

# The Fantastical Adventures of Pulu the Bored

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## INTRODUCTION

On an average day, I can be found in front of the computer at least nine out of my sixteen hours of consciousness. A little sickening, isn't it? Granted, six of those hours are usually devoted to class and homework, but most people would agree that this is probably an unhealthy lifestyle. You have to admit, however, that the computer, and more specifically the Internet, is one of the best inventions for providing instant gratification to curiosity. That in itself is not a terrible thing. After all, curiosity drives the desire to learn about the world in which we reside. We can look up an infinity of information with mere clicks of a button! I can't begin to count how many times Google saved me in researching for papers and resolving fact-based disputes.

However, what happens when our search for specific knowledge ceases, and random surfing begins? The difference between information and knowledge depends on one's desire to understand. In the end, information without understanding is really the same as not knowing at all. We can literally spend hours skimming through interesting things online or attending lectures, and then proceed to mindlessly refresh our Facebook pages or email inboxes. Thus, the "search" for knowledge becomes less of a focused exploration and more of a mechanical way to escape boredom without any real sustained interest. The Internet, in satisfying curiosity, is even better at staving off boredom. We become apathetic to the information that we acquire, and they become waste.

I wish to illustrate that instead of mindlessly glossing over information, we could accomplish so much more than satisfying boredom by creating something out of all the information at hand. Do something, make something, go somewhere, have a discussion with someone, extend your knowledge about a particular subject, and retain your interest in it! Knowledge and the search for it enrich our lives; we need to be aware and to actively strive for it.

My project is a narrative presented in the form of an installation of fourteen boxes. The main character, by the name of Pulu, embodies the concept of the apathetic individual void of curiosity.



*The Fantastical Adventures of Pulu the Bored* installed in the Warren Robbins Gallery

## SYNOPSIS

In choosing to use a narrative as a way to present my idea, I wanted to bring to existence a rather generic, yet amiable, character in which people could see themselves. Thus, the rubbery, blob-like humanoid "Pulu" was created. The story follows him in his journey as he develops newfound curiosity about his world, presented through a series of fantasy dioramas installed on a wall. It begins with him alone in a white room. His posture indicates boredom and apathy. His mind is disengaged, and he doesn't give a damn about what he's doing. The second scene shows him flopping back on his chair, and in doing so, noticing a hole in his ceiling. The hole grows into a vortex, which forcibly sucks him through a passageway and ejects him into a different environment.

In this new environment, Pulu meets the Owl, who has the role of the authoritative character. Determined to be wise and utterly convinced of its own judgment, the Owl acts as the external force that is often times necessary to get one moving in the right direction. He is perhaps a professor or a parent or a boss. He tells Pulu that he must take the empty bag that he offers to him, and that he must fill it with knowledge and experiences. Pulu is at first unwilling and cannot understand the point of filling the bag, as he was content sitting in his own room. The Owl, however, does not offer him any choice other than that one exit out of that environment. Pulu goes off dragging an empty, yet seemingly heavy, bag behind him.

The first creatures that Pulu meets are three monkeys that are intent on interacting with him and giving him small marbles that, in the narrative, represent the experiences that protagonist gains from his journey. He is reluctant and feels that he is being pestered and pressured. Annoyed, he snatches his bag away from the monkeys and storms off. As he continued to walk, he grows regretful of his reaction and reflects on why he was so resistant, as the monkeys were merely trying to help him. He doesn't find his answer but surrenders to the fact that he must continue. Although the monkeys were originally intended to be only playful and enthusiastic, I eventually came to see them as the three wise monkeys who express the proverb, "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil".

The next scene that Pulu encounters puts him in awe. He climbs a rope comes to a place where he can see a tree bursting through the roof of a building. The branching tree is home to different birds and he sees a nest. He watches as the parents feed their chicks the very marbles that he refused



from the monkeys. He climbs the tree and does not decline when the marbles are again offered to him. Pulu begins to realize how small his world was and how insignificant he felt sitting hour after hour at his table. He becomes curious about what he will see next and continues on.

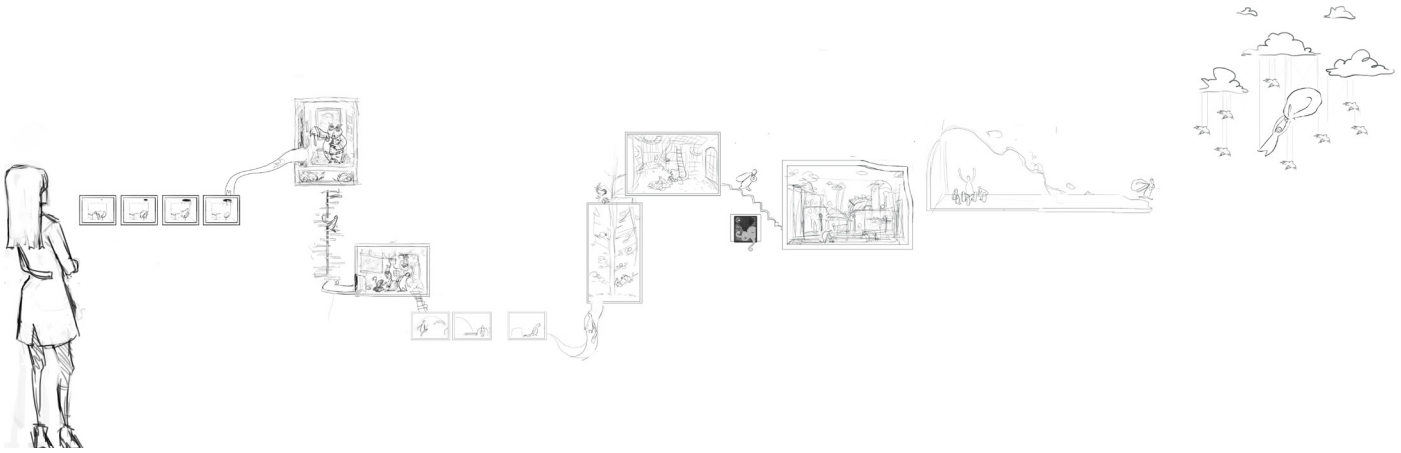
He comes across a small library with books of many different sizes and discovers the magic in the texts. As he reads, lines of books untangle themselves from the white pages and rise into the air, becoming nourishment for the bookworms of the library, who repay Pulu with marbles. After the library, Pulu reaches a city, one nearly deserted by all the inhabitants staying at home in front of their respective computer monitors. He wonders why they would do so, with so many wonderful things to behold out in the physical world, forgetting that he used to be just like them.

Upon encountering different creatures, experiencing different environments, and making friends along the way, his excitement grows, and the bag no longer drags. In fact, the fuller it gets, the lighter it is. The knowledge and interactions that fill his bag eventually make it expand into a large balloon. In the last panel, he is seen escaping the physical constraints of the shadow boxes and floating into unbounded space. The final box shows Pulu back in his original room, with his legs hanging out of the box and the bag resting on top of it. The ending of my version of the story doesn't tell us whether or not Pulu changed from his experience, or reverts back to his original apathetic self. After all, his journey taught him the fantastical possibilities outside of his tiny world, but he has yet to create his own legacy.

Although this was the version of the story I had in mind when I designed the installation, I chose not to tell it to my viewers. Without knowing the exact story that I wanted to convey, I found that many people enjoyed making up their own interpretations of the story. I believe, for a narrative sculpture project such as this, having the audience interact with my piece made it more successful and engaging than if I had told them my version.



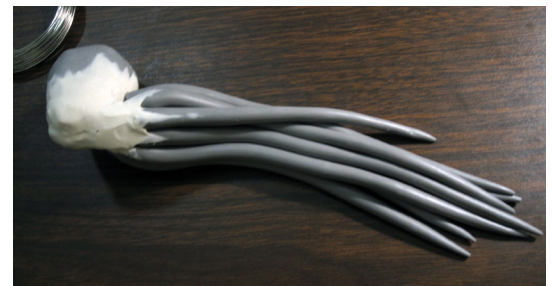
## MATERIALS & PROCESSES



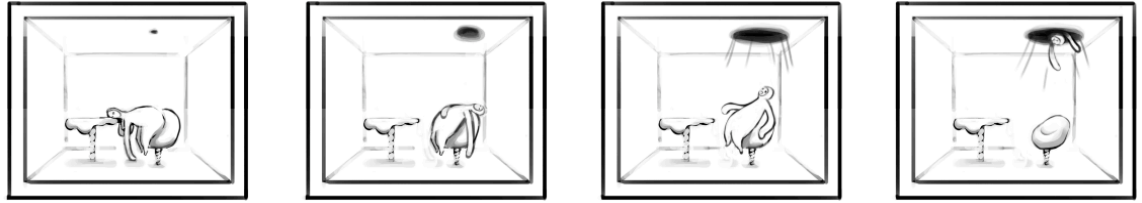
During the ideation phase, my thesis transformed repeatedly as I struggled to find my focus. Eventually, I decided that instead of trying too hard to grasp a profound and world-changing concept, I wanted to do a story focusing on little magical moments. After sketching and writing for a few weeks, Pulu emerged from a piece of original Sculpey clay and became my protagonist. I chose to use a three-dimensional format instead of doing traditional illustrations and making a book because I enjoy working with physical materials, and I wanted to explore telling a story through a linear installation with a physically apparent timeline.

My initial sketches largely determined how the final piece looked. After figuring out approximately the size of all of the boxes, I ordered enough medium density fibrewood (MDF) for the entire project. The boxes are of varying dimensions and degrees of complexity. Constructed out of sheets of 3/8" MDF mitered to fit together, each box is fitted with a hidden museum mount for hanging solidly on the wall. Visual cues allow the audience to tell the difference between sequences of three motions that occur consecutively versus an entirely different event that occurs at a different time. Visible connections bring together individual boxes into one coherent timeline.

All characters are made out of polymer clay, baked, sanded, primed with gesso, and painted with acrylic paint. Larger characters and delicate parts were reinforced with wires and tin foil. The environment is fabricated out of a mixed media of paper-mache, modeling paste, chipboard, bass wood, wire, fabric, and more. I wanted to create scenes that are visually interesting through details and patterns, as well as showing clearly how the characters are interacting.



## SKETCHES



## INSPIRATION

My largest visual influences for this project have been Yoskay Yamamoto (his elegant shadow box installation and sculptures) and Irma Gruenholz (her playful and polished plasticine illustrations). Yamamoto's installation was the reason I wanted to install shadow boxes on the wall instead of creating completely enclosed spaces in which to peer into. I like the dramatic three-dimensionality of the boxes and the look of the rectangular shapes extruding from the walls. I was also inspired by the fact that Yamamoto produces both 2D and 3D art of incredible elegance; he manages to allow his style to transcend the boundaries of media.

In contrast to Yamamoto's elegance, Irma Gruenholz created works dribbling with playfulness and narrative. I love the way she created illustrations by photographing modeled clay. I wanted to do illustrations but also ached to work with more physical materials; her methods inspired me and provided the happy middle ground for fulfilling both desires.



Yamamoto, Yoskay. *Street Lights*. 2009.  
([Yoskay.com](http://Yoskay.com))



Gruenholz, Irma. *Thief of Time*. March 2009.  
([Behance.net/iirma](http://Behance.net/iirma))

## CONCLUSION

I wish for viewers to see the piece and reflect on their own use of time and what learning means to them. In particular, many students complain and see education as something forced upon them. Doesn't it seem a much more efficient use of time and energy to take every learning opportunity to be engaged so they become something meaningful to yourself? Instead of being proud that you were able to bullshit through an assignment, what if you used that opportunity to create something that you could truly be proud of? Although this mentality might be the fault of our educational system, learning does not need to be painful if you would only allow yourself to be open-minded. Thus, as much as this piece will be intended for my peers, it will also serve as a reminder to myself to embrace learning and see the beauty of knowledge rather than as something that I must acquire through the command of others. Another intention of the project, rather selfishly, is for me to allow myself to get off the computer and work again with physical materials, without the constant distractions of digital noise.

I believe the theme of this installation will resonate with many of my peers. It is very relevant to my generation and even more so the next. More and more, I encounter criticisms from our elders that the generations that are taking over the world have lazy minds, are addicted to the digital world as though to a drug, and are losing our humanity to machines. We take having information for granted, and in the oversaturation of information so easily acquired, we become numb and disinterested. Because this is so much our norm, it is difficult to see the way we are constantly plugged in as a new phenomenon. We could argue that our world is simply changing, and no one could say for sure whether it's for better or for worse, but even I, who have been using a computer for almost two-thirds of my life, find it hard to believe that our lifestyle is entirely beneficial to the quality of our culture. This is, of course, not a new revelation. There are many articles and papers addressing the concern for the future generation's reliance on digital tools, but nothing in sight will stop the digital revolution from taking over civilization.

Why then, should I make a point to create this project? Although we are criticized as a generation, there is nothing that we ourselves can't fix in our own lives. This project is a self-serving reminder for myself to unplug, to care, to explore, because I feel myself lacking the passion for life that is necessary to have a solid goal and to find happiness. I wish to rid myself of the anxiety that plagues my indecision about my future, and this installation is the embodiment of that desire.

Thus, *The Fantastical Adventures of Pulu the Bored* aims to let others, as well as me, to step into the character's shoes on a journey of discovering beauty and knowledge beyond of realm of his own bubble of a world. I hope the narrative and visual impact captivates the audience and encourages them to explore each scene and what it means for Pulu, and, in turn, themselves.