

ABSTRACT

CULTURAL MANSTERS

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This document is written in support of the thesis exhibition, *Cultural Mansters*, which represents and supports the idea of using satire and non-threatening imagery as tools to create a discourse on sociopolitical topics. By placing innocent, furry, and cute characters in situations that closely resemble the harsh realities of people who live in the United States, I am creating a platform on which to discuss the social, political, economic practices that have slowly led us to where we are now.

CULTURAL MANSTERS

A Report of Creative Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Art and Design

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the

Degree Master of Fine Arts in Art

By

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CULTURAL MANSTERS

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DEDICATION

Lovingly dedicated to Mom, Dad, Josh, Lee, Maitha, Vince, Katya, Kayla, Claire, Young, Dayon, Connor, and Michael. All these people supported me throughout this year with love or friendship.

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Plates photographed by Andrew Wells
All plates are images of thesis work by Andrew R. Wells

Introduction

My Thesis Exhibition, *Cultural Mansters*, begins a conversation about a cultural crisis using satire and non-threatening imagery to question and explore assumptions – practiced in the United States – about a race, religion, and class warfare that has become institutionalized and normalized through misinformation, social media, and ideological practices. Large drawings are exhibited publicly, facing the street from storefront windows while coloring books are available for viewers to take from a small wooden box nearby. Through these formats, I aim to disseminate knowledge of these ideologies into the public in hopes of beginning a discourse on sociopolitical issues.

I am a straight white male who comes from a lower middle-class household from a small town called Sanford, North Carolina. I find it important to state my cultural economic position in the United States to give my viewer a sense of where my point of view is coming from. As a straight white male in the United States, I live with an inherent privilege that non-white males do not have in this country (the color of my skin, gender, and sexual orientation do not create barriers for me to overcome each day). Being in this position, I witness how racism, sexism, and other bigoted practices affect the lives of those around me, not me directly. Because of my cultural position, I am appointing myself to be the “provocateur,” a word taken from the French term, “agent provocateur,” which means “provoking agent.” These works are not meant to incite violence but to encourage a discourse around the issues that are depicted. Viewers respond to what they are seeing by writing and drawing in the available coloring books. Once the book is complete, they leave it inside of a second box where it can be read by their fellow community members. Viewers will discover they share common or different ideas on these topics with other

community members. Both common and different opinions will fuel a better discourse on these topics in the community.

The Low, The Middle, The Upper

Cultural Mansters will be on view at the Woodside Antiques Shop in Farmville, NC, in the Wonder Box exhibition space. The drawings will be installed within the 19 large display windows that make up the front entrance to the Shop. The space is divided into three sections: seven windows on the left, five in the middle, and another seven on the right side. The drawings are divided into these sections to represent the three socioeconomic classes in the United States – lower-class on the left, upper-class on the right, and the vanishing middle-class being crushed in the center. My work is intended to reach a larger audience, not confined to a museum or gallery where my work would be seen by only a few. The Antique Shop sits on the street in the middle of the downtown district, which brings plenty of foot traffic and potential attention. Each window is eight feet in height and between two to three and-a-half feet in width and easily seen from the road or across the street from another store. Shown below (Plate 1) is the first image that viewers will encounter, representing the lower-class.



Plate 1: Andrew Wells. "She Couldn't Take Care of Him Anymore". 2016. 44x93". Digital Print

This Manster is Danny. Danny the “Dumpster baby,” which is a slang term to describe a child who is unwanted after birth and then discarded into a place where the chances of survival are incredibly low: trash cans, dumpsters, sewer drains. Indiana recently moved to become the first state in the U.S to offer “baby boxes” – a small box in police stations and fire departments where an infant can be surrendered for workers to find and be placed in child services. Research done by reporters at *Fusion* could find no records of how many children are relinquished or discarded each year in any state because there is no Federal department that accurately keeps track (Cleo, 2015).

Disadvantaged parents are often too scared or embarrassed to seek safe ways to relinquish responsibility for their children because of the ways society criminalize parents who seek abortion or wish to give up ownership of children. United States culture and media shames women and refer to the act of abortion as “getting away with it,” “or refusing to take responsibility.” “Dumpster babies” are the result of poor education for the disadvantaged and the criminalization and shaming of women who want to have abortions (Stiller). Danny’s parents were most likely living in poverty and just couldn’t afford him anymore, or possibly drug addicts who became unfit to raise him because of turning to substance abuse to deal with their impoverished lifestyle.

On the other side of the exhibition are the upper-class Mansters who enjoy a comfortable lifestyle on behalf of those under them. The following image (Plate 2) shows Wilson, an upper-class executive, having a nice dinner with dessert.



Plate 2: Andrew Wells. "Climb and Climb and Climb." 2016. 44x93". Digital Print

Wilson gorges himself with the bodies, hopes, and dreams of smaller Mansters who attempt to join him atop the Corporate ladder. For them, the ladder leads only to his dinner table. My father worked “higher up” jobs in corporations for years but he started at the bottom as a cashier at a grocery store. Throughout our childhood, my brothers and I watched as he came home late at night, shoulders hunched over, and slid with a thump into his chair after work. He was tired all day, yet he would do his best to have energy to spend time with us in the evening. As my brothers and I grew older, he was given management positions, specialist positions, and upper management/corporate positions where he now overlooks multiple stores at a time. He enjoys his job and he’s nice to his employees, but on occasion he comes home, frustrated and bent over like he used to do.

After 20 years of work, my father was fired from Food Lion because a corporate worker didn’t like the way he ran his stores (my father’s stores were the highest grossing stores, the most populated stores in the entire company for multiple years). His boss would say, “you’re too nice to your employees, you’re not their friend, you’re their boss and only that.”

My father’s personal experience represents the corporate grind in the United States. Employees risk their lives, sacrifice families, sacrifice everything to get these positions, just to realize how fragile of a position they’re in after all their sacrifice. We do our best, “but there’s always a bigger fish to eat you.”

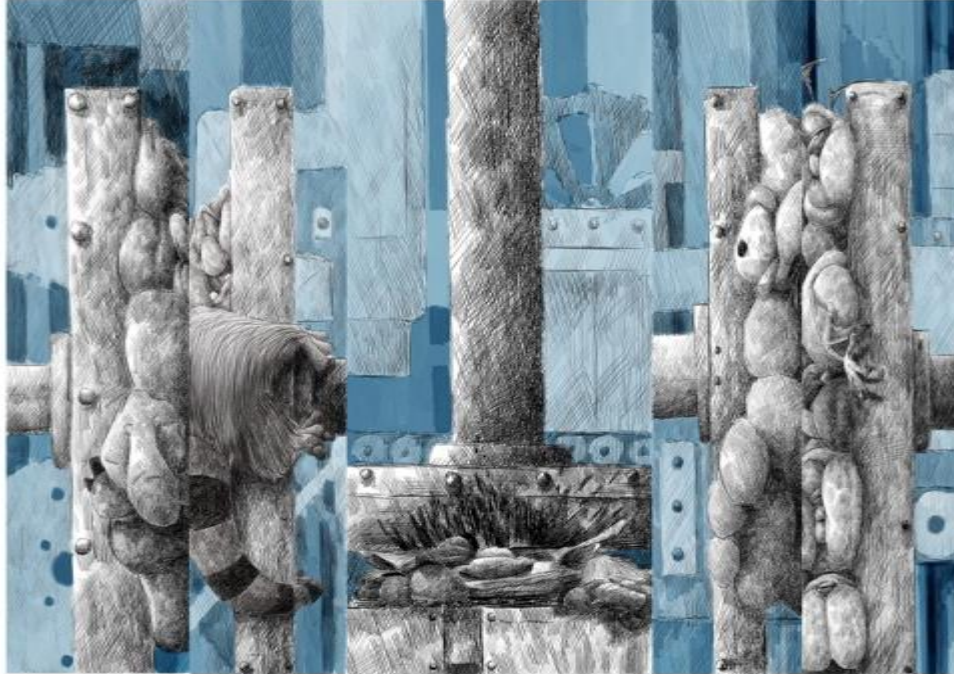


Plate 3: Andrew Wells. "The Middle". 2017. 100x93". Digital Print

In the center of the scene are the middle-class Mansters, (Plate 3 above) who are being crushed on either side by the lower and upper-classes around them. The machine arms represent Capitalism – being fueled by the Mansters who pass laws that damage those outside of the American upper-class. Left with no chance of being in a position of comfort, they have no power to control where they are in relation to the other classes.

My hope is that viewers will notice, upon closer inspection of the images, the relationships between my Mansters and the cultural economic practices of the United States. Wilson is an exaggeration of the capitalist practices found at the highest positions of corporate companies, while Danny shows the harsh reality of being forced to give up a child rather than raising one. These scenarios involve real situations that people find hard to cope with or even discuss, which is why I turned to satirical representation.

The Low, The Middle, The Upper: Humor

My greatest influence on this body of work is comedy, which comes in many forms. The best comedy and satire comes from a place of honesty and integrity. Tina Fey's impersonations on Saturday Night Live of previous vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin demonstrated far more effectively than any political pundit the candidate's lack of seriousness, and gave an impersonation that will influence comedy for years. Her skits were so effective because Fey didn't write the scripts herself... all dialogues came directly from Palin. The performances made lasting impressions because of their honesty (Bliss, 2012).

Like Fey's impersonations, which are honest and based on Palin's speeches, Donny and Gary (Plates 4 and 5 below) are two representations of upper-class lifestyle practices that negatively impact those around them (the middle and lower-class Mansters).



Plate 5: Andrew Wells. "He Built a Wall to Protect Himself from Nothing." 2017. 21x93". Digital Print

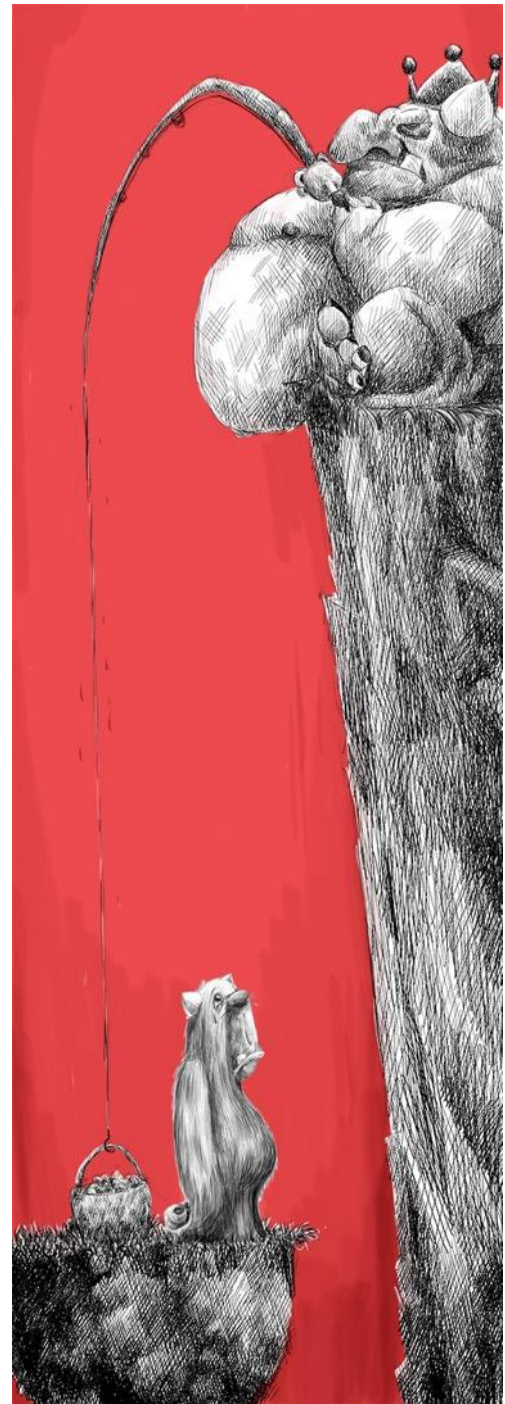


Plate 4: Andrew Wells. "Fishing at the Gap." 2017. 38x93". Digital Print

Tina Fey used line delivery and acting with her Sarah Palin impersonations, and my characters are based in real world practices: Donny constructed a giant wall to keep immigrants off his land and Gary is using his fishing line to steal from a less fortunate Manster at the bottom of a large gap. Donny's resemblance to an elephant and his giant wall are references to President Donald Trump's connection to the Republican party and his desire to construct a giant wall to keep Mexican immigrants out of the United States. Gary's fishing is increasing the gap in wealth between himself and the smaller Manster below – similarly, in the United States, tax cuts for the rich are steadily increasing the gap between the upper 1% and the 99% working classes of the country.

Fey's performance is only one example of humor and satire being used to critique political practices in the United States. John Stewart's "The Daily Show" is probably the most well-known example of fact-based comedy, and is a testament to its effectiveness. Surveys from Pew Research and Annenberg Center for Public Policy found that Daily Show viewers are better informed about current political events than the viewers of all major network and cable news shows (Bliss, 2012). Stewart's brand of comedy consistently scored higher in both credibility and retention than the professional news media. This is quite ironic when one considers his intent to be comedic and entertaining and the desire to inform the viewer comes second (Bliss, 2012). Bliss brilliantly describes what it means to construct a successful joke in his TED talk on comedy as a tool for communication:

A great piece of comedy is a verbal magic trick, where you think it's going over here and then suddenly, you're transported over here. And there's this mental delight that's followed by the physical response of laughter, which, not coincidentally, releases endorphins in the brain. And just like that, you've been seduced into a different way of looking at something because the endorphins have brought down your defenses. This is the exact opposite of the way that anger, fear and panic, all the flight or fight responses, operate. Flight or fight releases adrenalin, which throws our walls up sky high. And the comedy comes along,

dealing with a lot of the same areas where our defenses are the strongest – race, religion, politics, and sexuality – only by approaching them through humor. Instead of adrenalin, we get endorphins and the alchemy of laughter turns our walls into windows, revealing a fresh and unexpected point of view.

In other words, since humor releases endorphins, the viewer or listener is much more relaxed and willing to have a more in depth conversation. I am creating a discourse about topics that viewers may find difficult to discuss (Plates 6 and 7).



Plate 7: Andrew Wells. "The King." 2017. 44x93". Digital Print



Plate 6: Andrew Wells. "He Sleeps, They Struggle." 2017. 38x93". Digital Print

In Plate 6, we see a Manster dressed as a king on a golden throne with his miserable servants, and in Plate 7 a bloated, sleeping, slob who is relaxing with food on his stomach while others struggle to carry him as he floats over a sea of pink clouds. Not only are the two rich Mansters in positions of comfort, but their positions of comfort are directly dependent on the suffering of the small servants. This represents the one percent's willingness to subject the lower-class to a less than desirable lifestyle to continue their lives of luxury.

Practices such as trickle down economy have been historically proven to not work as a reasonable business plan to allow for a healthy economy. It is the idea that providing tax cuts for the rich will allow for economic growth for everyone, provided that the rich are willing to place money back into the other classes. "A rising tide will lift all boats," a phrase used by John F. Kennedy in a 1963 speech summarizes the idea nicely – everyone benefits if one group thrives (Jencks).

In a paper titled, "Do Rising Top Incomes Lift All Boats," Christopher Jencks tries to put the idea of trickle-down economics into perspective by explaining, in theory, why it works, yet then he clarifies why it isn't a reasonable plan. Jencks is here to ask the question: Is it better to grow slowly and equally or rapidly and unequally? "The conservative argument holds that rapidly and unequally is better over the long run because of compound interest," explains Jencks. "Even growth as little as 0.1 percent per year can add up over the course of many decades" (Jencks).

Jencks and his colleagues' research found that after 1960 there was a pattern: a one percent rise in the shares of the top ten percent led to a 0.12 percent rise in gross domestic product in the next year. The effects are very minimal because it would take 13 years for people in the lower 90 percent to be compensated by the proceeds of economic growth. At this rate, the

working class will see a growth of five percent in 40 years... that's a long time to wait for a break-even point. "It's like giving people aspirin when they have cancer... it might make them feel a little better, but it's not going to cure," says Jencks, on the topic of Trickle Down Economics. I find these facts to be unnerving, and the idea that the government does not always act in the greater interest of its people may prove to be a difficult discourse for the American people. Satire serves to relax viewers so that they would be more receptive to a different point of view.

Not only is comedy a great way to get people to relax, it's also an incredibly fast way to spread information. Bliss recounts a time when he was in Los Angeles, when Richard Pryor told a joke about the time he accidentally set himself on fire during a freebasing accident; the next day when Bliss was in Washington D.C, he heard someone already telling Pryor's joke. Within twenty-four hours, the comedian's joke traveled from coast to coast – and this was before we had mass access to the internet in the United States. Comedy is a realm of entertainment where most people don't think they're getting anything more than a simple joke but in many cases, comedians like Richard Pryor, Amy Schumer, Louis CK, and Tina Fey all talk about prevalent social issues but use the joke as their veil (Bliss, 2012). Over the years humor has also made its way into Contemporary Art Museums.

The Low, The Middle, The Upper: Humor in Museums

British artist Sarah Lucas looks at “women’s work,” as she calls it, especially sexual relations, with tongue in cheek humor. In the 1990’s she created erotic bunny sculptures – limp, seriously anorexic, stuffed nylon dolls, so exhausted that they can hardly sit up in their straight-



Figure 1. Sarah Lucas, Pauline Bunny.
1996. Nylon and stuffed figure in plastic chair

backed chairs. Her representations of bodies are as comic as they are pathetic. In the end, they discomfort far more than they please. This is, of course, the point of it. Art that makes you laugh isn’t necessarily funny. Lucas says, “if I make a female form out of a bucket and a couple of lightbulbs, that’s a very melancholy figure. It’s also kind of absurd.” She uses the absurdity to suck you in. Once she has you close enough, a conversation can begin. Lucas’ sculptures could have closely resembled real women sitting in chairs, but she chose these stuffed shapes as her way of representing women (Yablonsky, 2004).

Like Lucas’ imagery of anorexic bunnies, I am depicting drug addicts and communities that have less access to healthcare advantages by representing them as sad, depressed, and down on their luck Mansters (Plates 8 and 9).



Plate 9: Andrew Wells. "Broken." 2016. 38x93". Digital Print

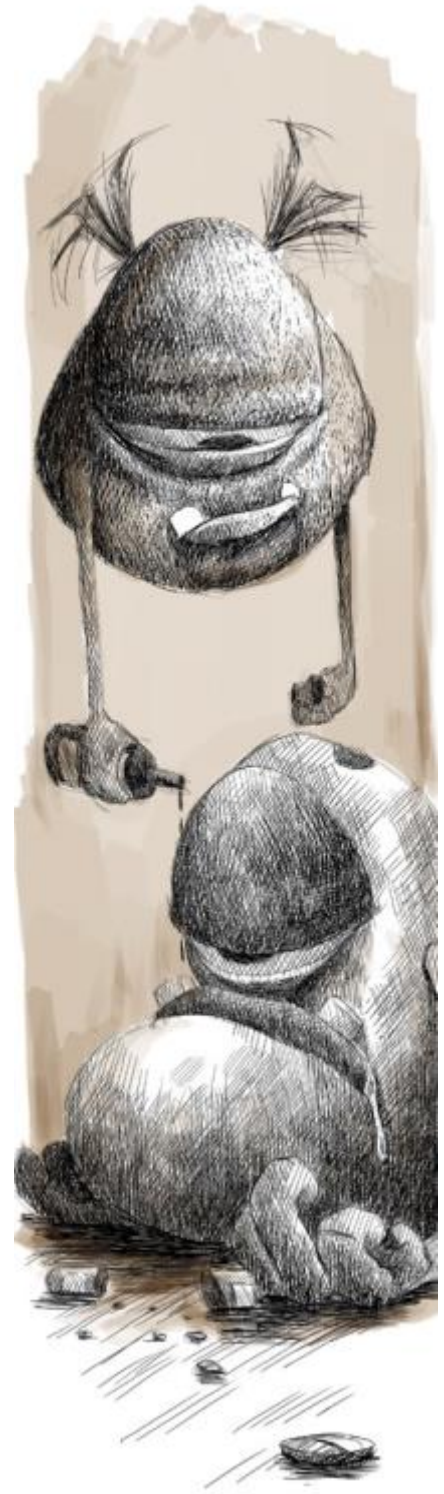


Plate 8: Andrew Wells. "An Escape." 2016. 21x93". Digital Print

In one image (Plate 9) two Mansters have found themselves in the grip of drug addiction. Many of those who live under the poverty line in big cities in the United States find themselves with easy access to drugs and surrounded by dealers in rough neighborhoods. The people who live in impoverished situations often turn to drugs to cope with their environment, financial stresses, or physical/emotional abuse. Those who are addicted to drugs are often told to go and get help, seek medical assistance, or go to a rehabilitation center. For people with adequate money or health insurance there are many private centers for detoxification, but for those who lack the income, these services are hardly available (Drug Talk).

My other furry friend (Plate 8) is seen standing outside of a building, assumed to be a hospital because of the red cross on the sign, wearing a neck brace and a sling around his broken arm. He looks to be in rough shape but able to find just enough help to get by (judging by his sling and neck brace). Many Americans who are impoverished live in a situation where it is difficult to find help when it comes to their health due to lack of funds or affordable healthcare. The Affordable Care Act or, “Obama Care,” as it’s been called by many seeks to provide those who are impoverished with suitable hospital and medical care. For many, this system is their only means of receiving care from the system and depend on it to live.

In an open act against “Obamacare,” President Trump proposed an executive order, 13,765, that aims directly at undoing the requirement that individuals carry insurance or face fines. The decision would allow people to go on without healthcare if they prefer to not have it, which sounds great to some, while presenting chaos for others. According to Larry Levitt of the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonpartisan clearinghouse for information and analysis about the health care system, these broad exemptions from coverage requirements could scare off insurers already on the fence about participation in 2018 and beyond. Without these requirements, which

nudge healthy people into the coverage pot, many independent experts believe premiums would spike, making HealthCare.gov's insurance markets impossible to sustain (Alonzo-Zaldivar). These potential changes threaten to make affordable and good healthcare very hard for impoverished people to find.

In Jayson Musson's series of *Miscellaneous Things That Resemble Paintings*, he creates intentionally child-like images that ask us to question ideologies and how they appear and are practiced in culture today.



The image on the left, titled *The American*, depicts an American Cowboy, standing as victorious on top of a pile of skulls. It appears that the skulls are people that the cowboy has defeated, because of the grin on his face and the victorious raising of the pistols by his side. The depicted moment is meant to question the ways that our culture celebrates acts of violence and the historical practices of Manifest Destiny.

Figure 2: Jayson Musson. *The American*. 1993. Acrylic Painting

Martin is seen (Plate 10) standing on top of a large pile of skulls, with a giant glistening city emerging behind him.



Plate 11: Andrew Wells. "His City." 2017. 38x93". Digital Print



Plate 10: Andrew Wells. "BYOB." 2017. 24x93". Digital Print

His city was built on the bodies of others and he takes great pride in it. One could see the success of upper-class America and be hypnotized by the glamour but if one looks deeper and sees the actions that have led to such power, they may be horrified.

American Culture inspires the heroic tone of my drawings via the celebration of death and the defeat of an enemy. One of the oldest versions of American conquest is the ideology of *Manifest Destiny*. The belief that Americans are destined by God to expand their lands, be the example for the rest of the world, and always move forward based on this. The history of American colonialism (which is the reason for the red, white, and blue colors behind him) features multiple tragic blood baths such as the Trail of Tears and the American-Mexican wars that were all carried out based on Manifest Destiny. Many Colonial Americans held the belief that westward expansion in the New World was their right, what they were meant to do, and most importantly, what God wanted them to do. The key piece of this ideology is that it was not their will, but God's; not the will of the acting government.

Americans have continued in this manner of thinking for many years with great economic success. Using slaves to build a nation, enlisting slaves into wars to increase numbers, using immigrant workers (slaves of a different name) to build a network of railroads that allow expansion to continue; there is no end to the possibilities when you treat people like working animals, all under the belief that you're meant to have the land as your God-given right.

While Martin conquers with Manifest Destiny, Watson (Plate 11) is preparing for war. He grins happily as he anticipates that he will use his bombs and tanks very soon. Other Masters will respect his strength and admit to his greatness, or be swiftly destroyed (as he likes to say it). Martin and Watson work together in achieving their goals.

The “bail-to-jail” system in the United States, NIMBYism, which stands for “Not in My Backyard,” defunding of the public-school system, homelessness, and the vanishing middle-class are all represented in Manster form (see Plates 12 to 15).



Plate 12: Andrew Wells. "Money Can Buy Freedom."
2016. 38x93". Digital Print

According to a newly filed lawsuit, thousands of impoverished people, especially African Americans, are being locked up before trial in Cook County, Chicago, IL, because they are too poor to be able to post bond (Hoerner). It argues on the behalf of two inmates who claim circuit court judges and Sheriff Tom Dart are violating the constitution by setting bond that poor people cannot pay and then holding them in jail while they wait for their trials. The bail is five hundred dollars, shown in the image above of the manster who desperately watches us from behind his bars. The lawsuit contends that Cook County's imposition of cash bail hurts poor defendants by separating them from their families, keeping them from jobs or school, and hampering their ability to prepare a defense, often forcing them to plead guilty regardless of innocence (Hoerner).

This "bail-to-jail" pipeline in Cook County keeps poor defendants in jail for days, months, and years as their cases slowly move through our judicial system. Cash bail systems are intended to keep dangerous criminals, or those who are thought to do something dangerous if released, in prison to prevent criminal actions upon release. The case has been made by those who are against the system that those who are dangerous shouldn't be released even if they have enough money and that all we're doing is preventing the release of harmless defendants (Hoerner).



Plate 13: Andrew Wells. "NIMBY." 2016. 38x93". Digital Print

The above image of a fish-like Manster sitting in the ocean represents the NIMBYism and Manifest Destiny-like practices that affect the disadvantaged, low-income population in the United States. Landfills, prisons, places that society have deemed as “unwanted” are built at low cost beside low-income housing and neighborhoods because they were refused by the upper-class property owners in cities – not in my backyard, put it in theirs’. These landmarks lower property values, making it harder for low-income homeowners to sell their homes and move out of these areas in the future. For example, companies like Duke Energy want to move coal ash pits (large pits of water where coal ash residue is stored in the ground) close to peoples’ homes and water supplies, where the residue can poison the homes of the disadvantaged instead of the upper-class houses on hills (Fragoso).

The previous governor of North Carolina, Pat McCrory, signed House Bill 630, which essentially bailed out Duke Energy and defended their desires to relocate these ash pits and continue disposing the chemical waste that they generate in this unprofessional manner. My parents live in an area that will soon have their own backyard ash pit. My grandmother also had one. Her water supply was quickly poisoned, forcing the energy company to send out complimentary bottles of water to her and other home owners in other neighborhoods. Eventually the situation was taken care of and she now has clean water, but that was only after having to boil her water for a week and barely being able to take a shower (Fragoso).

This fish-like Manster is wearing a plastic ring, surrounded by trash, and a toilet to reference the way we dump our landfills and ash pits beside low income housing.



Plate 14: Andrew Wells. "She Doesn't Need Books." 2017. 38x93".
Digital Print

Holly, in the above drawing, (Plate 14) is watching as all her books are burned in a menacingly-sized incinerator. My usage of the act of book burning is meant to represent the government's willingness to give up on the education of those under the poverty line in the United States, to provide increased choice for those who live in the upper-class. I'm using the reference to book burning to implicate the United States in the act of not only failing to provide a proper education for those in need, but intentionally preventing them from getting it with programs such as school choice and closing public schools that were easily accessible to them.

The drawing is a reference to recently presented ideas from President Donald Trump and his education secretary, Betsy DeVos, with their new policies that would potentially negatively impact public schools in low-income areas. DeVos' previous "reform" process (during the Bush administration) was intended to bring choice and accountability to the school system. Instead, it will destroy community-based education for working-class families, and funneled resources toward a few better-off, exclusive, institutions. If a school is deemed failing, students can transfer schools, opt to attend a charter school, or receive a voucher to attend a private school. Competition is the idea: good schools survive; bad ones disappear (Quinlan).

If a similar system is implemented, we will see the closing of many neighborhood schools and people in low-income areas will run out of places to send their children when they're deemed to be living somewhere that is falling apart economically. In an article on the effects of a school choice mentality and its effects on Detroit written in 2011, Natalie Hopkins states that "the system recently floated a plan for yet another round of closings, with a proposal for new magnet middle school programs in my neighborhood, none of which would open in time for my son. These proposals, like much of reform in Washington, are aimed at some speculative future demographic, while doing nothing for the children already here. In the meantime, enrollment,

and the best teachers, continue to go to the whitest, wealthiest communities.” Considering that DeVos is the one who implemented these negative policies back in 2011, this does not bode well for the small Manster standing in front of the incinerator.



Plate 15: Andrew Wells. "Anything." 2017. 44x93". Digital Print.

The Manster in the above image is holding a sign that says, “Will do anything for food,” which signifies that he did not choose to be homeless; he was put on the street by things that were out of his control. The sign is meant to suggest that he is more than willing to work to make money and improve his life. The issue is not that homeless people are lazy, or they don’t try.

Insufficient income and lack of affordable housing are the leading causes of homelessness in the United States. In 2012 10.3 million renters qualified as “extremely low income,” or ELI. In that year only 5.8 million affordable homes were available to that enormous population. Barely over half of the total renters who qualify were even able to afford the houses, not even considering how many of those who qualify live a considerable distance from these homes. Many ELI households use over half of their total income on rent, and the remaining funds are used to provide for essentials such as transportation, food, medicine, and childcare (Homelessness in America: Overview of Data and Causes).

Coloring Books

Along with my large drawings, *Cultural Mansters* will also feature the distribution and collection of handmade coloring books. Each book contains three pages that include one lower-class Manster, the middle-class Mansters, and one upper-class Manster, with a question to be answered. The books serve as a way for viewers to think about and respond to the images they are seeing. Beside each image is either a question like, “How do you think this Manster ended up in this position?” or an instruction such as, “Please draw him something to eat.”

Cultural Mansters

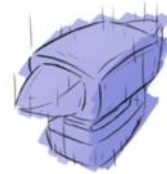


Plate 16: Andrew Wells. Coloring Book Cover. 2017. 4.5x3". Digital Book Print

These activities are designed to provoke the viewer to think deeper into my imagery that intentionally appears cryptic in the public display – I want the viewer to be enticed by the window drawings enough that they seek more information, which is provided in the coloring book.

Coloring books, or Paint Books as they were originally marketed, were a response to the idea to democratize art popularized by the British artist Joshua Reynolds in the mid 1700's. Art was being used in all fields of education and many educators saw the potential in coloring books to bring messages to children and adults because both have been proven to



Maybe you can draw him something to eat?

Plate 17: Andrew Wells. Coloring Book Page. 2017. 4.5x6". Digital Book Print.

retain information more efficiently, pay better attention, and be more engaged when there is a physical interaction that directly deals with the learned information (Marsh, 2015)

More in line with my own interest, coloring books have use far beyond the classroom. In the art world of 1975, the coloring book was adopted by feminist artist Tee Corinne as a tool of female empowerment. Corinne made pencil sketches of female genitalia which she then inked and printed on card stock. Sexual education is often something that people keep very private, keeping their bodies to themselves. Corinne utilizes the format of a coloring book to educate viewers of all ages about the human body. By using a coloring book Corinne is implying that we should teach children about their bodies at an early age (Marsh, 2015). My books have the potential to make their way into the hands of children, which I view as a positive – the imagery is in a non-threatening form and it's never too early to learn that public schools need more funding.

The coloring book format allows artists to take advantage of the ease of production, the ability to distribute to a wider audience, and the idea of allowing a viewer to be more active and engaged with their work. Felix Gonzales Torres collaborates similarly with viewers in gallery spaces. When asked about the dispersing of his artwork (piles of candy for the viewer to take away and sheets of paper they can take home), Torres says that he wanted his work to be disseminated, to exist in multiple places at the same time, and to be realized completely only through the participation of the viewer, which he described as “one enormous collaboration with the public.” My sociopolitical critique will be disseminated to the public in the form of these coloring books.

CONCLUSION

Cultural Mansters began with an interest in using satire as a veil with which to better prepare viewers to carry out a sociopolitical discourse. My research focused on the class system in the United States and how ideologies that we practice serve to keep the system intact. By displaying and dispersing my imagery in the public sphere, I have a greater chance of creating interest in the community and spreading information. *Cultural Mansters* will create a better sense of community, while serving as a catalyst for conversation around these concerns. By bringing viewers together with a public display, a progressive conversation that fosters understanding and empathy in the community will begin.



Figure 3: Andrew Wells. View of Cultural Mansters from the Street. 2017



Figure 4: Andrew Wells. *View of Cultural Masters from the Street*. 2017

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