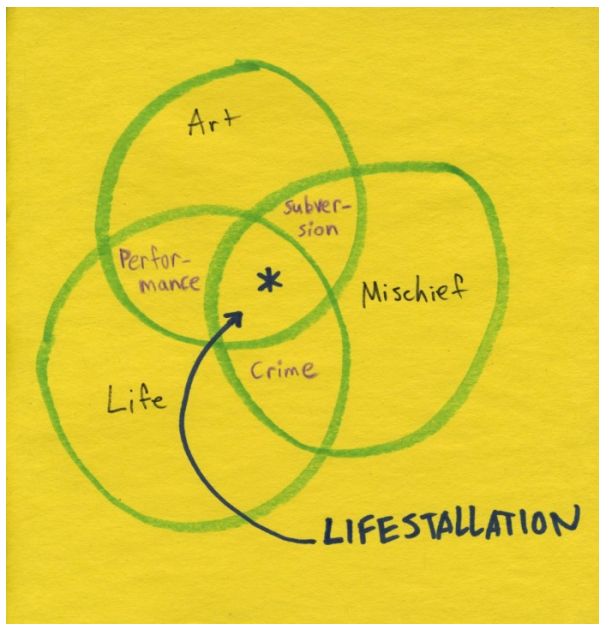


Zach Kolodziej
 IP Section 2
 Professors Holly Hughes & Howard White

The Whole Things Nuts: Welcome to Squirrel University

Introduction:

The culmination of my thesis work occurred somewhere at the intersection of life, mischief and art. I have included a drawing by Leslie Rogers¹, which is also her web artist statement, which I believe is the most concise illustration of what I could hope to achieve:



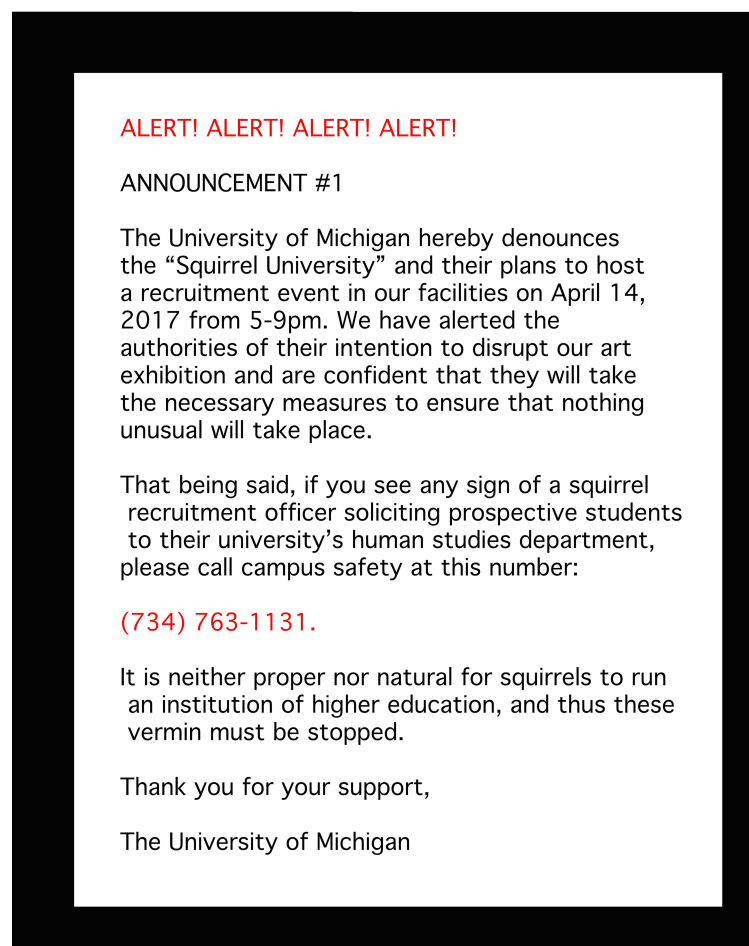
The work of my thesis was executed in three venues: The Duderstadt Video Studio, the Michigan Theatre, and the Stamps Gallery. Respectively, these venues showcased my work in three mediums: performance, film, and intervention.² Each of these pieces revealed part of the world of Squirrel University, a university run by squirrels. One could refer to my thesis work as “Squirrel University,” but to consider this work as an art piece to be titled,

¹ <http://www.leslierogers.net/statement>

² For the purposes of this paper I will only discuss the performance in the Duderstadt Video Studio and the intervention in the Stamps Gallery.

boxed, and shipped out to the next venue, or given a plaque in a gallery would run counter to the concerns of Squirrel University with regards to the commodification of art and the hegemonic standards that determine cultural capital. In fact, through the course of advertising my thesis show I have constructed a narrative in which Squirrel University is invading University of Michigan space, and is subsequently denounced by the U of M administration.

My artist statement, which I posted throughout the Stamps Gallery, and which appeared on the Stamps School of Art and Design website, read as follows³:



³ It is significant to note that the police were nearly called on us twice during the Stamps Gallery opening.

Of course, U of M had made no such statement of condemnation towards my project. But what I hoped to convey both in this statement, and in the presentation of my work, was the conflict between my free expression and the interests of the university on how students should represent themselves, and by extension, how they should be representatives of the university. For anyone familiar with the sort of imagery and rhetoric within higher education, I don't think it should take much convincing to tell you that representation of the "diverse student body" does not include space for showcasing anarchists in squirrel costumes.

I believe that this is because my concerns are in conflict with the concerns of the university model. The work I hope to create is founded on striving for joy within the present moment. It is based in the idea that we can build the world we want to live within today, by banding together and self-determining our course in resistance to hegemony. This type of work does little to add bricks to the columns that are the pillars of institutional greatness. Some categories of work that would align with "Great Pillars of the University" would include the "Curing of Disease", the "Archiving of Data", the "Spirit of Victory", and "Extension of Global Lifespan". When adhering to the dogma of the university, these achievements are pursued in the hopes of some grand recognition within global capitalism. However, the immortalization of one's accomplishments in the hallowed halls of the institution comes at the cost of life; it is in essence a process of embalment in which knowledge is sterilized and domesticated.

Why is so much research and creative work channeled into this space? I cannot deny that the university is a place of sanctuary. It fosters an environment of stability within an infrastructure of complex organization and bureaucracy. One is unlikely to find such a

complete arsenal of experts, archival data, research tools and specialized technologies anywhere else. My opportunity and experience surrounded by everything the university has to offer has led me to ask the question: How is this space designed to promote a certain theory of what constitutes the presentation of legitimate knowledge? Who are these spaces and resources really for? And what sort of a person can access them? These questions have caused me to create Squirrel University, and within that project to satirize, appropriate and infiltrate university space.

Contextual Discussion:

Several artists and thinkers have significantly impacted my understanding of how space is controlled, shared and regulated. The satirist and fiction writer George Saunders provides a startling example of how capitalist societies designate space in his children's book (for all ages), The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip. He conjures the town of Frip, situated on the edge of a cliff where the residences have to choose between competition and cooperation to solve the problem of orange leech-balls attacking their goats. Through inventive language and satire, George Saunders clearly illustrates the danger of basing society on individualism and private property.

Barbara Ehrenreich's book Dancing in the Streets provides significant historical background for much of Saunders' critique of contemporary notions of space. Ehrenreich's book chronicles the necessary restriction on communal space enacted by Europe's ruling class to perpetuate social hierarchy and colonial power. As each new chapter proves, across centuries of changing political models the forces of domination in Europe continuously sought new ways to suppress working-class populations by restricting their right to gather and hold space for self-expression, cultural and spiritual practices. While exposing the

homogenizing force of colonization and state rule, this book affirms the potential for performance to be used as a tool for coalition building, solidarity, and communal resistance.

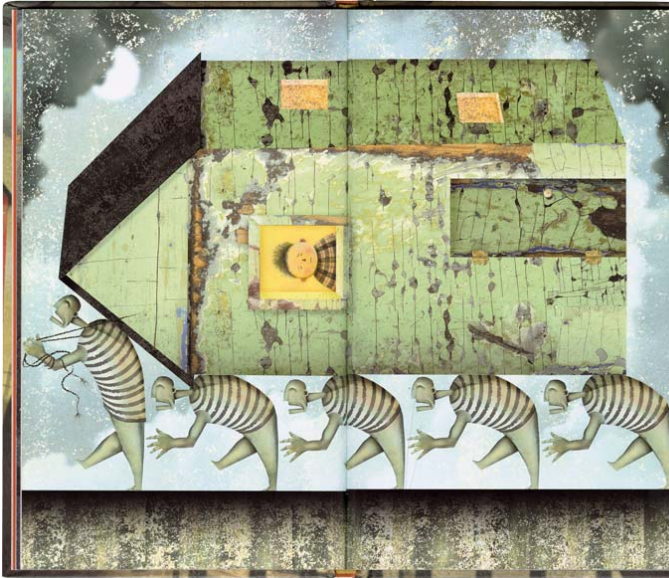


Illustration by Lane Smith in The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip. Strong men from the next town transport the neighbors home to the edge of their property so they don't have to deal with the infestation of orange gappers being inflicted on Capable and her father.

The anarchist philosopher Max Cafard lays out a framework for reimagining space to be more communal, open, and sustainable in his book The Surre(gion)alist Manifesto. His writing calls us to shift our gaze and refuse to validate hegemonic notions of how space should be organized and regulated into states with borders, checkpoints and walls. The Surre(gion)alist Manifesto introduces a way to restructure space and identity from divided, discriminant places, into overlapping, blended "regions". He writes:

Regions are inclusive. They have no borders, no boundaries, no frontiers, no State Lines. Though Regionalists are marginal, Regions have no margins. Regions are traversed by a multitude of lines, folds, ridges, seams, pleats. But all lines are included, none exclude. Regions are bodies. Interpenetrating bodies. Interpenetrating bodies in semi-simultaneous spaces. (Like Strangers in the Night).
(Cafard, 6)

Cafard's poetics form a basis for the utopic inspiration driving me to create spectacles that intervene in the dominant construction of space.



*Dragon Float in the Mistick Krewe of Comus parade on Mardi Gras evening, New Orleans, circa 1970s from the book *Geopsychic Wonders of New Orleans*. Photo: D. Eric Bookhardt.*

Geopsychi Wonders of New Orleans sparked inspiration for many New Orleans artists like Cafard, who sought to investigate the idiosyncratic nature of the urban landscape.

The Yes Men are artists who I look up to in regards to this practice of interventionist art. Their self-titled film documents one such intervention at a conference titled “Textile of the Future” in Tampere, Finland. There the Yes Men impersonate representatives of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to satirize and expose the WTO’s tactics of exploitation through globalization. As keynote speaker of the conference, Yes Man Andy Bichlbaum demonstrates a farcical business suit, which they describe as: “A golden leotard with an inflatable three-foot phallus [...] equipped with a video interface system that allowed surveillance of employees, and a device purported to deliver electric shocks to lax workers” (Yes Men, 104). Despite their extravagance, the Yes Men were able to pass as WTO representatives until later investigation was done. I admire both their detailed considerations for camouflaging into corporate environments, and their fearless performance of farce and absurdism within unwelcoming settings. I hoped with Squirrel

University's intervention into the Stamps Gallery to draw from the tactics of the Yes Men to effectively infiltrate institutional space and chip away at its veneer of peace and stability.



Andy Bichlbaum poses as representative of WTO to present the “Management Leisure Suit with Employee Visualization Appendage.”

Methodology:

I began this academic year with the germinating idea of creating an “alternative graduation ceremony” inspired by my interest in spectacle and communal gatherings, and capitalizing on the significant nature of this year’s graduation as coinciding with the university’s bicentennial. My loose plan was to create props, set pieces, writing and performances to be incorporated into an end-of-the-year ceremony, while also organizing many peers to contribute to the creation of a DIY graduation. The performance of graduation, however, proved to be a distant concept – something that could not inspire an immediate reaction in me – since it pertained little to my everyday or to the many political and social crises of the moment, which occupied my mind much more than the idea of some grandiose culmination. A sense of urgency towards current events, and the need to elicit and experience lively, radical energy from my peers and neighbors drove me to start the Sunday Players, a door-to-door improv troupe that would perform on porches around Ann Arbor’s Kerrytown neighborhood. Besides creating spontaneous spectacles for nearby

strangers, the Sunday Players handed out literature to its audiences, which spoke of the need to reconfigure how we occupy space, to open our homes to each other and create a more communal society to respond to the isolating architecture of apartment living that prevents people from organizing.

The Sunday Players' most intense intervention took place at the U of M Engineering Career Fair, in which Spencer Haney, Riley Hanson, Jay Moskowitz and I disrupted the courting ritual of the capitalist job search. I handed out oversized resumes with Dadaist statements scribbled on them, while Riley stumbled around in a nervous state, as if breaking down under the pressure to succeed. We portrayed contrasting results of the careerist environment: boorish overconfidence in my case, and paralyzing anxiety in Riley's. In our conversations with career fair-goers that followed I was surprised to hear one engineering student reflect on the isolating feeling of standing in line at tabling events surrounding by their peers, but not talking to them because of the underpinning of competition between them.

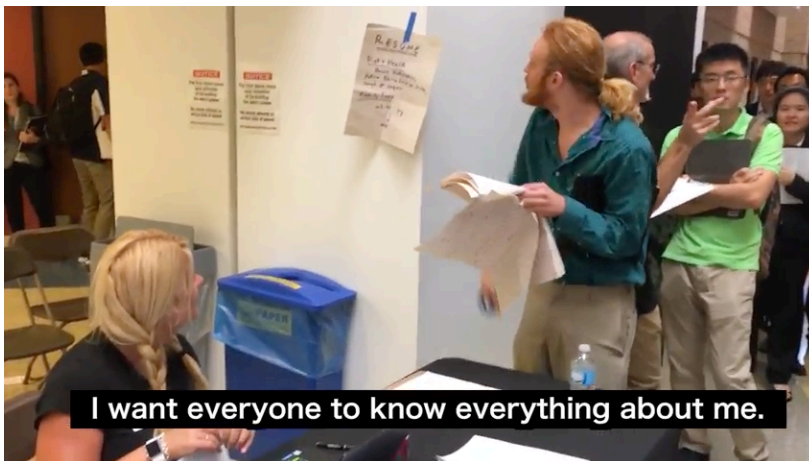
As the first semester progressed, my art became more and more intertwined with conflicts in current politics and their how they played out in the spaces I occupied. A major revelation occurred for me when participating in the occupation of Standing Rock over October study break. This was my second time spending a long weekend at the encampments in North Dakota, witnessing and participating in a community sustained through ceremonies, prayers, song and dance. Over months of accumulating people and resources, Standing Rock's encampments became spaces of resistance, built collectively for the exchange of ideas, culture, and ritual practice. The conflict there screamed to me of the



Sunday Players in the street performing "Have You Seen this Man?" (left). Camille Johnson as Dorothy in the Sunday Players Perform "The Wizard of Odd."



Sunday Players performing on the second floor of the EECS building looking out over the Engineering Career Fair. Left to right: Zach Kolodziej, Thomas Kratofil, Spencer Haney.



Zach Kolodziej hangs up oversized resumes.

root cause of unrest in the world: the battle between colonization and indigeneity, of ecological exploitation and symbiosis. I learned to take seriously the long history and tradition of indigenous beliefs and their common message that all of life is connected, and needs one another to survive. I also began to see how my environment and lifestyle was at odds with this new knowledge.

Most importantly, I developed an appreciation and understanding of the tactic of occupation, as a form of resistance, infiltration, and intervention rooted in community togetherness and the reclamation of public space. Over the following two months, I worked with a newly formed collective called Decolonize Michigan to distill the knowledge I gathered at Standing Rock into a zine about the occupation. We presented our work at North Quad Space 2435 alongside listening stations showcasing audio interviews I collected with Water Protectors at the encampments.



Decolonize Michigan Collective holds up zines, banner, and patches in front of banner painting at "Stand With Standing Rock" zine release event

Overall, my experience at Standing Rock – which I channeled into educational writing, journalism, and protest art – served to give me a spiritual and theoretical basis in my creative process.

At the start of the second semester, I felt a returning need to respond to my immediate environment as a university student. The tone of my work shifted from rage to playfulness as I investigated a very accessible and light topic of interest: cute animals – and in particular – squirrels. I believe this shift in focus was necessary for me to process the heavy ideas I was exploring through a less emotionally draining lens. I saw squirrels as infiltrators and interventionists into human spaces, never afraid to benefit off the food scraps left by college students and the peanuts offered them by old men. I toyed with the question, What if squirrels took their occupation of campus a step farther by founding their own university here? This possibility tickled me as a way to subvert and expose the destructive role of humans on an environment – to take over, industrialize, and institutionalize space. What if U of M had competition from squirrels? How would we feel about that?



Squirrel eating a slice of abandoned pizza on my neighbors' porch.

I tested this question by working with an ensemble of performers called the Weak Staff to create skits and scenes of Squirrel University that imposed an alternative reality in U of M spaces. We collaboratively wrote and improvised to devise pieces that grew the identity and presence of Squirrel University as an infiltrating force at U of M. The Weak Staff met in rehearsal rooms of the music and theatre buildings, entering and exiting conspicuously carrying large gray lumps of fabric over our shoulders. Clad in squirrel costumes, we practiced impersonating the idealized representation of university students, faculty and staff. We embellished our script with many stolen and appropriated lines from student testimonials and official statements from U of M's website. Furthermore, we extended our acquisition of university property by putting up posters and banners on the Diag advertising for Squirrel University's School of Human Studies⁴. The installation of these ads was an intervention into university space by failing to use that space for its designated purpose: to advertise for "legitimate" student organizations. Additionally, The Weak Staff staged guerrilla performances on U of M's North and Central Campus Diags. On the North Diag, four squirrels conducted research for the School of Human Studies by following around crowds of (human) students by scampering behind them, then crouching beside trees for cover. On the Central Diag, two representatives of Squirrel University handed out flyers for the Squirrel U tabling event that would take place in the Stamps Gallery. They proudly greeted passersby with "Hi! Welcome to Squirrel University: Home of the Squirrels!" These interventions into U of M spaces set the foundation for the way in

⁴ Notably, the rental of space for our posters and banners on the Diag was made possible due to my status as an authorized signer for a defunct student organization. This org's association to U of M was nonetheless seen as more legitimate than Squirrel University's claim to space would have been, were we to try to acquire university space outside of established protocol.

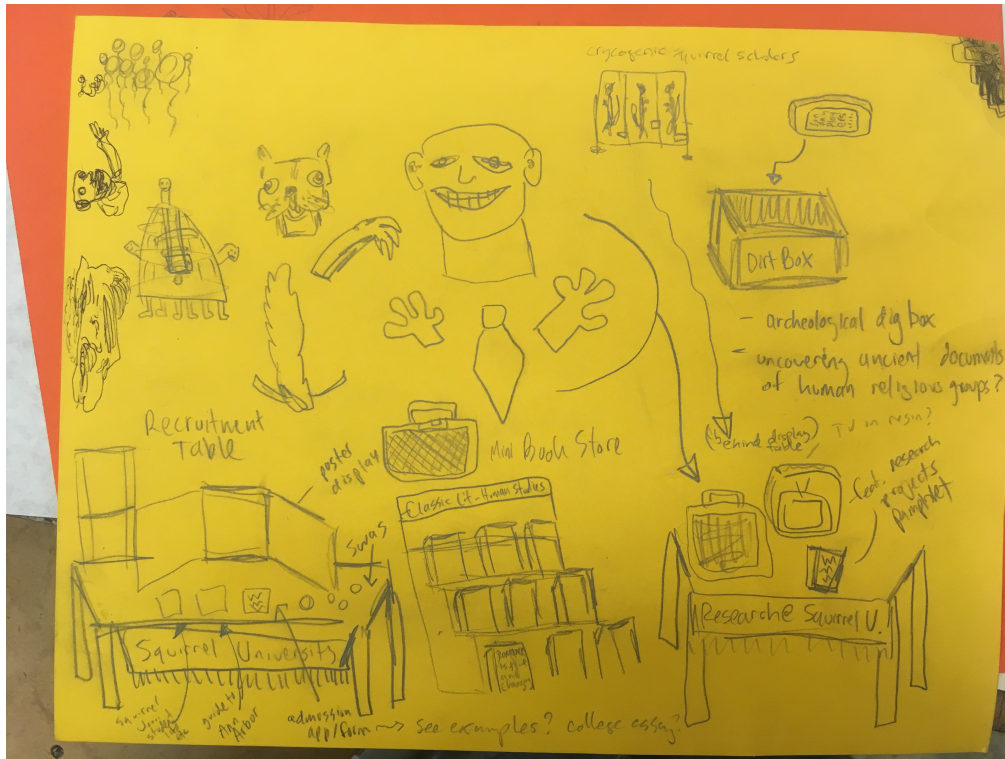
which our culminating performances and interventions were executed in the Duderstadt Video Studio and Stamps Gallery.



Phoebe Wu (left) and Thomas Kratofil (right) try on their squirrel costumes for the first time.



The Weak Staff rehearses improvised movement with mirroring exercises



Preliminary sketch of Squirrel University layout. Includes an idea for a box of dirt for burying research materials, which I later discarded.



Sketch by architecture student, Olivia Howard, to illustrate how Squirrel University may look within the gallery space. (Per instruction from Zach Kolodziej)



The Weak Staff rehearses in the Chemistry Building late at night, using the technology to broadcast images of ourselves in squirrel suites on the many screens stationed across the room.



Three squirrels perform at Arbor Vitae for the opening night of Shed X Conference.



Zach Kolodziej (left) and Thomas Kratofil (right) posed in front of the Diag Board for Squirrel University stationed between of North Quad and Rackham Graduate School.



Zach Kolodziej (left and right) and Thomas Kratofil (middle) try to give squirrels flyers to Squirrel University's admissions event.

Creative Work:

The Weak Staff presented Squirrel University in the Duderstadt Video Studio as three sketches, each spaced out between the other IP acts. Because the squirrels came on and off stage throughout the night, we developed a degree of omnipresence. We hoped Squirrel University would be less of an act in a variety show as much as it was an ongoing performance that could reappear at any time. In fact, throughout each night of performance there were always two audience members dressed in squirrel costumes that I had convinced to play small roles in our third and final piece. These squirrel volunteers were key infiltrators who blended the boundaries of the space between audience and performer. The show culminates with my arrest as an illegal nut-peddler thanks to one of the audience squirrels who happened to be an undercover cop. The last line of the show is then delivered by the second audience squirrel who gets up from their seat to stand at center stage, self-righteously chastising the nut-peddler in a public decree to the rest of the audience.

“That’s what you get,” they cry. “That’s what you get for spewing vitriol from your gaping maw!” And at that, a thunderclap shakes the studio and lights flash in the final storm.

This ending – in which the performers all exited and were replaced, or “upstaged,” by a member of the audience – served to culminate a playful and campy disruption of the theatrical space.

Our next performance, in the Stamps Gallery functioned as an experiment in welcoming more non-performers into the world of Squirrel University, and thus converting more of U of M space into a squirrel playground. We occupied the gallery at tables

stationed throughout the space where gallery goers could learn about our degree in Human Studies and enroll in a 15-minute undergraduate program. Two squirrels by the front door were instructed to take over the Stamps Gallery reception desk as the Squirrel U “Welcome Center,” and point people in the direction of other parts of “campus”. Another squirrel was stationed at the “Admissions Office” where applicants could go through a quick interview process. If accepted, these applicants were directed to the “Orientation Center” where they would learn about the curriculum and practices of human studies, and complete their own assignments as students in the program.

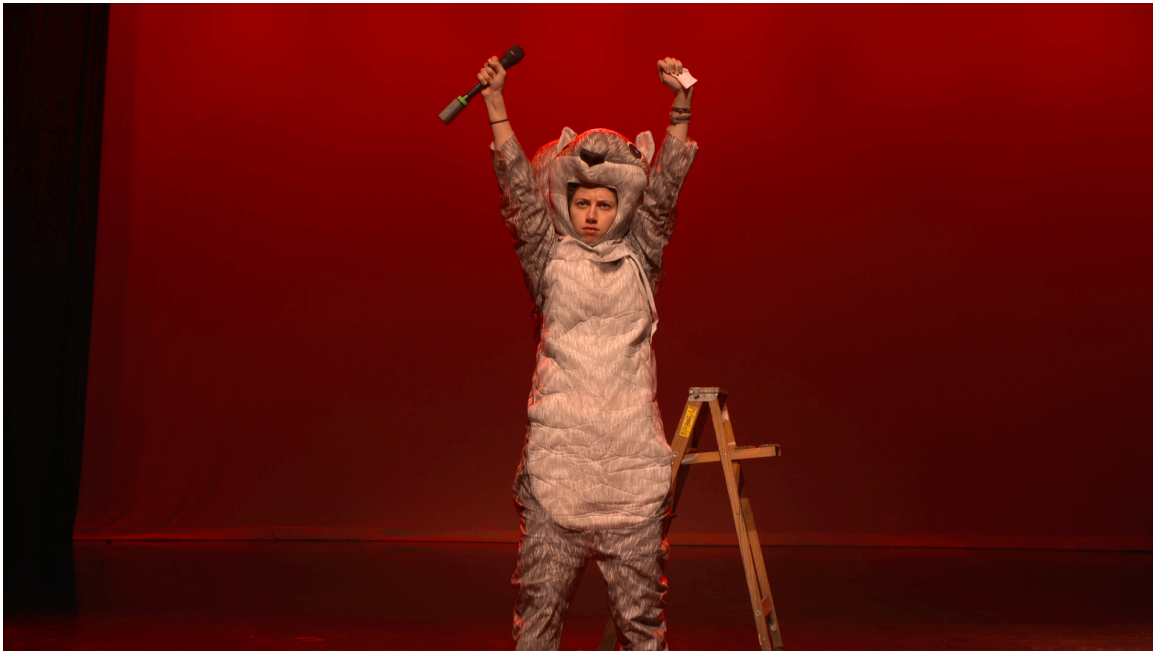
The design of this space and the interaction within it was necessarily spontaneous in reaction to the gallery environment and limitations. Arriving at the gallery to assess the space I was surprised to see a scene of chaos as art students marked off territory they had claimed for themselves. Mark Nielsen, a member of the gallery staff, admitted to me that any sense of organization had fallen apart amidst a mad rush for space. It became clear to me that Squirrel University was meant for this sort of space: one in which the coexistence of people and work in adjacent territories were already explicitly fragile and contentious. Another squirrel was stationed at the “Admissions Office” where applicants could go through a quick interview process. If accepted, these applicants were directed to the “Orientation Center” where they would learn about the curriculum and practices of human studies, and complete their own assignments as students in the program.



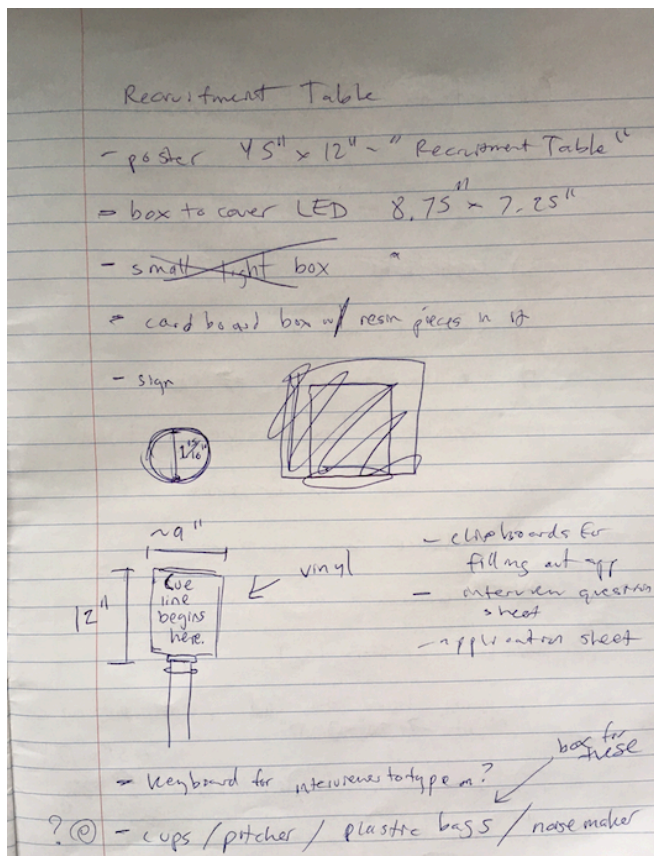
Zach Kolodziej as the Cockney Squirrel (left) gets taken downtown by Phoebe Wu as the Sheriff Squirrel (right).



Chris Squirrel (left) and Sadie Squirrel (right) begin the Squirrel University Campus Tour.



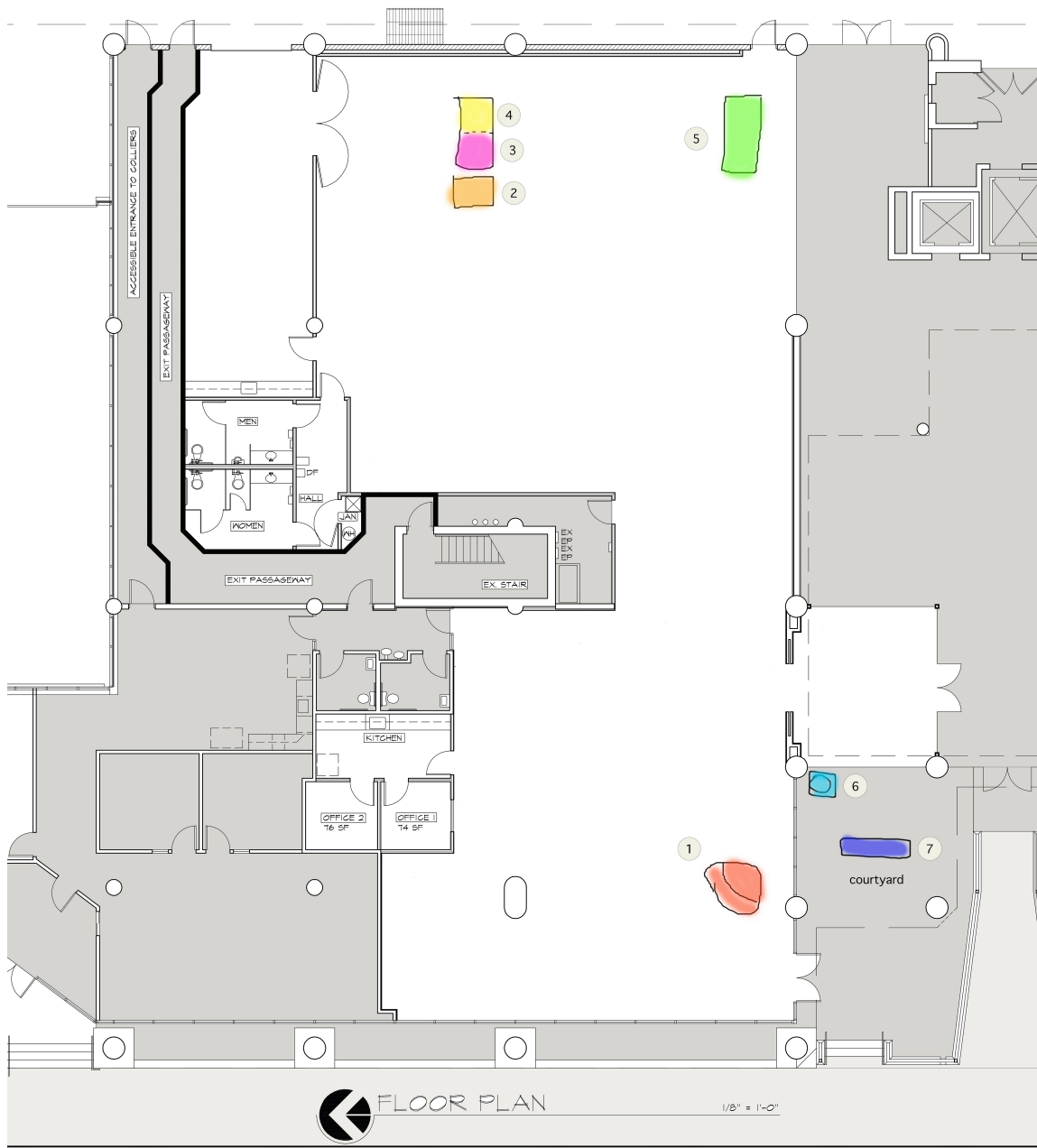
Julia Gaynor delivers the final line of Squirrel University's performance in the Duderstadt Video Studio as the "Self-Righteous Squirrel"



Notes on supply needs for the Squirrel University Recruitment / Admissions Table

Squirrel University School of Human Studies Campus Map

- 1 Welcome Desk Information Center
- 2 Student Locker Facilities
- 3 The S Nest
- 4 Admissions Office
- 5 Orientation Center
- 6 Cryogenic Chamber for the Preservation of Squirrel Knowledge
- 7 Sludge Material Research Laboratories



Campus map for Squirrel University using real floor plan on Stamps Gallery provided by Robert Platt.

The design of this space and the interaction within it was necessarily spontaneous in reaction to the gallery environment and limitations. Arriving at the gallery to assess the space I was surprised to see a scene of chaos as art students marked off territory they had claimed for themselves. Mark Nielsen, a member of the gallery staff, admitted to me that any sense of organization had fallen apart amidst a mad rush for space. It became clear to me that Squirrel University was meant for this sort of space: one in which the coexistence of people and work in adjacent territories were already explicitly fragile and contentious.

I decided to radically break the barriers between individually assigned space about half way through opening night when I began removing my squirrel costume and announcing to passersby, "This is all a hoax," "I can't stand the pressure any longer!" and "I'm not even a real squirrel!" As I stumbled around lamenting my woes the whole gallery became a stage for my crisis. Unsurprisingly, I was ignored by most people, who preferred to be removed observers of the art rather than engaged actors.



Zach Kolodziej has identity crises, tearing off his costume and claiming, "It's all a hoax, I'm not even a real squirrel!"

I understood from these reactions that most people are not accustomed to open and flexible space, but to the cordoning off of spaces in separate zones. Our installation satirized the expectation that convoluted bureaucracy should segment space within a university. For instance, we closed the distance associated with education and consumerism by conveniently placing the “admissions office” and “merchandising department” at the same table, so as to streamline one’s purchasing of tuition and school “swag”. Additionally, the admissions table was surrounded by a set of stanchions connected with velvet rope – like at the VIP entrance to a nightclub – and a sign reading “Cue Line Starts Here,” creating an artificial sense of control over the space. Beside the admissions/merchandising table, a set of gym lockers filled with acorns and sheets of paper providing Fluxus-style assignments comprised the “student facilities” of Squirrel University. Verging on absurdity, this representation of the classroom satirized the segmented cubicle-like learning environment that is most common in the university, and which is only counterbalanced by occasional “experiential” or “exploratory” learning.



A potential student interviews at the Admissions Office of Squirrel University



Experts in various fields of human research staff our Orientation Center at Squirrel University.



Prospective students examine our merchandise at The S Den.

Later in the night, the strict regulation of space was explicitly exposed in a series of confrontation with the property manager, Todd Battle of McKinley Inc.⁵ Todd Battle first threatened to call the police on the Squirrel University band Acorn Mom, who were playing drums and trombone in the courtyard beside the gallery. After they stopped performing, Spencer Haney, a plainly dressed but affiliated member of Squirrel University, picked up the trombone and began to play. Todd Battle then approached Spencer repeatedly

⁵ The corporation that owns the property occupied by the Stamps Gallery.

shouting, “Stop!” without ever introducing himself. When Spencer did not cease to play, Todd Battle grabbed the trombone and pulled Spencer onto the ground, and stood over them. In this moment something very raw and scary became explicit. The threat of violence inherent in a system of domination was proven not to be a bluff, but rather the necessary means to the perpetuation of that power. While this was a small example of oppression in a much larger web, I do not believe that it was a coincidence that the representative responsible for maintaining control over private property through the use of force was a cis white man.



Stamps Gallery Director Srimoyee Mitra (right) comes out to speak with Todd Battle (middle) and Spencer Haney (left) after Todd Battle pulled Spencer to the ground.

Despite this disturbing upheaval, we ended the night with resistance by holding the graduation ceremony for Squirrel University “seniors” in the forbidden courtyard. The graduating class, who each gave unprepared speeches to an enthusiastic audience, reclaimed the space. They ranged from peers, to professors, to strangers and children. Sujit Das, a long-time Ann Arborite, organizer, and supporter of the DIY art community in town gave a particularly rousing speech:

“Friends! Professors! Moms!

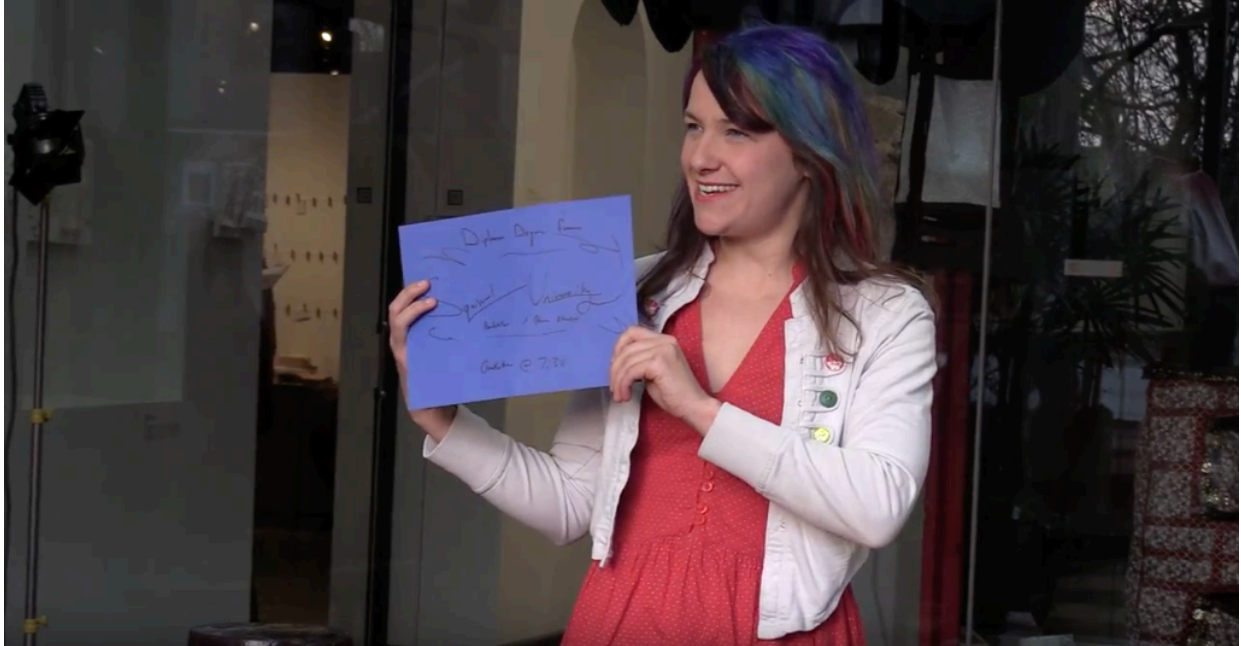
We live in uncertain times. Neo-fascism is on the move. Bourgeois excess is excessive. The Meanies are out there! And theres the Greedies! And the Stinkies and the Smellies!

But I know this!

One thing is true: ROMANCE IS ALIVE AND CHANGING”

Not long after Sujit’s speech, Todd Battle reappeared to shut us down, stating, “I don’t want to be ‘that guy’ but you guys can’t be out here.” When asked whether he was shutting down our university he refused to acknowledge the identity of Squirrel University and instead stated that he had no intention of shutting down U of M. To the sounds of boos from the crowd, he declared, “I am the building manager,” and explained how Bar Louie next door was having “a large party” that did not want to be disturbed⁶. Todd Battle then entreated us to move our festivities inside. Unsure if Todd Battle was an actor or the actual building manager, one crowd member asked over the din of noise, “Are you for real?” to which Todd Battle replied, “Yes, I am for real.”

⁶ I later found out there was a large *birthday party* at Bar Louie that night. I find it ironic that our separate celebrations came into competition with each other.



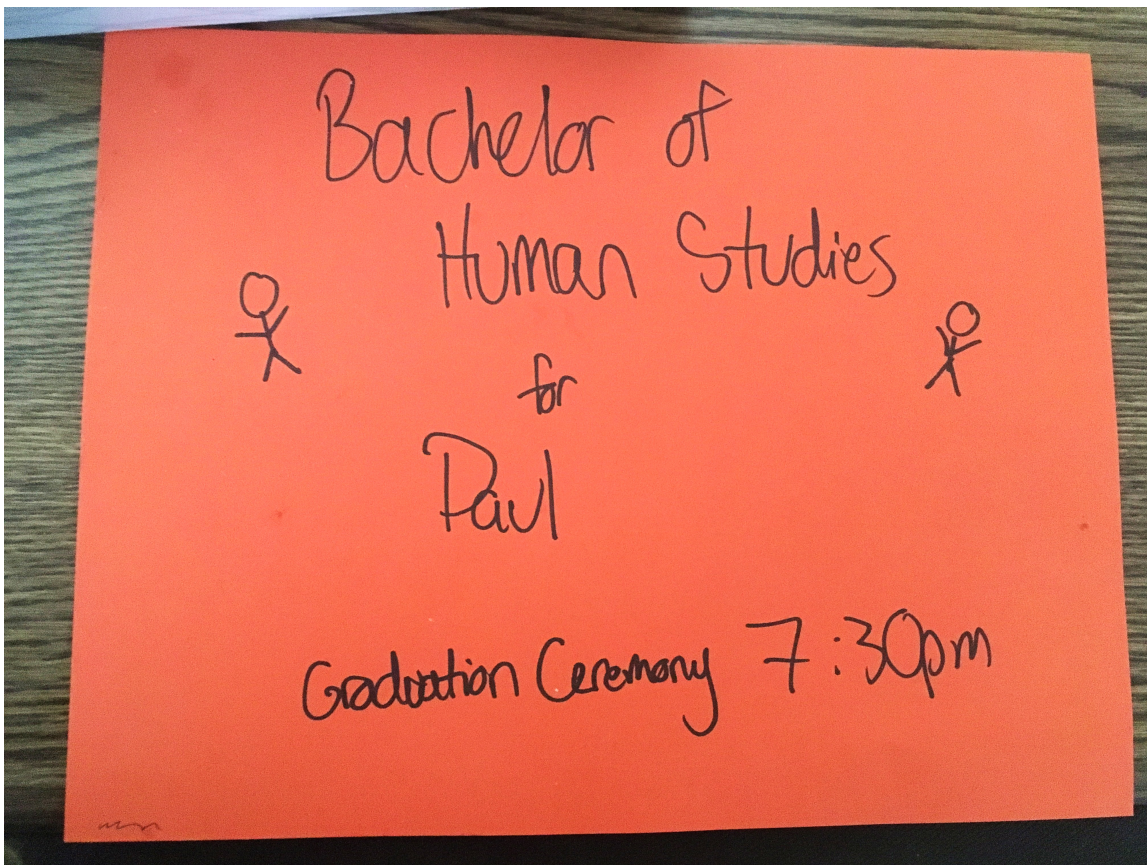
Leslie Rogers gives a speech at Squirrel University graduation: "I always wanted to know about humans and I didn't, but now I do."



Sujit Das gives a speech at Squirrel University graduation.



A young graduate of Squirrel University gives a speech: "I learned a lot."



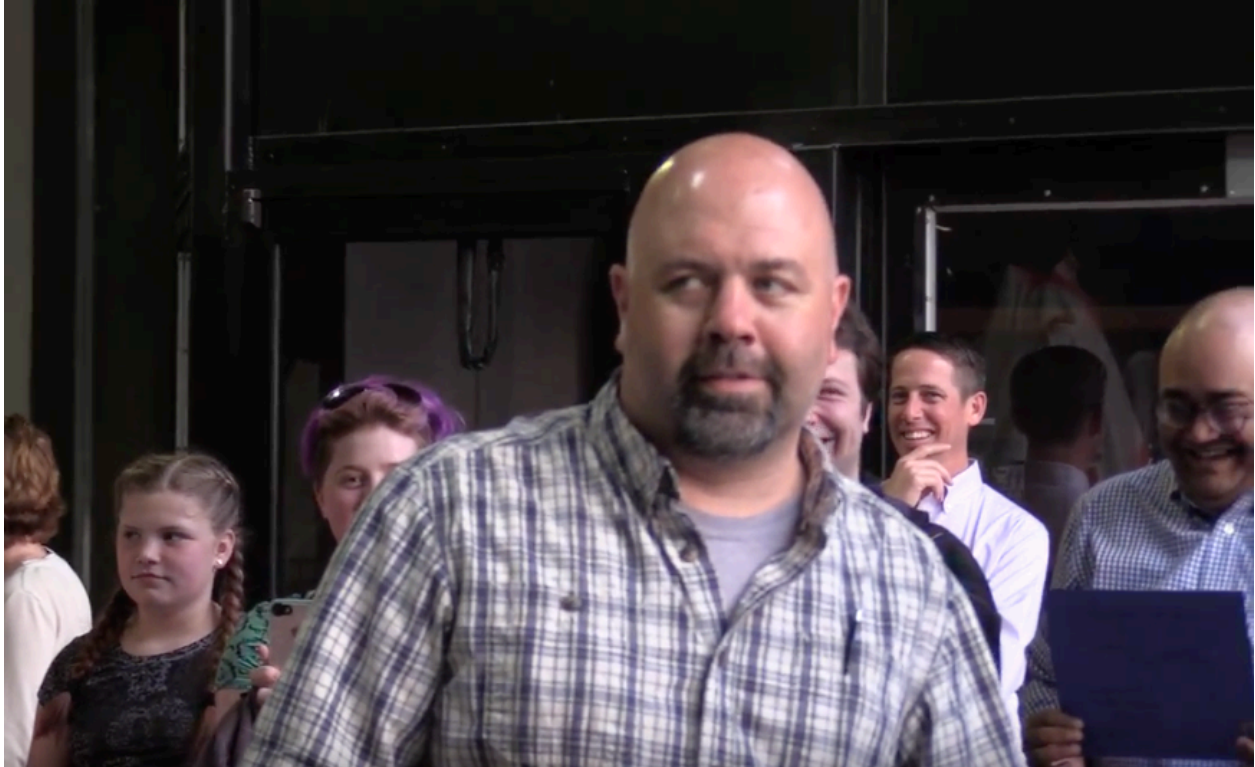
Paul Reggentin's official graduation certificate.



Todd Battle (left) enters the courtyard to break up the ceremony for Squirrel University graduates (right).



Todd Battle (right) explains to the crowd of supporters that the ceremony must end.



Todd Battle (center) confronts the crowd at Squirrel University's graduation ceremony.

Ironically, Todd Battle provided the role necessary to orchestrate a perfect ending to our ceremony. He played the part of the “bringer of law and order” perfectly, just as Athena might enact justice at the end of a Greek tragedy, or how a police brigade arrest all of the characters in the final scene of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Yet in this scenario the power dynamic was reversed, and Todd Battle became an infiltrator into the reality of Squirrel University. When he gave his credentials as “building manager” I countered him by declaring myself the Dean of Squirrel University. How else does one maintain their facade of legitimacy?

Or put in more literal terms: Whom will the cops believe? The building manager who says a trombone player trespassed on his property? Or the student he assaulted? Whose claims are more valued?



Police arresting Sir Lancelot in final scene of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.



Policeman telling camera operator to stop filming in final scene of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

Conclusion:

Who controls space? What power is seen as legitimate? Squirrel University was an experiment in probing these questions. Throughout history, performance has been a way to subvert hierarchy by creating the space for enacting an alternative reality. The greatest joy I felt within this process was from the formation of coalition with my fellow performers and friends. Squirrel University also touched strangers on campus who saw squirrel suited people wandering the Diag or greeting them at a gallery opening. I believe these interactions encouraged many people to recall a sense of imagination and openness that is nurtured less and less as we grow older. In part, the sterility and segmentation of our public spaces directly results in the feeling of tension and unease many experienced when attempting to engage with Squirrel University in a playful way.

Post-IP, I will continue to chip away at the paint on the institutional walls and loosen the cogs in their machines. Squirrel University will continue through guerilla performances on the Diag and scheduled performances. We will perform April 30th at the Dreamland Theatre for Totally Awesome Fest XIII and plan to perform at The Hosting in Ann Arbor in mid-May. Then, unfortunately, many of us will go our separate ways.

I am excited to continue this work beyond Squirrel University this summer at Adventures in Cardboard, a camp in Minneapolis where kids role-playing wizards and knights sieging castles and go on quests in city parks. Adventures in Cardboard is another example of a fantastical reimagining of space that opens up new possibilities for how community may be formed.



Map of "The Realm" at Tony Schmidt Park, Arden Hills, MN.



Campers siege the castle at Adventures in Cardboard.

Beyond the realm of fantasy, I hope to participate in the gatherings and practices of indigenous people. I plan to attend the Chippewa Tribe of Sault Ste Marie Pow Wow in July and accompany my professor Anita Gonzalez to various Lakota ceremonies and Sundancer gatherings.

So much of our space is colonized, exploited, and commoditized. The spiritual reclamation of space, through the performance of ritual, connecting us again to the Earth as an ecosystem of living beings, is at the heart of what matters.

In closing, I will quote my peer Jay Moskowitz. As his undergraduate career came to a close he explained his final classroom experience:

“It was the last class of my undergrad. The professor told us not to miss it since there would be a surprise. The surprise turned out to be that they let one of the GSI’s demonstrate a magic trick. They got two students from the class to come up as volunteers.”

Our university spaces save moments of magic for special occasions. GSI’s grade papers for eight months, and then get to inspire students with a sense of wonder for five minutes before the semester ends. I do not believe that we have to structure education this way. I do not have an alternative reality to substitute over the deeply entrenched capital driven culture we inhabit. But I do have up to six squirrel costumes and a rainbow tutu, and I think that is enough to change the way we think about the world.



Squirrels inspire people. This is a thank you card pinned on the wall of the Air B&B my mother stayed at when visiting Ann Arbor this February.

Bibliography:

Thompson, Nato, Gregory Sholette, and Yes Men. *The interventionists: users' manual for the creative disruption of everyday life*. North Adam: MASS MoCA, 2004. Print.

Cafard, Max. *The Surre(gion)alist manifesto: and other writings*. Baton Rouge: Exquisite Corpse, 2003. Print.