Ceramic Sculptures in Group Display to Narrate Passage of Time & Emotion

MFA Thesis Presentation
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Abstract

The thesis project, “Good Will, Ill Will,” builds multiple sets of group-displayed sculptures telling a life-long story of two sisters, Soleil & Luna and their unusual birthmarks, from childhood to teenage to adulthood to old age.

Facial appearances of these sculptures reflect the two sisters' age progression and changes in emotion.

My previous sculpting process is enhanced to integrate the facial muscle anatomy and the added facial bone anatomy, such that bone anatomy is embedded in the construction of face foundations, followed by clay manipulation continually based on muscle anatomy to form facial features.
This thesis project implements age progressive sculpting processes covering, not only the muscle anatomy beneath the face surface, but also the bone anatomy respective to bone growth and aging beneath the muscle, in order to more comprehensively and consistently illustrate my conceptual narrative, the life-long story of two sisters' varied reactions to their unusual birthmarks. The age progressive sculpting process originated by this thesis has increased my ability to keep the appearances of a single sculpted individual recognizable over multiple sculptures that reflect the passage of time and/or emotion.
New Direction of My Ceramic Sculpting

• Changing my narrative sculpting paradigm from solo-displayed to group-displayed

• Prior to my MFA years:
  One story (single plot) by one sculpture

• Starting my MFA years:
  One story (multiple plots) by one set of sculptures
Inspiring Group-displayed Sculptures

Fig. 1 - Mind-blowing Sculptures by Johnson Tsang
Why Group-displayed Sculptures?

• Able to present longer stories of multiple-plots – one sculpture per plot

• Able to present a person's changes in emotion – one sculpture per emotive expression

• Able to present age-progressive appearances – one sculpture per life stage

• People-oriented themes (family, people, etc.) are not true to the meaning with solo sculpture
### Solo-displayed Sculptures vs Group-displayed Sculptures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo-displayed Sculptures</th>
<th>Co-displayed Sculptures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One-plot stories</strong></td>
<td><strong>Multiple-plot stories</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“First Impression about My Newborn Niece”</td>
<td>“My Grandma’s Life”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One emotive expression</strong></td>
<td><strong>Changes of emotive expressions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(happy, sad, etc.)</td>
<td>(changes from hopeful to disappointed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>An appearance of certain age</strong></td>
<td><strong>Progression of age-appearances</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(young or old or any age in between)</td>
<td>(progression from young to old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One-person theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>People theme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(you, me, anyone, etc. at certain age)</td>
<td>(family, war, pandemic, election)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Set of Group-displayed Sculptures of Different Individuals

Satisfactory result being built with the existing sculpting process. Facial recognition across sculptures is not required.

Fig. 2 - “Three No Evils”
First Set of Co-displayed Sculptures of Same Individual (my Grandma)

![Sculptures of Same Individual (my Grandma)](image)

Fig. 3 - “Life Does Not Have to be Perfect to be Joyful”

Unsatisfactory result being built with the existing sculpting process. Facial recognition across sculptures is required but not achieved.
Existing Sculpting Process

• Follows the conventional facial sculpting process which starts from the muscle form beneath the skin and builds outward to the skin surface.

  • Step 1 – build a flat face foundation with only face contour, without facial components (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.)

  • Step 2 – clay manipulation into facial components. Keep fine-tuning until it resembles the model.

• Issue: Facial recognition is not achievable across group-displayed sculptures with the existing process. I need to investigate why and seek countermeasures.
Conflicting Requirements of Group-displayed Same-Person Sculptures

- **Distinctive** and **Recognizable as same person** at the same time.
  - **Distinctive** to show different expressions, different ages, different gestures.
  - **Recognizable as the same person** to narrate a story of that person

- Face appearances are able to show **gradients of oldness or youth**, also able to present:
  - Age progression from young to old, or retrogression from old to young;
  - Changes in emotion
  - Progression of both ages and emotions
Countermeasures of Group-displayed Same-individual Sculptures

• For narrations over extended time against one person (age-appearances changed), use skull-like mold with suture markups to produce tailorable face foundation embedded with bone anatomy to guide subsequent sculpting for face recognition against age progression.

• For narrations over a short period time (age-appearances unchanged), use realistic mold to replicate face foundations for minimal manipulation to minimize unwanted alterations and maximize face recognition.
Two Molds

Fig. 4 – Skull-like Hump Mold with Suture Markups

Fig. 5 – Realistic Two-part Slump Pressed Mold
Inspiration from Age-Progression Simulation

Only 1st image is photographed from a real 3-year-old boy. Other images are simulated by UW research software.

Data show inspiring findings without explaining why:
- The face grows vertically as the age progresses.
- The nose continues to grow longer virtually until death.

It inspired me to speculate a rationale in Facial Bone Growth and began a study of Facial Bone Anatomy.
Facial Bone Growth & Aging

Fig. 6 – Position of Facial Sutures

Facial bones grow at expansion of bone sutures. Facial Appearances change at the direction of suture expansion. Sutures expand at different ages, different rates, different duration!
Age-Progressive Appearances Cohere to Bone Growth & Aging

Research conclusion:
The age-progressive facial appearances adhere to the facial bones' growth which follow with the expansion of facial sutures connecting facial bones.

Therefore, age-progressive facial sculpting adheres to not only facial muscle anatomy but also facial bone anatomy.
How to Integrate Muscle Anatomy and Bone Anatomy in Facial Sculpting?

• Face foundations are built reconfigurable to reflect age-appropriate facial bone anatomy. It is done by using a skull-like mold with suture markups to guide the reconfiguration before clay manipulation.

• Clay manipulation continue as the existing process which is based on facial muscle anatomy

• Prototyping is done to prove the concept.
Prototype of Skull-like Mold Approach

Step 1: build skull-like mold in plaster with suture markups

Step 2: replicate clay foundations (teenage)

Step 3: tailor face#2 to adult-age; face#3 to old age

Step 4: clay manipulation follow conventional (existing) sculpting process
Build Prototypes into Wall Pieces

Fig. 7 – Soleil's sculptures show her appearances in age-progression
Thesis Project:  Good Will, Ill Will

Three sets of group-displayed sculptures:

• Set of 12 busts presents *Emotive Narrations*. A realistic mold is built to produce identical face foundations then manipulate them into various emotive expressions amid narrative dreams.

• Set of 7 wall pieces presents *Age-progression*. A skull-like mold with suture markup is used to produce face foundations reconfigurable to appropriate bone anatomy of corresponding ages.

• Set of 7 sculptures presents a combination of *age-progression and changes in emotion*. The same skull mold is used.
Set I shows Emotive Narrations

Fig. 8 – 12 busts narrate the two sisters' dreams reflecting Soleil's good will and Luna's ill will
Set II shows Age Progression

Fig. 9 – 7 wall pieces show age-progressive appearances of Soleil & Luna
Set III shows Passage of Time & Emotion

Fig. 10 – Two sisters' sculptures show the progression of their age-appearances and emotions
Thesis Implication and Conclusion

A new milestone of my ceramic sculpting initiative – by shifting the paradigm from solo-displayed sculptures to group-displayed sculptures, my sculptures narrate multiple-plot stories instead of one-plot, as if it adds the additional time dimension to my 3D sculpting arts.

In order to maintain the continuity of a story, it is important to retain facial recognition on an individual's sculptures while presenting age-progression or changes in emotion. This is addressed by prototyping and implementing special designed realistic face mold and skull-like face mold. My thesis project illustrates the satisfactory outcomes shown in my MFA Exhibition.