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Independent Thesis Project

Stefani L. McClure

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Independent Thesis Project

For my thesis project I chose to do three separate drawings illustrating certain aspects of three individuals. The three people are two of my friends, who I will refer to as Canterbury, and LW, and myself. Each piece was done in a different medium; from hand rendered to totally computer generated and a mixture of the two. I am greatly interested in the computer illustrated medium as a means of expression, but also value the traditional hand methods which are difficult to reproduce in the same manner with a computer.

Canterbury

The first of these pieces was done with a mixture of computer and hand rendered techniques. Pieces of the image were initially hand drawn and scanned onto computer documents. Other pieces were photographs of a group of pictures that I took as research images for this project. All were finally imported and manipulated in Adobe Photoshop.

This project is an analysis of certain aspects of my friend named Canterbury. He is a SIUC graduate with a degree in Exercise Physiology. The figures in this image are arranged in a primarily circular fashion with each figure either leading the viewer's eye towards another. The most obvious figures to the initial glance are surrounding the center, the large face on the left side, the deer to the bottom and the earth in the background. The less obvious images are the fishbowl with the woman and eel and the chess board. The way this is organized is symbolic of one of Canterbury's personal visions of life. He believes that the "side attractions" of life are almost more important than what we spend our lives searching for in the way of a career and monetary success.

The central image is my representation of his favorite line from a song... it says "We're just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl, year after year". He believes we are finally moving back towards our true purpose of being on the Earth... the interaction we have with other species as well as our own. The environmental

movement is very important to him as is the fight to save endangered species. He believes that perhaps in time we will be able to communicate with some of the species we share our world with, and that we would no longer be "lost souls" making the same mistakes time after time. This worldly concern also is indicated by the overshadowing world background, but it has a second analogy as well. He would like to travel extensively to see what the world holds that he has yet to experience.

The large woman's face is a visual representation of the idea of Fate. Canterbury believes that we are controlled by Fate to a large degree. The flaming nature of her dislodge into the fishbowl is a representation the "Flames of Fate" as he puts it, or that we cannot escape from her touch. Fire reaches everywhere except through water though, and our resistance to the natural way things should progress has left us alone in our fishbowl. Fate's influence on this total image is also present in the chessboard. Aside from games of strategy like chess which are Canterbury's favorite pastime, he compares it to controlling a world of people, or playing Fate himself. If you imagine the pieces of the chess set as having personas, as in this case they are soldiers instead of regular looking pawns, it is easy to identify with his thinking. The deer is the symbol of a hopeful but uncertain future. The deer is leaping into the unknown blackness that surrounds the entire picture and lands in what appears to be water. However, the water disappears to nothing more than a shadow. Any kind of leap into the unknown is scary, and the image being a deer, one of nature's most skittish animals, suggests that the future is safe. This is an analogy for how he believes we are on the right track, and for his own life, which has changed immeasurably since I first met him.

LoneWolf

The second project was completed entirely by computer generated images. The formats they originated in varied from Adobe Illustrator to Infini-D to Aldus Superpaint, QuarkXPress and Adobe Photoshop. The final piece was again compiled and manipulated in stages in Adobe Photoshop. This project is an illustration of a friend of mine I will refer to as LW. The LW comes from a nickname he was given of LoneWolf. This became an alias he used on computer bulletin boards across the country. He is a microbiologist and an avid computer lover. The piece was done in purple - blue tones since they are his favorite colors.

The watercolor filters that were applied in Photoshop are for his favorite type of artworks.

The wolf is the most easily recognizable image when first looking at the piece. It goes back to his nickname. He was given it because, despite his interest in partying and bar hopping, he was prone to mysterious disappearances in which he would walk home alone without a word to anyone. He was never completely a part of any group, as a Lone Wolf is by very name single. Also since wolves are accustomed to traveling in packs, this makes him a bit more of a mystery.

The Texas flag and the roses are representations of a woman he loved in Texas and their relationship. (He is an avid country music lover as well.) The rose symbolizes what he wanted from the relationship. Its colors vary from the red of love to yellow which normally means friendship. However, it is yellow only where the white of the flag image overlaps it. This is an analogy to the Yellow Rose of Texas, a term of romantic endearment used by Texans, and country music songwriters. The rose's reflection is the truth of the relationship. It is a wobbly unstable image which is broken by tiles. The tiles add a type of definition which would not normally be found in a reflection but which is used here to symbolize the realizations and changes LW found in himself as a result of the relationship. The light which shines directly on the reflection is an impossibility which is also significant since the relationship was perhaps doomed from the start for extraneous factors.

The binary code is a reflection of his interest in computers. It is a filling pastime and image, which takes us time and space without blocking the realization of any other image. The DNA on the other hand varies in its image from obscurity to opacity. Microbiology has been a interest of LW's for all his life, but his pursuit of it has been varied and sporadic. The fact that it is incomplete signifies the decisions he has left to make involving his future and whether or not he will actually pursue his degree in Microbiology. His uncertainty about his future bothers him a great deal, and like the DNA image, leaves him with an incomplete feeling. The black line at the bottom of the rose's reflection is significant as the desire he has for a grounded or finalized path for his future.

Myself

The third and final project was completed entirely by hand. It is a representation of how I felt as last semester drew to a close and I faced separation with the man that I love. The overall close-up of the eye is a format which I began with years ago on a similar type of project. It was based on certain feelings which I wanted to express at the time but could not. I see this progressing now as almost a series of pieces done throughout my life dealing with what makes me cry. I do not normally display a lot of emotion except to a few people, and I do not cry easily. That is what makes these pieces special to me and a very personal statement as well as one that can be understood by a large number of people I believe. The inside pupil of the eye is a scene from an Arctic "desert". The plane is the only sign of civilization and its loneliness or solitude is very apparent to me. It was done with regular pencil and is in great contrast with the outside of the eye. The colors are vivid and exaggerated to suggest the way many of my coworkers or associates view me. I have been told often enough how lively and rich my life is. (Lately this has not been as true as at other time because of this issue and a few others that have been weighing more heavily on me than normal.) Usually this is a comment from people who do not know my personal thoughts but see me in a social setting at times. I am very adept at hiding my own emotions and putting on a wonderful show if it is necessary and in some instances it is. So the piece is a statement of how I am both perceived and how I felt at the time. I find that expression through artwork is a very useful means of releasing my emotions, not only in the image but in the process of making it. The swirling nature of the outside is a confusion and frustration that accompanies the feelings I had at the time. The kind of relationship I had with this man was difficult at best to explain and his leaving was no less difficult.