

Jim Drain

Art in Embassies:

a survey of student models and drawings

2/29/12

Creating models and drawings for a major project is like mapping out a universe; each is in orbit with each other and together they are important as a whole. The models and drawings were informed by our research into the Arts and Culture of Morocco. The Arts of Morocco are incredible: they are vibrant, colorful and ingrained into the fabric of the culture. They are alive and 'live' as they have done for hundreds of years.

We were immediately drawn to the arabesque tilework, zillij, that seems to cover every inch of the interior architectural spaces. The geometry is perfect as it is dazzling. The zillij works come from the Arab culture and is a men's craft and fits within a narrow canon.

The Berber carpets were the second and immediate draw. Their patterns are lush and boldly sensual. The carpets are woven primarily by women and as much as they are traded, and sold, they are highly functional and prized objects within a household. There are canons to follow (for example, there are specific carpets made for a wedding) but innovation in the use of colors and patterning makes this Moroccan artform unique.

Looking at the berber carpets, it was almost like overhearing a song or secretly reading a private journal. The language used in the carpet designs allowed for an infinite variation of pattern and design. They act as recordings of a culture; each one a reinvention.

As the class proceeded, it was amazing to both learn more about these respective art forms as we explored parallel forms more immediately familiar to us such as Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion maps, transegrity sculptures and Americana quilt making. Our goal was to find a new American-Moroccan hybrid form.

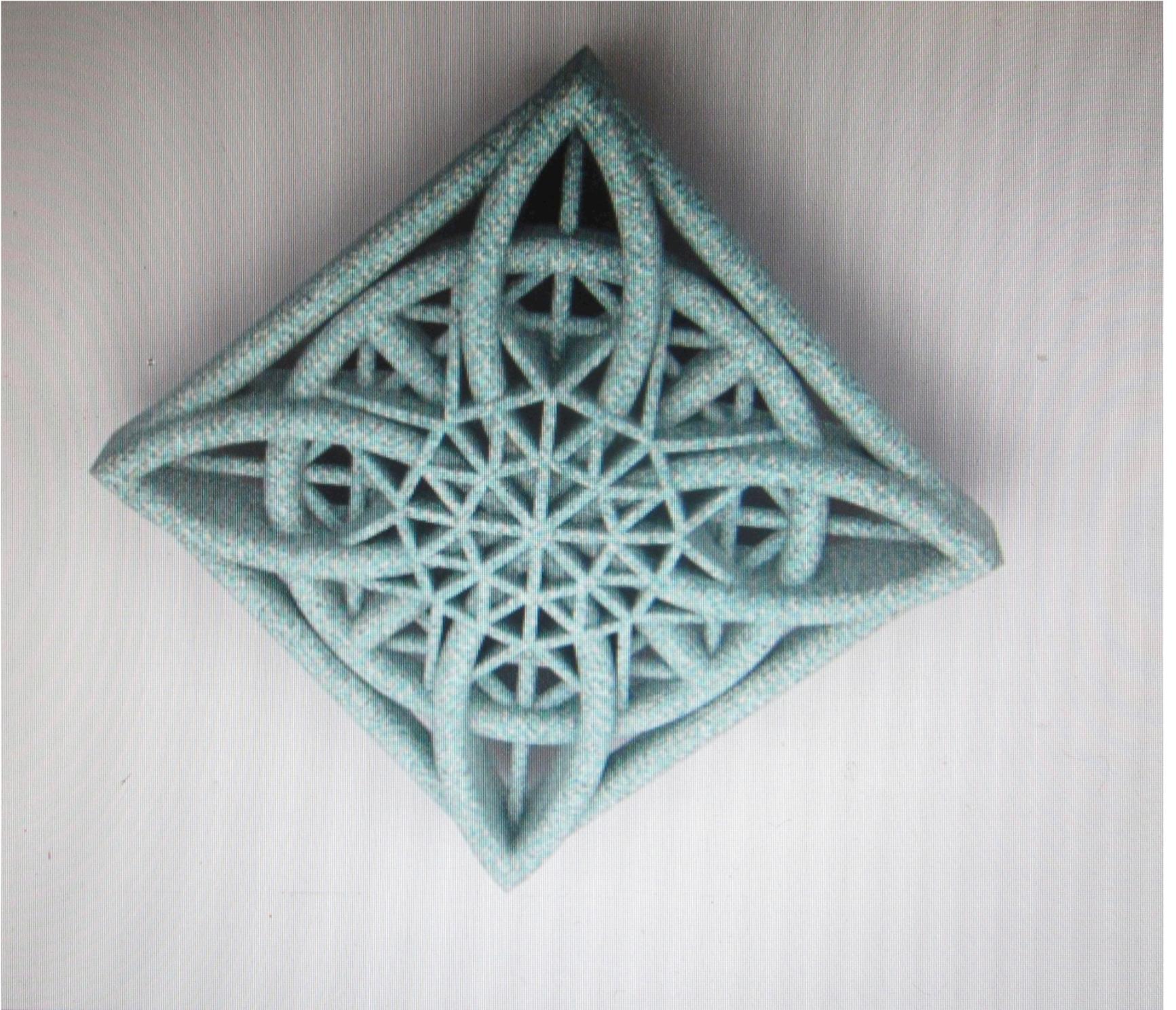
Structural Explorations: pps. 003-008

There has been a set alphabet of tile forms established in zillij that enables a craftsperson to make an infinite universe of interlocking geometric shapes. In the following pages, the images illustrate the different forms students designed to establish a 'dimensional phrasing.'

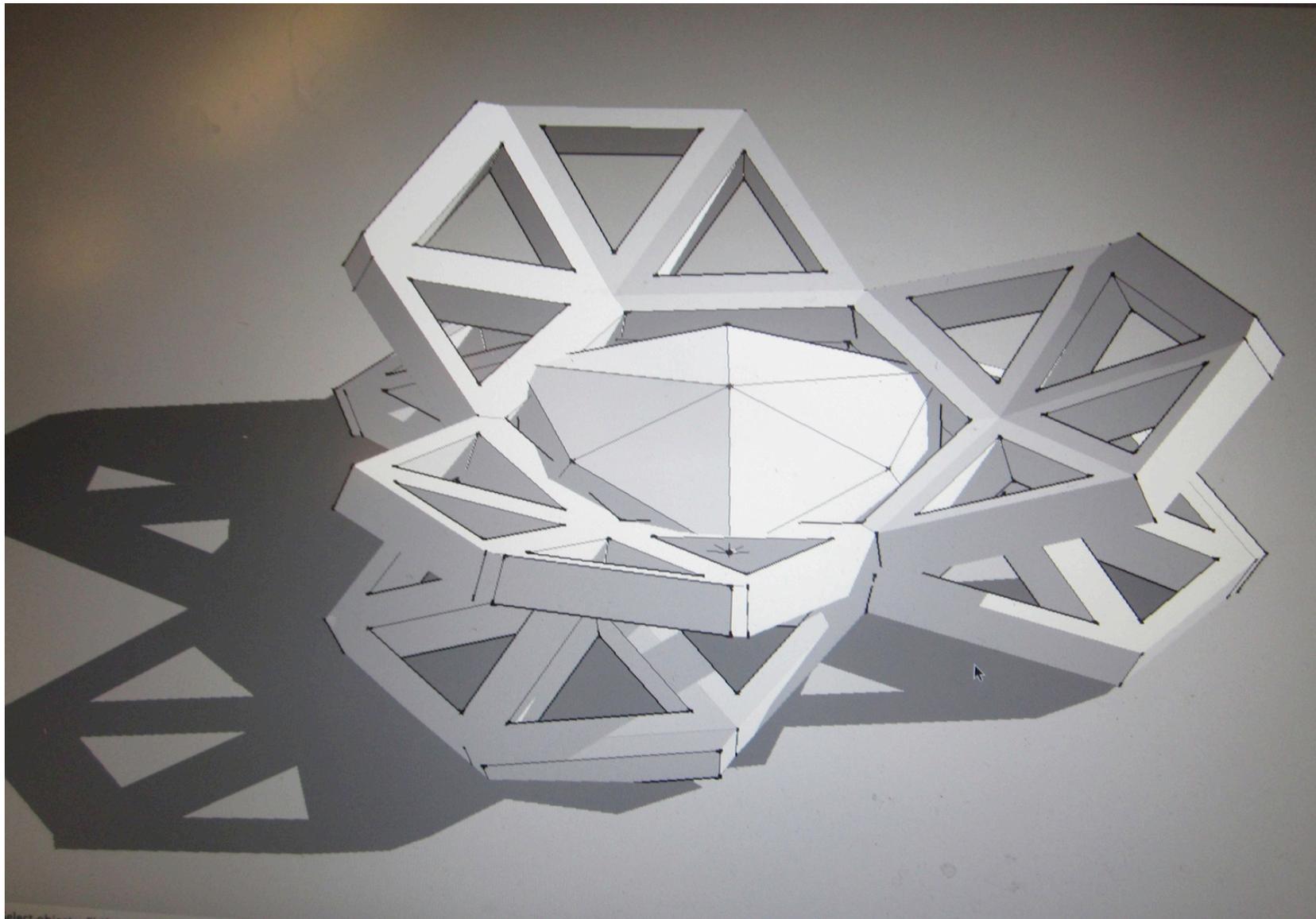
In particular, Pages 004, 006 and 007 show one student's unique exploration. MJ created a cast plaster form (page 007) as well one made via the rapid prototyping machine (pages 004 and 006).



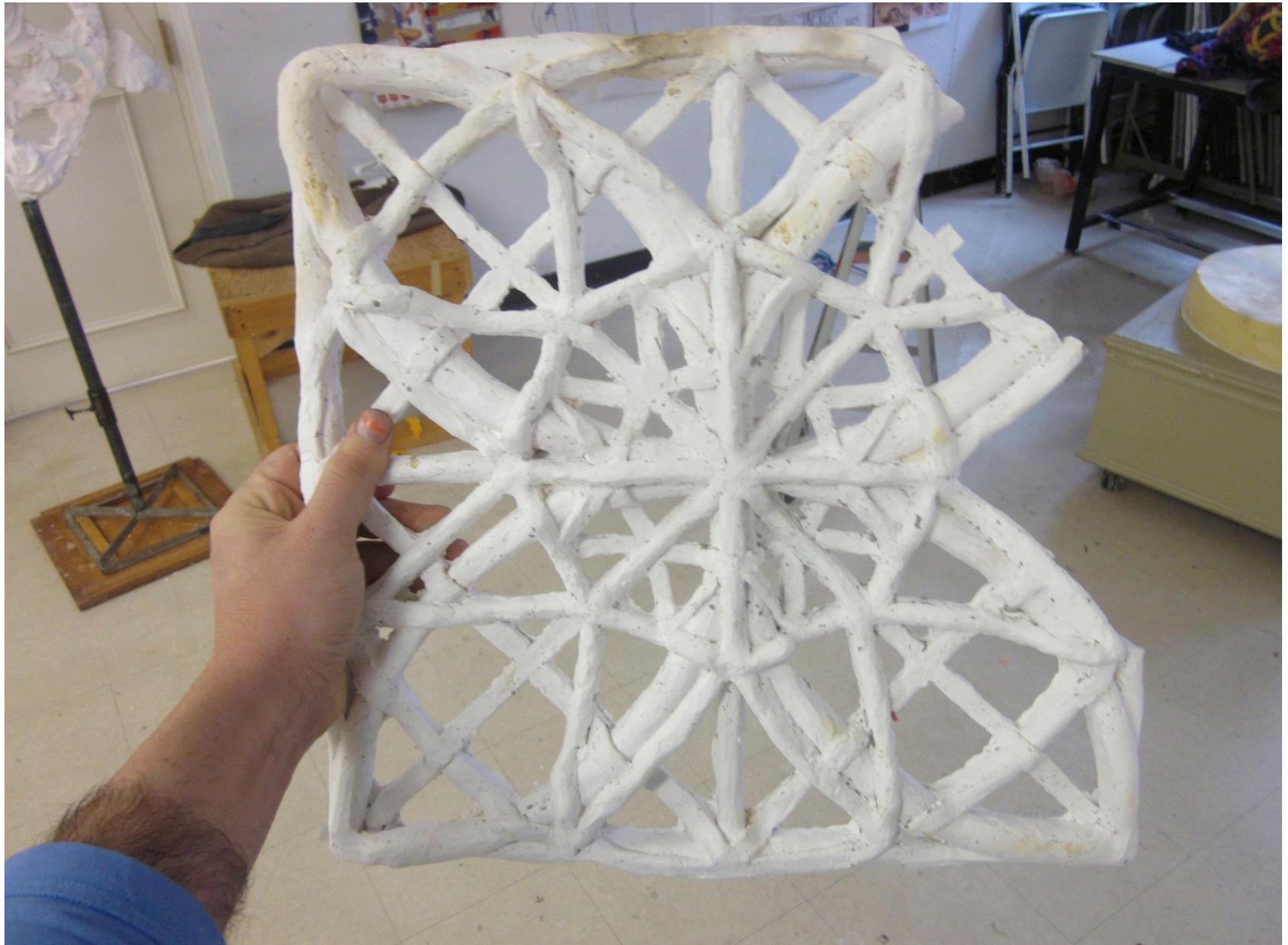
EJ's drawings



MJ's computer model

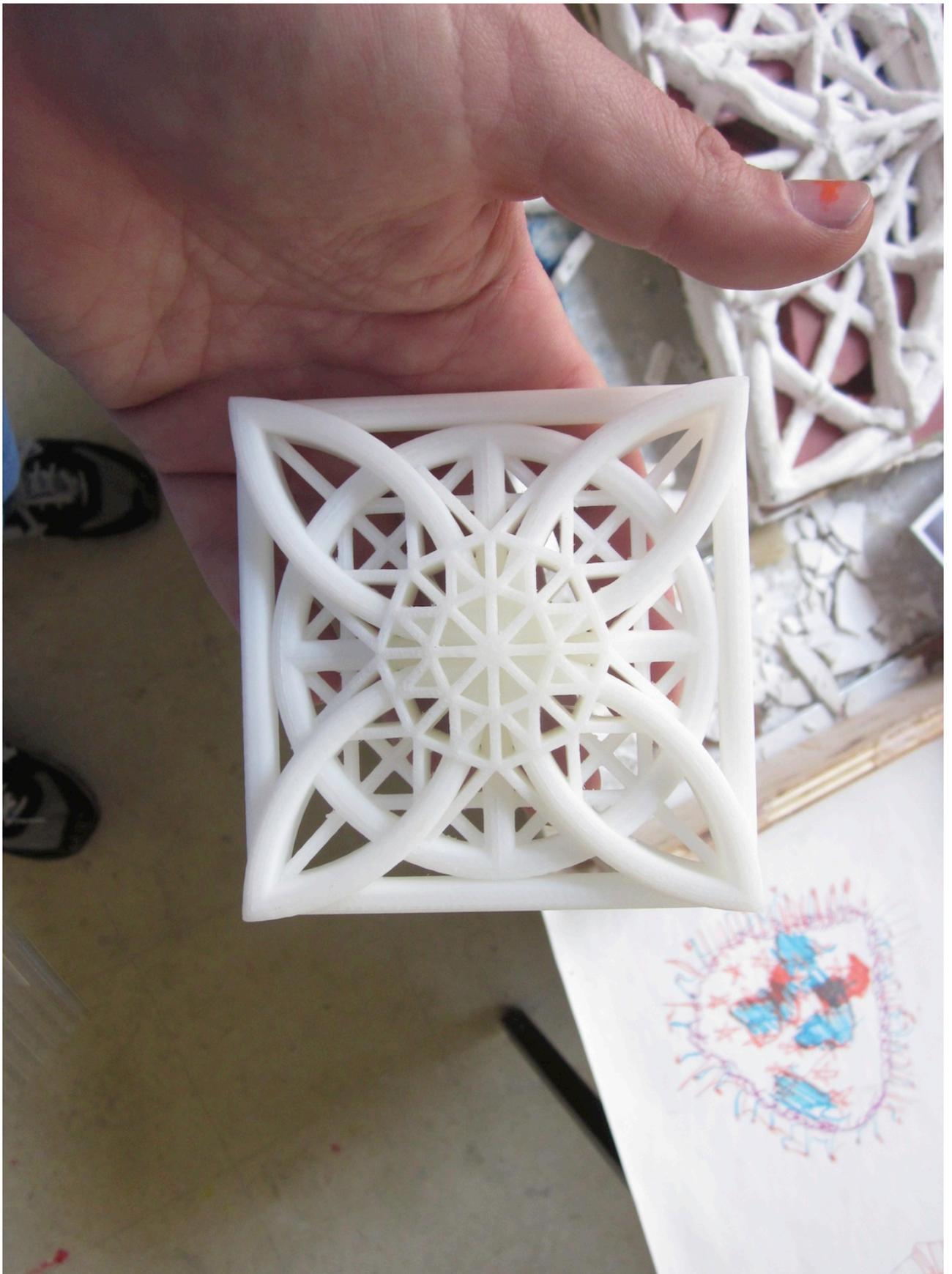


Yuan's computer model



MJ's plaster cast relief

006



MJ's rapid prototype model



Sarah's design welded in steel

008

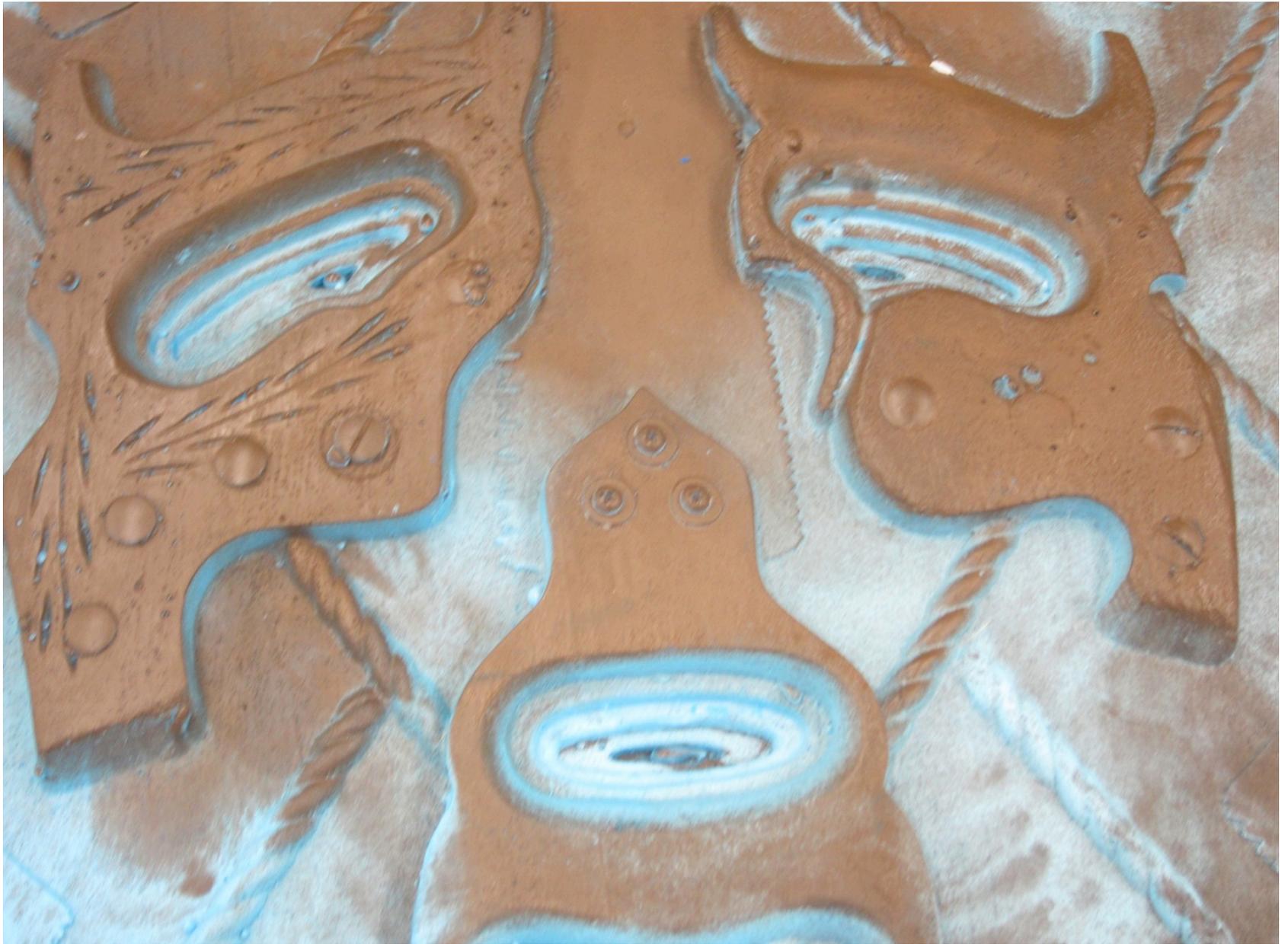
Cast Relief Objects: pps 9-18

The one-part relief (or bas relief) is the simplest way to make a mold. It was both a fast way to get our ideas cast into form as well as see how these casts could function as 'linking components' for a larger structure.

Plaster itself became a medium of exploration (as in page 011). Relief forms enabled the students to not get too precious with their cast objects. Page 012 is a good example of an after-the-fact collaboration.

Creating molds allowed the students to translate their positives into other materials. Pages 009 and 010 are examples of a relief cast in plastic with tinting and bronze powder added.

Pages 013 and 014 are examples of a relief cast in wax as well as in glass. Page 16 shows a Glass student pouring molten glass into a wooden basket. The result is shown on page 017.



Bayne's relief cast



Bayne's second relief cast



Andrew's plaster and pigment experiments



EJ's and Zoe's combined relief casts



Simone and Carmel's relief cast (in wax)

013



Simone and Carmel's relief (sand cast with Zoe's copper weaving)



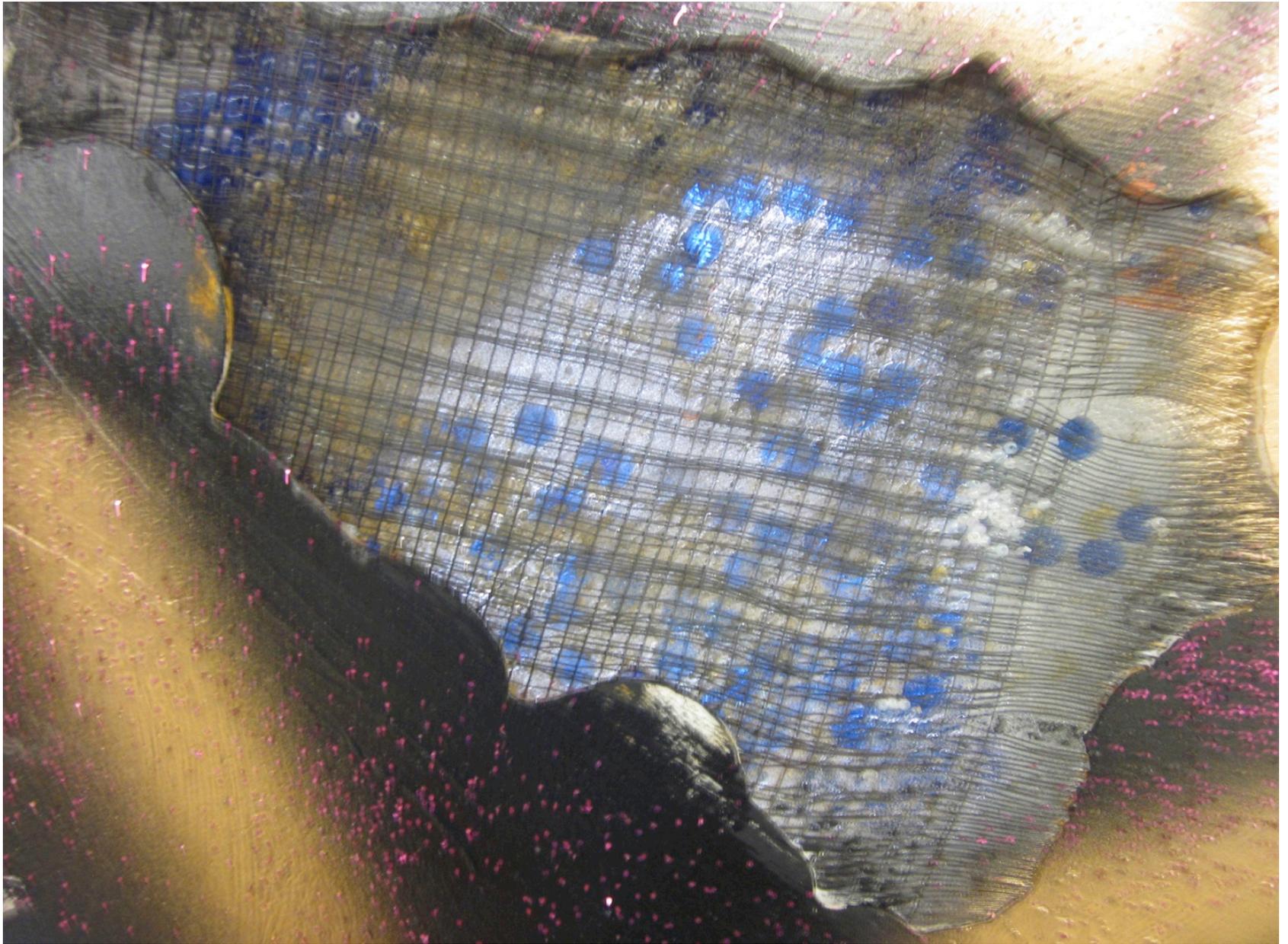
Glass being poured into a relief form



EJ's hand (the sand impression can be seen on page 015)



glass poured into a basket with stainless thread and spray paint **017**

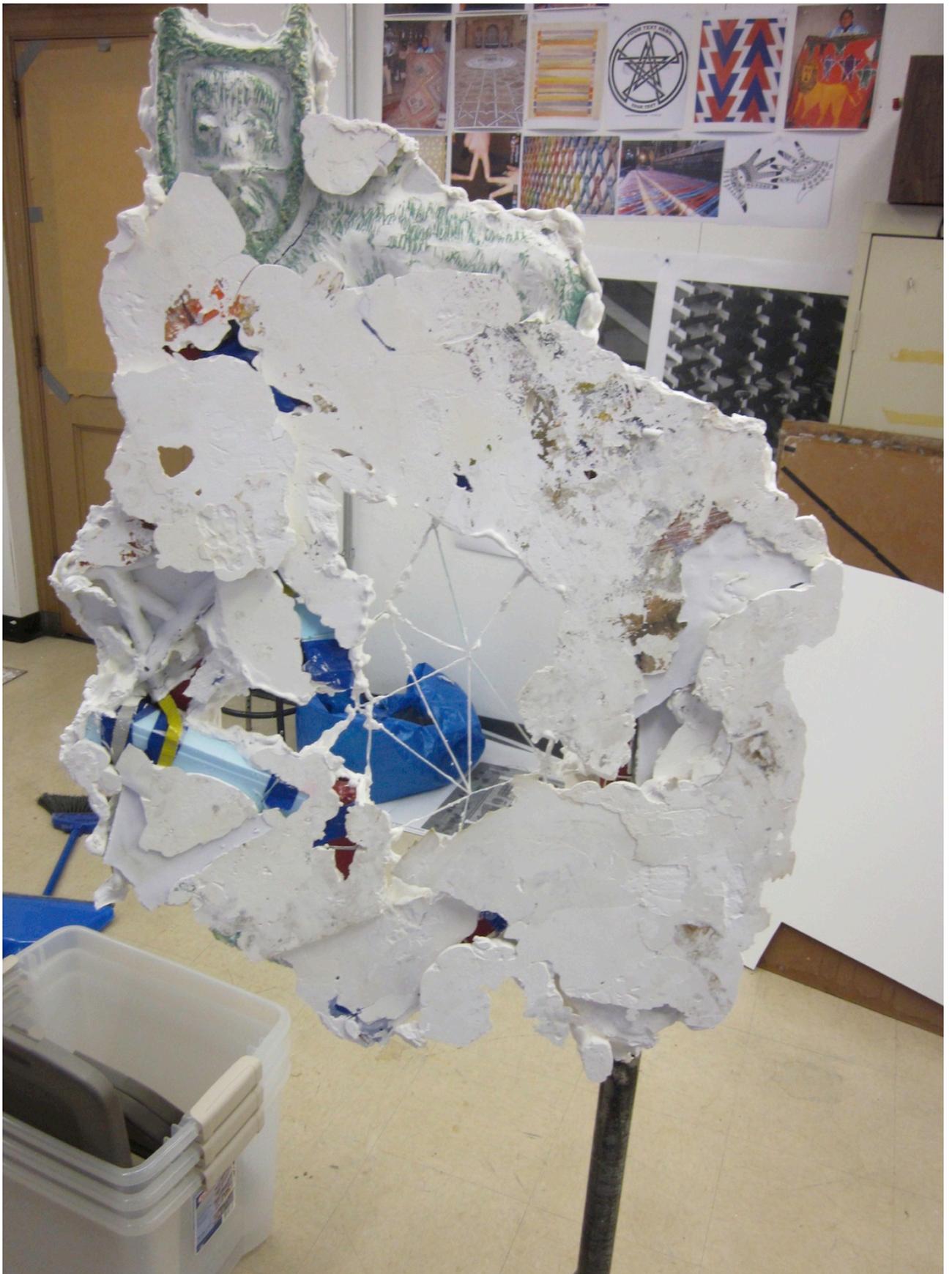


detail of cast glass piece with Zoe's steel woven structure embedded in plaster

Simone and Carmel's relief designs embedded in plaster: pps 021-024

This work is a great example of an unexpected discovery. The cast positive objects were placed on a flat surface and 'glued' together with plaster. The center yarn pattern floats as a central window and the cast lion sits at the peak of the work. This exploration is directly informing the approach I will be taking with the bronze casting. It allows for chance and unexpected discoveries within an established structure.

I also really like how raw the form is while maintaining a very fragile and varying profile line.



Carmel and Simone's plaster form



(detail of Carmel and Simone's plaster form)



(detail of Carmel and Simone's plaster form)

021



(detail of Carmel and Simone's plaster form)

022



(detail of Simone and Carmel's plaster form)

023



(detail of Simone and Carmel's plaster form)

After the Architects Left: pps. 25-28

The first few weeks we were building and developing a vertical woven structure that used repeating forms to establish a screen or barrier wall. It was familiar territory for me since it was based on a work I had made the previous year.

After the architects left, this vertical screen suddenly seemed too neutral. The repeating blocks added very little play with the toned-down environment created by the embassy.

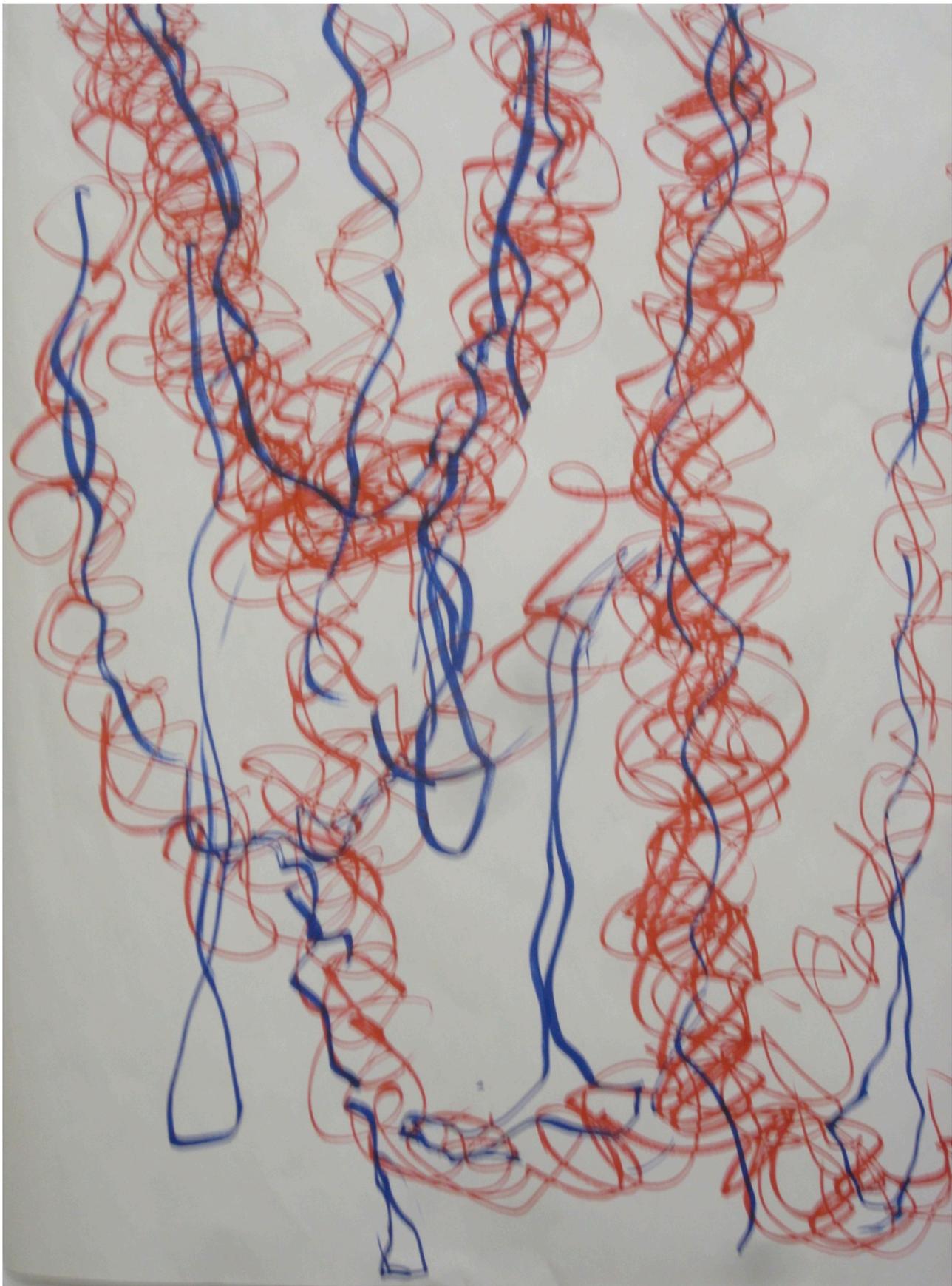
The following drawings are good examples of the works made to re-establish a more chaotic and unruly position.



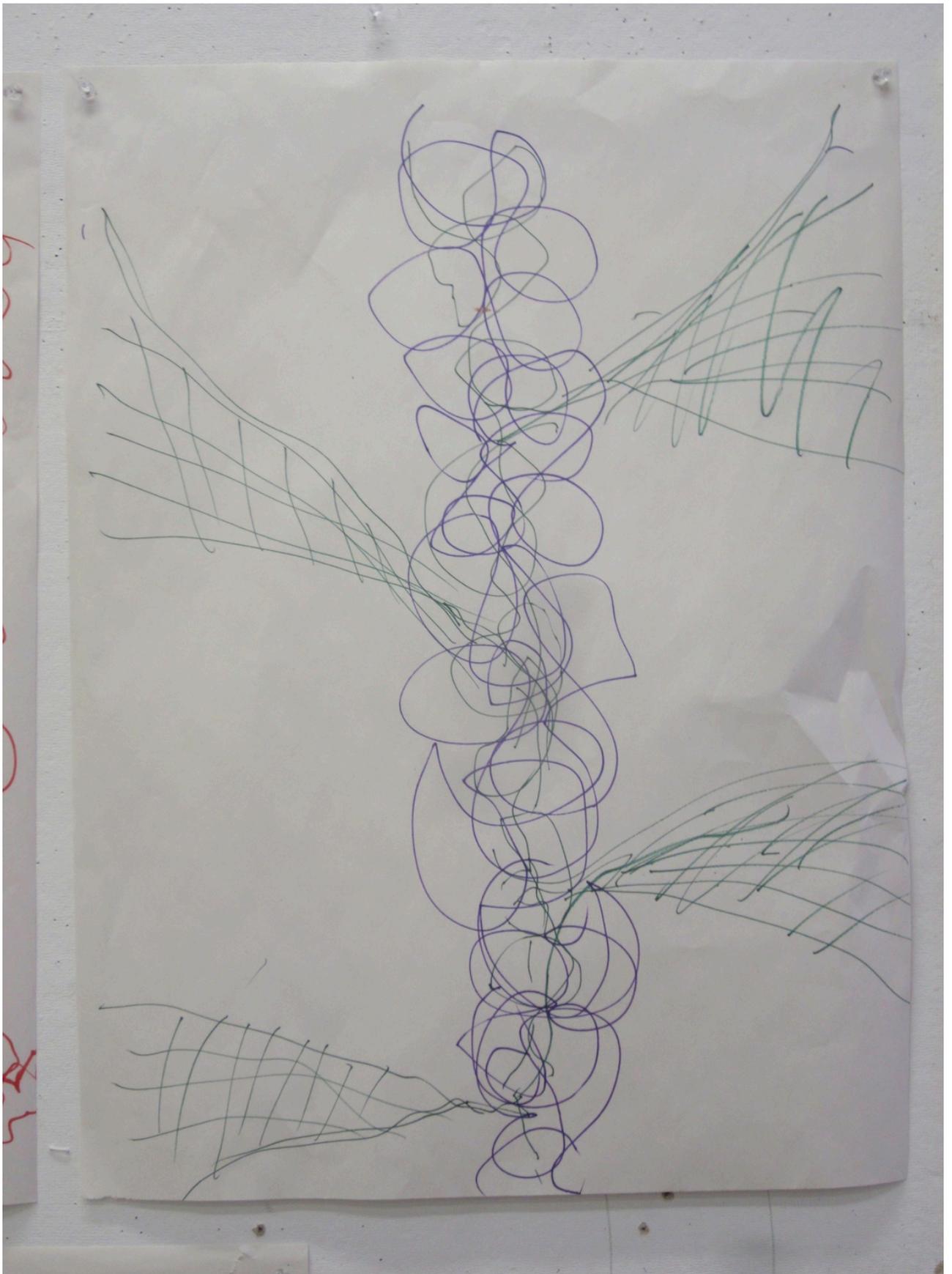
Zoe's drawing



Andrew's drawing



Andrew's drawing



Andrew's drawing

Architecture talks to Textiles (and vice versa): pps 29-35

Pages 29-31 are good examples of the students looking at Textiles from an architectural or structural point-of-view. These works were created by Textiles undergraduates.

Page 5 and page 34 were both created by Yuan, a first year Grad Architecture student. Yuan was especially interested in seeing the looms in action and was at first hesitant to think outside of his computer modeling program. The work on page 34 is one of the best leaps forward for the class. It uses a repeated interlocking circular forms held together by a loose draping string. As much as the forms pictured on pps 32, 33 and 35 are 'wild and chaotic,' it is Yuan's form on page 34 that really has a sense of danger and anarchy.



Zoe's waffle weave



EJ's knit form with gel medium and pigment



Carmel's wool knit structure with copper wire

031



found glass embedded in plaster



033
painted ropes

033



Yuan's sculpture (cardboard and thread)

034



wood embedded in plaster

035

Summary:

Together we made a way forward to find new, uncharted territory. The sculpture that will be created for the Moroccan embassy will draw directly from the ideas we established in class. The models and drawings will be immensely helpful as we move into more durable materials like bronze and cast glass. They will be inspirational points of reference and in essence, establish the principles of the universe we created together.

Also, the resulting sculpture will reflect the Moroccan culture's wonderment of geometric form, geometry being 'the voice of the heavens,' while embracing the country's raw, enduring spirit. The sculpture will be a true hybrid of cultures, reflecting too a spirit of innovation and experimentation that is unique to American culture. I can't wait!