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Senior Projects Spring 2020

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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## Behind the Wheel

Claire Eva Zerbe  
*Bard College*

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## Behind the Wheel

by

Claire Eva Zerbe

“Behind the Wheel” is a project specific to the time and process without the need for justification: the essence of it is self-contained. Through the installation, the only, if any, intention is opening up a space for people to be in or not be in, with the potential for positivity, mindfulness, constructing a non-judgmental stance. I created a quilt that escaped from the interior of a 1968 military ambulance. The quilt is sewn and new, while the ambulance is found and older. I am interested in the lifecycle of materials and the relationship between new and old, natural and unnatural. I use inanimate objects, color, and light to connect otherwise seemingly random visions. The motif I work with throughout my pieces is invisible.

As a young artist, there is an interpersonal relationship between the art I create, the viewers, and myself. This relationship is simultaneously positive and detrimental. What concerns me is not what impact my piece leaves on viewers, but *that* my work can touch upon them in some way or another. There are infinite ways an author can create the work in which they *only* provide tunnels through which the viewer can experience the work without restraining the message. Likewise, viewers critique and reflect on the work in infinite ways free of artists’ intention. Yet, these factors are particular and cannot be controlled when expressing the essence of mood, memory, thought, or ideas as abstract or natural as war, peace, and love.

In an abrupt about-face from my lifelong training in math and chinese, my calling to introspection art was the beginning of my works in fabric, metal, plastics, and more. Although surrounded by artists throughout my upbringing, rigid structured schooling did not allow art to take hold until young adulthood. In my work, I am interested in exploring alternative modes of communication through installation and sculpture. Growing up bilingual and with early childhood trauma, I struggled with communication and now strive to communicate universal empathy in topics that can only be understood through art. I am interested in how memory, thought and emotion--so inescapable and strong--can change with not just an individual's energy, but everyone else's in a room too. The discarded ambulance, dominating any space it occupies, and the quilt that escaped from it represent all the possibilities of those invisibles on the individual and those around her.

The proposed project, which would have been presented in the UBS show, included sculpture surrounding the quilt and ambulance. Included inside the bed of the ambulance were Vietnam War era found objects of which I based my sculpture. Once the project moved off campus, the quilt came with me outdoors on hikes, and into public space as I searched for closure on the work in a new environment.