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Trinkets, Baubles, & Ephemera: This Will Look Real Good On Your Shelf.

Kjelshus H. Collins
University of New Orleans, khcolli1@uno.edu

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Trinkets, Baubles, & Ephemera:
This Will Look Real Good On Your Shelf

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Fine Arts

by

Kjelshus H. Collins

B.F.A., B.A. Oklahoma State University, 2006

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Abstract

I am an amalgamation: Printmaker, ceramic sculptor, and toy maker.

I usually only make things with intent. I hardly ever throw anything away or destroy my art. I like the idea of archiving my work as possible artifacts for future generations. Prehistory, archaeology, mass production, and the consumers are my inspiration. Art is all an act of creation. I use various rituals and practices to create. The constant thoughts on alchemy and the personifications of the objects are driving influences. Through sculpting I create a new object in this reality. This object can be personified by simple alterations to the source material, through words, biological features, or accouterments. This has been a common theme throughout art history as a way to make fetish objects of influence and desires, decorations, or toys. The following is an explanation of my method to embrace this tradition and ritual in a long history of art.

Introduction

From childhood, I have been exposed to lots of art, either through travel, or museums, or my parents' art history books. But, the art my parents liked was what might be expected from that generation (besides my father's interest in underground comix): Hieronymus Bosch, MC Escher, Picasso, and Dalí, and all the other men and women reviewed in Art History 101. My parents were artists that traveled the country selling their art at large street festivals. It was here, watching my father close big money deals with clients, that I learned the value and power of aesthetics. Art should be (and is) available to all, but it is also a powerful commodity. Artists don't generally make art for capital, they tend to do it for their own desires and urges, yet it can be used to sway the masses and accumulate wealth.

I've always had insomnia, so I would stay up late and watch television I wasn't allowed to watch. In the 90s, MTV had an animation department that was "known for their dark humor, sexual jokes, graphic violence, pop culture references, and irreverence."¹ *Liquid Television*, *Cartoon Sushi*, and *Oddities* were serials of, at the time, experimental adult animation.

In 1993, I saw a Chicago Imagist exhibit at the Milwaukee Art Museum. MTV's *Liquid Television* was in the middle of its run. And somewhere that escapes me, possibly St. Louis I saw a massive Paul McCarthy exhibit. As someone who has taught a thousand kids art, I know this is that cusp between child and adult. These were things that really stuck with me into adulthood. Maybe it was because I could be on the spectrum, or these are just simply images that were that powerful; I do not know.

So, imagine a young boy who had just made the transition from elementary school to middle school seeing McCarthy and Chicago Imagist Jim Nutt for the first time: these hyper-sexualized, vibrant, almost animated paintings hanging in a very large art museum. What was this? Where had I seen such things before? I hadn't. I had never seen this in a gallery or museum in my life. But I had seen some similar things on late night television. I saw two-dimensional fine art as a whole new thing. I asked my mom, "Why do these paintings look like the cartoons on MTV?" She had no answer because I was not supposed to be watching such filth, but she did not want to censor me at the art museum. This absolutely rewired my brain. Thus began my appreciation of certain aesthetics.

¹ "MTV Animation." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 17 March 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MTV_Animation#History.

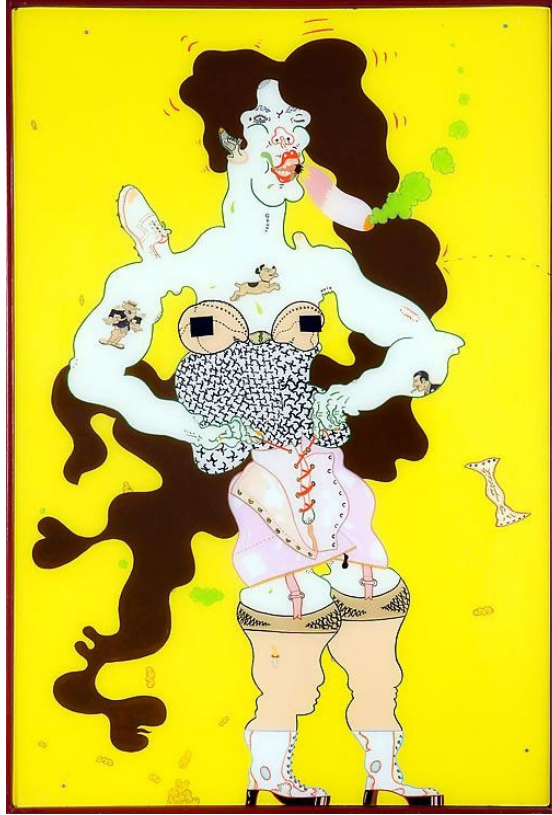


Fig. 1 Jim Nutt, *Coursing* c. 1966 acrylic, Plexiglas, wood

For me, making objects became the perfect way to combine the three creative outlets that I truly enjoy: comic books (narratives), printmaking, and sculpting. Most of these art objects are figurative in style and unique. They take on a life of their own and develop their own personalities, so to speak. For example, the New Orleans originated Ooze-It of the early 80's was a one hit wonder, though it eventually created a cult following over the decades, first as a rare item, second it was bootlegged in Japan as a gashapon, later the IP was purchased by Japanese artist, Yoda-san, and reborn, and now the Ooze-it lives on as a cult object amongst artists and collectors with many iterations being created globally.



Fig. 2 From Ooze It to Japanese bootleg to Indie sofubi toy: The story of Yusei Majin,

There is the ritualistic urge to create, being an artist. We go through these processes to begin creating. Setting up the work space, procuring materials, putting in the physical activity of making and so forth. I see all of this as a ritual. Then I see my own work almost as shrine-like in its reverence, placed in shiny cases of glass and light.

I first created a print at Oklahoma State University with Professor Mark Sisson. I was more interested in sculpting than two-dimensional work, but I had a requirement to be fulfilled. Surprisingly I found the process very relaxing and engaging. And at the same time rather sculptural. When I no longer had access to the technology to create sculptures I fell back on printmaking to fulfill my urges. For my post-baccalaureate work as a public school teacher in fine arts, I went to the Oklahoma Arts Institute in Lone Wolf, OK on scholarship to continue my education in printmaking working with well known printers from around the United States. This allowed me to learn all of the processes of printing. When I create a linocut, I try to go into a Zenlike state using ritual. On a clean surface, I roll out the bamboo wrap and knoll the tools, hone each gouge on a leather strop, imbibe a combination of tobacco, cannabis, and wine, turn on something to listen to, begin cutting, and sweep every little shaving into a pile; all the while completely blocking out everything around me. While I complete the piece I let the thoughts flow like a river to the noise I turned on and the repetition of the cuts, slowly the image takes shape, my eyes hurt, my hands hurt, my body hurts, but my mind is in Nirvana.

I began using ceramics at Oklahoma State University under the guidance of Prof. Brandon Reese, a student of Jun Kaneko, Jim Leedy, and Peter Volkous. It was here that began to truly appreciate sculpting. The natural malleability of clay was perfect to bring any and all

ideas into reality. Clay is reliable, strong, and abundant. Whether the object is smooth and flawless, or rough and unrefined, the stability of the clay was maintained through the firing process. I took advantage of this nature to build sculptures that could embrace an *art brut* sensibility. While many prefer to have a clean, perfect aesthetic, for instance a well thrown pot, I embraced a more loose style in the vein of Japanese tea ceremony wares that are often made by hand instead of being thrown. Jean Dubuffet would also be an inspiration to adopt roughly made works. His interest in the arts of children, prisoners, and psychiatric patients made sense as a starting point to dismantle what I was taught in art school. Not entirely as a rejection of traditional education, but as a way to take what I learned and rebuild it in a way that pleases my particular aesthetic desires. I am often drawn to older objects and destitute buildings. I can feel the history in these things and can see them as having more personality and life as they get older. I try to add this into my ceramic pieces. Building things where I know they can look degraded but remain structurally sound after the firings.

Simulacra

I spent many a February at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, because the art festival season began in winter and many of the shows were there. My parents, who worked at these festivals, felt it would make it easier on us to have fun while they worked and a campsite within the park was relatively cheap. Fort Wilderness was an EPCOT resort that was a simulation of Yellowstone. I recall finding these environments created by the Imagineers fascinating. I had been to the real Yellowstone before, yet I felt the excitement of being in these very curated and produced “worlds” that Disney provided. "The Disneyland imaginary is neither true or false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It's meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of their real childishness."² These would be my first personal experiences with installations, though they are not regarded as “fine art” and are viewed more as architectural design or prop making. In any case, being in this environment was definitely influential in my future art practices and interests.

I was quite disturbed when I was taken to the Paul McCarthy exhibit because of my admiration for Disney. The animation, the character costumes, the simulacra of all the rides and attractions, it was all so wonderful. Then there is this miscreant who turned all of it into a grotesquerie. I recall the bastardized drawings of Mickey and Tinkerbell, but the one thing that really stuck out was the installation. It was like the real Disney, but he had twisted it. Snow White was the Virgin Mary in statuary form and the dwarves were drunken louts inside a tavern set on a gravel lot sprinkled with beer cans. Audio of a busy bar was playing on loop and the viewer was basked in the red and blue neon glow from a sign that said “BAR”. Disturbing as a child, fantastic now. I see this as a copy of a copy, x2. “Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. Such would be the successive phases of the image:

it is the reflection of a profound reality;

it masks and denatures a profound reality;

it masks the absence of a profound reality;

it has no relation to any reality whatsoever;

² Baudrillard, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulations," 1994 pp. 166-184, University of Michigan Press.

it is its own pure simulacrum.”³

I see simulacra as possibly a type of augmented reality. American artist Jeff Koons has embraced this theme on a large scale, even to the point of being sued numerous times for his “*Banalities Series*” for reproducing unlicensed objects. Koons continued his large-scale kitsch by creating aluminum replicas of Popeye, balloon animals, and other toys. As Richard Dorment writes, “Just as Andy Warhol paid tribute to the genius of industrial designers responsible for the original Brillo boxes and Campbell’s soup cans by turning them into works of art which are indistinguishable from the real thing, so Koons chose to reproduce these cheap toys in hard metal because he found distilled in them all the freedom, fantasy, and unselfconscious joy of childhood.”⁴



Fig. 3 Elmgreen and Dragset, *Prada Marfa* c. 2005, adobe, plaster, paint, glass panes, aluminum frames, MDF, carpet. Marfa, TX

Simulated environments through art, like dioramas, interest me as well. The Prada shop in Marfa, for example, is not a real store but rather a semblance of a fragment of civilization in a barren landscape. Growing up in landscapes like this and coming across “Cherokee Trading Posts” on the highways inspired me to create my own versions of this type of installation. These Roadside gift shops are not in any way authentic Trading Posts. It’s another form of false reality.

New York artists and contemporaries Morgan Phillips and Ron English have both used empty storefronts to showcase their work in a manner that augments reality. The former uses an

³ Baudrillard, pp.175

⁴ Dorment, Richard. “Jeff Koons Popeye Series at the Serpentine Gallery, review” *The Telegraph*, July 6th, 2009

old mall in Fuzhou Chinatown, NYC, and the latter an empty grocery store in Beacon, New York. In both cases, these well-known artists and peers have sidestepped the familiarity of traditional galleries to take control of their respective environments. Sparrow, Phillips, and English all create nouveau pop art with some parallels concerning kitsch and tchotchke as art, but one very important similarity is the audience of their artificial habitats can, for a brief moment, leave this world and take an artifact home.



Fig. 4 Ron English, *Beacon Popmart* c. 2018, Beacon, NY

Lucy Sparrow is a fiber artist from the UK who specializes in recreating consumer products from felt, installing them by the thousands in defunct brick and mortar establishments. With this she has created a new reality based on a reality that has gone absent. Her “fauxdega,” as she calls it, “faces the last stretch of working meatpackers left in New York’s trendy meatpacking district.” “I’ve always been fascinated by things made out of materials that they’re not,”⁵ Lucy Sparrows told *The New York Time*. Hence, “Baudrillard claim[ing] that our current society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that human experience is a simulation of reality.”⁶

⁵ Gopnik, Blake “Ah, That Old Corner Store. But in Felt...” *The New York Times*, June 9, 2017, Section C, Page 18 of the New York edition

⁶ Kellner, Douglas (1 February 1987). "Baudrillard, Semiurgy, and Death". *Theory, Culture & Society*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications. 4 (1): 125–146



Fig. 5 Lucy Sparrow, c. 8 *Till Late* c. 2017, example of felt soft sculpture in bodega. NYC, NY

The “bootleg” toys that I often make, discussed further later, are a simulation of actual objects purchased in stores. Being a toymaker is a romantic interest I have had for some time. Having control of the figures and presenting them as art and embracing the act and handiwork brings much pleasure and excitement.

Ritual and Religion

I like the ritual aspect of creating art. For me, the process of making something is important. I once tried to find evidence if certain religious groups viewed creating art as a sin, as it would be emulating God through the act of creation. It's a preposterous notion unless one takes into consideration loose interpretation of scripture from the Book of Enoch which explains how the 200 Watchers taught the humans how to create with their hands.

All of this is depicted in ancient murals. These artists were most likely the shamans of whatever tribal structure they relied on. These would be the members that understood herbs, minerals, healing and so forth. They were the ones that stood out amongst their people in what we would call the creatives. Simply put, they processed information differently than the others. They understood the ways of visual art as a medium for information and ritual majik.

Evidence of this still exists amongst the aboriginal tribes in Australia. It has been noted that their oral storytelling is so accurate that modern paleontologists can consult the oral histories to verify certain fossils of new discoveries. "Among the stories from the Dreamtime of the Aboriginal People in many parts of Australia are references to giant animals that in many cases can be traced to fossils of animals that formed the megafauna of Australia."⁷ The aborigines were regarded as a pure human, unchanged for tens of thousands of years until colonial meddling during the height of European imperialism.

Imagery and objects alter states to invoke an emotional reaction. Other instances are to act as a guide or full on control as propaganda would do. Graphic design is the greatest tool consumerism has in its arsenal to manipulate the mind. Take a comparison between graphic design and sigil majik. Chaos magicians will work a written down desire by reducing it to its basic consonants and turning those letters into a magical symbol to manifest said desire. Comicbook writer and magician Grant Morrison states, "One of the things we are actually dealing with is some kind of operating system that can be hacked, using words, and words seem to be the binding agent for this thing, whatever it is."⁸

Graphic designers know that "Red is the color most used by fast food chains, followed closely by yellow and orange. Yellow and orange are colors that make people feel hungry. The color red is associated with emotion and passion. So when one sees red combined with yellow

⁷ Monroe, M.H. "Australia: The Land Where Time Began, A Biography of the Australian Continent, Megafauna and the Dreamtime" 11 September 2013 https://austhrutime.com/megafauna_dreamtime.htm

⁸ Morrison, Grant. "Chaos Magick". Disinfocon, 19 February 2000, The Disinformation Company, Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City. Lecture.

and orange, they become passionately hungry... White represents purity and cleanliness.”⁹ This is the recipe for the McDonald’s sigil.

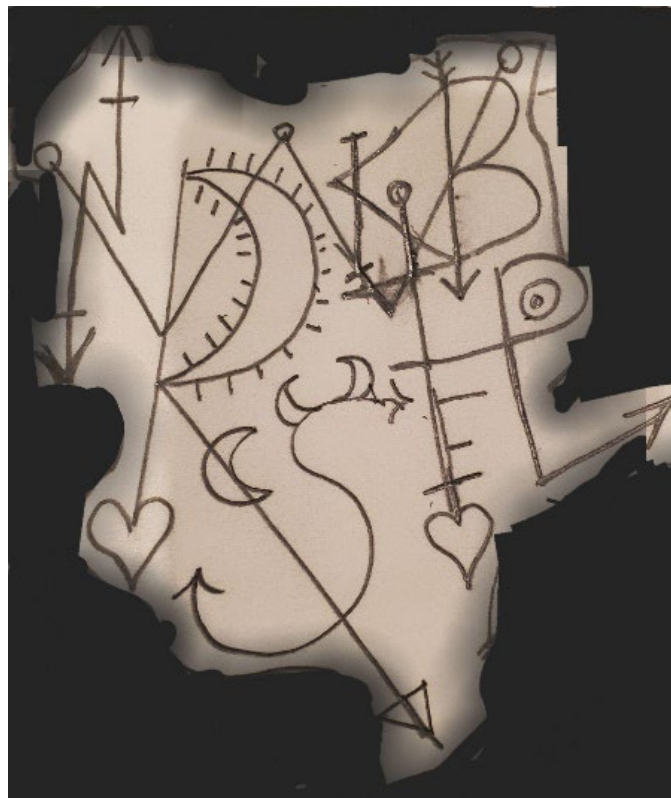


Fig. 6 Kjelshus Collins, *Sigil* c. 2022, graphite, paper

Though these ads and sigils are very much two dimensional “objects” I attempt to apply this to my sculpture. I see the sculpture as imagery in a more fourth dimensional concept. You can pick up a sculpture as an object, it can be viewed 360 degrees, it lives in our space, but if we peel away the veil of reality and only look through our eyes as a painting or photograph these objects are no different than a sigil. An example of combining symbols and sculpture are the pieces that I have dubbed “*Requinware* ” are a derivative of the face jug but its meaning has been altered into a form of what I refer to as “social graffiti”. Instead of being on walls, the image is on an object that can be used in everyday life. The shark grin is appropriated from European pilots of the World Wars; the menacing shark faces of aeronautic nose art. It is war paint, folk art, soldier art and a mask all in one. *Requin* is the French word for shark, translating into “menacing grin.”

⁹ Nelson, Lisa. “Color Psychology in Food Marketing” 21 April 2016, <https://awgsaleservices.com/2016/04/21/color-psychology-in-food-marketing/>



Fig. 7 Kjelshus Collins, *Colour Coded* c. 2021, ceramic, glaze



Fig. 8 Kjelshus Collins, *Requinware Prototype* c. 2019, ceramic, glaze

Ceramics

Artists are essentially alchemists, in the broadest sense. They take raw mundane materials and “spin it into gold” like so many before. The general art historical consensus is that 40,000 years ago, our ancestors most likely used art in ritual to record their views of the world, entertain themselves, and manifest prosperity. While there is the stereotype these people were primitive troglodytes, or “cavemen,” looking at the art that remains shows otherwise, at least amongst those that had the intellect to recreate what they experienced.

Ceramics is a perfect example of alchemy in the arts. A ceramicist takes the “Four Elements: earth, water, air, and fire to create a piece of art, or “gold.” While it is not necessarily transfiguration of base metals into noble metals, the analogy works. More importantly, the four elements are used in an act of creation. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, clay has made a few appearances of a miraculous or supernatural nature and certainly allegory. The first man, Adam, was conceived as a golem with life being breathed unto him by the God of Abraham, with over seventy more references to clay in the holy texts. Whether it is the abundance of the material or its forgiving nature in the simplest ways, humanity and clay have a relationship ranging from the mystic to consumer.

There is an energy felt with the clay. I feel it is the aging of the Earth, the time and erosion it takes to make clay. There are millions of years of energy trapped inside this malleable goo. When I work with clay, I like it loose and rough, letting that wild trapped energy show. When I use polymer clays, I am inclined to make those objects very tight and meticulous. Besides the ingredients and firing process in the two clays, there is little difference in process, but the two products come out completely different. In relation to occult practices, ritual, and votive fetish art.

I referenced pharaonic wares, American face jugs, and *Star Wars*, specifically characters on the science fiction planet of Tatooine from that series, in this set of ceramic decanters. In some circles, these references have developed cult-like followings in specific designs of toy objects. By turning these characters into fetish/votive objects I turn my attention to where some have put their energy reserved for faith and worship. On another note, *Star Wars* is one of many series originating in the U.S. that has replaced the folk heroes of old.



Fig. 9 Kjelshus Collins, *Kenner Cantina Decanters* c. 2020, ceramic, glaze

This set of wares has combined these toys from the 1970's with canopic jars as a set of wine decanters. This is in reference to my experiences in archeology. This is taking the ritual and majik from the Egyptians and blending it with popular culture of the 20th century as a sort of votive. Instead of the ancient Egyptian gods, the figures are the much beloved figures from the Kenner series. These are popular now due to the designs of the figures, and them being simple background characters from the films. A first in the toy industry as many figures were created to represent main protagonists or villains. The decanter aspect is to appropriate a functional ware into a piece of art instead of a simple vessel. This is to bring a jovial quality to the set. The raw unglazed clay is intentional to add an artifact aesthetic, while the one glazed piece is to set it apart from the others as the piece is based on a factory mistake, the coveted "Blue Snaggletooth" that was eventually discontinued and replaced with a design cler to that of the film.

Overall the end product here is a simulation of ancient artifacts and children's toys. While the majik of the originals is far removed it has been replaced by the interests of modern peoples. Our folklore and rituals have evolved over thousands of years. Idols and statues that would have been placed in reverence in one's home, are now often replaced with the infatuations of the culture we are surrounded with.

Toy like objects have often been used in ritual, for instance pippy dolls or "voodoo" dolls. Children use toys to learn and create scenarios from their imaginations. This is a ritual of play for the child. Creating new worlds and experiences through this act involves objects to interact with. Similarly, sympathetic majik also utilizes closely related objects for the ritual. Comparatively, the differences between say, dolls for play and dolls for spiritualism would be

the actual ritual and design. Most fetish dolls are created by hand with natural materials and modern toys would be made in a factory, though that would not be the case prior to the Industrial Revolution. The making process would have been similar. I can recall finding such objects at an archaeological site outside Amman, Jordan. When objects like this are found in the field they are categorized as children's toy/cult objects with the determination being sorted with later analysis and data. The objects can be so similar in design that further study must be enacted.

Artist Designed Toys as Ritualized Objects and the Magic of Nostalgia with Cargo Cults

The personification of an object is an old concept. Face jugs and toby pots are popular ceramic examples. The common face jug is a wholly American concept originating in the arts of enslaved Africans. The African peoples were often forbidden to practice their indigenous beliefs, such as masking. It is said to o hide their beliefs, slaves in the pot shops would make face jugs in secret. These vessels had ritual use as grave markers, or to ward off evil, such as being buried underneath the entrance of a home. Chattanooga State University says the jugs have often been found along the Underground Railroad.



Fig. 10 Kjelshus Collins, *Cornfed* c. 2019, ceramic, glaze

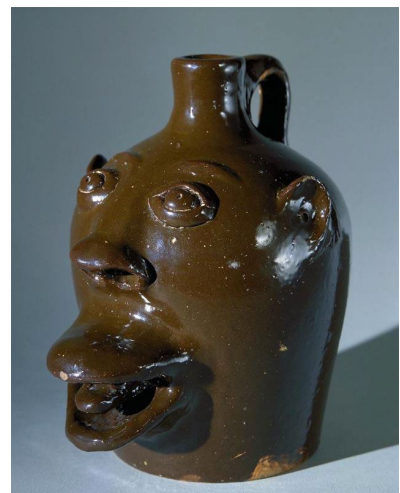


Fig. 11 Unknown, *Face Jug* c. 19th Century, Southern United States, ceramic, glaze

In Japan, “Tsukumogami are animated household objects. An *otogizōshi* (‘companion tale’) titled *Tsukumogami ki* (‘record of tool specters,’ Muromachi period) explains that after a service life of nearly one hundred years, *utsuwamono* or *kibutsu* (containers, tools, and instruments) receive souls.”¹⁰ This *yokai* folklore has most likely influenced the development of a certain transforming brand of products that became humanoid robots.

Manhattan artist Morgan Phillips is a “cargo cultist” who has gained notoriety in art circles for his resin castings of kitbashed action figures and collage techniques using illustrations from the 1970s and 80s. He calls this bootlegging. The whole concept of his work revolves around collage, either with graphics, readymade sculpture, or masking with modified Ben Cooper masks. I refer to him as a cargo cultist because of his infatuations with design and aesthetics from a bygone era and his worldbuilding through staging happenings, video work, short films, and commercials. Phillips created a whole new subgenre of artists designed toys, which is a subgenre in itself of pop art. One breakthrough in his work is an amalgamation of *Star Wars* and *Pride*, was simply a bootlegged stormtrooper cast in pink called *The Gay Empire Homotrooper*. “The Gay Empire is what first got the attention of retired rock-poster artist and designer-toy giant Frank Kozik,” writes the *Village Voice*. Kozik calls Phillips “the purest form of American huckster artist,” “a raconteur,” “a wise guy,” and “P.T. Barnum.” “He has incredible charisma: He can put on a crappy homemade costume, and he can transform himself into this gigantic figure....He’s producing these little crappy handmade objects that seem so wrong and so stupid, but they’re actually kind of like super-important. They’re infinite onion layers of meaning into his toys...”¹¹

¹⁰ Reider, Noriko T. "Animating Objects: Tsukumogami Ki and the Medieval Illustration of Shingon Truth." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 231-57

¹¹ Doderer, Camille. “The Suckadelic Era.” *The Village Voice*, September 28, 2011, Cover Story. Page 8-15. Vol. LVI, No. 39



Fig. 12 Morgan (Super Sucklord) Phillips, Gay Empire, c. 2005, resin, digital print, cardstock, blister



Fig. 13 Kjelshus Collins, The Magyar, digital print of linocut, resin, Citadel paint, blister

Phillips’ handmade “bootleg toys” jumpstarted a subgenre of Pop Art under the greater “artist designed toy” movement. However, Phillips was not the first artist to ever design toys regarded as collectible artworks. In the very beginning Rose O’Neill was the first creator of the Kewpie Doll in the early 1900’s. O’Neill was a bohemian and suffragist. She was also, at the

time, one of the wealthiest artists alive, and surely the wealthiest female artist. She studied under Auguste Rodin, and was a popular illustrator though she is mostly remembered for her toy works, which are still popular today.

At the turn of the century, artist Jim Woodring was one of the first established American artists to adapt his work to the toy medium having his illustrations turned into gashapon capsule toys in Japan. In the early 20th century, Marcel Duchamp made chess boards and other games to mass produce for department stores. In the 1960s, members of Fluxus also made chess and card games for trade amongst each other. Jeff Koons has reproduced many of his sculptures as toys in metal, and Damien Hirst has recently done the same with his grandiose kitschy exhibit, *Treasure from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, 2017.

Karl Wirsum of the Chicago Imagists sums up the drive to make artist-designed toys as follows: “I think I retained that kind of childhood fascination, in terms of the toy material and those other childhood connections to visual aspects. I retained some of that fascination and wonder, and then had to break it down, and analyze it.”¹² What the New York Times coined “boutique toys” became an outlet for young urban artists that had grown up in the 1970s and 80s on cartoons made as commercials. The toys were like friends as well as artworks, tucked away in boxes like time capsules to become miniature archeological excavations in adulthood, unleashing floods of memories from the smell of plastic and vibrant colors.

Interest in material culture is widespread, ranging from prehistory to Americana. The Cabazon Dinosaurs are a perfect coalescence of both. What was once a roadside attraction for a diner has now become a young Earth creationist museum. While still capitalizing on the obsession with dinosaurs, the owners of the establishment can push their religious beliefs at the same time.

I feel the concept of cargo cults can be applied to modern western civilization as well. This phenomenon is mostly used to describe specific worship of materials goods in the South Pacific following World War II. Pacific Islanders became infatuated with goods from technologically advanced civilizations through trade with servicemen. After their departure, the villagers began making ritualistic fetish objects of military gear and tech to appease the god John Frum and reignite the cargo runs. February 15 is John Frum Day on the South Pacific island of Tanna:

On this holiest of days, devotees have descended on the village of Lamakara from all over the island to honor a ghostly American messiah, John Frum. “John promised he’ll bring planeloads and shiploads of cargo to us from America if we pray to him,” a village

¹² Ribstein, Susannah. “Toy Collectors.” *The Chicago Imagists*, Pentimenti Productions. 2022 <http://chicagoimagists.com/#discover/toycollectors/viewmaster>

elder tells me as he salutes the Stars and Stripes. “Radios, TVs, trucks, boats, watches, iceboxes, medicine, Coca-Cola and many other wonderful things.”¹³



Fig. 14 Kjelshus Collins, *CRGCLT: Portable Art Collection and Fashion Accessory*, 2018, vintage watercolor case, resin, digital print, linocut

There are characteristics of this in the West through Federal style architecture (Greco-Roman) and Art Deco (Pharaonic Egypt) as a way to emulate the glory of these ancient empires. I, too, have managed to tap into this obscure sensation by lashing together a little English wisdom from Charles F. Worth, a bit of DIY toy making, a Fluxus box, and my own cult based on dinosaur/fossil fuel enthusiasts. The outcome? *CRGCLT: Portable Art Collection and Fashion Accessory* (fig 14). As fossil fuels run dry, the life we are accustomed to will change. My version of the future has cults developing around the loss of this resource going back to the original organisms being fetishized. Objects and ephemera of prehistoric creatures become votives.

There is an asymmetrical connection of creativity between the different types of art I've mentioned, from creating poppets and fetish art for majik, to creating dolls out of clay for the ritual of "play," such as face jugs and cookie jars. The wild graphics and ephemera of the 1970's and 80s rubs shoulders with traditional printmakers now. Combining clay sculpting, casting, and printing turns nostalgic objects as symbols of the zeitgeist to be remembered in art history.

I have managed to think outside the Eurocentric traditions of art history by utilizing the knowledge of the other parts of the world to create a style unto my own. I enjoy the materials and make an effort to not deny their unique faculties. Using certain colors, common objects, and images that have been manipulated into my style, I hope to convey a message that we are all connected through time and our artifacts.

¹³ Raffaele, Paul. "In John They Trust." *Smithsonian Magazine*, February 2006 Page 70



Fig. 15 Kjelshus Collins, *Reach Out and Touch Something*, ceramic, glaze, plastic magnifying glass, 2022

I leave you with this oversized planchette. This object does not actually exist, but think of it as an interdimensional phone booth. A little American Telephone & Telegraph, some communication symbols, the oversized planchette, and you have a phonebooth for the universe. This is our future. The things we make have power, for good or bad. Our energies merged with the energies of our planet is humanity, and all that humanity has when we are gone, is our junk.

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Vita

The author was born in Oklahoma City, OK. He obtained a BFA and BA in Art History from Oklahoma State University in 2006. He joined the University of New Orleans fine arts graduate program to obtain a MFA in fine arts becoming a graduate assistant from 2019-2022, respectively.