Dale: Self-Assessment Unit 3 FIN130

CREATE

The artist research for this project led me toward geometric designs that admit light, and curvilinear shapes that are flowing and have spaces between the elements. I think I find the curvilinear ones more beautiful and the geometric ones intellectually satisfying – perhaps my best course would be a marriage of the two – unite the two sides of my brain, as it were? However, the "learning the software" research led me squarely into left-brain learning mode and I ended up designing largely geometric shapes, leaning toward more solidity and less towards open airy space. Still meaningful, but short of where my imagination wanted to go.

DEVELOP

Skill expansion – oh yes. Woodshop largely new to me – quite rewarding to trace and cut out the patterns with bandsaw, smooth them with belt sander and manual sandpaper. New software times three, plus new mousing skills to get the software to do my bidding. I didn't have a felt sense of the workflow at the outset, so I just parsed the instructions carefully to make my way through. On the other side of the process now, I think I could find a more creative path next time, with a better idea how each thing rolls into the next.

COMMUNICATE

Solidity and stability. Precision to the best of my ability. Objects that could be viewed from many angles, with the cardboard icosahedron like a wavy sphere that could be rolled like a dice or hung and rotated with some permeability to light. The contrast between the permeable cardboard and the stepped solid wooden variant of the icosahedron, the severity of the geometric form in contrast with the goofy creature emerging from it.

EXPAND

Not a lot of conceptual risk-taking. It felt more like code-breaking… trying to uncover the meaning for each step of the workflow, without a felt sense of how the materials were going to respond or behave as I didn't handle them or practice with them before designing the objects. Technically, it was great to get some exposure to the 3D software, doing quite basic work this first time out, hopefully take more risks next time!

COLLABORATE

Helping each other out with the software in the lab was great. Sat beside Torr the first few sessions, who familiarized himself quickly with Meshmixer and I could riff off his progress. Later was able to do some very basic version of helping others find their way. Cutting the wood and problem-solving dowel placement took support from classmates and from woodshop technician Jeff. I found the cardboard assembly worked best as a solitary task, as I needed quiet focus to identify which piece was which on the unlabelled sheets, and a lot of slow patient manual work to slide the intersecting pieces into place, their pointy edges easy to deform or damage.

PROBLEM SOLVE

I so enjoyed hearing about the variety of problem-solving approaches by classmates, at the December 5th critique. The people who ignored the software telling them it wouldn't work are my new heroes! My default approach to learning new things seems to be a thorough investment in getting it "right" before I am capable of imaging deviations. For example, when the sheets of cardboard with etched-but-not-yet-removed shapes arrived from the Make-It Space, I realized I would be unable to follow the assembly plan in Slicer unless I identified each piece in situ on its sheet, because they all looked very similar. I removed and assembled one piece at a time, following the program. BUT – not everyone did so. And they made beautiful objects, after a process of figuring it out on the fly, supplementing with glue, prying apart the mistakes, following their instincts and their eyes and their hands. Very good learning for me. I think I am stuck with my brainset for "the right way" as an entry point, but I feel emboldened to move more quickly into "an interesting way" now.

REFLECT

The first level of revision was a shift away from early thoughts on the shape I would make, which involved long thin spikes from a sphere, thinking it would be technically impossible as intersecting or stacked slices.

I settled on an intersecting slices version of the icosahedron with indents on each of the twenty faces, and then worked to narrow the space between slices so the indents could be implied and visualized. It made for a denser object, but I didn't reflect at the time about how I was losing the airiness and permeability to light that had originally interested me, as I was focused on the surface relief.

After the cardboard version was settled, I considered ways to stretch the icosahedron geometry to introduce more organic shapes – decided to "crack it open" and have a fanciful creature emerging from within. Several revisions to angles of head and arms and foot with an eye to giving the creature some spirit. Further revisions to turn his hands into paws because the wood slices seemed too coarse to imply fingers and toes. Final major revision was going ahead with the dowel as it would help me keep the geometry of the planes accurate—but the original dowel markings were not the same size as the dowels Jeff had on hand, so he helped me technically to think through how to enlarge the marking but not lose accuracy.

Thanks, Angela, for encouragement to stretch and imagine in new ways!
Dale
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