

Real Fake Real Life

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Integrative Project Thesis Paper

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I. Introduction to Field

From a young age my parents exposed me to outdoor culture through countless road trips, camping and backpacking adventures. This immersion sparked a strong connection to the freedom of the outdoors directly within myself. After completing my Bat Mitzvah at age thirteen I had the opportunity to start saving money to ultimately get more connected to where I saw myself in the far away future. At the young age of thirteen it was decided that I wanted to live in a van and travel the country. Now, as a senior in college this want is unaffected. The ability to be mobile within the comfort of my own home is how I have defined the convergence of my wants and needs. The wants defined as, being close to the outside and mobility and my needs, comfort and safety. Researching commenced and I purchased a 1987 VW Westfalia Vanagon to exist as the home that defined the perfect balance of my wants and needs.

But, currently enrolled as a student at the University of Michigan challenged my ability to establish the van as my permanent home. The situation presented problems within both social and environmental aspects. There was not a place to store or park the van legally in the city of Ann Arbor and the winter season is harsh on the vehicle. Power usage and essential technology to succeed in a college setting was unavailable and poor. The establishment of this home was put on hold due to an ongoing list of obstructions. These hindrances ultimately lead to the creation of an art project questioning what makes a home a home?

The art project, titled *Real Fake Real Life* is set in a fake world, removed from what occurs in real life and is structured to directly parallel occurrences within my current life situation. For my Integrative Thesis Project I generated an installation story about the creation of an alternative home for my fictional self. The story revolves around my present life and is told by two characters Nash and Toad, who were invented directly from my interpretation of my boyfriend and myself. Nash and Toad have exposed, manifested and developed themselves throughout the course of the project. These characters are life size, black and white illustrations, as is every possession of their life. They have created an alternative living space within 'their' vehicle home. This story and this world belong to Nash and Toad; I am simply the facilitator and creative conductor. This fictional life is generated directly into a non-fictional

reality. An interest lies within the intermixing of the two-dimensional world directly within the three-dimensional world.

I completely saturated the home with Nash and Toad's life, a production of their belongings, as they would subsist in real life. Accompanying their possessions Nash, Toad and their dog will be present in the insulation, alongside a small production series of mini self-proclaimed self-produced zine stories. The stories follow a chronological series of events that occurred while creating the home. I will create everything that they will need and want to be and to survive in this road home. Using chipboard and plywood, I will build and construct Nash and Toad themselves, along with the every item that they need to live in their mobile home. These items will coincide directly with the style of Nash and Toad as drawings. My plan is to fill the van day by day with new items, as if they had purchased them. The 'cups', 'pillows' and 'clothing' will soon start to appear in this space. In this way, Nash and Toad will make a home - a road home.

The creation of this art project presented its' own set of challenges. My intentions for this project are to mask the lines of expectation living. The story is introduced when the van no longer belongs to me; but when I relinquish it to Nash and Toad. This relinquishment occurs when I remove myself, as Carly Fishman form this space. The creation of this space as a home is related to my real self, I have intentionally removed and highlighted the play between real and fake aspect from this project, to understand, learn and re-realize what this is all about, to recognize and comprehend the true reason my real self chose to make this step in my real life. This journey intertwines the real, tangible aspects of my life with the fantasy that can only exist and be understood through my artwork.

The responsibility of the viewer lies in the questioning of what 'home' means and whether or not it can and how it can be created. While interacting with the van, viewers will become acquainted with Nash and Toad and the livable space. Therefore, every aspect of me as a person and artist is ingrained in every piece of this project. There is Carly, the author of this fantasy and creator of this livable home and piece of art, and there is Nash, the person I will become once I embark on my journey. When the van is unveiled, viewers will have the opportunity to see into the future, and for a moment, experience the fantasy that is soon to

come with Nash and Toad. Therefore, my intention is to bring this fictional part of my being to life and allow it to exist in the real world, inviting others to witness the convergence of reality and fiction. The viewer will question, what is real and what is fake? Where does the control lie? If I, as Carly and as an artist have full control of this fake life, does this control parallel within my real life.

II. Contextual Discussion

This section provides the cultural, historical, and theoretical background in relation to the creative work. I will be separating the concepts of my project down into two separate relationships- First, the interplay between limitedness and the role of a rule and second, the projection of the reality of instinct and habit in the sense of creating a home.

My interest lies within the space of breaking the habitual subconscious gap in the thinking process. In other words: what happens when you stray from the path? Do we follow this habitual system solely based on practicality, and what happens when practicality is no longer needed? We live based off of an already set in place version of our individualized needs and wants. After years of willingly and artificially living within the constructs of this path, I have decided for a stint to disrupt the expected procedure. Because it is difficult for my real-life self to physically exit while enrolled as a college student, instead, my fictional self will be leaving.

i. Limitedness vs. The Role of a Rule

There is a strange and cyclical dynamic between the confined and unconfined systems that we are upheld within our normal societal lives, in this familiar American society we are free to make any decision that we please but those decision innately come with an in place set of rules and structures that we are required to follow to accomplish whatever task at hand. Choosing to spend time, live and make a home in an unconventional space comes with obvious limits but are those limits what I am trying to stray away from by moving my life into this unconventional space? The goal for transitioning into a moveable vehicle is to have boundless opportunity of where to go and where to be. There is this sense of boundless, infinite and vast un-confinement but

directly beside this bigness comes a very small space to call home. The creation of this home may be considered as breaking a rule of societal normality, but at what cost is this rule being broken? Society says, get an education, get married, make a home and have babies- these rules are not specific but come with a very clear picture of what it is should look like. What happens when you change the picture of these guidelines? Does un-limitedness become limitedness? Does attempting to not have rules, generate more rules?

ii. The Rules of Permanent Culture

By creating a space that becomes a permanent culture for myself and for the ones around me comes with a set of guidelines that are invented or conjured up by the one who leads the life (myself) and the people that are directly effected by these actions within a created space. The choice to make a van or any other form of alternative space livable is out of the ordinary but there is reason to why, myself and so many others are beginning to do this. Permanent culture or permaculture is a system of agricultural and social design principles centered on simulating or directly utilizing the patterns and features observed in natural ecosystems. I am not saying that living in a car, created by man is directly mimicking the constructs of how the natural world was created, but I am saying by making the conscious choice to live simply, is. Sustainable living is a lifestyle that attempts to reduce an individuals or society's use of the Earth's natural resources and personal resources. Practitioners of sustainable living often attempt to reduce their carbon footprint by altering methods of transportation, energy consumption, and diet. I am beginning on becoming a practitioner of my own space, creating the rules that I feel fit to live by. By being the sole creator of MY livable space, the opportunity and rule is boundless. I become the creator of my own permanent culture, which will always be the aim.

iii. The Reality of Instinct and Habit:

The distinct definition and understanding of instinct and habit in this context is important to determine, but it is also important to understand that both instinct and habit in any definition holds universal need. Instinct is innate, typically a fixed pattern of behavior in animals in response to certain stimuli, where habit is described as a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up. In this case instinct is where comfort plays a major role where as habit is where normality plays a major role. My interest lies within what regular human instinct and habit means, and what does it mean to not follow or allow these innate feelings to take control? The human condition arises from the existence of so-called 'good and evil' in our make-up. We as humans are capable of a shocking expansive set of moralities of a very large scale. This scale is where a countless number of different human traits become available. This study of creating a home is not based off of the good or evil in each individual, but what we do with the good and evil that we have been handed by simply being placed on this earth. Specifically focusing in on the two human traits of instinct and habit and examining how these sensibilities affect the way each individual leads an every day life. I am fascinated, humored by and intrigued with 'we' as the indirect subject. This predicament or 'condition' of not being able to understand ourselves meant that the more we tried to understand ourselves—that is, the more we tried to think about this obvious and most important question about human behavior of why is it so imperfect— This exploration is less about this 'good and evil' and the deep questioning of who am I, who we are as a human race and how we react within the parameters we are faced with. The surface human level of easily digestible, easily relatable space is where I want the obvious intention to be.

III. Methodology / Creative Work

The development of my original project began as a contextual experiment between how to incorporate my future plans after schooling within the job market I wanted to embark on, what I felt I needed to do with my life, and what it means to sustainably create a livable home.

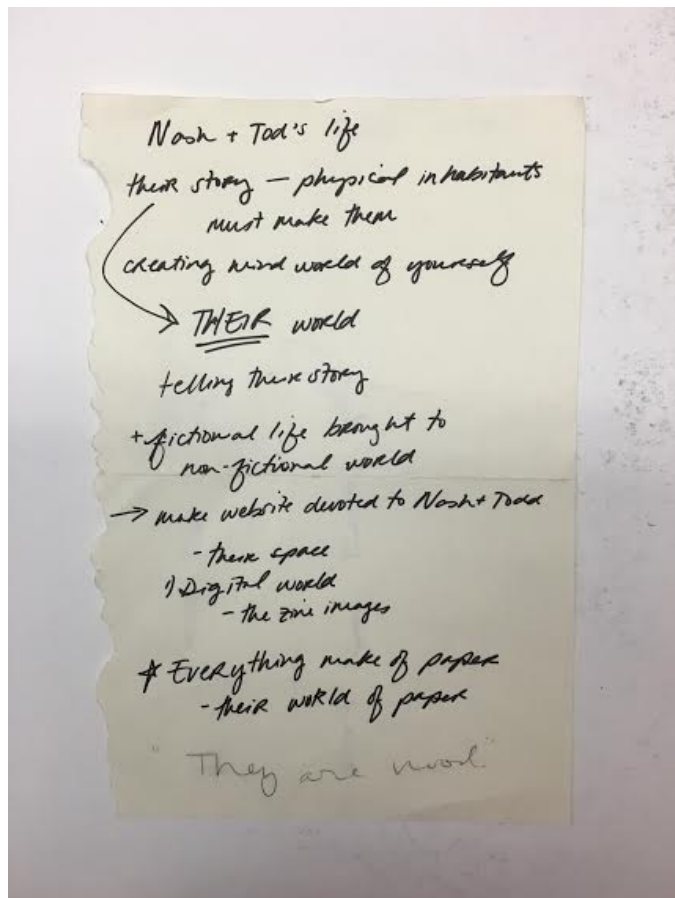
My original thoughts involved wants and needs. What I wanted to do needed to be refined and what I needed to do didn't seem as appealing. I eventually broke apart the wants and needs into its separate sanctioned sections to fully develop a final product with the incorporation of my wants, my needs, my artworks and my happiness. I found that in order to complete a full development of this project I needed to remove myself from myself, this project could no longer be about my wants and needs but about a parties wants and needs that would not be directly affected. The breakdown of what was being created was imperative: the van, the characters, the stuff and the story.

To fully develop my project I needed to understand why it was seemingly impossible for me to create and generate interest within a subject of home within an art context. As human beings, we have instinctual habits that shape our life - the creation of a home being one of them. Home is somewhere comfortable to return back to- which stems form the basis of natural instinct and protection of territory. Creating a home or a space to call your own is generally a habitual step people take in the path we call life. This need for something comfortable and familiar follows us throughout the entirety of our lives. As young beings we are generally handed a space to call home and as time moves on these given spaces become disrupted; we flee to the next step, such as a higher education or traveling, from there we are discharged out into the adult world, fending for ourselves trying to create another space to identify with to soon become home. We, as humans have always and will always seek the most comfortable situation possible. As mammals we innately have habitual routines that help us develop this comfortable nature that we follow to survive on a daily basis. As creatures, we have needs. We need to eat so we eat; we need to sleep so then we sleep. How is it that we accomplish anything in between serving our needs? This is where habits come into play; habits help us throughout our day to meet all of our subconscious needs as well as our wants, but also lead us down a path that's hard to deviate from.

These parts are the simplest version of how humans be, how humans survive. **This project morphed into the simplest version of myself inside of a space of art and home.** To bring this project to the level it needed to go to, I needed to relinquish the home to characters that did not hold the same attachment to it as I. This is when Nash and Toad were born. This

van, this story and this fake life now belonged to these two characters that are loosely based off of my real life. To fully develop my project I needed to understand why it was seemingly impossible for me to create and generate interest within a subject about home.

I would like the emphasis of my show to be focused on a simple recognition of a life being lived. Yes, this space is an unconventional and fun but I would love the viewers to converse within themselves about what really does happen when you stray from the path? When anyone thus far has come in contact with vehicle they have responded in a manor such as: "This is so cool, I wish I could do something like that." The incredible realization that I have to respond back to that is, you can do anything you want. An outcome that I am not seeking is for the viewer to be in this profound space of understanding how deep and connected to the installation they are. I would like the work to be easy, relatable and digestible. I would like, the stories and imagery present to speak as simply what it is.



Conclusion:

Before the completion of this yearlong project I did not seem to be aware of how close my real life self would be engrained within the ideation of my direct life, the establishment of Carly was obvious. This directness really hindered and helped with the creative processes. While creating I was simply under the impression that I was doing so to get to another touch point, to check off of my list, done. In truth, what happened was the understanding of how I really operate within the creation of this real thing I am now embarking on. This year was a first attempt for how I am going to now lead my everyday, I had the opportunity to try it a

preliminary time as fake, to break down all of my belongings that I think I may need, how living in a small space confines and frees you. How being the creative conductor is the highest power I can go to myself, understanding and realizing that I am in control of every move I make, this project allowed me **to understand the purest application of my own life, and that is the withdrawal from mainstream society**, how this wanting and needing for doing everyday differently while being fully confined to a university institution made me understand more than I ever would if I did not have the confinements and rules to make this project grow, but more importantly for my understanding of the life that I am seeking to manifest, to grow. How has this project, directly informed my life project?

