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CYCLE

CYCLE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Art

By

Nichole Annette Howard
University of North Texas
Bachelor Fine Arts in Ceramics, 2009

May 2013
University of Arkansas

ABSTRACT

Cycle is the exhibition of a year-long project that experiments with growing food and medicinal herbs. Alongside an exploration of plant growth, I transfer iconic cultural objects of daily life from plastic to ceramics. Using material culture as a physical and conceptual platform, this re-contextualization of objects offers a radically different view of use and meaning. I transform the soda-filled, plastic Big Gulp cup into a terra planter filled with new life.

My working method involves making molds of Big Gulp plastic cups and transferring the form into a traditional plant growing material, terra cotta. I then germinate seeds inside these objects and use those plants for large gardens, where healthy food and medicinal herbs can be accessed.

The Big Gulp as an object of mainstream culture is currently in the throes of political warfare. In New York City, Mayor Bloomberg proposes law that prohibits citizens from consuming sugary beverages from vessels larger than sixteen ounces. For me, the conflict surrounding this law marks a paradox within the American relationship to food. *Cycle* looks to both sides of this argument and attempts to represent, understand and blend the two seemingly opposed sides that capture a larger picture contemporary American culture.

This Thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my Thesis Committee: Jeannie Hulen, Mathew McConnell, Kristin Musgnug and Alissa Walls for their constant guidance in my graduate work, without whom this thesis would not be possible. I must also thank Leo Mazow for his support and constant honesty throughout my time at UA. A special thank you to Amanda Solov for her foundation teachings and the inheritance of her garden that made this project possible. This endeavor came to fruition only through the support of my parents Rodney and Therese Levins. An extra thanks to my mother for all the food in the freezer and her long hours of making and installing my work. My husband, Scott McDonald, is an invaluable force behind my thesis work for his willingness to support me in every way possible. The volunteers who helped me install my thesis exhibition: Jodi Foutch, Amanda Wunderlich, Elizabeth Quinn, David Scott Cunningham, Cambry P.D. Newton, Macy Burr and Hannah Waddell. To Ozark Alternatives' Paul Chapracki and Amanda Wunderlich for opening their doors to me and endlessly sharing their farming wisdom. To Amanda Austin and Marie Denoon at Cardo's Farm Project, a special thanks for the support of my gardening and artistic voyage.

DEDICATION

Cycle is dedicated to my Grandfather, Thurmon Levins, whose green thumb I inherited.

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INTRODUCTION

During the first year and a half of graduate school, my work focused on form, color and the specific function of pottery. In the spring of my second year, I immersed myself in rural Taiwanese culture for a three-month residency in Tainan, Taiwan. During that time, I made formal decisions in my work based on cultural observations regarding food practices. I became curious about the seamless integration of starkly opposing tea practices within Taiwanese culture, and this fascination became the subject for a new body of work that formed the foundation for my final year of research in graduate school.

Taiwan allowed me not only to make and study the history of ceramic art works, but also to observe and participate in the cultural traditions surrounding tea activity. As an active consumer of bubble tea, I frequented the nearby village bubble teashops, sampling tea drinks from different venues and noting the nuances of the recipes while simultaneously attending performances of traditional Taiwanese tea ceremonies. Tea rituals are richly formulated in Taiwan, pulling from both Japanese and Chinese traditions. Endless conversations about tea and conventional research on the history of Taiwan revealed layers of information that illuminated the paradoxical nature of Taiwanese tea practice.

To begin my work, I collected foam and plastic bubble tea cups through saving my own and requesting that my studio mates also reserve their cups for my use. With the collected objects, I made plaster molds that yielded porcelain mimics. The process of transforming disposable materials into porcelain was important to the work in order to assimilate the materials of traditional tea into a bubble tea context. Out of these materials, I fabricated brightly colored porcelain bubble tea cups and wide-gauged ceramic straws. In addition to bubble tea objects, I made traditional tea pots, cups and trays. After producing paraphernalia from each branch of tea consumption, a simple rearrangement of objects completely shifted their contexts. I placed bubble tea cups on top of traditional tea trays and filled small porcelain tea cups with uncooked tapioca balls and drinking straws (Fig. 1 & 2). To emphasize excess, I made an installation with slip casted soy sauce bowls filled with tea leaves of my own consumption that I saved over the three-month period.(Fig.3 & 4).

The goal of this body of work was to observe and report on the beauty inherent in a culture flexible enough to embody ritualized behavior through ceremony and contemporary practices adapted for fast-pace life. The level of design and craft designated to bubble tea objects led me to a closer understanding between the two starkly different practices.

The same level of consciousness that ritualized tea ceremony demand takes identical hold in bubble tea designs. A practice designed to cater to a scooter-driving country, bubble tea comes in cups machine sealed with heat and a thin layer of plastic. Bubble teashops are almost exclusively to-go venues and tea is served in small plastic bags that hold one individual cup, which is easily attached to a hook that comes stock on most Taiwanese scooters. Wide-gauge straws are designed to a width that allow for the perfect amount of tapioca ball and tea to make its way into the mouth of the consumer and every shop is known for their specialty in tea concoction. Teashops are popular because of their quality of tea, milk and bubble (cooked tapioca ball) and for their level of craftsmanship in tea mixtures, integrating fresh fruit and juices. The elaborate specialization of tea products and the level of intention behind design of function and mixture are comparable to the ritualized performance in tea ceremony.

Absorbing information about object-based similarities between bubble and traditional tea practices was key to my understanding of a wider cultural complex, and the body of work produced from it was paramount to locating the main concerns regarding my own artistic voice: food as a cultural identifier.

Changing processes from my earlier graduate studies, my work shifted from food service towards understanding food at its most fundamental level: seed and germination. To do this, I started with the most iconic object of soda consumption, The Big Gulp, and made investigations on American food culture from this platform.

SODA HISTORY

When Mayor Bloomberg proposed a law that prohibits citizens from consuming sugary beverages from vessels larger than sixteen ounces, he created great change in the American cultural landscape. By publicly addressing issues of health surrounding the cultural norms of food, he put excessive soda consumption on the American consciousness and called on both New York citizens and the entire American population to connect food to health. Rather than merely pointing toward healthy lifestyle choices, the law attacked a major root cause of obesity in America: high sugar consumption levels of soda.¹

Used by pharmacists at the beginning of the 20th century (before modern pharmaceuticals), soda concoctions disguised the unpalatable tastes of herbal tinctures and teas.² Soda originated from the invention of mineral water and grew to include various flavors through the addition of sugar.

During the time of the Pharmacy as an active social space, the newly established Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had no way of affecting daily life. Pharmacists used any material they desired and medicines that are illegal in contemporary pharmaceuticals constituted the norm in soda ingredients. It was common for soda recipes to contain morphine, cocaine, and heroin, and these harmful additives quickly became popular and addictive. Over time, the soda fountain, only located in pharmacies, became a hub of community activity, especially during Prohibition, with little regard in the public's eyes for the dangerous level of potency within the drinks. The distribution of heavy drugs at the soda fountain deteriorated the health of the American people and the FDA forced pharmacists to discontinue the use of addictive narcotics and to alter soda ingredients. Recipes became standardized, and mass distribution replaced the community event of the soda fountain and the popular nuanced recipes of soda

¹ Mark Bittman, "Banning the Big Gulp Ban," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2013. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/03/19/banning-the-big-gulp-ban/>

² Allison Aubrey, "In Soda Revival, Fizzy Taste Bubbles Up From The Past," *National Public Radio*, September 1, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/01/140093866/in-soda-revival-fizzy-taste-bubbles-up-from-the-past>

jerks.⁷ Though contemporary soda formulas do not contain narcotic drugs, they do contain high levels of sugar and are sold in increasingly higher quantities.

The first project I did in response to this information was a total function reversal of a soda container. I filled the largest Seven Eleven vessel, the 64 ounce Double Gulp, with growing medium and medicinal herbs. My aim here was first, to highlight the absurdity of size and also to offer a new use for it as a planter instead of a soda container.

FARMING

Using the methodology of food as cultural identifier, I transferred my Taiwanese work into in an American context with the Big Gulp series. An intriguing element surrounding the conflict of Bloomberg's law proposal is its commentary on American culture in regard to food, consumption, and excess. I would argue that the Big Gulp Ban, as it is popularly referred to in media, represents a fundamental divide in American ideology between excessive consumption (Big Gulp) and excessive austerity (Young Farmer's Movement).

The Young Farmer's movement is a trend toward young, educated people foregoing the status quo of the professional business world and entering farming as a viable occupation. As a whole, the movement is part protest to conventional farming methods, which harm both the earth and its inhabitants, and part nostalgia for simpler times.

My interest in this movement and its level of cultural impact on contemporary America, led me to volunteer at a local farm, to grow my own garden, and to blog about my findings. I worked one day a week at Ozark Alternatives farm during the summer season and in return, the host farmers compensated my labor with meals and fresh produce from their harvests. Time spent at Ozark Alternatives proved

⁷ Darcy O'Neil, *Fix The Pumps*, Art of Drink. 2009

invaluable, as the farm served as a host for the WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) organization, which put me into contact with many young farmers. Working alongside the individuals drawn to this farm through WWOOF provided insights and nuances into the movement's ideologies and its ground workers.

One recurrent conversation I participated in, both in person and in conventional research, focused on a desire to escape from the corporate business world and instead use one's body in labor for a greater good in food production. The idea is that labor is a portal to a way of living that connects the farmer to dignity, pride and autonomy and that these values lead to greater levels of happiness within themselves and ultimately to culture at large through community involvement.⁴ This observation led me to T.J. Jackson Lears' thoughts on anti-modernist attitudes and their connection to the Arts and Crafts movement during the early twentieth century.⁵ At this time in American history, culture experienced rapid changes that dramatically shifted daily life into rationalized labor structures through capitalism. The arts and crafts movement reflected an attitude similar to that of the young farmer's in that it went to great lengths to re-establish and maintain traditional crafts workshop that produced high quality, hand built objects whose production rejected the lifeless qualities of assembly line goods. Just as the arts and crafters sought a return to a holistic approach to the production of artistic daily objects, the young farmers work towards similar goals in food production.

The arts and crafts movement ultimately failed in its larger goals. It produced solid and original works of its time, but when the power of capitalism swept over, artisan workshops closed their doors. Similarly, history proves (even through the 1960's and 70's organic movement) that small communities of artisan crafts people and farmers are eventually devoured by larger corporate structures. However, culture

⁴ Zoe Ida Bradbury, et. Al. *Greenhorns*. (North Adams, MA: Story Publishing, 2012)

⁵ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920*. (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London. 1994)

desperately needed the Arts and Crafts movement at its time and the same is true in regard to human and ecological health today.

Though my gallery garden is a small gesture, it meets its goals in terms of inspiring growing in a new generation of people. We have forgotten how to grow food and in order for environmental change to come to fruition, we must create fundamental social change first. Gardening and growing one's own food is our most powerful tool.

BIG GULP SERIES

With experience and observation in hand, the Big Gulp became the catalyst to visual representation of both worlds of excess and austerity. I collected Big Gulps and similar cups from gas stations, including Seven Eleven, and made plaster molds to create terra cotta seedling pots and trays. I used original plastic containers and terra cotta mimics, and filled them with growing medium and medicinal and culinary herbs. I based my decision on the types of herbs to plant on my own health needs and on their ability to add beneficial qualities to a vegetable garden.

A list of herbs planted:

- Borage
Helpful in relieving digestion and fatigue and is also helpful as an anti-inflammatory and a diuretic.
- Bergamot, Wild
As a member of the mint family, it is helpful in relieving stomach upset.
- Calendula
The petals of the calendula flower are both edible and medicinal. It is used widely as a skin aide in relieving sunburn, eczema and itchy skin. Used as a tea, it brightens blonde hair.
- Comfrey

An ancient herb, comfrey is used to apply externally to aid in healing wounds. An ancient tale suggests that the plant is capable of healing broken bones and is thus used as a way to relieve injury in muscle and bone.

- Chamomile

When chamomile is used in tea, it is helpful to both the stomach and the nerves. It is often used as a bedtime medicine to help induce sleep, but it can also aid in easing stress, reducing swelling in joints, healing wounds, reducing skin inflammation. The herb is also said to help aid in menstrual disorders, migraines and hemorrhoids.

- Catnip

Another member of the mint family, catnip is beneficial for fevers, flu's and colds. It can be taken as an aid to stomach upset and is calming to the nervous system. It can be used to aid with flatulence, diarrhea colic, as an enema to cleanse the lower bowel and has said to be helpful to miscarriages and premature birth.

- Coriander

This is an ancient herb used to help prevent digestive disorders and helps to increase appetite.

- Evening Primrose

With Native American roots, seeds were used for poultices and food. Today, research shows that this plant possesses a rare essential fatty acid- gamma-linoleic acid. It can be used to treat skin conditions and PMS.

- Fennel

This plant can be used to treat abdominal bloating and as an anti-inflammatory.

- Lavender

This herb is popularly used to treat upset stomach and calm the nerves.

- Lemongrass

It can be used culinary in soups and dishes and is also a strong anti-inflammatory.

- Motherwort

When used as a tea, mother wort is capable of lowering blood pressure, normalizes heart function, it can alleviate pain during childbirth, stimulates the uterus to contract after delivery and thus, preventing infection. It also helps calm the central nervous system.

- Paprika Pepper

Widely used as a spice for foods, paprika can also possess as much as nine times the vitamin C found in tomatoes. It is also an antibacterial and stimulant to help blood pressure, circulation and digestion.

- Sage, white

When made into a tea, sage can help to decrease mucous secretions in the sinuses, throat and lungs. It can also be used as a stomach tonic, sore throats and for heavy menstruation.

- Saint John's Wort

Widely used in the west, this plant can aid in depression.⁶

In August I produced an exhibition entitled *64 oz. Garden* that consisted of a windowsill garden in which twenty-four 64 oz. Double Gulp cups (the largest size) were filled with growing medium and herbs (Fig.6). Similar to the bubble and traditional tea paraphernalia arrangement, I re-contextualized the 64 oz. cups by making them vessels for plants with healing qualities, rather than with unhealthy soda. Alongside the apothecary, I made large terra cotta containers for growing vegetables, edible flowers and culinary herbs. I filled large metal and wooden found objects with growing material and displayed fully-grown plants, on the cusp of fruiting. The *Cycle* project includes August work, winter work, materials, forms and experimentations, and current spring works. The full scope of the project encompasses representations of plant growth at every seasonal level of the yearly cycle.

MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS

After a summer season of farming and gardening experimentation, plant life died, and my work moved to accommodate this seasonal period. For the fall semester of my final year of graduate school, I focused

⁶ Rebecca Johnson, et al., *National Geographic Guide to Medicinal Herbs: The World's Most Effective Healing Plants* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2010)

on material experiments that came to inform the final thesis of *Cycle*. My working method set out to test the capabilities of clay, seed and soil to see how far I could push the mediums. The results of experiments with clay and seed led to a material understanding of both, but most importantly to a conceptual one in which plants would be considered art objects.

A list of material experiments:

- **Root Structure Study**
By pulling existing plants from the garden and bringing them under studio observation, I observed the root structures of individual plants.
- **Container Designs for Specific Plants**
Through the information provided by the root structure study, I designed vessels whose forms are based on the need of plant roots. Pepper roots spread outward and need wide, shallow basins and tomato roots grow straight down and need deep, narrow containers.
- **Disposable Ceramic Seedling Pot**
Through a root study, I found that transplanted seedlings with recycled paper pots tend to sprawl less through the soil and carry fewer fruits. Alternative designs replace the paper cup with a serrated, low fire terra cotta vessel. The object is porous enough to allow the seed to germinate fully and to be transplanted directly into the soil with no harmful effects on the roots ability to break through the material and mature fully.
- **Seedling Watering System**
Using plumbing parts of PVC pipe, I designed a form for ease of seedling development. Along with this form, I built small funnels that would aide the vessel in watering itself. The form is hollow on the interior walls and receives water from two different sources: one is watered through a funnel built directly into the form and the other is watered through a piping system that lays flat across a number of serial forms (Fig.7 & 8).
- **Seed Germination Through Moist Clay**
By wedging seeds into chunks of earthenware, I found that seeds were strong enough to germinate in this dense material. Without light or regular watering, the seeds germinated through

the thick clay, thereby disproving the idea that clay in garden and/or agricultural soil poses serious threat to germination/fruiting (Fig.9).

GALLERY DESCRIPTION

For the final thesis exhibition, I used the Fine Arts Center Gallery as a space in which to plant a garden. Eight raised beds made of moist earthenware spanned the gallery floor and each main crop had its own twelve by three foot dammed-in clay section. When viewers walked into the gallery, they were forced to walk between the rows of the beds, similar to a real garden experience (Fig.10). In those beds, vegetables, flowers and herbs grew in a companion planting system, which enhances the growth of each other when inter-planted. For example, growing cucumbers next to beans is mutually beneficial to each crop, as is okra with sweet bell peppers.⁷

The vegetable crops planted in the exhibition were bush beans, peppers- bell, sweet and hot, tomato, cucumber, and okra. When these varieties are planted amongst each other with the addition of marigolds, nasturtium, parsley and basil, they add an additional layer to the viewer's experience through smell. During the five-day exhibition, the scent of fresh plant life wafted through the halls of the Fine Arts building and greeted visitors when they walked into the space.

At the far end of the gallery I erected a greenhouse whose interior held three shelving units covered with flourishing, bright green plants, all blossoming inside of richly colored terra cotta pots and trays (Fig.11 & 12). The seedlings inside the green house were three weeks old and corresponded with the same ten-week-old plants in the main clay beds. Every day of the exhibition, I tended the garden once in the morning and again at night. In order to assure that each bed had enough light to maintain photosynthesis in an interior space, a roller cart with fluorescent lights hovered over plant beds for the duration of the exhibition (Fig.13). Though using all light sources available in the gallery, including natural

⁷ Louise Riotte, *Carrots Love Tomatoes: Secrets of Companion Planting for Successful Gardening* (Pownal, VT: Storey Publishing. 1998)

light from windows and halogen bulbs from a track system, additional fluorescent lighting allowed the plants to thrive so that they could later be planted in outdoor gardens. However, the exhibition was another experiment in which the plant's strength and stamina were tested. The information gained from this experiment will help fuel future gallery installation designs that including organic plant life. My main goal for this exhibition was to encourage the act of gardening and in order to implement this, I provided free plants and seeds at my closing reception (Fig.14).

FORMAL DECISIONS

Raised clay beds spanned the length of the gallery floor and stood about eight inches tall. The beds were long and linear and where sharp angles may have occurred with a wooden bed, the clay version provided soft curves and imperfect lines instead. This is important to the interior garden design because the layout represents a real-life garden plot where imperfections and inexactitude are the norm. Inside of the red clay beds is a dark brown soil and mulch with accompanying plants about a month old. The color palette consisted of layers of earthenware red against dark brown, contrasting against the bright green of vegetables, herbs and flowers. The plants inside the beds thrived with life and were on the cusp of fruiting, providing the viewer with the excitement and hope of fruition that a real-life garden evokes. The garden's development was at a seasonally appropriate stage that reflected how a garden might look in a viewer's sight at the time of the exhibition

I built the clay beds with earthenware and a rich texture covered their walls that exposed the mark making of the builders. The marks on the walls of the beds were those of my own and my volunteer's hands. Though community is not a primary focus in this thesis, I designed the gallery garden with labor in mind. My experience as a volunteer farmer proved that small farms depend on the labor of community volunteers in order to secure successful operations. I estimated that the over the two-day installation period, the project would require close to thirty hours of labor to produce. I asked my immediate community of artists, close friends and family for help and offered young plants as a trade for gardens of their own. This portion of the execution was almost equally as important as the gallery-viewer

experience, so that volunteers had access to a project that altered their daily experiences and where discussions surrounding the concepts of the exhibition could take place.

In addition to highlighting the inexactitude of garden plots through the use of clay beds, the beds also reference agricultural sights that I grew up with in south east Texas: rice and crawfish fields. According to the U.S.D.A., rice crops are most present in the coastal plains of the Gulf of Mexico that include the landscapes of parts of Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas.⁸

There are some rice crops in California and Florida, but the largest sections are in the states which I have spent all of life- Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Growing up in Texas on the Louisiana border with my Cajun family, I recall many car trips into Louisiana where I looked out onto the flat, shallow planes of water that were sectioned off with mounds of dirt. Water filled planes were a symbol to my Cajun community of bounty when the spring crawfish season was near and we prepared for big feasts in light of annual luxuries. Rice and crawfish were a major staple in my childhood diet, so the landscape of its agricultural qualities are in mind as I build the small mounds of earth to hold in the soil in which I planted a gallery garden.

INFLUENTIAL CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Mierle Laderman Ukeles is an influential artist that I look to in my work. Most striking about her practice is that she asks of the viewer to consider the daily act of labor as works of art. In her 1976 project, *I Make Maintenance Art One Hour Every Day*, New York City maintenance workers participated in a project where they imaged their labor as Art. Ukeles asked her subjects to visualize their labor as Art for one hour each work day for five weeks, sign forms at the end of each work day explaining what chores they were doing during their 'art' session, and allowed Ukeles to take images of them throughout

⁸ Geological Survey (U.S.), Research in Rice Fields, 2000

the duration of their participation.⁹ Ukeles displayed the worker's forms and her images in the Whitney museum as part of her exhibition of living Maintenance Art, to give viewers an idea of how much support work goes on around them.

Ukeles' radical redefinition of art through her methodology of Maintenance Art provided the foundation that allowed me to ask of my viewers to consider plants, gardens and tending as works of art. Ukeles' work makes visible the unseen labor that is essential to any system's operations. In fact, she states in a letter to the maintenance workers, where she compares their work to office and bank work, "In a way, it is your daily support work that keeps this whole building up just as much as the steel and marble and glass."¹⁰ By leveling work that we culturally and financially caste, Ukeles destroys labor hierarchies, demands that we recognize the inter-dependence of life systems and reminds us that we are all in this together.

Similarly, the daily act of my garden tending during the five-day exhibition of *Cycle* physically connected me to gallery visitors and destroyed the mysterious aura of the gallery that hides labor and the artist and exhibits only the fruit of that labor. This act simultaneously lowered the status of the gallery and raised the position of the garden, enabling each space to significantly redefine themselves.

Fritz Haeg was influential to the initial stages of this project with his involvement in socially engaged art works.¹¹ In an ongoing project, Haeg produces a series of work entitled *Edible Estates*, wherein he rips

⁹ Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings* (University of California Press: Berkley and Los Angeles. 1996)

¹⁰ Mierle Laderman Ukeles, "I Make Maintenance Art One Hour Every Day, from a letter distributed to three hundred maintenance workers, 1976" in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings*, Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz. (University of California Press: Berkley and Los Angeles. 1996)

¹¹ Nato Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (New York, NY: Creative Time; Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press. 2012)

up grass of suburban front lawns and plants large vegetable gardens instead.¹² Haeg radically alters the front lawn from a space for manicured landscapes, often requiring high levels of water and dangerous chemicals, and transforms it into a highly productive area of vegetable production and community center. By re-contextualizing the utility of the front lawn Haeg tells us that land is precious, conventional farming is flawed, and that it's a critical for us to reconsider our culturally accepted use of the front lawn.

In his article, Michael Pollan discusses the main question that is the antithesis to this thesis and asks, "why bother" to grow gardens or indeed attempt green living at all. He reminds us that the small gesture of growing a garden can feel pointless in a world of environmental disaster, but that it's crucial because changing culture through the act of influence is our most powerful tool for larger environmental change.¹³ By re-contextualizing the garden plot away from my private back yard and into the public space of a gallery, my work reaches a broader audience and the scope of influence goes beyond just those in my immediate community.

I look to Andrea Zittel, as she uses her own body and living situations as test sites for her artistic investigations. In response to New York City living, she created a series of *A-Z Living units* in which she built highly functional units that, in some cases, possessed all of the qualities of a large home into a 200 square foot unit.¹⁴

For my own investigations, I've used my life's daily functions to tackle my most pressing concerns as an artist. I use my back yard, home, garage, and studio to fill with dirt and plants in order to find out what it takes to grow my own family's food. My artistic experiments brought me to a local farm during the heat

¹² Fritz Haeg and Diana Balmori, *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn* (New York: Metropolis Books. 2008)

¹³ Michael Pollan, "Why Bother?" *The New York Times Magazine*, April 20, 2008.
<http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/why-bother/>

¹⁴ Paola Morsiani and Trevor Smith, *Andrea Zittel: Critical Space* (Prestel Verlag: Munich, Berlin, London, New York. 2005)

wave of 2012, where I risked heat exhaustion every shift, in order to get close to young farmers and gain a broader understanding of food production. That adventure led to my education in growing that required a scope beyond books and forced me into experiential learning. Though a home renter, I've transformed multiple areas of my yard into annual vegetable garden plots, ripping up perennials along the way. This led me to closer relationships with my neighbors, which in some ways, is a radical position in contemporary culture.

About a year into graduate school when I was unable to align my philosophy with my artwork, I stated that I wanted to make functional work because I wanted a functional life. Through experiments that go well beyond an artist's studio, I live at least partially a functional life through the endeavor of growing, failing and sharing.

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Figure 1: *Bubble Tea on Tea Tray*. Porcelain, wooden tray. 2012. Image by Artist, Nichole Howard



Figure 2: *Excess*. Porcelain, tapioca balls. 2012. Image by Artist



Figure 3: *Decay Collection*. Porcelain, tea leaves, tea bags. 2012. Image by Artist



Figure 4: *Decay Collection, detail*. Porcelain, tea leaves, tea bags. 2012. Image by Artist



Figure 5: *Mint in Double Gulp*. Plastic, soil, plant. 2012. Image by Artist



Figure 6: *Apothecary*. Plastic, wood, soil, plants. 2012. Image by Mathew McConnell



Figure 7. *Germination*. Terra Cotta, soil, seed, wood. 2012. Image by Mathew McConnell



Figure 8. *Germination*. Terra Cotta, soil, seed, wood. 2012. Image by Mathew McConnell



Figure 9. *Germination*. Terra Cotta, seed, wood, Plexiglas. 2012. Image by Mathew McConnell



Figure 10. *Cycle*. Unfired Earthenware, soil, plants, wood, mixed media. 2012. Image by Artist



Figure 11. *Greenhouse*. Greenhouse, wood, fluorescent lights, terra cotta, soil, plants. 2013.
Image by Artist



Figure 12. *Greenhouse*, detail. Greenhouse, wood, fluorescent lights, terra cotta, soil, plants. 2013.
Image by Artist



Figure 13. *Light Cart*. Wood, rebar, fluorescent lights, casters. 2012. Image by Artist



Figure 13. *Grow Some Stuff!* Plastic shelves, cups, seeds, plants. 2013. Image by Artist