**The Transcendent in the Transient**

Music has played a role in human culture sense early times. Like art, music served as a means of expression for early peoples. Small clay drums, pipes, and whistles can be traced back as far as the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. So, when early humans were creating the beautiful Chauvet cave paintings they were also using their creative nature to express themselves through sound in rituals, entertainment, medicine, work, and dances (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018).

Early musical instruments are thought to have originated from cooking pots and bowls as well as hunting materials that were transformed to serve a new use. As access to new materials and technology increased instruments began to be made out of other materials such as bone, bamboo, and other malleable materials (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018).

The first records of string instruments lead us to Ancient Mesopotamia in 2500 to 3000 BC. Here is where we have the first records of lyres, stringed instruments that are similar to harps. During the medieval period stringed instruments began to undertake new developments. During this time new stringed and bowed instruments began to emerge. The Renaissance refined these instruments and they became more readily available for use. Composers and Musicians such as Bach and Vivaldi helped to popularize instruments such as the violin. As well as designers of instruments such as Antonio Stradivari (Skope Magazine, 2018).

Since its first beginnings the violin, as well as many other instruments has evolved and the making of the instruments for some has become an art form in which they dedicate their lives. The legacy of these brilliant craftsmen, like Stradivari, has become a major aspect of what contemporary violin makers study, and nearly every master working today would agree that the major fundamentals of the art in instrument making were present in these famous craftsmen who could be considered artists of the instrumental world. Paying homage to instrumental artists such as Stradivari many people continue to study and create after his designs.

So what can the artist, and even the everyday member of society take away from acknowledging the beauty and transcendantness in the creation of these beautiful instruments? By observing the process of development through the centuries we can see how humans, longing for something beyond themselves, have used the materials of the transient earth to create works of art, such as instruments to play sounds that reverberate throughout the universe and transcend the world that we see.

Throughout history humanity has recognized the power of music and the instruments and has showcased this through packed concert halls, lavish parties, coronations, as well as in artwork. Throughout Renaissance paintings musical instruments tend to be present, playing key roles in paintings. Caravaggio highlights various instruments in his works such as *Rest on Flight to Egypt, Amor Victorious*, and *The Lute Player*.

Modern artists have created representations of instruments using various mediums. The artist Pablo Picasso has created both paintings (*The Old Guitarist*) and sculptures (*Guitarra*) that revolve around instruments. Contemporary artist Rob Magnum has also followed with the pattern of history in creating instruments using his art form. Rob who received his MFA from Indiana University has used ceramics to express his love and appreciation for music. As a child Rob grew up in a family that had great interest in music and instruments. Today, along with other ceramic work, Rob has created several ceramic stringed banjos (Magnum, 2018).

My series of ceramic instruments is reflective on this rich history of human development and growth through music. Music being a transcendent force in a transient world has been a topic of contemplation for me and influential in my work as an artist. In creating ceramic instruments I have used materials of the earth (clay) to form vessels that resemble various types of stringed instruments. This process has required me to do a lot of research on the different parts of instruments as well as the different proportions and styles. This knowledge that I learned then enabled me to create templates in which I used to cut pieces from the clay to form various parts of the instruments. I also needed to think logically about how to form the vessels so that the air would have appropriate places to escape as the clay was fired in the kiln. Each instrument was carefully constructed and trimmed with care to create a realistic representation of the instrument. Once clay was bisque fired I then researched various glazes and parings that I thought would be appropriate for each instrument. Thus, the final product would be reflective of historical tradition and yet have a contemporary take.

I strive for my work to be reflective of the transcendental nature of the transient world and I believe music is one of the places where this meeting of the earthly and divine kiss. My contemporary artistic take on the historical subject of music is a place where the viewer can contemplate and appreciate the beauty of art and its connection to music and the human desire to seek

something beyond themselves. It is in art and music were humanity can explore the mystery of who they truly are.

Work Cited

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