sculpture began with the collection of branches. These branches are woven. While weaving these branches, ideas about the web of nature and its connectivity come to mind. An analogy of nature and regeneration is referenced by the conical form of the sculpture and the literal branches that sprout from the internal structure. The branches spilling out from the bottom of the piece represent roots. These roots were woven together using freshly pruned branches from river birch trees because of their flexibility and when dry stay in their tightly woven form.

The woven structure of branches is hidden beneath a layer of handmade abaca paper. The burnings on this piece allow light to penetrate the interior, revealing a representation of a precious memory of the forest as a child. Green wool was loosely applied to the interior of the sculpture to represent the multitude of green seen in the forest.

This sculpture metaphorically houses my memories and emotions in a comforting fragile skin of paper that envelops this forest where I collected branches. The burned patterns are pathways leading into the depths of rhythm heard in my heart.



PLATE 6

*Shelled*

Wet and needle felted wool, wire, yarn, thread, and  
hand-stitching.

25 x 10 x 9 inches

## SHELLED

Soft creaking of metal chains is heard as the wooden swing moves back and forth.

Laughter and the smell of fresh butter beans and pink-eyed peas fill the air as they are expelled from their shells. *Shelled* is a piece inspired by a memory of sisters, brothers, and cousins eagerly ready to take part in the preparation of “putting up” the vegetables, as my grandmother would say.

The sculpture is modeled to resemble characteristics of a natural bean pod. Its ambiguity gives visual clues but still remains completely its own. The linear components of this work are various green wrapped steel wire constructions running through the center of this piece, spilling out, and coiling back inside. These lines in the sculpture represent the seams that were pulled from each bean pod as they were shelled by hand. The soft circular orbs nestled within the linear pod-like structure are inspired by the actual peas or beans. My family is metaphorically represented by these orbs, revealed but not be detached from their home.

Felting creates the main structural component of this piece. This process provides the possibilities of creating a surface rich in texture, depth, and color. Many colors are layered with an understanding that they will appear subtly and fade back into the overall color of green. As each color of wool is layered, more colors are revealed such as red, purple, and yellow.

The color green carries the memory I have of the piles of unshelled peas and beans that would be shelled by me and my family. Stained with greenish purple fingers from shelling the multicolored bean pods, we worked together on the wooden swing while we sung hymnals, belched the alphabet, and secretly planned our next trip to the forbidden stream.

Using wool for the main construction of the sculpture holds within it a parallel to the blankets that each one of my grandmother's grandchildren got when they were born. Each blanket was hand-stitched with special care put into each loop and executed with love. Her hands worked with care and tenderness, instilling in us the care we took in shelling each pea pod.



PLATE 7

*Will this Turn my Hands Red?*

Welded steel, cast and pigmented soap, handmade abaca paper,

kozo fiber, yarn, bees wax, and pigments.

32 x 26 x 18 inches

## WILL THIS TURN MY HANDS RED?

Tasks and processes involved in the cooking of soap and the action of pouring it into molds re-surface a memory of hot colorful liquid pouring from a container held by my grandmother's hands. This process of making jelly from fresh fruit is what inspired this sculpture. The colors chosen to use in this sculpture are associated with the recollections involved in the sensory recall. For example, the vibrant red juice from the pomegranate tree that grew in the backyard of my childhood home.

Steel is used as the main structural component of the sculpture. The cast pieces of soap are pierced and slid onto steel spikes. These spikes are welded to the planes of formed sheet metal within the cavity of the structure. These planes are offset from one another, each flanking steel rod constructions providing a voluminous quality and allowing for adequate visual interaction of the interior. This creates structural and visual balance. The finished skeletal structure is sealed to avoid rust. A linear pattern on the exterior surface of the planes creates balance and rhythm, working harmoniously with the steel rod constructions opposing them. The sealed surface of the steel planes is scored with a metal stylus creating a cross-hatched pattern. The exposed lines allowed for rust to only appear on the etched surface.

The wet application of kozo fiber causes the etched surfaces to rust, creating a subtle pattern beneath them. The fibers are not processed into pulp, but left in strips of cooked bark laid upon the exterior shell. The steel subtly shines through the layer of kozo, catching the eye. Grey covers the steel rods and compliments the color of the sheet steel.

Four variations are modeled from oil based clay and plaster molds are taken. Test were conducted using various pigments of red and orange, adding specific amounts of each color to

the batches of melted soap achieving the desired color of the fruit. Soap being easy to carve, is beneficial in modifying each one of the fruit pieces slightly, to provide visual interest.

The handmade sheets of abaca are applied to the interior surface of the sculpture once the soap castings are set inside. Abaca is chosen because of its white color and reminds me of the pulp of the natural fruit. Abaca covers the steel interior of the sculpture. Lightly dry brushing the textured areas of abaca with various shades of red, yellow, and brown complement the color of the cast-soap and showcase an internal quality. Natural white beeswax is applied to the surface of the pigments because of its translucency and ability to saturate the paper giving it a visceral appearance.



PLATE 8

*Feeding Memories*

Wrapped welded steel rod, steel wire embroidery thread,

yarn, and hand stitched fabric constructions.

36 ½ x 27 x 14 inches

## FEEDING MEMORIES

Stitching is used in this sculpture to symbolize the connections to memory and family.

The stitch represents a constant line, a reminder, a visual story to be told, strengthening and continuing the cycle of family.

Importance of focusing on the line in this work is achieved through the use of the color black. Because the black is void of any dramatic or drastic color changes, it maintains the continued visual interest in the line, and leads the eye around the piece.

The interior soft forms are constructed with a sewing machine, stuffed, and additional stitching is appliquéd on their surface. As the interior forms are stitched, the memory of my grandmother who is my inspiration is evoked.

This work has a linear enclosure surrounding and connecting to the stitched forms on the interior. Steel rod is chosen for the main construction because of its ability to remain rigid. The rod is sectioned into units and intuitively cold bent using the the roll mill. These curves slightly mimic the stitched line, creating visual balance. The curvilinear sections of steel are welded together to complete a unified form. This continues throughout the piece creating a variety of thick to thin tapering lines, and organic lines flowing like tendrils from the interior constructions. The outer composition of the sculpture houses the soft forms and resembles a dwelling.

This metaphor of a dwelling houses these memories, keeping them safe. The continued act of stitching in this work produced an intimate and emotional stimulus, which in turn strengthened the bonds within my family.



PLATE 9

*Recollection through Sensory Reaction*

Chenille wrapped welded steel rod,

hand embroidered dyed silk.

41 x 34 x 30 inches

## RECOLLECTION THROUGH SENSORY REACTION

The storage of memory and the recollection of it through sensory reactions such as smell, sight, touch, and taste are stored in a part of the brain called the limbic system. The results of my research, pertaining particularly to illustrations of this system, are referenced in this sculpture.

The use of line in this sculpture creates a continuing circuit. Steel is chosen as the material to create the structure supporting the soft components. Several lengths of steel were cold bent and welded to complete the form.

Chenille yarn with its soft and feathery appearance is used in the wrapping of the steel. Both the texture and the color of this yarn are chosen because of their resemblance to the network of nerves used in the limbic system. The texture of the yarn is both soft and hairy. This texture pertains to the fragility of these nerves in our brain. The delicacy and internal quality of how they actually appear on the inside of our bodies is an idea visually conveyed by using this material. Blue yarn is chosen because of the association commonly misunderstood as the color of our blood while it is inside the human body. However, this network of lines does not represent the blood vessels in the body, but the nerves in the brain.

The soft constructions of Shibori dyed silk are suspended from the lines representing nerve receptors. These soft nodules are representations of neurons<sup>6</sup> or main nerve cells, which receive and transmit information in the brain. Shibori is a Japanese resist process used in dying fabric. This process is chosen because of the repetitive patterning achieved by this type of resist dying. Each soft nodule construction is met with blue lines, flowing into the stitching, traveling around them, and merging back into the network of proposed nerves.



PLATE 10

Reminiscences

Oil painted cast aluminum, wet-felted wool.

18 x 19 x 12 inches

## REMINISCENCES

Casting aluminum is a process I was not familiar with, but was one of interest. My concentration in undergraduate school was ceramics and I was comfortable working with clay and the potter's wheel as a tool to create bulbous forms. As these forms were manipulated on the wheel, I thought about the garlic plants that grew at my grandparents' home.

A mother mold is taken from this ceramic form. Five wax patterns were taken from the mother mold. This satisfied my idea of a tract of memory. These five components provide the desired height and width in creating balance when repeating these forms.

Aluminum was chosen because of its lightweight characteristics. These forms needed to be hollow and possess a hard form that could withstand any weight added to the interior. The separate aluminum castings are welded together creating a visual dynamic.

Contained within these bulbous forms are the soft representations of memory and the storage and careful packing of them. Felted forms provide softness and fragility. Hard outer shells of cast aluminum protect these soft and vulnerable pieces.

Again drawing from my experiences as a young girl, the outer surfaces of this sculpture are fashioned to evoke the garlic plants grown by my grandmother. The potent smell from the plant is intriguing and the flower that blossoms from them is brilliant in color and shape. However, the colors chosen for the sculpture are not the natural colors of this plant, but vibrant colors of oranges, reds, and blues. These colors give the structure a visceral quality.



PLATE 11

*Hippocampus*

Natural and Pigmented Kozo fiber

wrapped formed and welded steel

20 x 24 x 19 inches

## HIPPOCAMPUS

The hippocampus is part of the limbic system of the brain involved in forming, storing, and processing memory.<sup>7</sup> This sculpture is based on illustrations of the brain. The hippocampus is physically described as a curved elongated structure. Cradled within the formed steel plane of this sculpture is my interpretation of the hippocampus. The steel plane was cut and manipulated into a biomorphic shape. The shape creates the idea of a barrier or membrane that isolates one part of our brain from another. The openings in this plane visually integrate the steel rods covered with kozo bark. These lines represent the receptors in the brain that feed through from the bottom of the sculpture and surround the representation of the main nerve cell. The steel was forged into organic lines forming the main nerve cell lying at the center of busy receptors, which communicate with each other. The receptors or pathways are cold bent in a roll mill out of steel rod creating a smooth more curvilinear line. The decision to bend these steel rods with two different approaches was a way to differentiate my interpretation between nerve receptors and the main nerve cell. They lead into the openings of the steel plane through curved nodules that integrate themselves into its form, melding into the hippocampus represented by the curved kozo wrapped structure. Other openings in the plane suggest entrances waiting to take part in the frenzy of impulses, firing back and forth. These openings represent an absence of memory or one that has not yet formed.

The kozo fiber is used to wrap the structure to create a textured surface and provide the form with an intestinal or organ-like quality. Conceptually the kozo fiber in this piece is used to represent a recollection, recalled through the cooking process of the fibers and later wrapped around this structure.

Recalling these past events in my life was achieved through sensory stimuli, like the smell of fibers being cooked in my studio. As my nose reacts to this scent, a glimpse of the past brings back the smell of the paper mill behind my grandmother's house where my father worked. This fueled the interest of using this plant fiber and my experiences associated with it. Cooking these plant fibers also recalls the regular occurrence of canning vegetables, using the speckled canning pots owned by my grandmother. The plant fibers used in my work are cooked in one of those same pots that were once used to process the vegetables grown in my family's garden. The process of cooking, rinsing, and beating the fibers is reminiscent of the canning process used when storing fruits and vegetables such as cucumbers or figs. This piece portrays the process of how the sensory receptors jumpstart once a sense has been experienced, in this case, smell. The sensory reaction then goes on its journey through the brain and into the hippocampus to be stored and recalled for later use. Extensive use of the wrapping in this structure suggests the idea of having a protective layer around something that is fragile, like my memories.

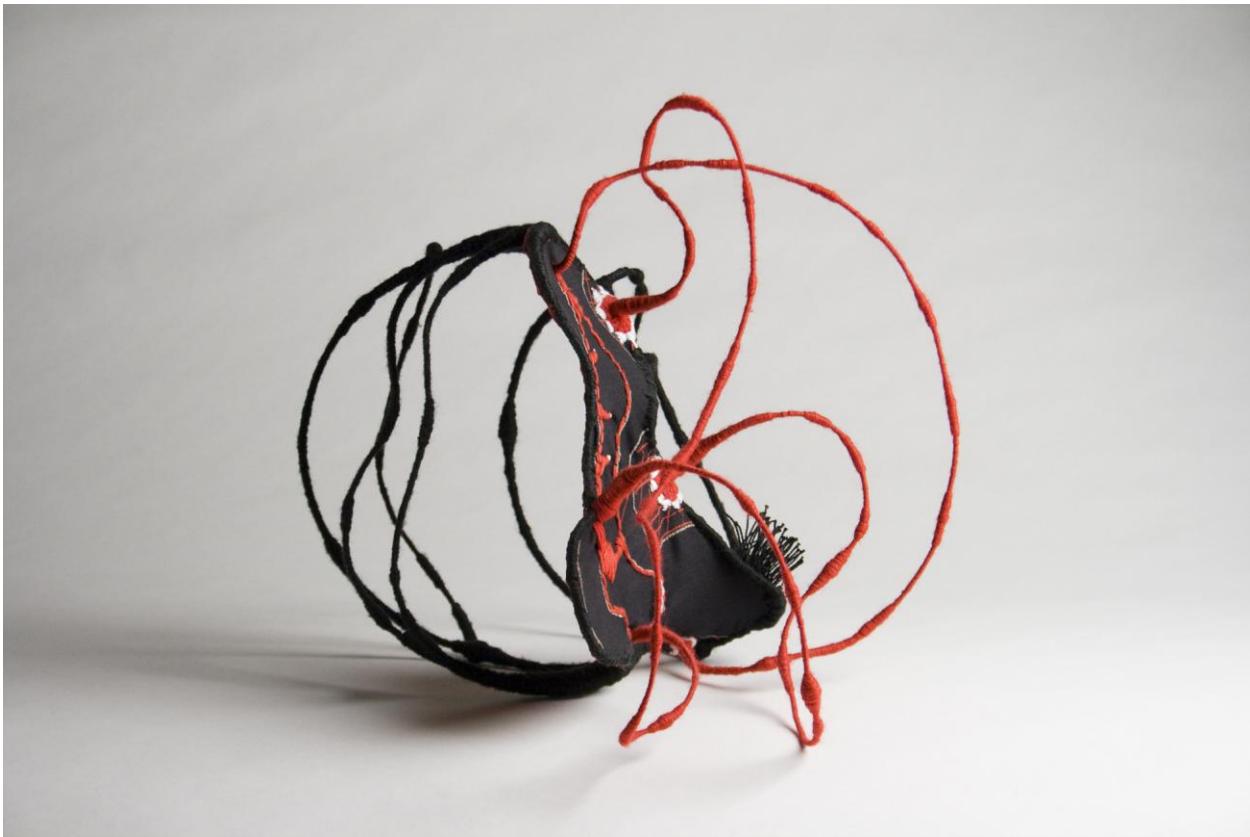


PLATE 12

*Evolving Stitch*

Wire, machine and hand stitched fabric, embroidery thread, yarn.

12 ½ x 12 x 9 inches

## EVOLVING STITCH

Sensory receptors are involved in the process of forming and storing particular instances in one's life. They are individual nerve cells that work together to provide a continuous pathway of remembrance, fluctuating back and forth. *Evolving Stitch* represents this idea. The flat plane of the sculpture is the center or midpoint of the bustle of communication. The graphic elements in this piece were the result of experimenting with a different way to create surface design by means other than hand stitching. The graphic elements create a rhythm of various lines that all flow into each other. The patterns are both biomorphic and systematic. This image is a result of categorizing these linear networks into a proposed filing system created by the stitching. Storing these nerve cell networks is represented by the graphic elements on the plane. This action in the sculpture creates a unified image, a complete memory. As these representations of memory are stored, nodules created with white embroidery thread expel red lines representing the travel of information, reaching outward for the opportunity to be revealed.

The handmade paper was adhered to the opposing side of the graphics to present a quality of interior flesh. Red wool yarn was chosen because of its soft and furry appearance. Black was chosen for aesthetic reasons to work with the many variations of reds in the interior. The black lines surround this meaty surface protecting the memory.

The act of stitching relates to the rehearsal of memory in its mission to form an event by piecing together scenes to create a more accurate portrayal of an event or episode. Episodic memory is memory from personally experienced events.<sup>8</sup> Within these stitches is the representation of creating a memory. The fleshy underside of the structure creates an association

with what lies within my brain. Memories are vulnerable, susceptible to being lost and perhaps never retrieved. Repetition of the stitch solidifies them.<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Leaving East Carolina and my studio space and the abundance of tools equipment is a challenge. I will not need all of these tools to create my sculpture but I gained the knowledge to continue my creativity activity. Various materials while here were intentionally experimented with to ensure the transition from my current situation here to the smallest of spaces. Although, I worked in my studio, half of this body of work was made in my small apartment. Regardless of my future accommodations or situations, my desire to make art will never cease. Pursuing a professional career as an artist is my number one priority.

My family is proud of my accomplishments in sculpture and they are interested in viewing and experiencing this body of work in person. I am looking forward to their responses. Because this body of work is based on the interactions of my family in my younger years they are even more eager to see if they can visualize these memories reflected by my sculpture. Importance in responses and reactions from unknown participates viewing my sculpture is even more exciting, listening to their reactions, and seeing what associations with their memories resurface. Engaging in these new experiments will continue my interest in gaining knowledge about memory.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to the Webster dictionary, sensory reactions pertain to the sensation as sensory impulses, especially those nerves and nerve fibers which convey to a nerve center, enacting impulses resulting in sensation; also sometimes loosely employed in the sense of afferent, to indicate nerve fibers which convey impressions of any kind to a nerve center  
<http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/sensory>. Retrieved February 15, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> These reactions are coded into sensory memory. The sensory memories act as buffers for stimuli received through the senses. Information is passed from sensory memory into short term and then into long term memory.  
[http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751\\_97\\_winter/Topics/human-cap/memory.html](http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/human-cap/memory.html). Retrieved February 13, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> This system is composed of a group of neural structures in the brain below the cerebral cortex, centered on the hypothalamus and including the hippocampus and amygdale, involved with the control of emotion, motivation, memory, and some homeostatic regulatory processes  
<http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/%20Limbic%20system>. Retrieved February 16, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Amongst scientists there is a widely held opinion that recollection depends critically on the hippocampus, fornix, mammillary bodies and the anterior thalamus (Mayes & Roberts 1404). These all work together in the limbic system to evoke recall.

<sup>5</sup> To provide a more comprehensible understanding of this an explanation research into *Theories of Episodic Memory* were conducted; Mayes and Robert (p. 1404) propose the idea that “recognition of episodes typically involves a directed search for a target memory. This may involve several stages in which the person retrieves cues which then reactivate further memories until eventually it is judged that a retrieved memory corresponds to a correct episode.” In other words, the mind pieces all of these flashes or scenes together to formulate a true event in one’s life.

<sup>6</sup> To find out more information on what a neuron or nerve cell is visit this site  
<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/cells.html>. Retrieved February 28, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> To find out more information on the hippocampus visit this site.  
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hippocampus>. Retrieved February 15, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> To find out more on episodic memory see *Theories of Episodic Memory* (Mayes and Robert p.1395).

<sup>9</sup> According to Mayes and Robert, “episodic memories of great personal significance also typically receive a large amount of rehearsal over the years”

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chudler, Eric H. Neuroscience for Kids. March 5, 2011. Eric H. Chudler All Rights Reserved.

Retrieved February 28, 2011. <<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/introb.html>>.

Georgia Tech University. “Sensory Memories.” Online Posting. Retrieved February 13, 2011 from Georgia Tech University Website:

<[http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751\\_97\\_winter/Topics/human-cap/links.html](http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/human-cap/links.html)>.

“Hippocampus.” Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary. Dictionary.com website. Retrieved February 15, 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hippocampus>>.

“Limbic System.” Webster’s 1913 Revised Unabridged Dictionary Version. Webster.com website. Retrieved February 16, 2011. <<http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/%20Limbic%20system>>.

Mayes, R. & Roberts, N. (2001, September). “Theories of Episodic Memory.” Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences. Vol. 356, No. 1413, Episodic Memory. Pp. 1395-1408. The Royal Society. Retrieved February 13, 2011. JSTOR Online Database.  
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3067099>>.

“Sensory.” Webster’s 1913 Revised Unabridged Dictionary Version. Webster.com website. Retrieved February 15, 2011 <<http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/sensory>>.