

Benjamin Hopkins

ART 499

Doug Sutherland

Senior Project

12/11/15

Statement

Art is more challenging than it looks, especially if one has a condition. Having been born with the Autism Spectrum Disorder Asperger's, it has had a profound effect on my art and worldview. Because of this, my art usually focuses on personal experience and the everyday, as well as themes of isolation, war, humor, and even insanity.

I take inspiration from a number of sources and styles, while leaving a few "personal touches" in each work. Pop art was a major source of inspiration, and with so much chaos in the world, Dada was also difficult to shy away from.

Growing up with Asperger's has cursed me with a tendency to confuse others and be confused in return. And so, I like to make my work easy to understand for the viewer, while remaining open to interpretation. Before putting paint to canvas or finger to mouse, however, I will take the time to thoroughly research anything I wish to create, in the interest of authenticity.

In Multimedia and Installation, the most important thing I have learned is that any viable object can serve as a projection surface. As a consequence, my videos and how they are displayed convey both a message and a means to an end. The videos may be a saving grace, but the projection surfaces themselves are all readymades focusing on simplicity rather than spectacle.

For my senior project, I will be creating a hybrid of ground and hanging installations. It will more-or-less be an imitation of my final installation for ART 463. The projection surfaces will be made of everyday objects collected from my family's house(s) and connected together by a single clothesline. The videos themselves will be a criticism of the Syrian Civil War and the tragedies in Europe and the US, and projected using a combination of the Modul8 and Mad Mapper software.

Materials and Budget:

Money will be no object. I will be constructing the projection mostly out of pre-purchased household items. It will require a lamp with shade, index cards, a bowling pin, and two candle holders w/ candles. Additionally, I will also need clothesline, pliers to trim the line, and duct tape to hold everything together. Since I am using spare clothesline, I will also be using clothespins to hold up most of the cards. For safety precautions, the lightbulb will be removed from the lamp.

Budget:

Candles (1 pack) \$7.99

Index cards \$4.99

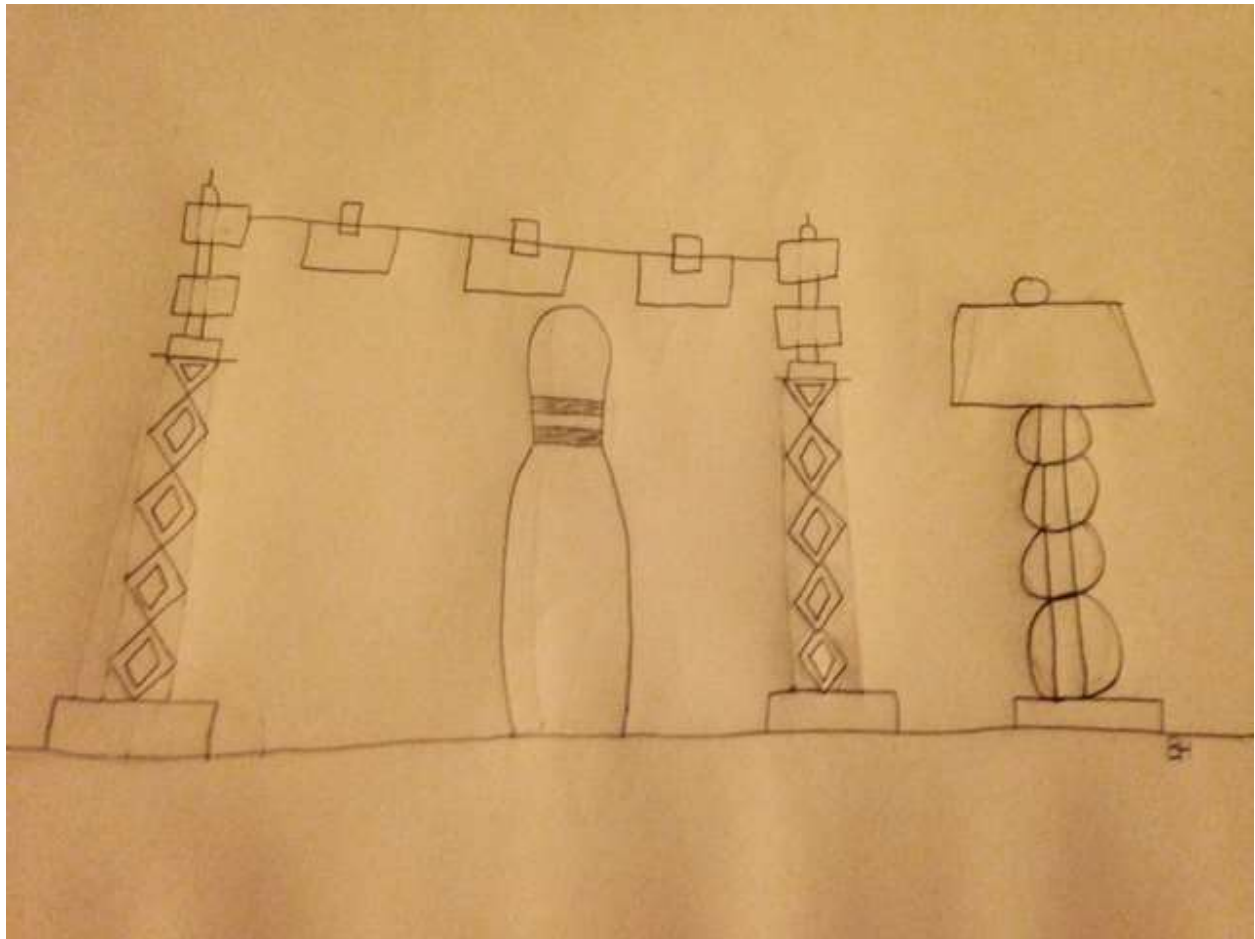
Total: \$13.00

Location

In the interest of convenience, my senior project will be displayed in the gallery of the Bailey Arts building for the annual MFA show. For a sculpture focusing on war and light, the surroundings will be incredibly dark, but as with all projections, that will divert all attention to the projection surfaces.

Concept Sketches

View from an angle (not to scale)



Research

For this work, I have decided to do research on the movements of Dada and Minimalism. The Dada movement began on both sides of the Atlantic as a reaction to the First World War and the causes of it, mainly the intense nationalism and colonialism of the time. Many of the artists responsible hailed from the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, Switzerland, wishing to express everything they hated about the Great War. Even the name itself is a nonsense word, adding to the madness upon madness.

One of my biggest inspirations for the project, however, has to be the works of Marcel Duchamp. Although he was a minor player in the movement, his creations had a major impact. Dada was often described as “anti-art”, and nowhere was this more evident than Duchamp’s “readymades”.



Duchamp. *Bicycle Wheel*. 1913 (1951 replica).

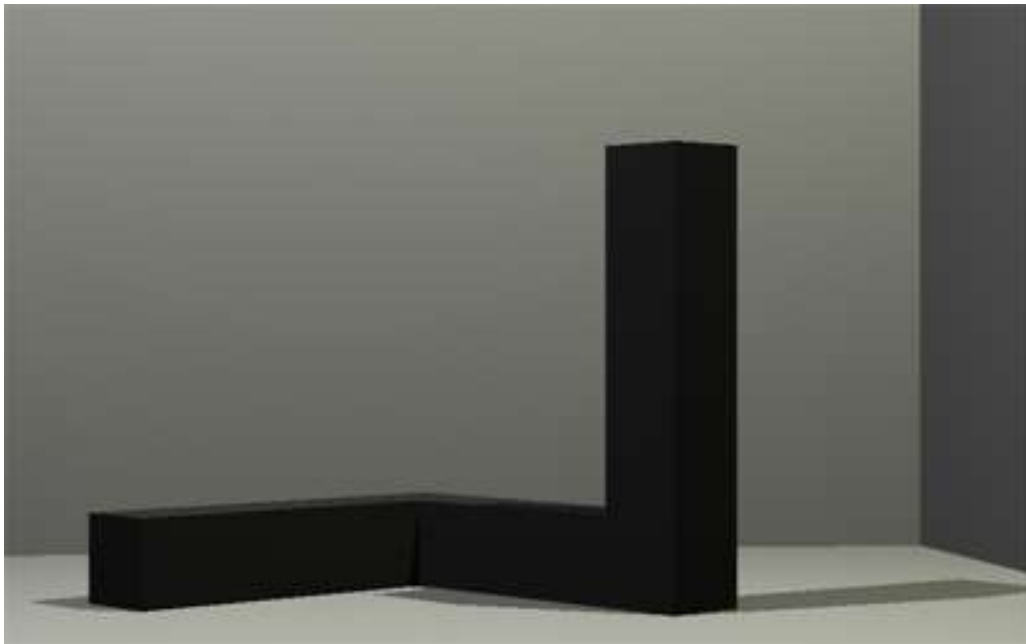
Dada was the complete opposite of reason and art, and Duchamp's portrayal of everyday items shocked the masses and challenged pre-conceived notions of art. Instead of a sculpture in the traditional sense, Duchamp's readymades were factory-made objects he had found and appropriated. Perhaps the most famous of these was his *Fountain*.



Duchamp. *Fountain*. 1917 (1964 replica).

Fountain was, and still is, the quintessential Dada piece. A sideways urinal with “R. Mutt” painted on in black, Duchamp appropriated and created the piece as both a reaction and a request from a friend. The Society of Independent Artists claimed that any kind of artwork could be submitted to their gallery, and Duchamp, as a founding member, wanted to test this claim. Naturally, the piece was rejected, but the point had been made. Anything can be considered art, even a toilet.

Decades later, another movement would challenge the norm. Minimalism, much like Dada, was born out of the rejection of a previous style. Unlike Dada, it was not chaotic, but incredibly simplified. One of the style’s forefathers was Yves Klein, who helped to revive the concept of a single-color painting. Soon, other artists joined the fray of bare minimum, such as Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, and Tony Smith.



Tony Smith. *Free Ride*. 1962.

Another influence for the installation is Donald Judd. In the early 1960's, Judd shifted his attention from painting to sculpture, but rejected the traditional European values of the medium. Instead, his "specific objects" explore the concept of real space and how a viewer perceives it. As another break from tradition, the individual segments of his works were factory made instead of by hand.



Judd. *Untitled*. 1967.

Works Cited

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