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NonAutomata

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NonAutomata

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NonAutomata

By

Jeremy Haynes, Bachelor of Fine Art

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfilment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Stephen F. Austin State University

December 2019

NonAutomata

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is a formal examination of the exhibition titled “*NonAutomata*” by Jeremy Haynes, as partial fulfillment of requirements for a Master of Fine Arts degree from Stephen F. Austin State University.

By examining the psychological influences within my artwork, I question the assumption that we are all just organic machines built with the same parts although we are all assembled and wired differently to perform specific tasks in society. I recall my personal experiences and how these influence my reactions to everyday life. While using clay with traditional and non-traditional processes, I have been able to connect through a visual language with society and come to understand more fully that people react differently to any given situation. As I have explored that “man is a machine” I have been able to push my creativity as an artist so the artwork can take on different meanings depending on the viewers experiences.

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NonAutomata

What is *NonAutomata*? In the world of manufacturing there are two basic types of machinery—finite machinery that can only operate within preset parameters and non—finite machinery, or non-automata—that are capable of adapting to changes autonomously upon recognizing differences within the production. These non-finite machines are currently the closest thing to artificial intelligence that mankind has created to date. The term *NonAutomata* is also used by authors of science fiction for artificial intelligence or automatons.

I believe that man is an intelligent machine! We are fashioned with organic parts. These parts can fail or break and cause us to not function. The human machine is also capable of being tuned to improve its operation. Our brain is capable of holding more information than most digital storage devices. Our nervous system is essentially the wiring needed to carry the electric signal from our brain to the rest of our systems, yet like any computer memory, our brain can become corrupt and our circuitry can go haywire, and cause us to not process information or perform rationally like every other machine that we interact with throughout our service life. In this body of work I explore this idea that we are all organic machines designed for a specific purpose, not only organically as individuals, but also within the greater machine that is society, introspectively looking at myself as a malfunctioning machine.

It is this malfunctioning that drives me to create the objects in this exhibition. It started when I was a young machine, I was involved in an accident that left me with traumatic brain injury that caused me to have hearing problems as well as learning issues. After years of parts being replaced and repaired, the mechanics deemed me whole except for the corruption that was left in my processing unit. This, they said, would take time to correct itself, if ever. This corruption caused me to be on the fringe of my peers, never really able to interact on the same wave-length as they did, and always being left behind. However, I discovered that there were certain aspects that I excelled in, primarily working with my hands and the ability to take mechanical things apart, find the failure, and reassemble them to work correctly. It was during this time that I discovered I had the expertise and mastery to draw and reproduce images of the parts and pieces that I was repairing.

After this discovery I decided it was time to work on reprogramming the corrupted area of my brain while increasing my knowledge of mechanical repair; I decided that enlisting into the military was the best course of action. During this time I did increase my knowledge of mechanical repair, but ultimately, my view of the world became focused through the reticle of a tank's gun sight: Instead of getting reprogramed to see things in a larger way, my focus became more narrowed, and I pulled even further from society. After my stint in the service I decided to attend trade school, where I was able to excel and obtain a degree in applied sciences. I then applied my mechanical trade expertise in both the automotive industry and the oil and gas industry.

How does this apply to this exhibition? In an engine or machine every part “knows” its job. If you apply a little lubrication, all of those parts work in harmony for the greater whole. I put this concept into every aspect of my life. However, I have found that society does not function as a well-oiled machine. I find that there is a constant malfunctioning part in my social interactions, and after exploring and diagnosing this failure, my conclusion is that the malfunctioning part is me! So, this exhibition is an exploration into how this machine views its failure in interactions with other machines in society. It is a visual recording of my corrupted programming and the struggle in my daily interaction with society. My intention is not to place the viewer in my mind or make them see the world as I see it, but rather to create images and objects that allow them to use their own experiences, angst, and failures to draw their own meaning within the work, making it autonomous, with its own reason for being.

In an artist’s workshop at Stephen F. Austin University, Greg Edmondson stated, “Representation is the what, abstraction is the what if.” Creating artwork abstractly with only vague references to “human” machine parts allows me to attack tough questions or delicate situations that could be controversial without creating a linear didactic narrative into the content of what inspired the work. In this way my art becomes open to multiple interpretations. First comes the idea that was present in my own head when I started the piece; as the process of creating progresses, the sculpture takes on its own agency and starts to direct its own completion. Viewers will have interpretations, based on the different ways they think, feel, and react. By presenting a “what if?” viewers are given permission to consider the complications of communication, and how we, as part of the

social machine, do not operate in a fully harmonious manner. Like most machines, society can be cranky, obtuse, and stubborn; unlike society, a machine will function smoothly when all the parts fit together, are well oiled, and maintained. In a well-oiled machine there is no argument among the parts regarding which is more important, they just do the function they were created to do.

Although I am a malfunctioning machine, I still learn. Through this body of work I have recorded my introspective research into my malfunction and how that malfunction has caused me to interact with the greater machine of society and the complications that I believe we all can relate to with that interaction and friction within the machine. Through this exploration I have been able to find harmony within the greater “machine” of society. It has also made me realize that we all have some type of malfunction—or—friction with humanity and that there is no finite answer to any one question or situation.



Figure 1 "Dark Days" 2019



Figure 2 "Dark Days" Detail 2019



Figure 3 "Dark Days" Detail 2019



Figure 4"Surface Composition #1" 2019



Figure 5 "Confused" 2018



Figure 6 "Hearing Everything" 2018



Figure 7 "Missing Pieces" 2018



Figure 8 "Parts not Quite Fitting" 2019

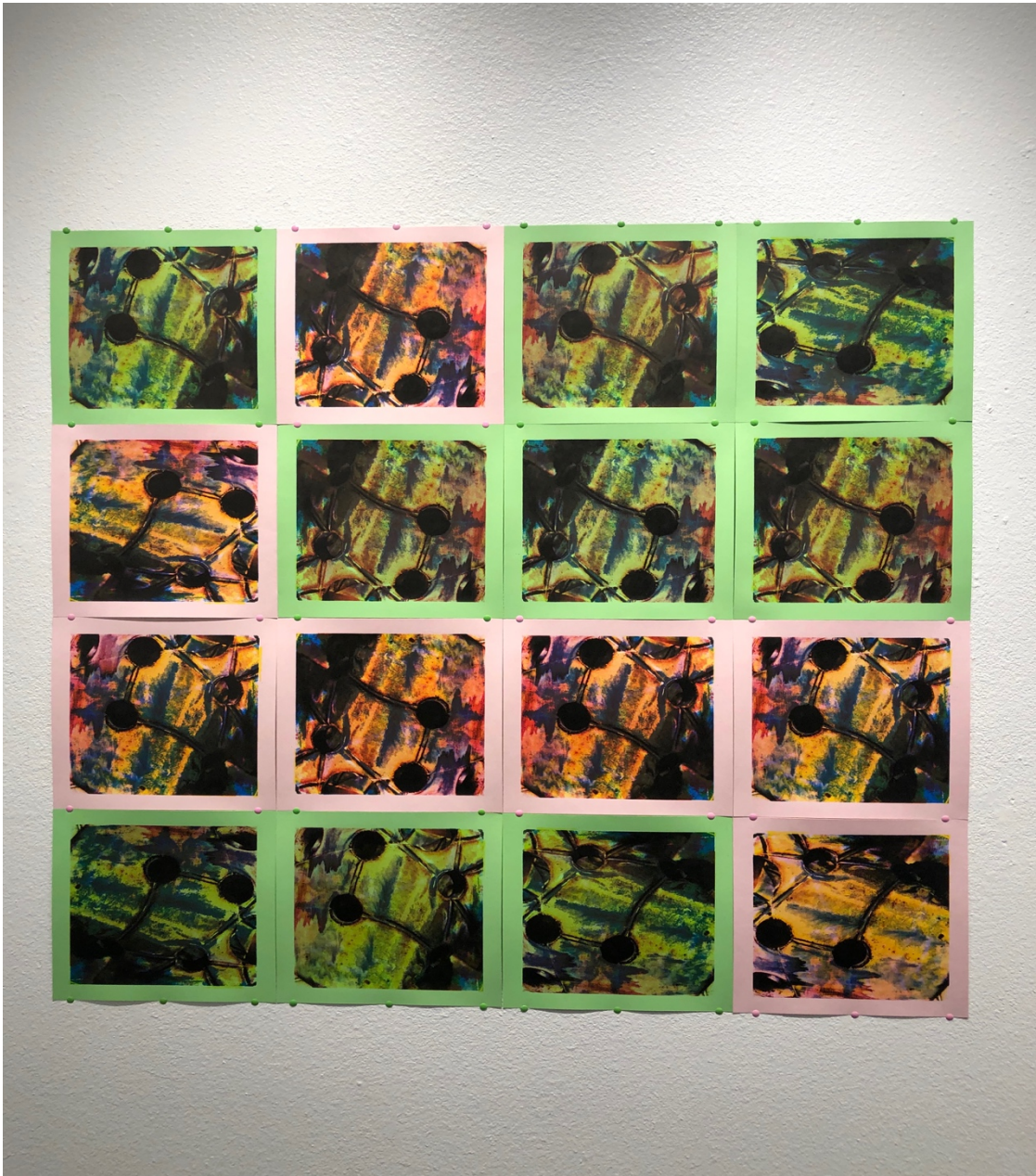


Figure 9 "Surface Composition #2" 2019



Figure 10 "Working Together" 2018



Figure 11 "On the Edge"



Figure 12 "Orange/Black Composition"



Figure 13 "Orange/Black Composition" Detail



Figure 14 "Happy Pills" 2019



Figure 15 "Happy Pills" View 2

Influences

Ceramics is a functional craft, used in everyday life. This aspect of ceramics makes it the ideal medium to create my art because my work is about my everyday life. There are a plethora of artists, historical, and contemporary, that have influenced my work.

My primary influence has been Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), credited with being a pioneer of abstract art. In his book “Concerning the Spirituality in Art”

Kandinsky discusses how images are emergent from the unconscious, comparing the

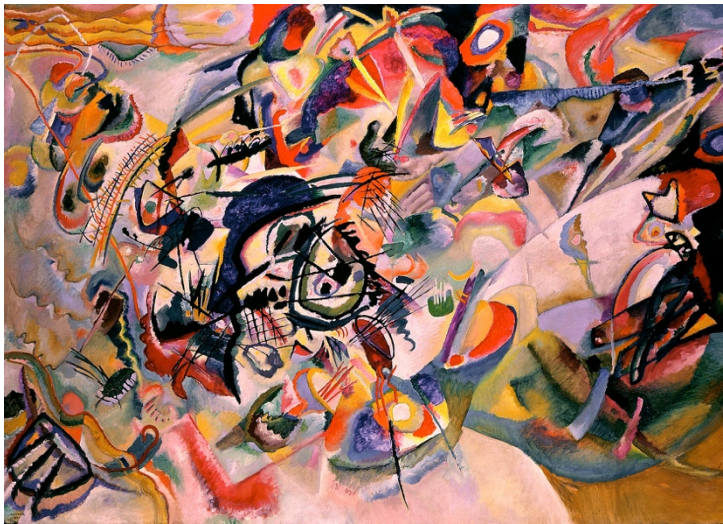


Figure 16 "Composition VII" 1913

spiritual life of humanity to a pyramid. His belief was that the artist's mission is to lead others to the pinnacle of the pyramid with their work. His writings influenced me to look into myself and record the angst and difficulties I have

faced with society using my personal visual language. One of my favorite quotes is from Kandinsky: “The artist must train not only his eyes but also his soul.”

Barbara Frey is a contemporary artist from North Texas who also mass produces clay parts to create her sculptures. Like Kandinsky's, are intuitive and emotional. I employ some of the same processes she uses to create art. Recently, I had the opportunity to have a conversation with her about not worrying that the viewers interpretation of the



Figure 17 "Roam" 2016

work is different than what I was thinking or feeling when I created it. She told me to embrace the idea that each viewer might have the freedom to react to the work in a different way. This idea of making

art that could have multiple interpretations was a little confusing at first. After breaking down the idea and reconstructing it, I was able to embrace it and find deeper meaning to why I make art.

The Primary influence in my art is my life, my little everyday interactions with society, and how I interpret those interactions For I am a malfunctioning machine! Always having difficulties socializing on a “normal” level, and not being able to express verbally how I feel in any given situation. Through these struggles in day to day activities I find a wealth of information to feed my visual language. By making art I am able to relate to these struggles and have a better understanding of where I fit in the greater “machine” that is humanity.

Process:

Clay Body:

O.M-4 Kentucky Ball Clay-20%

Gold-Art Clay-35%

Missouri Fireclay-15%

Red-Art Clay-20%

F-4 Soda Feldspar-10%

This clay recipe is a modified version of a clay body developed by Val Cushing. This body suits my work for it has multiple performance characteristics suitable for throwing and sculptural art; it is plastic enough to be manipulated on the wheel into complex forms, has a fairly low shrink rate, and is capable of withstanding thermal shock through different kiln firing processes. The clay body also is a red stoneware that is traditionally found in areas outside of the Far East countries.

This is a mid-fire temperature clay body, meaning that it fires to a working pyrometric cone of cone 6. This working temperature (working temperature is combination of kiln temperature, how fast the temperature is increased in the kiln, and how long the maximum temperature is held) is approximately 2100-2200 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a more contemporary temperature range, about 400 degrees cooler than the traditional high firing process that has been used by production potters for centuries. This allows me to achieve traditional results in addition to creating more

dynamic surfaces with more colors and movement while using less energy or fuel along with a shorter firing time.

After the clay is made, aged, wedged, and ready for use, I weigh out the amount of clay needed to throw the desired form (this weight varies depending on the form). I then throw the desired form on a treadle wheel. The use of a human—powered treadle wheel gives me complete control of the wheel head without having to rely on any outside power source. This allows me to concentrate more on the work and not on the equipment used. It is also a therapeutic activity of the whole body and not just the hands, eyes, heart, and head. I will spend hours or days creating different forms or parts, constantly editing as I go. If I am not crazy about the way a certain form comes out, I will put it in the recycle bin to be reprocessed later. After I have created several parts to work with that have thought, emotion, or angst, I want to express, I continue to edit the parts. This includes carving, piercing, and deconstruction of the forms. If any part does not fit the immediate need, it will either be rendered to the recycle bin, or set aside for another sculpture. The next phase is drying time, time to explore the thoughts that are driving the current need to express myself visually. When the parts are dry enough to be assembled, I start to construct the forms, again editing each piece to fit or, when appropriate, eliminating it all together from the sculpture. At this point, I begin to explore how I want to display the piece, whether I want it to stand freely on a pedestal, or have it hanging on the wall. This is the point where the object starts to have its own agency, and I start to have conversations with it and allow it to feed what the final work will look like. If the work is to be on a pedestal, this is the point I start to think about the pedestal. If it is to be

on the wall, I start to create the appropriate hanging apparatus. The next step is again time: time for the work to dry completely and the final editing of the form.

Once all the pieces are bone dry (the absence of any physical water and no longer cold to the touch), they are loaded into an electric kiln for the first firing. This bisque firing will remove molecular water, physical water and organic material from the clay body. This also creates a porous surface upon which glaze or surface treatment can be applied. This first firing takes approximately 28 hours to complete, and then another 6 to 12 hours to cool before the pieces can be removed from the kiln. During this time, I decide on the type and color of glazes I want to use to create the surface of the sculpture. This is a relatively loose idea as the direction of the surface can change as I assemble the pieces together to see how the final form will essentially look. Once the pieces are removed from the kiln they are inspected for flaws that can happen in the firing process. Some pieces will drastically change shape through warpage and clay memory (clay wanting to move back to a relaxed position when there is excess tension in the form). Again I will edit any piece out of the sculpture or completely scrap the sculpture at this point and start over.

Once the bisque pieces are ready, I assemble in different ways to achieve the desired interpretation of the thoughts that have inspired the image. This is a combination of aesthetic knowledge of form and intuitive direction of what the final image should say not only to me, but also to the viewers. They should be able to relate to the piece by using their own personal experience, as I avoid any didactic narrative to guide them.

After the final fitting of the pieces, I make the final decisions on how I want the surface to look, deciding which pieces need to be fused together in the final firing and what type of glaze I will use to achieve the desired effect. The glazes I use are a combination of commercially available glazes as well as some that I have created and tested to achieve dynamic movement and color within the glazed surface. I also decide if there are any pieces I do not want to glaze. In works where I want complete control of the surface, I apply a cold surface treatment, such as enamel or acrylic colors using painterly techniques to achieve the desired surface. The application of glaze or paint usually takes several days to finish. After all the pieces that need to be glazed are completed, those pieces are then assembled inside the kiln and a schedule is set for the final firing. This glaze firing usually takes 7 to 18 hours depending on the glazes and the effects I intend to have. While the kiln is firing I turn my attention to finishing any painted work and working on the hangers or pedestals that are needed for the work.

Once the kiln is cooled and the sculpture can be removed it is inspected for any major deficiencies such as glaze faults and any shifting of the pieces during the firing process. This final editing dictates whether the piece will be finished or completely scrapped. If the work is acceptable then it will be washed and any minor flaws repaired, any hanging device will be added and the final version of the sculpture will be assembled. The work is then photographed and documented. This time-intensive process usually takes anywhere from 4 to 6 weeks to complete, so I am usually working on multiple pieces at the same time. This also gives me an inventory of pieces and parts to choose from; what was created for one sculpture might end up on another

Vita

After completing high school in 1992, Jeremy Haynes joined the U.S. Army. After his service in the military he worked as a mechanic in the automotive and natural gas compression industries. In 2011 he returned to school, and in 2016 he received his Bachelor of Fine Art from The University of Texas in Tyler. That same year he entered Graduate school at Stephen F. Austin University and received the Master of Fine Art degree in December of 2019.

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MLA

This thesis was typed by Jeremy Haynes