Fuzzy Robots: Utopian Ideals, The Immortalization Of Youth, And The Innocence Of Childhood.

Elizabeth Caps
University of Central Florida

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

STARS Citation
FUZZY ROBOTS:
UTOPIAN IDEALS, IMMORTALIZATION OF YOUTH, AND THE INNOCENCE OF CHILDHOOD

by
ANNE CAPS
B.F.A. University of Central Florida, 2006
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art and the Computer
in the Department of Art
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2009
ABSTRACT

Ideals, aesthetics, forms, and concepts have resurfaced in various cultures throughout time. I am interested in the idea of the recurring themes that exist in the collective unconscious. I create monolithic figures that exhibit these archetypal qualities. Heavily influenced by film, animation, video games, and contemporary art, I create figures and paintings that are manifestations of my subconscious. These manifestations personify utopian ideals, the immortalization of youth, and the innocence of childhood.
For Mother Dearest, Fajah, and Brosef
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their contribution to my education: David Haxton, Scott F. Hall, Chuck Abraham, Brady Robinson, Keith Kovach, Carla Poindexter, Matthew Dombrowski, Janae Corrado, Daniela Cosovic, Glen Gramling, Danielle Lynise Jones, Caberbe Joseph, Alice F. Kramer, Brian Salisbury, Henry Schreiber, Katie Urban, Provost Hickey, Ken Brace, Erin Green, and Guard-Lee, Inc.

And a million thank yous to my family for their unconditional support: Donna Caps, John Caps, Christopher Caps, Shaun Wightman, Tommy Wightman and Kay Wightman.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................vii

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

THE SUBCONSCIOUS AS SUBJECT MATTER ............................................................... 2
  Forms ....................................................................................................................... 3
  Utopia .................................................................................................................... 4
  Immortalization of Youth and the Innocence of Childhood .................................... 6

ARCHETYPES ............................................................................................................... 8
  Prototypes ............................................................................................................. 11

INFLUENCES ............................................................................................................. 12
  Contemporary Art ................................................................................................. 12

CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................... 15

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... 16
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mother and Child Sketch from a lecture on a broad overview of art history ....................... 3
Figure 2: Early Sketches of Character Silhouettes ............................................................................. 4
Figure 3: Ham and Cheese .................................................................................................................. 5
Figure 4: CHEESE! ................................................................................................................................. 5
Figure 5: EETZ ZE MEETZ! ..................................................................................................................... 6
Figure 6: Bookends ................................................................................................................................. 7
Figure 7: Own Drummer .......................................................................................................................... 7
Figure 8: Mother and Child ................................................................................................................... 9
Figure 9: The Serpent Mother ............................................................................................................... 10
Figure 10: gOat, KeeWee, gRaff .......................................................................................................... 11
Figure 11: Tom Otterness Lecture at FAU ............................................................................................ 13
INTRODUCTION

I come from a family of engineers and computer scientists. As a result, I am predestined to enjoy math. I have always been interested in creating and problem solving. When I was little I used to dissect my Happy Meal toys to see how they were put together.

My family has always been supportive in the paths that I have chosen. I enrolled in the M.F.A. Studio Art and the Computer program to enrich my passion for creating. My three years in the graduate program has been a great effort to reconcile my love of the technical with my need to create.
THE SUBCONSCIOUS AS SUBJECT MATTER

“The personal unconscious consists firstly of all those contents that became unconscious either because they lost their intensity and were forgotten or because consciousness was withdrawn from them, and secondly of contents, some of them sense-impressions, which never had sufficient intensity to reach consciousness but have somehow entered the psyche” (Papadopoulos, 2006).

The human mind can be divided between the Ego and the Id. The Ego represents conscious mind that has access to memories, thoughts, and feelings. The Id represents the more instinctual, less realized parts of the mind. It is from the Id that individual personalities are developed based on the Id’s need to seek immediate enjoyment. The Id is concerned with the immediacy of the basic human instincts, much like a newborn. The Id is a strong influence in my artwork. My art is based on the fragments of memories that are locked in my subconscious.

I use my subconscious mind as a source of subject matter. The unconscious mind holds memories that are not accessible by the everyday waking consciousness. A focused action is required to awaken these latent thoughts. My sketches are created when my mind is trapped in deep thought. My body responds physically through pen and paper. These sketches are not confined to a sketchbook. In fact, I rarely sit down to develop an idea in a bound sketch book. Instead, I find inspiration in the stream of conscious association of words and imagery. My compositions are a simplification of greater ideas: mythology, religion, history, politics, music, film, pop culture.
I am attracted to the relationships that are evoked from the arrangement and repetition of forms. Through the placement of lines and even objects, I am able to create formalist relationships and visual narratives within my compositions. I am able to convey a message with simple means. My art exhibits youthfulness and simplicity.
I create eloquent silhouettes that reflect the utopian nature of my forms. My prototypes are a retreat from the worries and woes of our society. They are the citizens in a fictitious world that is carefree. There is no danger. The subjects are happy, inquisitive, reproductive, and most importantly, well fed.

Every now and then an external force causes us to step outside of our own world and to venture into something new. *EETZZE MEETS!* removes all modern characteristics of humans and retreats back to the primal instincts of Man whose primary concerns were basic survival: food, shelter, and reproduction.
Figure 3: Ham and Cheese

Figure 4: CHEESE!
Immortalization of Youth and the Innocence of Childhood

Like a person snapping a photograph to record a moment in time to remember it forever, I capture the essence of childhood in my sculpture and paintings. My characters are naturally inquisitive like toddlers discovering the world for the first time. They have huge clumsy feet that speak of the awkwardness of growing up in the challenging years of adolescence. The bright and vivid colors are reminiscent of the Crayola eight pack of crayons — a childhood staple for developing motor skills.
Figure 6: Bookends

Figure 7: Own Drummer
ARCHETYPES

An archetype can be defined as an original model of some sort: a person, thing or an idea. These models are reproduced over time in oral histories, literature, art, theater, film, etc. Through the many instances of the archetype duplication, changes occur. At the core of the new person, thing, or idea is the essence of the archetype.

My prototypes are stripped of identifying features and represent pure archetypes. These prototypes are derived from my subconscious. My paintings are the union of my subconscious with my Ego. The addition of color, environment, and narrative reflect my past. They represent elements of my subconscious and conscious mind.

My interest in archetypes and minimal design is a product of several things. My junior and senior year of high school was concerned with learning existential literature. I read William Shakespeare, Albert Camus, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Sophocles, James Joyce, and Joseph Conrad among others. Here I was introduced to Carl Jung and the themes of character and plot archetypes derived from his philosophical studies.

In addition to my existential literature classes, I studied Latin, Classical art, and mythology my four years in high school. The Greek Gods and Goddesses of classical mythology are the basis for many of Carl Jung’s archetypes, e.g.: Aphrodite the Seducer, Athena the Father’s Daughter, Hera the Matriarch, Ares the Protector, Hades the Recluse, and Zeus the King and Dictator (Schmidt, 2001). I studied these deities all throughout high school and their stories are ingrained inside me; some stored consciously others
stored with less intensity. My *Mother and Child* painting is a direct result of this subconsciously embedded knowledge. This piece is the calm before the storm in the myth of Persephone and Demeter. The painting led to my first prototype design, *The Serpent Mother*. 

Figure 8: Mother and Child
As for my interest in simplistic design, my eyesight started fading in the 6th grade. It was not until the 8th grade that it became a minor issue. By the 10th grade, I could not see the television from the couch. It was at that time my brother experienced schadenfreude by informing my mother that I needed glasses. During those pre-corrective years, I learned to identify people, personalities, and characteristics from simple shapes and silhouettes. I never really learned to focus on small details; rather I learned to take in the wholeness of people and objects. I capture the essence of my characters with simple and deliberate silhouettes that accentuate their form.
Prototypes

I began creating digital sculpture in my second semester of grad school. I first created the serpent from my “Mother and Child” painting. I had the figure laser-sculpted from my digital form. I was fascinated by the idea of creating images on a computer and having them fabricated by a machine. I began machining all my digital sculptures this way. The prototypes became the perfect union of my need to create things digitally and to produce them physically.

![Figure 10: gOat, KeeWee, gRaff](image_url)

Figure 10: gOat, KeeWee, gRaff
INFLUENCES

“I am the combined efforts of everything I have ever known” –Chuck Palahniuk

My art is a synthesis of the world around me. I take what I like aesthetically and conceptually and discard all else. I enjoy the classic forms of Hellenistic sculpture, the vibrant colors of the Fauvists, the emphasis on compositional elements of the formalists, the functionality of the Bauhaus, the thick outlines of Roy Lichtenstein, the childish simplicity of Tom Otterness and Keith Haring, and the graphic quality of Takashi Murakami and Joe Ledbetter.

Contemporary Art

As I began my journey into character driven artwork, I was introduced to three influential artists, Keith Haring, Tom Otterness, and Rodney Alan Greenblat. Unknowingly, I was already quite familiar with Keith Haring’s work. I grew up watching Nickelodeon. Keith Haring was responsible for several promotional animations for the network. What I find most relevant about Haring is his message: art is for everyone.

Rodney Alan Greenblat was another artist I was unconsciously aware of artistically. Greenblat is a New York based graphic artist who uses a lot of vivid colors with thick multihued outlines. He has created many interactive web-based animations, something I explored my first semester of grad school.
Greenblat exhibited in the 1985 Whitney Biennial. He is well known in the entertainment industry as creating the character and video game “PaRappa the Rapper”.

Tom Otterness is a public artist who combines allegorical narratives with simple designs. His political and social commentaries are masked by child friendly characters. His sculptures can be seen all over the New York subways.

Figure 11: Tom Otterness Lecture at FAU
I had the fortunate opportunity to meet Tom Otterness at Art Basel in Miami, Florida. His lecture was very inspiring. I had mentioned my interest in public sculpture to him and he gave me some great advice on grant writing. Since then I have applied to three grants including an Art and State Grant to install a sculpture at the Children’s Wellness Center at the University of West Florida. Unfortunately I did not win the grant, however this will not deter me from future proposals.
CONCLUSION

This last semester I have come to realize that I do not need to reconcile between my technical nature and my desire to create art. I need to embrace them both. These two aspects help define who I am and it is what makes my art – My Art.
REFERENCES


