

Digital Drawing Room: MFA Fine Arts featuring Minyue (Mia) Zhou

Interviewed by Rebecca Sexton



Minyue (Mia) Zhou

Starting May 10, you can view work by students in the MFA graduating class on the website 2021.CCAMFA.art and in the [Class of 2021 Showcase](#).

Works in this series were written by students in Glen Helfand and Maria Porges' respective graduate writing seminars this past fall and spring.

Minyue (Mia) Zhou attended college at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. She first studied urban design, but switched her major to fine arts, primarily focusing on painting and printmaking. At CCA, she has focused on ceramics and installation.

Rebecca Sexton: How would you describe your work and practice? What choices do you make in your work, and why are they important to you?

Minyue (Mia) Zhou: I primarily make sculptures and installations. I use clay as my main material now, but I have used wax in the past too. I am inspired by the female body, and think a lot about how clay can act as stand-in for the body. I usually begin by spraying foam into nylon socks. It is a very unpredictable process because you can't control the foam. Once it gets to a place that I am satisfied with, I will slip cast my work, and I manipulate the clay before it is completely dried. On some of the surfaces, you can see the skin texture because I use body casting. Using slip casting and commercial glazes, the combinations and reactions are totally unpredictable. Nothing is clear until I have finished firing them.



Moult 2, 2021. Silicone.



Moult, 2021. Silicone.

I am drawn to ceramics because they are so malleable and changeable. The materials react to the forces applied to them. The location of where the pieces are made has a huge impact on them, even their placement in the kiln brings immense change. I also think about my identity as a foreigner here. This experience always has me asking: What is affecting me? As someone who is not American, I constantly experience different forces that mold and shape me.

RS: How has your practice changed over the course of graduate school?

MZ: I had begun working with glass before the CCA campus closed down. There is a lot of similarity between the way that glass and clay respond to their environments. Both materials draw me back to the body. Glass reminds me of water, blood, and life-giving fluids. Clay reminds of skin and muscles and touch. There is a symmetry in the way you can move them in whatever way you want when they are capable of being moved, but there comes a point when they are no longer malleable and are fragile. Both materials offer this moment and possibility of change, and then that moment is gone in an instant.



Ceramic Object, 2020. Ceramic.



Ceramic Object 2, 2020. Ceramic.

RS: How would you categorize your work? Are these objects paintings, sculpture, installation, or something else entirely?

MZ: I would categorize my work as sculpture and installation. I prefer to make each piece in isolation from the others because they are individual sculptures. However, I often try to combine these two materials together in installations. I like to present them in a large space where the pieces can echo each other in form and color.