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# Illuminations

NEWSLETTER FOR NEW FACULTY

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## An Interview with Ryan Buysens

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*Ryan Buysens was born and raised near Detroit, MI; an environment that imparted a rich, lifelong influence from the automotive industry's mechanized culture. An artist in the broadest sense of the word, he expresses his ideas through countless media. Preferring to explore the "what if" in the evolution of technology, he seeks out a departure from the logical path of invention and uses it as a branch that sprouts new possibilities. His work becomes a comment on logic and progress.*



(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHTiociYABI>)

**How did you first become interested in kinetic art?**

I have always made things that move in one way or another. From my childhood of hacking and manipulating my toys to try and make things that suited my interests – as far back as I can remember I took toys, bikes, clocks apart to figure out how they worked – sometimes attempting to put them back together and not always succeeding...

**What was your first attempt to create something in this genre? Does it still exist?**

My first attempt to actually make kinetic “Art” (with a capital “A”) was a lightbox with an arm balanced on a knife-edge joint (a la George Rickey). The arm held one piece of halftone film in front of another that was mounted directly to the light box. With the lightest change in air current, the arm would rock and the overlaid halftones would create a dancing moiré pattern – fun stuff, very Op-Art. Although in disrepair, I do still have the pieces of this artwork.

**What do you feel is unique about your art?**

If it’s all been done before, how does one do anything unique? My work is a personal exploration into aspects or phenomena of everyday life that I find interesting. Someone else’s answers can usually be found about why something happens. However, it is only when I attempt to find something out on my own that I discover a certain truth and understanding of things. I attempt to bring forward this empirical understanding in my work to share this vision with others to allow them to see the world as I do.

**How has your work evolved since you started?**

Every piece is an evolution from what I have done before. When the time passes between finished works, this is even more evident. In some extreme cases, my work may evolve to a point that it may even seem like a departure.

Through the years, my ideas have grown more and more complex as my skills and interests progressed. Constantly dealing with contemporary themes and concepts I have acquired skills and learned how to use a highly diverse “toolbox” of hand-craft, computer design and 3D-Printing to bring my ideas to fruition. I am an early adopter and always placing myself ahead of a curve – I believe my work is a reflection of this while trying to remain timeless.

**Who or what is your biggest source of inspiration?**

Oddly enough I am often inspired at the most inopportune times. It is usually things that one would label as everyday or mundane that get me to go of on my tangents.

**Can you walk us through the development of one of your pieces, from the original idea through the finished product?**

I usually spawn an idea by observing or playing with something the wrong way. This action creates a cascading domino effect that leads to a need to portray the observation in some sort of physical/tangible way. I often tinker, design and prototype many tests until I seem to be getting what I want. Very rarely do I have successes right out to the gate, some projects even go on for longer than they should only because I cannot let them go. In the end, when I do finish a piece, I usually only see flaws – aspects where I fell short. Although I obsess and try harder and harder to eliminate this in each successive piece. Ultimately, this self-criticism is what drives me to make another and the cycle continues.

**What prompted you to join UCF?**

I often have trouble labeling myself as sculptor or even artist. What prompted me to apply was that the position described someone who was not just these things but transcended the labels and paradigms – it was perfect for me. After meeting such great folks during my interview, I was elated to have received the offer and am enjoying my time here very much.

**What contemporary artists inspire you?**

Actually, I am most inspired by art of the past – especially Renaissance Art. There is such a liveliness and poetry in the work of the classic artists that draws me in – a perfect mixture of content and craft. I prefer to see (and make) art that fulfills something that I cannot have every day and I don’t admire art that is ubiquitous or that I can readily replicate myself. This is not to say that contemporary art falls short in any way. Most contemporary art connects with me cerebrally but rarely engages with me on that visceral level to a degree that the classics do. I like art that does both – some of the contemporary masters that do this for me are: Ganson, Koons, Piccinini, Barney, etc.

**What are your current projects/future direction of your work?**

I have recently fallen into the rabbit hole of interactivity. For the past decade, I have resisted the amount of technology that was present in the final piece (although there I posed no limits to the means that could be used to produce it). I had incorporated Computer Design, 3D printing, and Electronics into the works more and more until I created “resistance.” It was my first piece to incorporate interactivity as its conceptual foundation. The potency of this piece and how it bridges human behavior with art has

spawned a whole new direction in my work. The majority of my new projects deal with phenomena that are centered around the responsiveness of an object or environment to the presence of people.

**Can you describe your art in one word?**

no