



Terry Maker

TIME RELEASE

Medical and Pharmaceutical Constructions

December 1, 2016 – February 16, 2017

The Art Gallery, Fulginiti Pavilion for Bioethics and Humanities
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

cover image: *Job's Lament*, 2016
paper, vacuum formed capsules, pills, oil on panel
3'9"h x 15'w x 8"d

Time Release

In my art-making process, I use a variety of commonplace, discarded, quotidian objects combined with traditional art making materials to compose sculptural forms that are subsequently cast, cut, drilled and scraped to reveal the “guts” of the matter.

Through this process, I curate selected forms that become – or represent – specific, symbolic codes or grammar that speak to the physical and spiritual concerns of the human condition – specifically, the compulsion to reify and base our life’s concerns on seductive but ultimately ephemeral, transitory experiences and their empty promises of fulfillment.

My work addresses desire and human initiative in light of our [obvious] awareness of our ultimate end – a haunting and relentless companion that hovers over our life’s journey. With this medical and pharmacologically focused body of work, I investigate the conundrum of this reality with various sculptures that symbolize the gravity, pathos and, sometimes, comedic state of the human situation in light of our pursuit of perfect health, freedom from emotional distress, relief from the anxieties inherent in lived experience, and even the possibility of “spiritual” redemption.

Inherent in this exhibition’s title, *Time Release* is an underlying element of storytelling, with pill-like sculptures symbolically



representing common threads of our human experience. Aesthetically colorful, shiny and inviting, these pill sculptures seem to call us to “ingest” this solution while sadly – and this is not to ignore the astonishing successes of medical and pharmaceutical advances in alleviating many forms of suffering – these easy solutions are chokingly too big to swallow and often fail to address our deepest issues and yearnings.

Time Release, as the title infers, derives its meaning from the profound spiritual and embodied condition which we human beings struggle to fulfill while limited by the passage of time, the inevitable decline of capacity, and our choiceless end. We continue to seek relief from our mortal woes and yet so far no outside intervention, no “miracle drug” can ultimately rescue us.

Once again we are thrown back to consider our lives in light of “eternity,” truth or whatever makes for ultimate value. As we continue on this uphill road as reflected in my piece titled *Job’s Lament* we are called to questions of faith in a “salvific” cosmic order – a journey which leads in and out of labyrinthine existential mazes and – if touched by grace – may give deeply nourishing and lasting meaning to our struggles, our joys and sorrows, our deepest yearnings - our life’s journey.

This work is drawn from my personal struggle with depression and my testimonial “rescue” with the use of anti-depressants. There is medicine that can heal. After a life long struggle with sometimes debilitating darkness my life was literally and miraculously changed with a very low dose of this medication. However, I also credit my return to a fully lived life with an intensely dedicated search for spiritual meaning. These experiences along with my new ability to capably engage my life and consistently apply myself to creative work has made

me both curious about and inspired to address the intertwined subjects of medicine, art and spirituality.

The amalgamation of such medical materials as shredded documents, cast off prescription bottles, pills and other scientific detritus with art making tools becomes a curious, often abstract assemblage with the history of each deeply embedded in the finished work of art.

I explore the inside of the formal and conceptual path of art making, often - a kind of archeological challenge to dig deeper into the matter of the materials I use, the processes of art making and the inner, less physically or product-oriented work of spirituality.

One of my favorite quotes is from the photographer Paul Strand written in 1917. “The true artist, like the true scientist, is a researcher using materials and techniques to dig into the truth and meaning of the world in which she/he lives; and what is created, or better perhaps, brings back, are the objective results of the exploration.”

Terry Maker
October, 2016

Take Two and Call Me in the Morning

Your hands fashioned me and made me and then you turn
around and destroy me!

And why from the womb did you take me?

My days are but few – let me be.

Turn away that I might have some gladness, before I go, never
more to return - to the land of darkness and death's shadow.

The Book of Job (18 – 21)

Mother needs something today to calm her down

And though she's not really ill there's a little yellow pill

She goes running for the shelter of her mother's little helper

And it keeps her on her way, gets her through her busy day

“Doctor please, some more of these.” Outside the door, she
took four more

What a drag it is getting old.

Mother's Little Helper, The Rolling Stones, 1966

One pill makes you larger and one pill makes you small.

White Rabbit, The Jefferson Airplane, 1967

The pill is a quintessential icon of American culture. It encapsulates our history, shapes our lives – both private and social – and embodies our belief in limitless progress and our pursuit of happiness, youth, longevity, sexual prowess, and freedom from a multitude of physical and emotional woes many of which, some would argue, are inherent in the human condition. Pills are both glorified and demonized, freighted by social and quasi-moral ramifications, and propelled on to the marketplace by the euphoric hope that a “miracle” medication has been discovered. Often, at the other end of the pill’s trajectory from discovery to release onto the marketplace is the dejection which follows the experience of its limited efficacy and its potentially distressing side-effects and possible dangers. This is not to discount the extraordinary benefits that we have realized from medical/pharmaceutical progress. From the ubiquitous – but no less miraculous – pain relief that an aspirin provides, to the astonishing life-altering effects of many anti-depressant medications, the revolutionary sexual liberation of “the Pill,” and the latest frontiers of chemotherapeutic and immunologically targeted cancer drugs, “meds” have been a boon to countless millions of people. However, much of the public’s perception of pills - particularly those with psychotropic effects - is still anxiety ridden – a kind of “pharmacological Calvinism” that sneers at these pills as a “cop-out.” Emotional distress should simply be dealt with by moral fortitude and just getting back to work.

Pills have also been prominent players in popular culture including any number of films from the campy *Valley of the Dolls* (1967) to science fiction thrillers such as *The Matrix* (1999) and *Limitless* (2011). Further, the fact that “pills” rhymes with “thrills,” “kills,” and “ills” has made singing about pills a near-staple of pop and rock music. I would be remiss here if I didn’t mention the tiny pill that transformed an entire generation’s way of thinking about and being in the world – LSD. Its effects continue to ripple through and infuse our culture through the legacies of avid proponents and users such as Steve Jobs (Remember Apple’s marketing slogan “Think Differently?”) and Andrew Weil who mainstreamed “alternative” health modalities and elevated “health-food” into cuisine. Finally, LSD also gave rise to the optic and visionary practices of a multitude of artists both highly regarded and little-known.

I have been looking at Terry Maker’s work for a long time. I’ve always been taken by the strategies through which she conjures works of great beauty and moral significance by the intentional “repurposing” of the detritus and debris that accumulates in contemporary life. Maker states: “In my art-making process I use a variety of commonplace, discarded, domestic objects combined with traditional art-making materials to compose sculptural forms that are subsequently cast, cut, drilled and scraped to reveal either the “guts” or the of the matter. Through this process, I curate selected forms that speak to the physical and spiritual concerns inherent in the human condition.”

The benefits of repurposing or “recycling” discarded material is almost universally recognized in many countries of the developed world, and Maker’s artistic practice can be linked to the economic, moral, political and aesthetic reasons to participate in that endeavor. Art-historically, Maker’s process also links her to the techniques and intentions of Dadaist and Surrealist collage, montage, and “appropriation art” that continue through Robert Rauschenberg’s “combine” works of the 1950’s-60’s, the seminal work of Joseph Beuys, Jasper Johns, John Chamberlain, Yoko Ono, etc., and that still exert a powerful influence on many contemporary artists.

As I look at Maker’s formidable work *Job’s Lament*, I’m initially seduced and charmed by the alluring candy colors and shapes of the pills - Good & Plenty! Mike and Ike! Red Hots! – the insinuation of something sweet and satisfying. The pills in the foreground are filled with more pills – real ones. I’m on a planet of pills, and I want them. Beyond the horizon line of the work are faintly painted pill forms floating in the sky as though appearing in the evanescent dream-fabric of the night or as cloud-like forms – ungraspable but no less “real.” Unlike the other pill forms, the pill in the foreground of the lower left of the work is filled with – among other brightly colored objects – shredded money. I can’t help but think that these symbolic shreds of commercial exchange refer to the industry that manufactures and releases medications onto the marketplace. Pills may be panaceas to those who live with the ills which they

target, but they can, in certain circumstances, also be implicated in the heartless greed, the outsize profits they are capable of securing for their manufacturers and investors at the expense of the sufferers that most need them. The title of the work – *Job's Lament* – is richly evocative. Its biblical references pulsate with profound passion and pain – the longing for something, anything other than what one must endure. The misery of pain is raw, cruel and fatiguing. There is no shame or “sin” here, only the humanity which no pill or nostrum can cure.

Superscopic, a somewhat older work (2009-2010) made of shredded medical documents, photos and empty prescription bottles comes closest to approximating the mystical and/or cosmic illumination so eagerly sought by users of psychedelics – the experience of being embedded in a vast web or matrix of sentient life, a jeweled network of dizzying patterns – metaphysical optic systems both participatory and visionary. The work is a reminder that alongside the startling sense of belonging in the universe and of the mystery of Being, we are living in a radical time of historical transition caused by – among other things – the breakdown of planetary ecology and the passivity of consumerism – in this case the consumption of “meds.” Once again, Maker has produced a work of exquisite beauty and spiritual depth, which also manages to administer a hefty dose of social observation and concern.

Numinosity runs through Terry Maker's work which brings me to the strange place that religion occupies in contemporary art and more particularly in her art. Art that is critical of religion and of persons who are, in whatever sense “religious,” is not uncommon in contemporary art. Some artists may still engage themes of “transcendence,” or “enchantment,” but few turn to theology and “faith” as a purposeful foundation for what might matter most in their art practice. While Maker is quick to credit her many and disparate artistic influences, she also, through a very personal journey marked by the kinds of epiphanies and synchronic events through which the faithful come to see God moving in and through their lives, became a believing Christian. I recall hearing once that Queen Victoria was in the habit of “crossing her fingers” whenever she was publically required to voice her assent to the creedal formulations of the Church of England – of which she was the head. Maker - though she may find herself almost alone among her contemporaries – doesn't resort to any clever obfuscations of her deep religious faith. Though we may not be aware of it, that is her gift to us. The patient, obsessive attentiveness she gives to every aspect of her art practice, and the ways in which the resulting work lands so strongly on our heart/minds is Terry Maker's confession of her faith.

Simon Zalkind, Curator of Exhibitions
The Art Gallery, Fulginiti Pavilion for Bioethics and Humanities
October, 2016



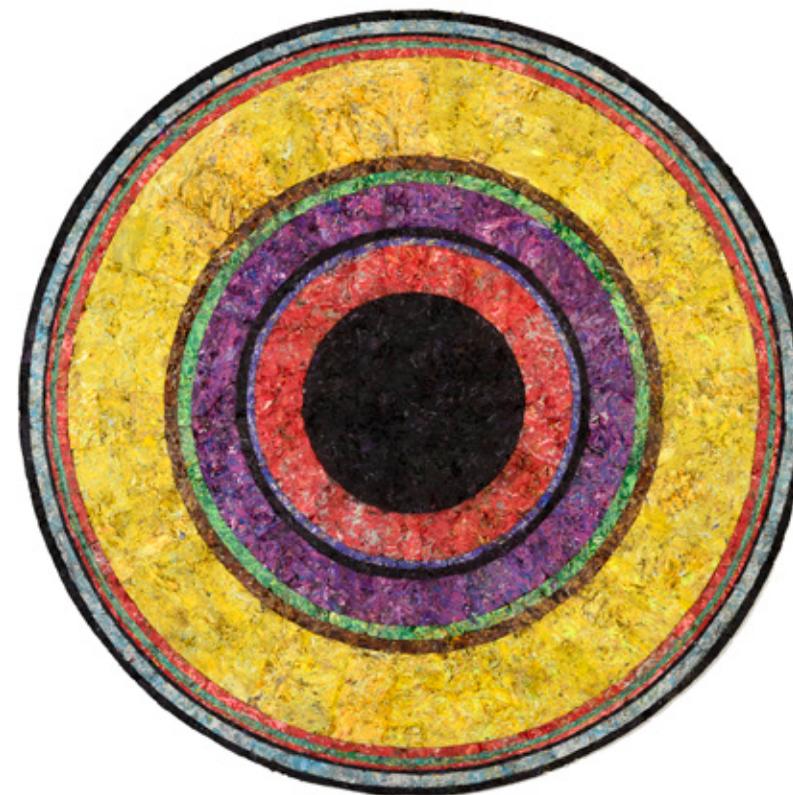
Superscopic, 2009
shredded medical documents, prescription bottles, pills
46" x 46" x 2.S"d



The Great Physician, 2016
vacuum formed capsule, ceramic hand, on wooden pedestal
75.5" H x 22" W x 24" D



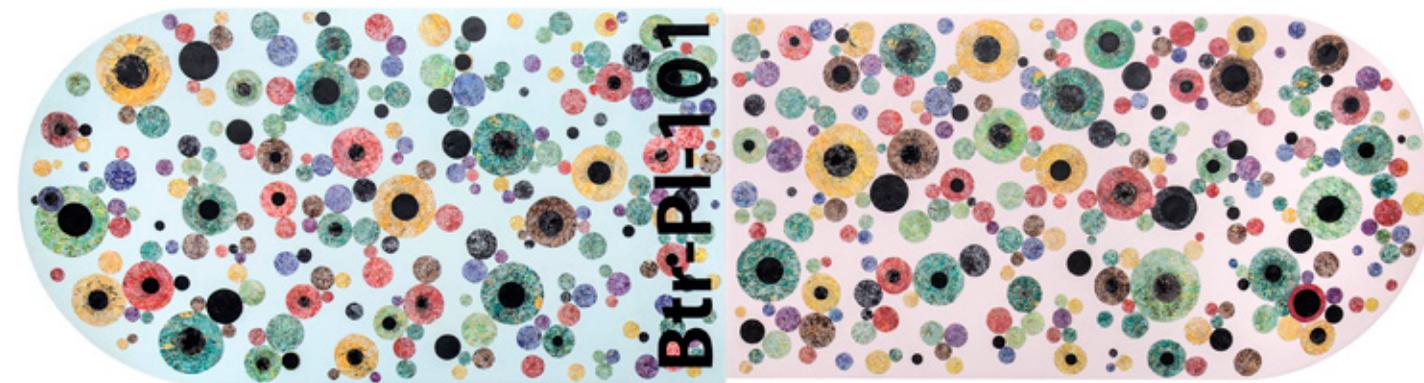
Cure All, 2016
vacuum formed capsules
47"h X 16"w X 16"d



Time Release (Cross Section), 2016
shredded paper, prescription warnings on panel
5' diameter x 2"d



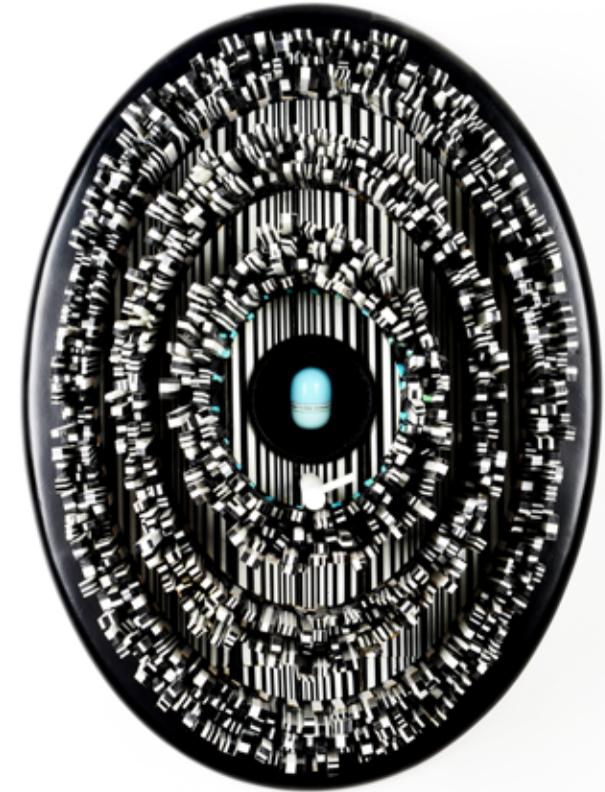
Balm of Gilead, 2016
oil on panel, cast resin thorns, vacuum formed capsule
14"h x 35.5"w x 4"d



Bitter Pill, 2016
paper, resin
3' 10"h x 14' 1.25"w x 3"d



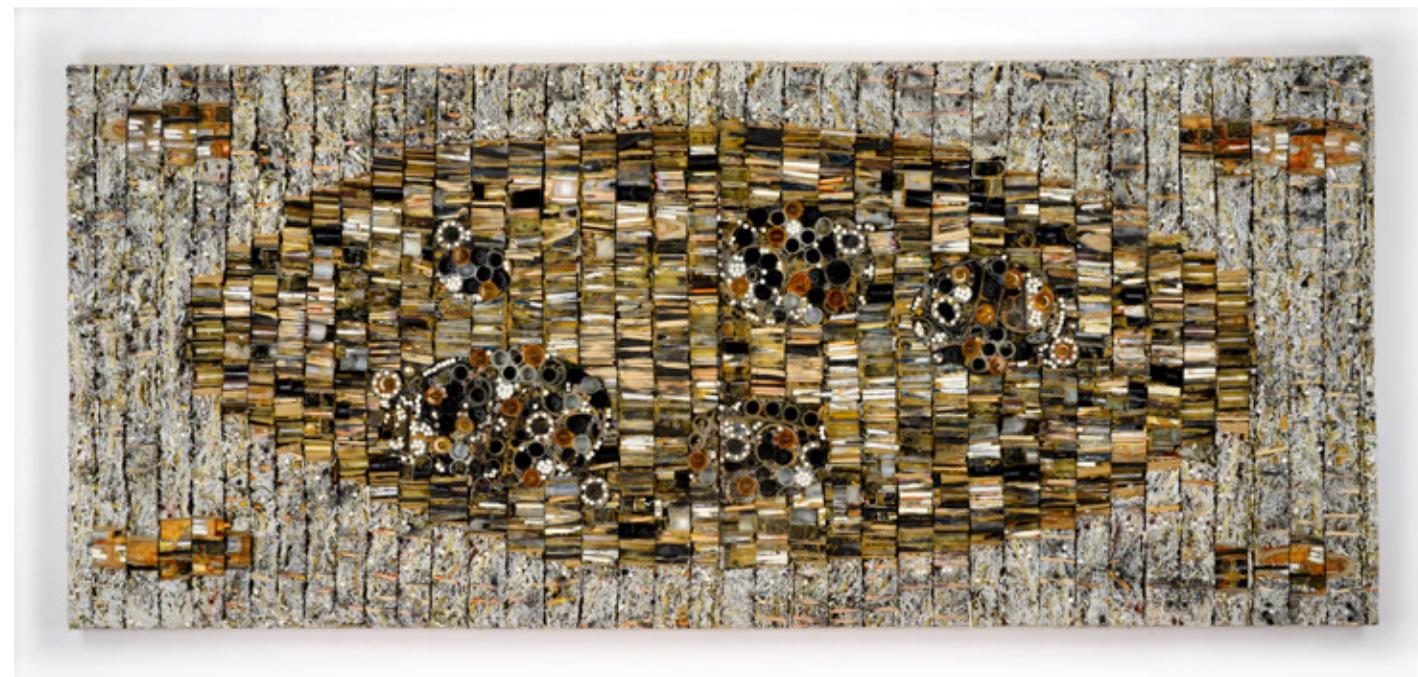
Antidote, 2016
turned urethane foam push pin, stainless steel,
carved wooden chain, vacuum formed capsule
3' 4"h x 7' 8"w x 2.5"d



Perchance to Dream, 2016
resin, wood, vacuum formed capsule
23"h x 15.5"w x 12"d



Root of Jesse, 2016
turned urethane foam pills, acrylic paint, threaded rod with pills
3' 4"h x 7' 8"w x 2.5"d



Lenticular Slice, 2010
shredded medical documents, photos, empty prescription bottles
3' 4"h x 7' 8"w x 2.5"d

Catalogue of the Exhibition

1. *The Great Physician*, 2016
vacuum formed capsule, ceramic hand, on wooden pedestal
75.5" H x 22" W x 24" D
2. *Job's Lament*, 2016
paper, vacuum formed capsules, pills, oil on panel
3'9"h x 15"w x 8"d
3. *Cure All*, 2016
vacuum formed capsules
47"h x 16"w x 16"d
4. *Time Release (Cross Section)*, 2016
shredded paper, prescription warnings on panel
5' diameter x 2"d
5. *Antidote*, 2016
turned urethane foam push pin, stainless steel, carved
wooden chain, Vacuum formed capsule
55"h x 10.5"w x 23"d
6. *Bitter Pill*, 2016
paper, resin
3'10"h x 14' 1.25"w x 3"d
7. *Root of Jesse*, 2016
turned urethane foam pills, acrylic paint, threaded rod with pills
7' h x 9'w x 7"d
8. *Balm of Gilead*, 2016
oil on panel, cast resin thorns, vacuum formed capsule
14"h x 35.5"w x 4"d
9. *Perchance to Dream*, 2016
resin, wood, vacuum formed capsule
23"h x 15.5"w x 12"d
10. *Full Strength*, 2016
resin, wood, vacuum formed capsule
23"h x 15.5"w x 12"d
11. *Migratory Slice*, 2010
shredded medical documents, empty prescription bottles
3' 4"h x 7' 8"w x 2.5"d
12. *Lenticular Slice*, 2010
shredded medical documents, photos, empty prescription
bottles
3' 4"h x 7' 8"w x 2.5"d
13. *Superscopic*, 2009
shredded medical documents, prescription bottles, pills
46" x 46" x 2.5"d

All works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist and
Robischon Gallery, Denver.