

Sidney Westenskow

I am a multimedia artist focusing in sculpture and fiber art as well as watercolor and oil painting. My work has developed around themes of portraiture and self portraiture (especially in terms of the body), memory, identity, and documentation. I draw inspiration from artists such as Sarah Lucas, Sophia Rupert, and Sonia Gomez. I hope to continue to embody their ability to work in diverse media and their uncensored willingness to talk about the body.

In this body of work clothing is used as a tool to represent identity. Discarded clothing was collected from my own closet as well as my peers to create large biomorphic plush sculptures. These objects suggest almost human forms, mimicking the way the body fills clothing through the lumps and creases created by tension between the plush filling and the seams which have been created and recreated in the fabric. The objects begin as two-dimensional but when sewn together, stuffed, and hung from the ceiling they are activated and transform into three dimensional sculptures. The sculptures, though they exist as a collection of similar objects, all have their own personality. They have unique shapes and unique histories, and can be interacted with or related to in many different ways depending on the material of the clothing used, and the size and shape of the sculpture.

The clothing items used symbolize the evolution of identity that the owner of the clothing experienced. Once, these clothing items were worn because someone felt that they served as an accurate way to visualize their external identity. They no longer wear them because they have changed, but at one point this is who they were. There is a brutal and literal deconstruction of self that happens in the studio. I take these significant items, full of memories, and I cut them apart, destroying old commercially produced seams and creating new ones. I am giving them new life, taking away their original purpose and giving them a new one. Now, instead of a body, polyester fiber fill fills the clothing, allowing for the collection of identifying objects to take on a whole new form, conceptually activated by ideas of memory and past self. The objects themselves represent a physical version of the artists perception of memory and how memory is experienced, not in organized compartments of ideas existing in a neat timeline, but rather experienced all at once, in sliced and collaged unpredictable patterns.

I aim to recreate the same sense of discovery that I experience while making my art for the viewers. This is one of the reasons that while on display, the viewer is encouraged to play with, wear, sit on, and freely experience the sculptures without the traditional restrictions commonly enforced in the gallery. It is important that the viewers feel comfortable and welcome in the space with the work. Though the sculptures are grotesque in their appearance as a result of the cutting and refiguring construction process, their color and material keep them approachable and relatable. These sculptures are funny, grotesque, playful, and evoke explorative nostalgia when used to their fullest potential.

I have executed many public performances with these works, wearing them around my current town of residence, Pullman, WA, throwing them down stairs and stairwells while people are making their way up or down, burrowing myself and my peers in piles of them, and spending extended periods of time buried in these piles in public spaces. These experiences have broadened the way I see my sculptures, allowing them to exist in my mind as limitless seemingly alive extensions of myself or others. They are objects which can be cuddled with and treated with care, or they can be carelessly thrown and squished. The way the viewer decides to interact with the work is a vital part of the work itself.

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BFA Portfolio Annotated Submissions List

1. Sculpture 1: Position A, 2019
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
2. Sculpture 1: Position B
3. Sculpture 1: Position C
4. Wall Mount 1, 2020
Various clothing items. Dimensions vary
5. Sculpture 2, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
6. Sculpture 3: Position A, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
7. Sculpture 3: Position B
8. Sculpture 4: Position A, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
9. Sculpture 4: Position B
10. Sculpture 5: Position A, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
11. Sculpture 5: Position B
12. Sculpture 6: Position A, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
13. Sculpture 6: Position B
14. Sculpture 7: Position A, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
15. Sculpture 7: Position B
16. Sculpture 7: Position C
17. Sculpture 7: Position D
18. Sculpture 8: Position A, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary
19. Sculpture 8: Position B
20. Sculpture 9, 2020
Various clothing items, Polyester fiber fill. Dimensions vary