A series of ceramic and bronze sculptures exploring the subject of social anxiety through a personal perspective
Concept

The concept of my work explores the subject of social anxiety through a personal perspective. Experiences, feelings and thoughts relating to this topic become the source materials for the projects I create. Each sculpture draws focus on my internal thought process during or after a particular social situation where my nerves take over. This helps me to examine and understand the basis of my anxieties as well as giving this introverted issue a voice. This body of work represents a deeply personal side of me, yet it also has a universal relationship to people of all ages who struggle with social anxiety.

The Action Figure and Its Environment

I have always had a fascination with action figures. I was reserved and apprehensive as a child, so I turned to toys to keep me entertained. I believe the tactile activity of playing with them coupled with my active imagination helped establish this passion early on. There was something about picking up your favorite hero or villain and creating stories and adventures that captivated me. It feels only natural now to tap into this childlike sense of exploration and storytelling through the action figure form. The intent is to draw the viewer in with an image that reminds them of something familiar in the toy and environment features and then allow them to unravel the nature of the content behind each piece. The metaphoric nature, animal and house themes my characters attempt to blend into share similar inherent qualities and characteristics with the emotion I am trying to portray. This imagery allows me to repurpose the action figure in a way to connect the viewer with this particular subject matter.
I used foam board and hot glue for the mold walls.

Pouring the plaster in the mold walls

Two and three-part molds were made for each of the three body types.
Here, I'm casting all the different parts of a figure. After I remove the clay from the molds, I use my tools to clean up the surface and remove any imperfections. Plastic wrap is then used to keep the clay parts wet and workable until I am ready to add texture.

The torso and limbs are assembled in the desired gesture. I made sure the joints registered well before adding any texture.
Process Images

Adding and subtracting clay with tools.

After applying texture and details, the pieces are set aside to dry off before firing.

Bisque firing transforms the clay to ceramic, locking in all the sculpted details.
Underglazes and oxide washes are applied and fired several times to achieve the right colors and finish.

Parts that were not connected during beginning stages are now attached using five-minute epoxy. I allow the epoxy to cure overnight for full strength and then the final work is ready to be hung or displayed on a pedestal.
Blending In

In the early stages of this series, I experimented with different themes in nature, animals and houses in order to visualize which one would best capture the emotion I wanted to communicate. I felt all three worked well so as the series progressed, I revisited each one and created a sub-series because it expanded the potential of storytelling. As an action figure enthusiast, I collect a diverse range of characters and brands, so I believe the variety aspect of this decision subconsciously worked its way into my projects as well.

Timid, 2010
ceramic, glaze, stain
15” x 6” x 4”

Awkward, 2010
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 6” x 5”

Empty, 2010
ceramic, glaze, stain
14” x 8” x 7”

Reserved, 2010
ceramic, glaze, stain
14” x 13” x 5”

Lost, 2010
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 8” x 6”

Isolated, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 8” x 6”
Stagnant, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 7” x 5”

Uncomfortable, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 11” x 4”

Boling Point, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 12” x 6”

Anxious, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 12” x 5”

Rooted, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
16” x 6” x 5”

Weathered, 2011
ceramic, glaze, stain
15” x 7” x 5”
I noticed much of my work began to look very stiff, vertical and lacking in gesture. In a sense, this reflected my personality prior to working on this series: the inability to get loose and feel comfortable in my own shell. As I felt more at ease expressing the concept of my social anxieties, I began to look for different approaches to free up the rigid nature of my projects to reflect the more confident side of myself. This led to taking the sculpture off of the pedestal and onto the wall. Working with wall pieces provided a new canvas and space for my characters to interact with. I was able to have my figures positioned in new ways that may have been difficult with a pedestal piece.
For my bronze work, I initially wanted to have several figures blend into a metal theme, but I found working in this material as an opportunity to further experiment with different ways of expressing the concept of social anxiety. With *Unbalance*, I wanted to create an arrangement of figures that exhibit the overall topics touched upon in my ceramic work.
Suspended Articulation was a project where I was able to focus on the functional and conceptual aspects of the articulated joints in my figures. I fabricated the female and male with working joints so that their limbs and torsos could move. Although they possess this potential ability, they are not able to. This served as a metaphor for the influence social anxiety has on me.

*Suspended Articulation, 2012, bronze. 16” x 17” x 5”*
This next set of figures exhibit a slightly different viewpoint about my concept. I began to realize and identify that it could be less about blending in and more about me wearing a metaphorical skin or mask to protect what was inside: the fear of embarrassing myself publicly because of my behavior, not being able to articulate myself at times, awkward silences and many more issues. I put up protective walls around me when I attempt to be social and these figures represent that notion. With this sub-series, I started using the interior space to assist in developing the narrative. I sculpted open window frames and doors with tiny faces peering out to symbolize the interest and desire to be outside of my protective walls. The lively gestures and brighter colors suggest a brighter outlook on my future and this is the direction I wish to aim towards.

Sway, 2012  
ceramic, glaze, stain  
17” x 8” x 7”

Gotta Get Away, 2012  
ceramic, glaze, stain  
18” x 8” x 5”

Breathe, 2012  
ceramic, glaze, stain  
17” x 9” x 8”

Tranquil, 2012

Gather Yourself, 2012

Back Up, 2012
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sculpture Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels Like Falling</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Ceramic, glaze, stain</td>
<td>17&quot; x 14&quot; x 8&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut It</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Ceramic, glaze, stain</td>
<td>16&quot; x 7&quot; x 9&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Should Have Said</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Ceramic, glaze, stain</td>
<td>16&quot; x 11&quot; x 7&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look Ahead</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Ceramic, glaze, stain</td>
<td>9&quot; x 14&quot; x 7&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Entering the sculpture program three years ago with no art background was nerve-racking for me. I never thought my work would develop into something so personal, but I am glad it happened that way because I do not know how I else I would have done it. Now that I am at the end of program I feel there is still much to learn, but I gained the skills and studio practice to help me along the way in becoming an artist. Thank you directors and instructors.