

THESIS

CREATING WORLDS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

CREATING WORLDS

A longing for adventure is a component of human nature. The adventures that I am interested in are ones that can only exist in the realm of imagination. Fantasy has traditionally been a way to vicariously find that adventure. More recently, video games have allowed the player to become immersed in new worlds. Like video games, film, and fiction, my paintings also use imagery from fantasy worlds. A large portion of my work utilizes paradoxical humor through the juxtaposition of unlikely objects or settings and the anthropomorphization of inanimate objects that act as the protagonists in the stories the paintings tell. I incorporate aspects of interactivity into my pieces that allow the viewer to cross the line and become a participant in the piece. In my works, I try to highlight the limited nature of the world we live in versus the unlimited nature of imagination. To create imaginary worlds I use the art style of many games in the way I incorporate visual elements.

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You need to believe in things that aren't true. How else can they become?
- Terry Pratchett

A longing for adventure is a component of human nature. It starts in childhood and reveals itself in games and stories. As a person ages it can get buried under the mundane but many people still seek to find some way to fulfill this desire. Extreme sports, dangerous activities and travel are ways that this need can be met in the real world. But not everyone has the ability, or desire, to fulfill their longing by these methods and so they turn to the realm of fiction or the virtual world. While these lack the physical reality of the other methods, the fictional and virtual worlds have the compensation of relative safety without the physical limitations of the real world. These are the adventures that I am interested in, ones that can only exist in the realm of imagination.

These adventures come easily when a person is young. A simple cardboard box can become a time machine that lets you go back to ancient Egypt where you can slide down the sides of the pyramids. These adventures are wonderful and disregard the laws of physics to satisfy the children's sense of who they want to be. As a people age they gain the understanding that they aren't going to be an astronaut ninja. They move on with their life. However, that desire for an imaginative adventure is still there. It takes on a different form but still is a driving force in the person and manifests itself in a variety of ways. Painting is a way for me to bring these adventures to life and share them with others.

Fantasy, in both literature and movies, has been a way for me to vicariously find that adventure. The advent of video games has brought it to an entirely new level where the player can venture into a completely new world and experience it through a character. Because the fantasy is interactive, games provide a better way to escape and experience the adventures of other worlds in a more immersive manner. For some people, this can lead to more satisfying experiences than they have in their "real lives." This creates an interesting conflict within the individual, and within society, as one is torn between the real and the virtual worlds.

Like video games, film, and fiction, my paintings use imagery from fantasy worlds. A large portion of my work utilizes paradoxical humor through the juxtaposition of unlikely objects or settings and the anthropomorphization of inanimate objects that act as the protagonists of the stories the paintings tell. The humor allows the work to be more lighthearted, which is in keeping with the type of games and fiction that I am drawn to. Humor in contemporary art tends to lean more to the satirical and is often geared towards social commentary as a means to make the concepts more palatable. For instance, the artist Sarah Lucas uses humor to address feminist issues by confronting the absurdity of being female in a society that tries to subjugate and suppress women. She brings attention to this by using absurd sexualized imagery to provoke thought. Other contemporary artists employ humor as a means to address issues like consumption and consumerism. Jeff Koons is a notable example. He also deals with the absurdity of consumerism and the elevation of possessions in our culture today. The painting *Boy with Pony* (Fig 1) has two toys painted on a large canvas. The elevation of plastic toys to the level of art by painting them at a large scale is what makes the piece thought provoking in its ridiculousness.

In my pieces I am concerned not with criticizing an aspect of society but with reaching the viewer through an understanding of the motivation many people have to find a more interesting life. I choose to pursue a humor based in paradoxical whimsy. Paradox for me is a way to remove the viewer from the real world while making them smile. Paradox draws the viewer in and engages them with the world of the story. In my paintings I place items in unexpected places, unexpected items in settings, or show items behaving in an unnatural manner. The result is pleasure, offering an escape from reality. I want my paintings to function in a similar way, where viewers can enter into the world I create and separate themselves from the cares of the everyday. I find delight in making the paintings and want viewers to walk away with that same feeling of satisfaction.

One of my greatest influences for humor has been Rene Magritte. He uses the juxtaposition of objects that are not normally associated, or of objects seen together in an unusual way, to encourage the viewer to think about the nature of perception and reality. He was interested in the painted objects relation to real objects and how the image of a thing differs from the thing itself. These are questions that have

taken on another aspect within the digital age and in the conflict between virtual life and “real life.” Objects in Magritte’s paintings also take on a sense of being entities or characters in their own right such as the apple that completely fills the room (Fig 2) in *The Listening Room*. Even though there is no overt personification of the apple, its location and size give it an ominous presence that, combined with the size of the painting, make viewers feel like they can enter into the world, and make them uncomfortable. Paradox is created with the scale of the apple and its placement as the inhabitant of a room which adds humor to the foreboding.

For similar reasons the sculptor Claus Oldenburg has been a great influence on my work. His sculptures take a portion of the world and transform it in an improbable way. For example, the giant ice cream cone on the side of an office building (Fig 3) brings the *Candyland* idea to colossal heights. The space around the piece becomes part of its world – a world the viewer can physically exist in as well. Oldenburg, like Magritte, is dealing with paradoxical imagery, as well as disproportion of scale to create humor. Because these worlds are not grounded in reality, it asks the viewer to question what reality should be.

Creating other worlds was also prevalent in the traditional art I was exposed to growing up. My grandfather, John Wilson, was a locally renowned painter and sculptor on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. During my childhood, my family made yearly trips to visit him. While there, I often made pieces of art with him which has led me to become an artist. The content of his work was not about the creation of new worlds. It dealt with abstracted human or animal forms, but the way in which he placed the pieces together created new worlds inhabited by his people. For example, his front yard was a tableau with sculptures of men doing yard work. Several of the figures were holding tools and appeared to be working - one pushing a wheelbarrow and one holding a water hose that could be moved around to water the plants. Every year it was fun to see what new things had been added to his house (Fig 4). Upon arriving at my grandfather’s home, the first thing my family would do was go on an adventure to find all the new pieces. It was like visiting another world, and so I formed early on the subconscious connection between art and other fantastical worlds.

The Hudson River School artists have always captivated me, particularly Church and Bierstadt. Both of these painters must have felt the desire for adventure and were able to indulge it with travel to dangerous places. Their paintings inspire in the viewer with that same longing to go see these beautiful, and sometimes otherworldly, places. This reaction in the viewer was the intent, as they were used largely as commercial tools to encourage expansion into the West and to promote tourism in the United States. Bierstadt was influential in getting Yosemite Valley made into a national park by painting the beauty of the region. The national parks serve as a way for people to escape from their normal lives and adventure out into nature. Church was also interested in travel and nature after reading the works by the renowned explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt who implored painters to go to South America. He made several trips to South America and Europe, and even went on an arctic expedition. He made paintings on these trips which were brought back and exhibited. The viewers could experience vicariously the adventure of travel and picture themselves in these landscapes. Even though both of these artists painted from real life, the composition choices which altered the landscape and the use of luminosity (Fig 5) present the viewer with a prettier, and often better, version of the actual place. So the paintings, while being about specific places, are not just a representation of it, but an embodiment of the desire for adventure and the fantasy of perfect idyllic places with dramatic lighting and wonderful colors.

Like the previous artists, I live in the realm of imagination. This is an essential part of being an artist, and for me goes beyond creating art. I find myself augmenting the real world with imagined adventures. When going on a mountain hike, for example, I might pretend that I am guiding a group of people from a different planet through dangerous woods so they can get back to their ship or that I am with a group climbing Everest. This is in no way an attempt to escape boredom. Rather, it is a game to augment reality to increase the adventure. Many people engage in these private mental dialogs when going about their lives that they don't let others know about. Through the anonymity of the Internet, people can more freely discuss these topics without fear of being judged. There is even an Internet meme (a cultural event that can be transmitted from one person to another by imitable phenomena with a

mimicked theme) called *Weird Stuff I Do Potoo*¹ where people write their strange habits over the image of a bird. This image is then shared on websites such as Reddit. Many of these habits revolve around pretending while alone or having imaginary conversations. Even though it is something many people do, in our society there is a sense that it is not socially acceptable to play make-believe beyond a certain age. When you examine one of the popular computer game series of the past ten years, *The Sims*, its purpose is to provide a way to play make-believe with pixels instead of toys. The player controls the life of the Sim and can make it do all the normal things, but the virtual world has far more possibilities than reality. Players can choose if they want their Sim to have a “normal” life or make their Sim a werewolf that lives only on Christmas cookies and builds robots. A common tendency of people playing *The Sims* is to create a version of themselves where they live the life they wish they could be living. In this way, games have become a socially acceptable way for people to express their desire for adventure and a longing to escape the mundane. As an artist, I am like the player of such a game. I am not limited to representing the real world but can choose to construct a fantasy world of my own, which is then shared with the viewer. I control not only the world of the paintings but also how the viewer can experience them. They might have to open a door or stoop down to see the painting. This interaction invites them to become more like the player of a game rather than a passive viewer. For me, the process of making a painting goes beyond what is depicted in the piece. I imagine the world of the piece beyond what is shown and I create stories for the objects depicted in the painting as to why they are there and what their desires are.

Another widely popular game, *Minecraft* (Fig 6), is a sandbox game that allows players to explore a map the size of the planet Neptune and build anything they can think of with what they dig from their mine or find. So players can, alone or with friends, build almost anything that they can think of. Through both the memes and the popular games, it is clear that people are interested in finding a way to express the stranger aspects of their nature. It is important to me that my art connects to contemporary society by externalizing my own imaginary life in a way that relates to gaming. In *Choose Your Own*

¹ “Weird Stuff I Do Potoo,” *KnowYourMeme.com*, accessed March 13, 2014, <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/weird-stuff-i-do-potoo>.

Reality (Fig 7), I use imagery directly from several games, one of them being *Minecraft*. By doing so, the piece connects with viewers who have played the game on another level. The wonder, excitement and adventure that the players feel when playing the game become a part of the piece. The doors to the different game worlds mean more to viewers that are gamers, than if they had been creations of my own. Those viewers will feel more connected to the piece, and to me the artist, by understanding the reference and through the shared experience of the games. For those that have played the games that are shown behind the doors, the piece shows not just strange lands but ones filled with hours of fun and adventure.

It is the interactive nature of games that has led them to become so popular. Even games with simple graphics such as *Minecraft* have the ability to hold people's attention for long periods of time. I incorporate some interactivity into my pieces that allow the viewer to cross the line and become a participant. In *Open the Door* (Fig 8) the title gives viewers instructions on how to interact with the piece. The landscape behind the door is only on the lower portion and the viewer looks directly into the clouds giving them the feeling that they are a giant towering over the land. When the door is opened, they can experience the painting behind it. Because viewers open the door to see the piece, they are put in the position of discovering the strange land that is in the painting. Another piece, *The Grass Might Not Always Be Greener On the Other Side, But Sometimes It Is Just Because There Is None* (Fig 9), is comprised of two paintings with three plush standing stones between them. One painting is the "real" world with more traditional landscape of trees and mountains. In this setting there is a stone circle. Some of the stones have decided to leave the painting and find adventure. They progress out of that painting, through the viewers space, and into another painting. The painting they go to is a fantasy world in the clouds with block castles and flying ponies. There are three plushy stones that stand between the two paintings. Because the stones have entered the space of the viewer through being sculptural objects, the viewer can move in between so that the viewer can inhabit the world of the piece. Also, they encourage the viewer to get close enough to touch them as they are made of soft fleece fabric and resemble stuffed animals. Upon approaching them, the viewer steps into the world of this painting and can experience it as one of the participants.

The term escapist generally has negative connotations and is associated with many of the activities that people engage in to get away from their “real life.” There is the belief that anything that happens in the mind, or the virtual world, is of lesser value than what occurs in the real world because it is intangible and does not exist in reality. This prejudice has been part of the culture for a considerable time and is something that people who enjoy venturing into other worlds through imagination have had to address. J.R.R. Tolkien, in the essay *On Fairy Stories*, talks about the desire people have to escape and why it is not a negative activity.

It is part of the essential malady of such days— producing the desire to escape, not indeed from life, but from our present time and self-made misery— that we are acutely conscious both of the ugliness of our works, and of their evil.² (Tolkien 12)

Tolkien goes on to talk about the benefits of escaping as not just the search for beauty and good but a way in which to address various desires- ranging from simple ones like wanting to know what it is like to be a fish or a bird, to more complicated ones like conversing with animals or eluding death. While the world has changed drastically since Tolkien wrote this essay, self-made miseries and the desire to experience a different world remain for many people.

There is conflict between the real and the virtual worlds, the struggle between prejudices against living in the imagination and the desire to escape. The painting *Choose Your Reality* (Fig 7) addresses the conflict between the digital and real worlds. It has five brightly colored doors in a landscape of ancient ruins. Behind each door is the screenshot from a different video game. The screenshots are more appealing and seem more real than the landscape, because of the higher saturation. The ruins in the landscape show that there was once habitation but it has moved on. The intention of this piece is that the viewer will be more drawn to, and intrigued by, the virtual fantasy worlds while being aware of the presence of reality.

² J. R. R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories* (1947), <http://public.callutheran.edu/~brint/Arts/Tolkien.pdf>.

Another fantasy writer, Terry Pratchett, talks about the dissatisfaction with the way the “real world” operates as opposed to the fictional world. In an interview that was posted on his website a few years ago³ he said something that has stuck with me and sums up the way I feel about the subject. The interviewer asked him about the legend of the monolithic stone that was near Pratchett’s home. The legend states that on full moon nights the stone would come to life and run around the field it was in. The interviewer asked Pratchett if he had ever gone out to see if it really happened and he replied that he never had. Not because he was afraid that it would, but because he was afraid that it wouldn’t, and that would make the world a less interesting place. My paintings address similar issues of escapism. In my works, I try to highlight the limited nature of the world we live in versus the unlimited nature of imagination. Each object is dissatisfied with the world it is from and seeks to find an adventure by moving into a different world. There is a dual escapism happening within the works – the objects themselves are escaping, while at the same time, the viewer is offered another world to escape into by using the personified object as the means of its escape. I often use standing stones in my works as they have individual characteristics that give them a figurative quality. When viewed from a distance many of them look like hunched over people which gives a melancholic air while other stand straight and tall and seem proud. Because of this, they become characters more easily but still do not directly relate to humans. They are, however, indirectly related in that humans once placed the stones hundreds of years ago. Because they are the remains of civilizations long past, the stones have an aura of mystery that is intriguing. Like using video game imagery, putting standing stones in my work allows for the inclusion of the strange otherness of standing stone circles to be included in my pieces. The painting *After Centuries of Silently Suffering I Have Decided Enough Is Enough* (Fig 10) is about the story of a conflict between snowmen and a standing stone circle. The stone circle is old and has been there for centuries but every winter the snowmen have moved into the stones’ area and caused trouble. Once stone has had enough and leaves to seek a more hospitable place to live. In both *After Centuries of Silently Suffering I Have Decided Enough Is Enough* (Fig 10) and *The Grass Might Not Always Be Greener On the Other Side, But Sometimes It Is*

³ “Interview,” accessed in 2005, <http://www.terrypratchett.co.uk/>.

Just Because There Is None (Fig 9), standing stones from the paintings are physically leaving the paintings in search of a better place. The stone in *After Centuries...* has taken a portion of the painting with it as it leaves. The section itself is personified by legs and feet that allow the section to stand on its own away from the rest of the painting. The section of the painting is cooperating with the stone, or has been granted movement by the will of the stone to leave. The placement of the separate section in relation to the painting it came from, makes it clear that the stone is just starting out on a journey. Because of the mystery surrounding the purpose of the standing stones and the legends that have grown up around them they make good characters in the stories of my paintings. They are already connected to fantasy. Also, their shape gives them an individuality that allows them to take on human characteristics. The stones in *The Grass Might Not Be Greener...* are different in that they change from a normal stone into a plush stone as they leave their original painting. They also leave the painting and exist as three-dimensional (3D) entities instead of still being connected to a portion of the painting. These stones have more freedom and are seen going into a new painting of their choosing. Since there are multiple stones making the journey, there is safety in numbers and their journey seems to be less perilous than the lone stone's. Both of these pieces hint at a story but leave viewers room to use their imaginations.

Creating stories and combining 2D and 3D elements in paintings have come from two passions of mine, art and gaming. I have always sought to involve viewers in a way that makes their experience a less passive one. Art and gaming have always been sources of inspiration in this regard. Some of my earliest drawings were worlds that I created with the program HyperCard on a black-and-white Macintosh Plus. It allowed me to draw on "cards" and then link them together with buttons so that when a certain portion of the drawing was clicked it would take me to another "card." This allowed for interactivity, imagery, and storytelling to be combined into one. More recently, I have used Photoshop and Flash extensively for drawing, digital painting and creating simple games. All of these digital projects have influenced my more traditional paintings. My process for working on a piece is similar and my style is heavily influenced by the digital.

Looking at the art style of many games and animated films, there are several elements that have contributed to my visual vocabulary. Anthropomorphism of everyday objects has been a common theme in video games since they were invented. In *Super Mario Bros 3* (Fig 11) this can be seen in the smiling clouds and in some of the characters, such as Bullet Bill. In the movie *Wreck-It-Ralph*, released in 2012, one of the arcade games used in the film is a 1990s-style kart racing game that takes place in a *Candyland* style world. The inhabitants of this world are sentient pieces of candy (Fig 12) and each type of candy has its own distinctive personality and appearance. Numerous Pixar movies also personify inanimate objects, such as the *Toy Story* movies and *Cars*. It is now part of our culture to be inclined to attribute human characteristics to objects.

Fine artists also utilize the personification of inanimate objects to create works that are humorous as well as thought provoking. The artist Terry Border adds wire arms and legs to everyday objects, sets them up in a scene, and photographs them (Fig 13). The scenes are always humorous and often speak to the nature of the object. Some make visual puns. Both strategies result in viewers looking differently at the objects they encounter though the course of their normal day. I also use personification in my work. In the painting *On the Path to Destruction The Sea Stack Decided To Make Some Changes to His Life* (Fig 14), a column of rock is given human accessories to turn it into a character. After opening the door the viewer is confronted with an almost 8 foot tall sea stack wearing a top hat and other accessories. This rock is trying to prolong its life by leaving the ocean where it currently stands. Because of their constant erosion by the ocean, sea stacks only last for a relatively short period of time so the story of the piece builds off of the danger that the rock faces. By personifying objects, I am creating paradoxical humor which adds whimsical elements to the piece. Also, it creates a protagonist for the stories told in the pieces.

Another element from games and animated films that I utilize in my work is the prevalence of candy and dessert-themed worlds. The Facebook-based game *Farmville* (Fig 15) has an entire farm devoted to candy. All the buildings are candy themed and players can grow candy crops. There is also numerous candy or sweets-based items that can be bought for any farm. The whimsical nature of these

items is in keeping with the light casual nature of the game. The amount of dessert themed items shows that a light and whimsical candy filled world is appealing to many people.

The prevalence of candy and desert related imagery has not gone unnoticed by artists. Wayne Thiebaud's cake paintings, while initially rejected by galleries because of their light whimsical nature, became very popular. The way in which the paint is applied looks like the frosting on the cakes, which appeals to viewers in a visceral way. In Thiebaud's work the subject matter is light and whimsical he wants the viewer to laugh a little when they look at his pieces⁴. The humor in Thiebaud's work is subtle in that it comes from the elevation of mundane items and the association of cake with joyous times.

Contemporary artist Will Cotton also deals with candy-related imagery. He sees candy, pastries and sweets as symbols of desire. Sometimes he does this blatantly, by pairing the candy worlds with beautiful female nudes. However, other pieces deal more subtly with the subject of desire as it relates to his lushly painted candy worlds. These pieces invite the viewer to enter into them but these worlds often have an underlying danger. It is clear that his pieces showing a candy filled world resonate with popular culture today. He was approached by the singer Katy Perry, to be the art director for the video of her song *California Girls*. Through this, his work has become a part of pop culture and has reached many more people than previously. The popularity of the video even led to the creation of a Katy Perry expansion pack for the game *The Sims* with a number of candy themed clothes and items.

I choose dessert imagery for reasons of joy and lightheartedness as well as the way it resonates with contemporary culture. In the painting *What Rock Through Yonder Window Ventures?* (Fig 16) the imagery is bright, fun, and makes the viewer happy. In the smaller painting there is a stone circle in a misty field. Behind the circles a doorway has appeared and one of the stones has ventured through it. The other piece is where that stone ended up as it went through the door. The world it entered is a strange fantasy place with a giant cupcake in the room. In both of these paintings the rocks have a desire to go to some other place where they think they will be happier. The colors that frosting and candy come in are

⁴ "Wayne Thiebaud - CBS Sunday Morning," 2002, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vl_QJ5D9Qm8.

highly saturated which is a way to create a disconnection between the world that the stones came from - the “real world”- and the fantasy world they are heading towards.

Another component of video game art that has influenced my paintings is the color palette. In most games the colors are more saturated than in reality which makes them appealing and increases the disconnect between them and the real world. The game *Riven* (Fig 17), made in the 1990s, was one of the first video games to be called art. The graphics in *Riven* were vastly beyond anything else at the time and drew the players into its rich worlds. The imagery was created using texture samples from photographs that were altered and pieced together into fantasy worlds that were appealing because they were more vibrant in color than the real world. Many of the more traditionally animated games such as *Farmville* also use these highly saturated, unrealistic colors. The color, in this instance, emphasizes the whimsical nature of the game. In the piece *The Grass Might Not Always Be Greener On the Other Side, But Sometimes It Is Just Because There Is None* (Fig 9) the fantasy world that the stones are entering is full of saturated colors while the world they left has more subdued colors. The doors in *Choose Your Reality* (Fig 7) are all high chroma unnatural colors to symbolize that they are portals out of reality.

The last element commonly found in video game art that has influenced my paintings is the manner in which the 2D and 3D elements exist together. Most games that take place in a 3D environment are comprised of both 2D and 3D elements. The land, objects and characters are digital wire mesh models that are covered with a 2D image that is wrapped around the mesh. In older games only the most basic shapes are 3D and the rest is just an illusion created by the artwork. The result is an interesting mixture of deep and flattened space, as seen in *World of Warcraft* (Fig 18). In this game the trees appear to be somewhat dislocated from the land because they are relatively flat where the mountains recede back in actual space. The uniform color of the trees gives them a cut-and-paste feeling. Because the artificial worlds atmospheric perspective is only achieved with particle effects (a computer graphics technique that is used to render a large number of very small elements to create effects such as fog) and render distance (the point at which the world fades out of sight) the way object appear to recede into the distance is different than in the real world. The color of the snow on the ground is uniform in both the foreground

and the distant space, while the mountain in the background is far enough away to be affected by the atmospheric effects and so the color is altered. The result is a space that simultaneously appears to be deep and shallow.

I utilize this in my paintings in several ways. The first is in the mixture of the 2D and 3D elements. The transitions between elements are often rough or jarring. The way that the stones are coming out of, and going into, the canvases in *The Grass Might Not Always Be Greener On the Other Side, But Sometimes It Is Just Because There Is None* (Fig 9) is not a smooth transition between the flat painted surface and the relief of the stones. They are stuck on the canvas in a cut-and-paste manner. The trees in the painting *Open the Door* (Fig 8) are similar. The landscape appears to recede into space while the trees are flatter and disjointed from the land.

The piece *Tired of Lifeless Desolation the Painting of Mars Takes Matters into His Own Claw* (Fig 19) had two paintings that have walked through a doorway from another world. They came from a waiting room area and were originally hung on the wall. The painting of Mars landscape wasn't happy with itself and so it left the wall and started collecting objects it found and dropping them into itself to populate its desolation. It took a portion of another painting as well causing that painting to follow it out in an attempt to get the missing part back. The piece combines a large painting with a door-like frame with two paintings that have legs and are standing on their own. While the two paintings extend into the viewers space creating a 3D environment they themselves are mostly uninteresting as 3D objects. One of the free standing paintings has a claw and crane and is holding a piece of paper. These actual objects contrast with the painted ones that have already been picked up with the crane and dropped into the painting making them become 2D.

In some games, the playing with space is more overt as with *Boarderlands 2* (Fig 20). This game has a specific art style that combines a representational world with comic book style characters and objects. The landscape has great depth and realistic, dramatic lighting but the gun that the player is holding, for example, appear flattened in contrast. In my work I utilize this playing with space when depicting my worlds. For example I utilize this style in *On the Path to Destruction the Sea Stack Decided*

to Make Some Changes to His Life (Fig 14). The outlining of the objects sets the world apart as a different place than is seen in other paintings of mine. Since little is shown of the world other than the ocean, I wanted to use this visual style to differentiate it from the worlds in my other paintings. Because the sea stack is part of a different world, it should be looked at differently than the stones that came from the other paintings.

Each of my paintings start with a place I have visited. By the time the painting is finished the place has been transformed into a different world. At the core is the need for adventure I had in visiting that location. The resulting world is so far removed from the place of inspiration that no one could guess where the original image came from. The place is not important, rather the story that springs from it is. The drive behind my work is a desire for adventure. Through it, my experiences become new stories that are based in fantasy. The worlds I create are influenced by video games through color and style and incorporate viewer interaction through the use of sculptural elements. The saturated color palette creates a whimsical and inviting world that I invite viewers into in hopes that they can experience the delight of the imagination.

Through all my works the fantasy element is the most important. Imagination and creating worlds filled with strange characters and stories is the driving force behind everything I do. The delight I find in creating the stories translates to the viewer through use of color and imagery. By pulling imagery from popular culture and gaming, I create stories that have connections beyond the paintings. My paintings are a unique combination of 2D and 3D elements that brings the viewer into the story. The result is a contemporary approach to painting that follows my interests and desires.



Fig 1: Jeff Koons, *Boy with Pony*, 1995–2007, oil on canvas, 136 1/2 x 107 inches.

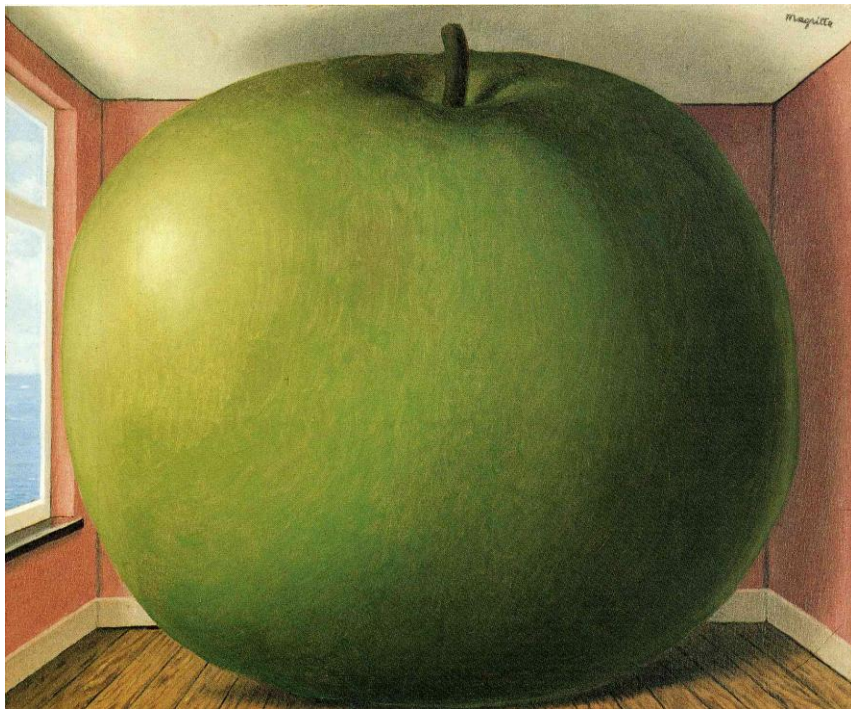


Fig 2: René Magritte, *The Listening Room*, 1952, Oil on canvas, 18 in x 22 in, Menil Collection, Houston, TX.



Fig 3: Claes Oldenburg, *Dropped Cone*, 2001, Stainless and galvanized steels, fiber-reinforced plastic, balsa wood; painted with polyester gelcoat, 39 ft. 10 in. (12.1 m) high x 19 ft. (5.8 m) diameter; Neumarkt Galerie, Cologne, Germany.

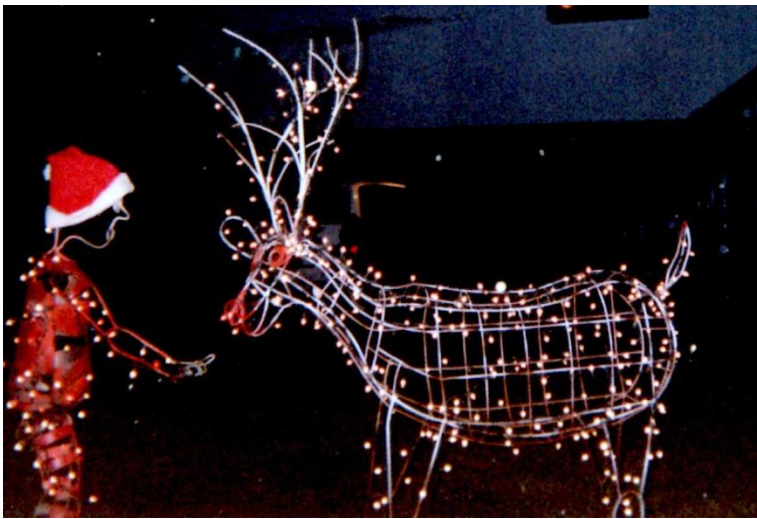


Fig 4: John Wilson, *Christmas Decorations*, 2002, Steel.



Fig 5: Frederic Edwin Church, *The Icebergs*, 1861, oil on canvas, 64.57 in \times 112.5 in, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas.



Fig 6: *Minecraft*, 2009.



Fig 7: Eleanor Wilson, *Choose Your Reality*, 2013, oil on panel, dollhouse doors, rock, video game screenshots, 48 x 12 inches



Fig 8: Eleanor Wilson, *Open the Door*, 2013, oil on canvas and door, 32 x 78 inches.



Fig 9: Eleanor Wilson, *The Grass Might Not Always Be Greener On the Other Side, But Sometimes It Is Just Because There Is None*, 2014, oil on canvas, fleece, 47 x 74 inches and 51 x 82 inches.



Fig 10: Eleanor Wilson, *After Centuries of Silently Suffering I Have Decided Enough is Enough*, 2013, oil on canvas, steel, wood, 48 x 34 inches and 12 x 22 inches.



Fig 11: *Super Mario Bros*, 1985.

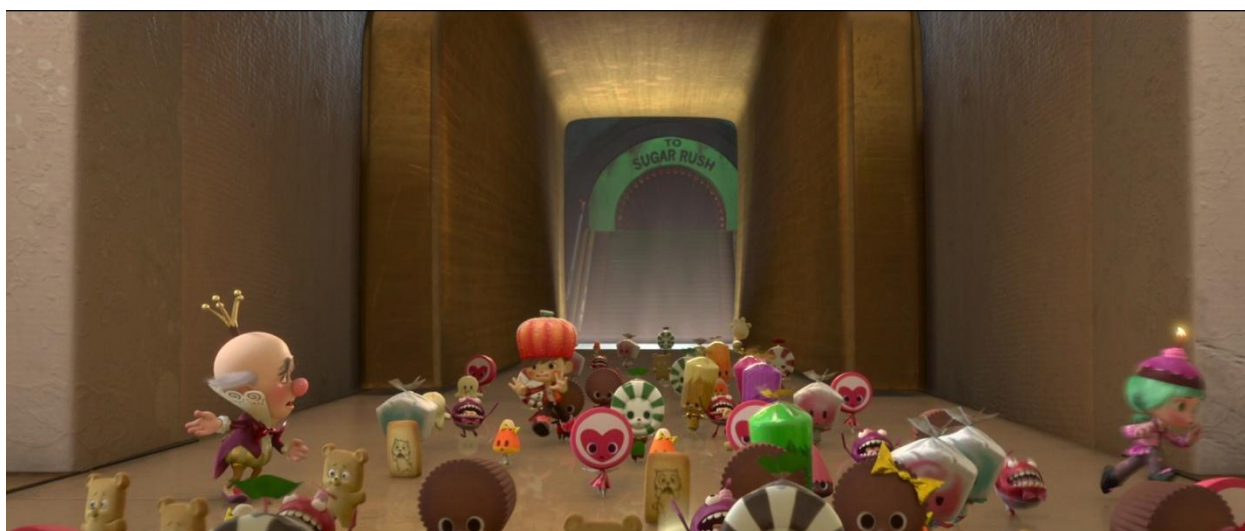


Fig 12: *Wreck-it-Ralph*, 2012.



Fig 13: Terry Boarder, *Bent Objects Missing Oreo*, 2012, photograph.



Fig 14: Eleanor Wilson, *On the Path to Destruction The Sea Stack Decided To Make Some Changes to His Life*, 2014, oil on canvas, 27 x 98 inches.



Fig 15: *Farmville*, 2009.



Fig 16: Eleanor Wilson, *What Rock Through Yonder Window Ventures?*, 2013, oil on panel, rock, 12 x 8 inches and 30 x 18 inches.



Fig 17: *Riven*, 1997.



Fig 18: *World of Warcraft*, 2004.



Fig 19: Eleanor Wilson, *Tired of Lifeless Desolation the Painting of Mars Takes Matters into His Own Claw*, 2014, oil on canvas, oil on panels, steel, 27 x 98 inches, 21 x 11.5 inches and 16.5 x 12 inches.



Fig 20: *Borderlands 2*, 2012.

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