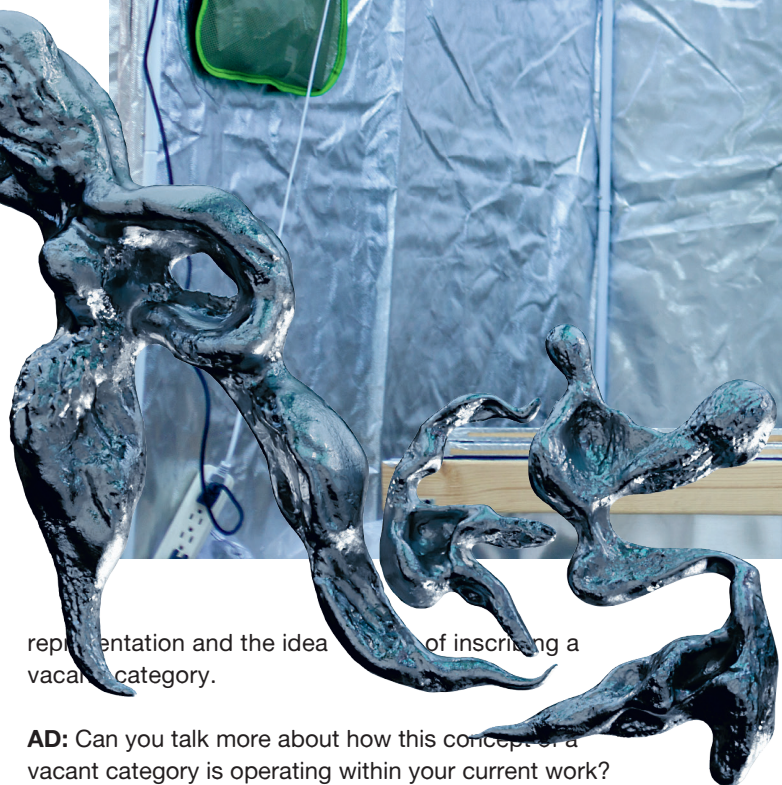


ANTHONY DISCENZA: There's a strong attraction in your work to various kinds of residue and detritus arising from industrial systems of mass production—materials that have become disassociated with their original context and function through the condition of being discarded. During our first studio visit back in August 2022, we talked quite a bit about the kinds of materials you incorporate into your work and the reasons you're drawn to them. One aspect we discussed was how these industrially produced materials could be thought about in more speculative ways, and how you saw them as potentially articulating themselves in spaces outside of any human agency. Can you talk about how this line of thinking has evolved for you more recently?

BRYCE KROLL: I make sculptures out of existing things and they become things that didn't exist before. I'm interested in value- and identity-shifts, and I think there's a prototypical value-shift in throwing something away, it's kind of like a reverse work of art. I'm focusing more on the move toward value than on the gesture of discarding. The idea of dissociation kicks in when something takes on a new function or is moved from one system to another, but it's difficult, there is always a remainder of its previous identity. Since everything I use was first made by someone else there's also a remainder of its production in terms of the actual manual procedures used to produce it and I'm increasingly interested in labor. My knowledge of and engagement with the things I use expands in the studio as they are absorbed as raw material into my own production—it's a chronological view. From another vantage point, the life cycles of objects can take on the appearance of natural growth or emergent phenomenon. It's difficult to distinguish where exactly the human element leaves off and the object begins.

This line of thinking has evolved more toward issues of representation. There are those "Y'all the first people in the world to see..." TikToks where people pour pickles into an air fryer or record some equally random action. While it might not be a bad candidate for a work of art, I'm more interested in how, rather than creating something new out of disjunction, this kind of gesture is a representation of improbability. I'm interested in what things represent and how this is altered through production and labor or by viewing them through a different system. Right now I'm thinking about situations where resemblance disappears as a requirement for



representation and the idea of inscribing a vacant category.

AD: Can you talk more about how this concept of a vacant category is operating within your current work?

BK: Well, the idea starts out as something that is possible to represent, but it creates an empty category because it doesn't exist in reality. Blue squirrels are a simple example of a category that doesn't exist but is easy to picture. It's possible just because the system of representation contains colors and rodents, but in reality it is just a vacancy. But I'm thinking about this in reverse, too, in terms of real things for which there is no existing category,





“Blue squirrels are a simple example of a category that doesn’t exist but is easy to picture. It’s possible just because the system of representation contains colors and rodents, but in reality it is just a vacancy”

and of having to consider systems of representation outside of the dominant norm as a response.

AD: Pushing a bit further into the more speculative side of your practice, what sort of fiction do you read? Are there any authors or texts that are informing or shaping your thinking right now?

BK: I’m a big Bob Dylan fan. He said he wanted to sound like he knew something no one else knew, and I think the result is a sort of empty meaning; it seems to emulate a structure of truth or knowledge without any basis. To be honest I barely read any fiction these days, but I read a lot of classics as a kid, stuff like Dickens and Tolstoy. I was homeschooled, and I remember choosing to read War and Peace in its entirety; no one believed it was voluntary. More recently, I encountered Viktor Shklovsky’s writing on defamiliarization in Art as Device. Shklovsky viewed art as a means of making what is known difficult and unfamiliar and uses Tolstoy as an example for describing common scenes as if they were alien. So maybe Tolstoy left me predisposed to this kind of approach of wanting to impose distance.

As dull as it can be, I read a lot of theory. Art and Labour by Dave Beech has been influencing me lately. Something he discusses is the history of the artist’s social role and this has helped shape my current view of the artist as a consumer. I’m approaching techniques of industrial manufacturing through a consumer role, by reverse engineering things and tackling commercial processes head-on—situations where it’s perhaps less a question of learning a skill than a lack of means necessitating the creation of a new technique. An example of what I’m thinking of are subcultures that form around customization, where resourcefulness or innovation can take the place of industrial resources, reapproaching skill from a new perspective based on collective creativity and shared knowledge.

AD: You’ve now done several projects in extremely offsite or non-normative spaces—In particular, I’m thinking of your project for Final Hot Desert. What sort of appeal do these kinds of spaces/ways of working have for you? How do you see your work functioning in these kinds of spaces and contexts?





JOIN ME IN THE QUEST FOR ANGULAR SEGMENTS, 2022.
 Polyethylene foam, epoxy resin, vacuum nozzle, butyl rubber, aluminum, steel, wire, polyester batting, polypropylene, organza, golf tees

BK: I particularly like these kinds of alternative spaces and projects for their potential to challenge the power of the white cube and its role in framing artistic value. I think projects like *Final Hot Desert* or *lower_cavity* serve the function of enabling dialogue between artists. There is something lovely about the fact that most of these shows are made entirely out of enthusiasm, by and essentially for other artists, but by being released online they have the power to reach a wider audience. I think they could be a model for the future of the institutional art world.

AD: The project here at *lower_cavity* was produced specifically for this site. Can you talk about how the ideas for this project developed? More generally, in what ways do you see the context of a particular site shaping your work, if at all?

BK: I grew up in Massachusetts, so I have a lot of experience with this type of post-industrial town and feeling like I have nothing with which to identify. From the standpoint of personal identity, the aims of my work could seem to mirror processes of self-creation. I approached *lower_cavity* in a very empirical way, based on my experience and what you told me about the site's

history as a paper mill, how the spaces that house the Chamber project exhibitions were originally used as holding tanks to mix water and pulp.

I'm interested in intensive properties in these pieces (for example color or temperature as opposed to extensive properties like mass). This has been a jumping-off point for me to look at operations that rely on a kind of externalized, objective measure of a process's success or failure, like creating a liquid or vacuum seal. Reintroducing the function of holding liquid back into the chambers, one of the pieces is made up of six vacuum-formed plastic trays. The trays are filled with water that's been colorized with leak tracing dye and a terpenoid used in antiseptic which opacifies the liquid. Another piece is made with a very simple vacuum bagging process, where I put resin in a space saver bag and vacuumed the air out (and accidentally destroyed my vacuum), again exploring the idea of the seal. This work also has a blue polyethylene foam component to which a third work has been color-matched, collapsing resemblance to color intensity. In many ways my work is a bit at odds with any site—I want to make work that could engage people even in the most adverse conditions.

WHO NEEDS MEDICAL COVERAGE WHEN YOU HAVE POLYESTER BATTING, A LOEWE GARMENT BAG, POLYPROPYLENE, ORGANZA, PLASTIC, WIRE, EPOXY RESIN, AND ALUMINUM?, 2021, Polyester batting, Loewe garment bag, polypropylene, organza, plastic, wire, epoxy resin, aluminum.
 WATER TRACING & LEAK DETECTION, 2023, Fluorescent Dye, water, terpenoid, plastic, cardboard, paper, wood.



55

UNTITLED, 2022, PVC, aluminum, plastic, polyester batting, rope, butyl rubber, polyurethane foam, string.
lower_cavity, a residency and project space operated by artist and curator Anthony Discenza, occupies a defunct paper mill in Holyoke, MA, where Bryce Kroll's show Residuum was installed as part of Chamber, a periodic exhibition series, from March 24 - May 23 2023