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## Normal Couple Stuff

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## **Some Brief Notes on Objects:** Sculpture Empowers Objects to Show Us (people) New Ways of Relating

### **Jack Whitescarver**

Objects have legs, torsos, extending arms, faces, surfaces, fronts, backs. These sculptures are not stand-ins for people. They are objects that follow the rules of how objects stand, sit, or hang in space. Rules work as the obstructions that focus energy into the act of forming. I'm interested in new ways of relating and I'm interested in how that relates to failure. Revolution on the state level is a movement that always fails at it is simply the replacement of one system for another. Queerness is embedded in failure<sup>1</sup>. We can take that which is dirty, contaminated, unfit, disabled, and wrong and move it into a new way of interaction, celebration and care. Making these sculptures, it proved impossible to effectively translate the things I wanted to express (namely of a rejection of normative ways of relating) without using and navigating through the rules and norms of sculpture that have developed through western art history and practice. This created an inherent contradiction, opening the work up.

This is what is powerful to me about the insular network. The most potent relationships these objects hold are to each other. Form gives way to space and the photographs throughout the show offer insight into what kind of "outside" may exist here. There is a blurring of landscape, and then there is a sharp focus of the subject. To me these works are not unrelated to moving image and video. My photographic images act as keys. The video here captures the community of making that is so important. Community is the foundation of an object that is social. We move through space and we dance and perform useless tasks that aren't meaningless. Dancing is one of these tasks. Dance can embody the gaps in time and space where how we relate to other people in new unknown ways. When dancing gets really good and really fun it can feel like time stops.

The title "Normal Couple Stuff" is a rote tired phrase appropriated from the reality show "The Bachelor". This work may not seem normal, or that is, reflective of something which is, passive and unspecific. "Normal Couple Stuff" also refers to the act of coupling, forming and situating the "stuff" that is, the material of sculpture that is normal historically but also objectively as an Elmers glue cap is an everyday object. Sculpture is the structure to work in and then *in-between* as I identify the rules, learning them intimately over the course of this year.

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford American Dictionary definition "queerness" as: 1 (adj) strange, odd, 2 (verb) to spoil or ruin, 3 (noun) a gay man... queerness is something that fails in its own definition. Judith Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* has proved to be a pivotal text for me in this time in understanding my own relationship to failure as a queer person and the provisional motions that make up her definition which I reference here

Sculpture, like video, gets somewhere thrilling when you start to handle the medium as material. When sculpture changes from deadpan matter in space to commanding that space and matter as one fluid thing, that's when openings appear, and it becomes possible to use sculpture to find new ways of relating. These are ways of relating that aren't determined by a larger social structure or predetermined meritocracy, but by distinct formations of objects sharing objects with other objects. These sculptures reflect one another and build off each other with color, material, form, image, and gesture, in a kind parasitic contamination that is like a painful ecstatic hug: oozing, penetrating, slithering, screaming, gagging, stuffing, ejecting, claiming, marking, pissing, rubbing and wrapping.

















