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IP Thesis  
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## Leaving My Mark

The huge eyes on the wall took almost everybody by surprise. Like the rest of my work, they are strange, silly, and startling due to their color, size, and expression. They are also hand-drawn with colored pencil and marker like the rest of my pieces, which gives them a child-like appearance. Yet, my oft-kilter color choices lend an eerie subtlety. From the short bursts of laughter and gasps my project received from the viewers at the gallery, I knew that I had achieved the kinds of reactions I wanted.

Figure drawing has always been a passion of mine, especially drawing faces. Throughout my life, I have drawn faces in my free time and while doodling in class. I love the way line and color can come together in a certain way to evoke such strong emotions, and a tilt of that line or a shift in color can completely alter that emotion. My drawings have always been realistic in style, but with the influence of Tim Burton, who I have admired my whole life, I have recently taken my drawing style in a different direction. (Fig. 1) I experimented drawing distinctive and exaggerated emotions on different characters and fell in love with the way odd colors and exaggerated lines could evoke even more emotion than realistic drawing styles. Blue and purple hues tend to convey a sense of sadness, while warmer colors, like yellows and reds, have a tendency to evoke a sense of energy and happiness. Long, droopy lines suggest tiredness or despair, but sharpening those angles and flattening out the

lines increases the liveliness of the character. (Fig. 2) Tim Burton's quirky personality and dark humor are also things that I relate to and like to use within my own artwork. Many of the eyes that I create are bloodshot and the lips are abnormally red and wrinkly. I like to make them seem creepy, odd, and darkly humorous.

Another subject I have always been curious about is the importance of everyday inanimate objects. A simple electric fan or a lamp is a thing we take for granted in our everyday lives and we don't think about its significance. Since I was a kid, I would imagine objects around my house talking. What would they say and what kind of emotions would they have? An artist whose work involves personifying inanimate objects is Terry Borders. Terry Borders creates Bent Objects, which are objects that he has humanized by attaching wire limbs to them in order to evoke expressions and personality. The weird fuzz on the outside of a kiwi has always bothered me, but I found it hilarious to see this from the viewpoint of a kiwi who is trying to shave off its fuzz in Borders's piece "Kiwi Getting Ready for the Beach". (Fig. 3) I think Terry Borders is trying to make the public see inanimate objects in a different light. Instead of just imagining what these objects would say or do, which I had done as a child, he assigns them personalities by giving them life and putting them in human-like situations.

His humor and creativity inspired me to humanize my own inanimate objects and to give them faces. I had many different ideas, and experimented a lot with personifying various objects. Such experiments included drawing the entire objects with faces, pasting pictures of facial features from magazines onto the objects,

Photoshopping faces onto the objects in pictures, and drawing the facial features out and pasting them onto the object. (Fig. 4) Drawing the facial features seemed to have the best outcome, and when I experimented with drawing these on a very large scale, I ended up loving the result. There was so much detail in the oversized drawings that they turned out to be very creepy and even more comical, which is exactly what I was striving for.

The problem that I had at this point, however, was that my new compelling human-like objects only existed inside my apartment. I knew that I needed to expand my audience beyond my roommates and myself. Putting my artwork out in public is still something new and foreign to me. It makes my face flush and skin sweat with nerves, since I have always been shy and somewhat introverted. Even when I think my artwork is good, I hold myself back from presenting it to the public, since I know it's weird and I'm not sure if people will understand it. After experimenting with my faces in public for the first time, I realized that exposing my work to the public, which is crucial to my project, is going to be a challenge and an accomplishment for me at the same time. It's hard to get out there at first, but once I do, I know I will feel euphoric.

Public artists and graffiti artists have been my main source of inspiration at this point. JR, a French public artist, is a brilliant human being and I am amazed by how grandiose and inspirational his projects have been. JR takes photographs of residents of a certain town and blows them up to a massive size in order to paste them on walls, roofs, stairs and other structures inside the town. In a TED talk he explained his Women Are Heroes project, in which he took pictures of the women in certain towns

where they are especially disrespected and pasted these pictures around the town in order to try to bring dignity back into their lives. (Fig. 5) During the explanation, he talked about the citizens of those towns, in which the projects took place, and said, "I wanted to feel that the art belongs to them." Being a public artist is tremendously different than being an artist who only shows their work in galleries. The people who are exposed to JR's art do not have a choice whether or not they want to see it. JR's work, like other public artists', is not meant to be seen by only select individuals who can afford to and who choose to see it, it is for everyone. Even though it makes me nervous to do so, putting my art in public places does make me feel like I am offering it to Ann Arbor and to its citizens.

The way JR attempts to "Use art to turn the world inside out," which he also quotes in his lecture, is astonishing, and the giant faces he produces and pastes have a great purpose to society, trying to bring about awareness of the inequality of women's rights. However, when I began to create my faces and put them out in public, I had various purposes. Some of my faces were made simply to make people laugh. These included nauseous faces on the spinning Cube near the Union and on a door that many drunken students would see as they waited to get pizza. I also got kicks out of putting a sexy face on the bathroom mirror and a disgusted face inside the stall of the women's bathroom. Other faces had more serious meanings. Two experiments included putting a sad face on Borders after it went out of business and putting a disgusted face on a dumpster to comment on consumption and waste. (Fig. 6)

Two other artists have also greatly influenced my project for similar reasons, though their work is strikingly different. Claes Oldenburg makes people think of an everyday inanimate object in a very different way through the scale and the placement of the object. "Dropped Cone", a giant upside-down ice cream cone on the corner of a tall building in Germany, for example, puts a twist on such a normal object. (Fig. 7) By seeing this ice cream cone in person, you may never be able to look at another ice cream cone again without thinking about his humorous giant piece of art located in such an odd place. The way he uses the site and object to startle people and to give them a feeling of whimsy has contributed to my intentions for my project. He may not be attaching faces to his objects, but the way he transforms them definitely gives them a sense of character. Vinchen is a graffiti artist whose work is also very site-specific. The face he created in his piece "Ivy" was placed perfectly in order for the hair to be created out of the ivy growing on the wall. (Fig. 8) People may have passed by this lonely ivy everyday without noticing it or thinking about it, but once Vinchen painted the face beneath it, people thought about the ivy differently. These two artists transform the everyday into works of art that can now be thought of differently and in a humorous way. The way they use the site as part of their piece is something that I finally achieved in my pieces in the end through much trial and error. Taking pictures of structures beforehand allowed me to plan out the faces so that I could really integrate them into the structures and use the sites as part of the pieces. I was able to transform the structure into a character and use a face that conveyed an emotion that I thought the structure would have. (Fig. 9) Creating characters out of

inanimate objects in public was rewarding for many reasons. I was able to face my fears and deface public property, I was putting my artwork in public for anyone to see, and I was able to make people laugh and also think differently about the objects that I transformed.

However, I realized that I was having trouble connecting these different creatures into a cohesive project. How could I convey to the public that these characters were part of a set, that they meant something to Ann Arbor, and that they meant something to me? That's when I decided to make this project more personal. I wanted to use my own emotions as a reference and put these emotions into the structures. What better way than to use strong emotions that I have experienced throughout college and to integrate these into the areas where I felt these emotions.

The last seven weeks of IP is when I finally pulled all of my gained knowledge, new ideas, and own emotions together to create my final cohesive project that I was going to show off in the gallery and in public. For my final project, I created a connection between the emotions that I have experienced living in Ann Arbor for the past five years and the physical structures of Ann Arbor by humanizing certain structures here. Hand-drawn from colored pencil and marker onto paper and plastic sheets, I have created facial features which express emotions I have felt throughout my college experience. I then integrated these into the area that I experienced them by adhering them to certain structures that best make up a complete face to convey my exact emotion. The emotions range from feelings that I first experienced at Nichols Arboretum to the time I first got my heart broken. With the help of a map to show

where my interventions are, and the date that I experienced these emotions, the audience can trace the path I have provided and see these pieces in person. For the people who know nothing about my project, however, these pieces will be surprises on their daily walk.

The eyes on the wall of the gallery are accompanied by a mouth, which is printed on maps resting on a shelf underneath. (Fig. 10,11,12) Together, they make up a face that conveys the radical emotion that I felt the last few days before the opening of my IP show. It is a combination of being nervous, stressed, and tired. I was nervous that I might not be able to pull off what I had intended, and that it might not be well received or understood in the gallery. I was stressed and tired from working late into the night to accomplish my final project and display it in an intriguing way. I believe that this face not only conveys my emotions well, but also reveals even more about me than the expression that the eyes and mouth display. The odd colors, lines, details, scale, and placement of this face, among the rest, show my subconscious thoughts and feelings. My final project reinforces my assumptions: I'm just a weird person who creates weird art.

## Bibliography

JR's TED Prize wish: Use art to turn the world inside out

TED2011, Filmed Mar 2011; Posted Mar 2011

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nside\\_out.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/jr_s_ted_prize_wish_use_art_to_turn_the_world_inside_out.html)





Fig. 1



Fig. 2

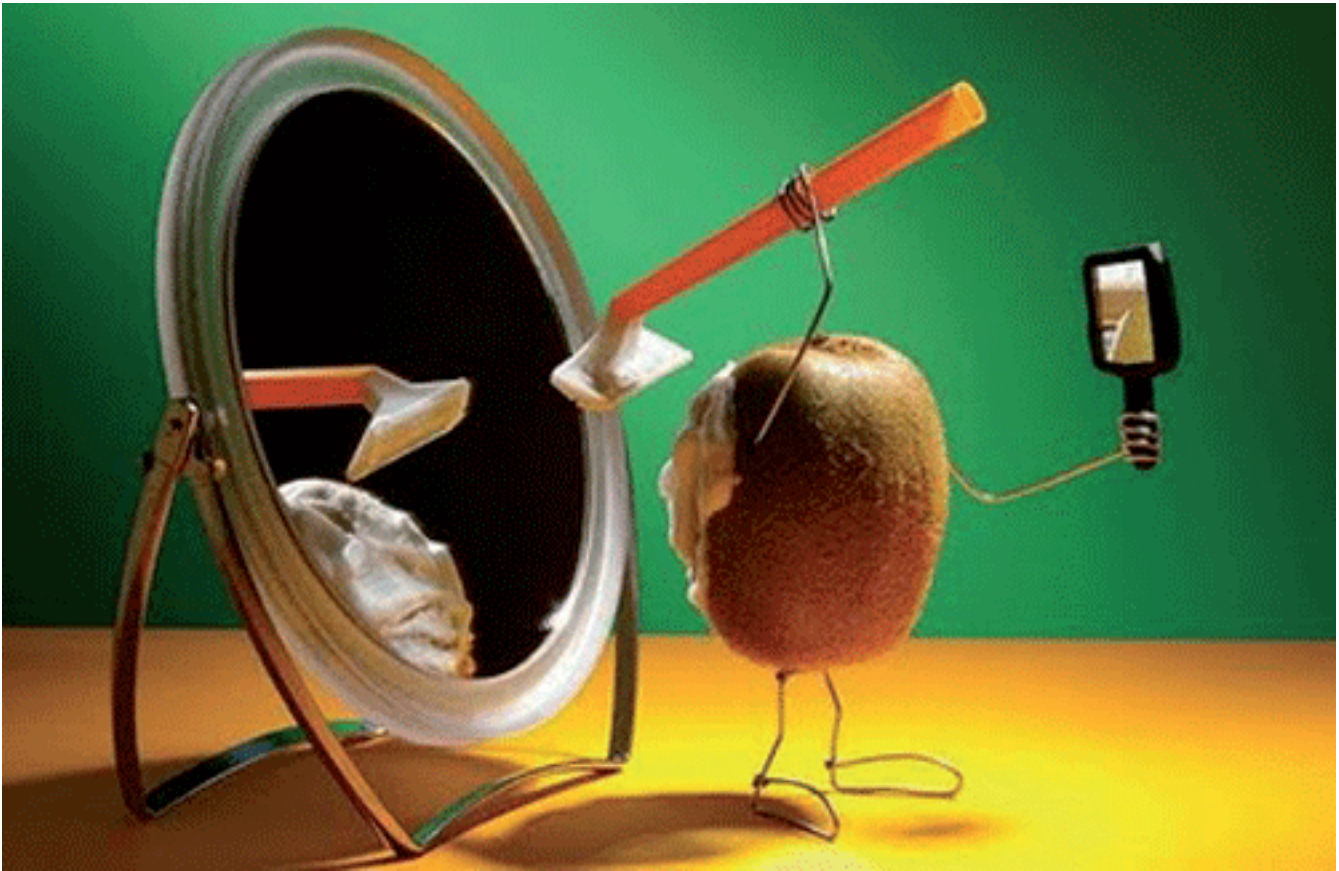


Fig. 3

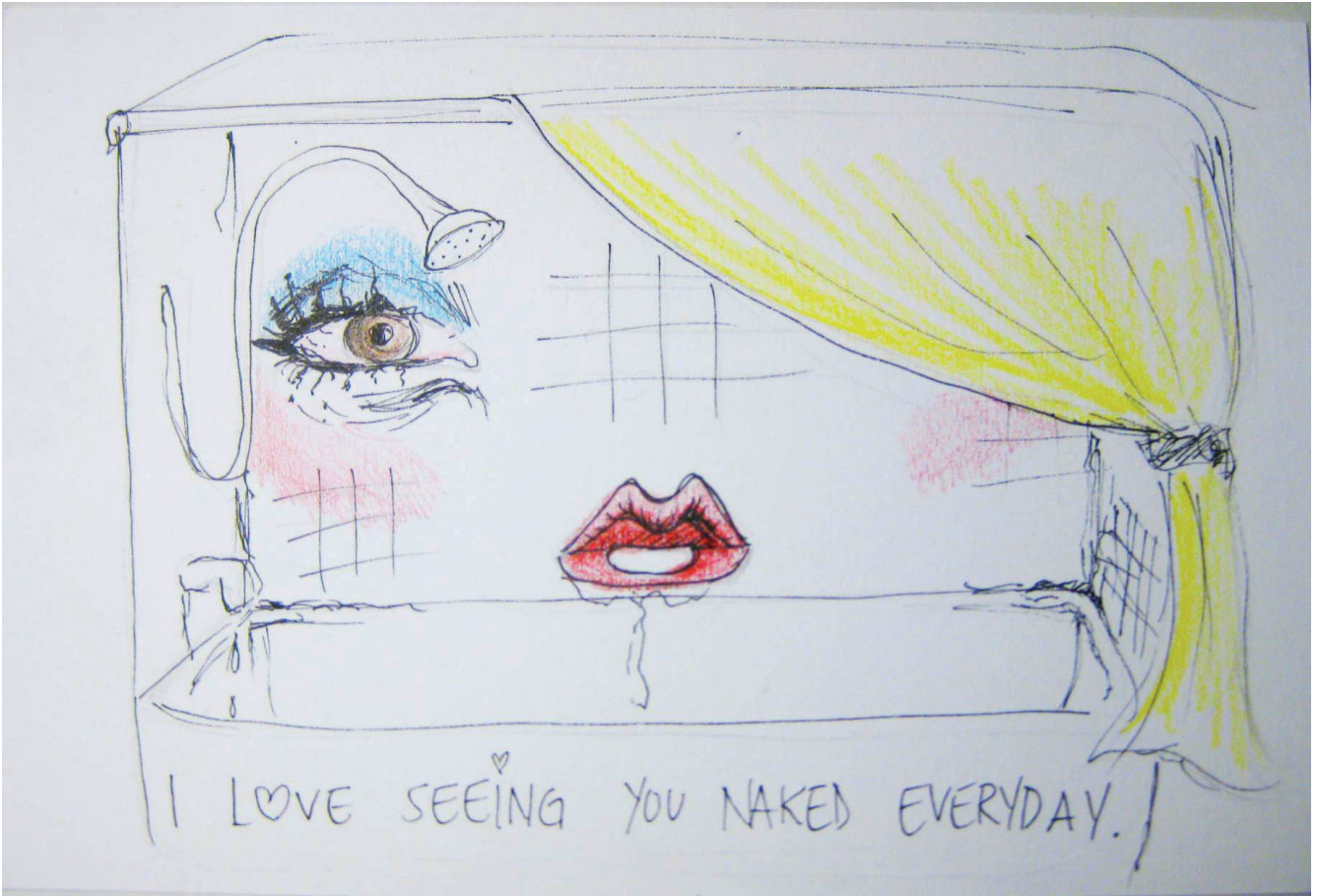


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

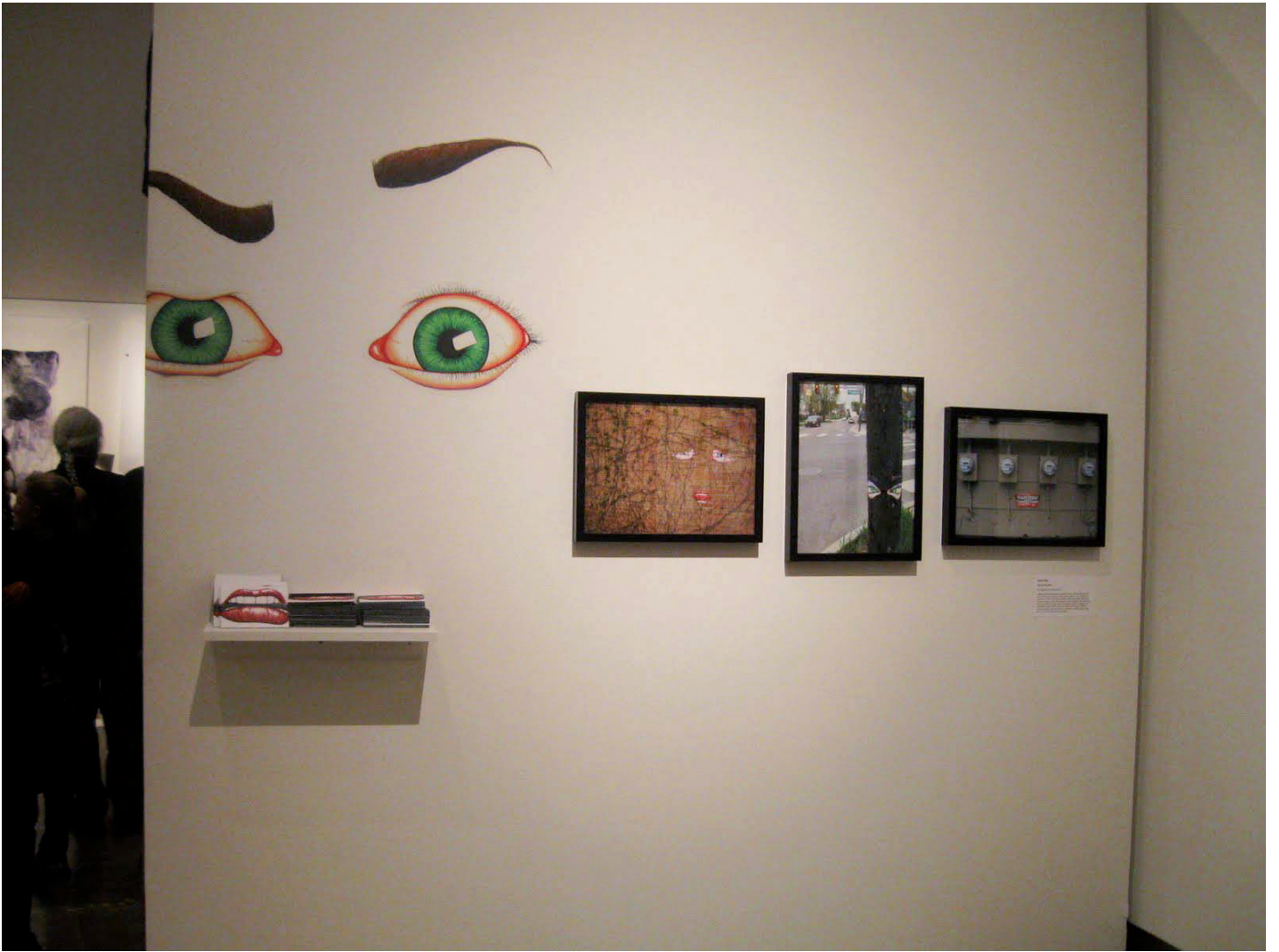


Fig. 10



Fig. 11

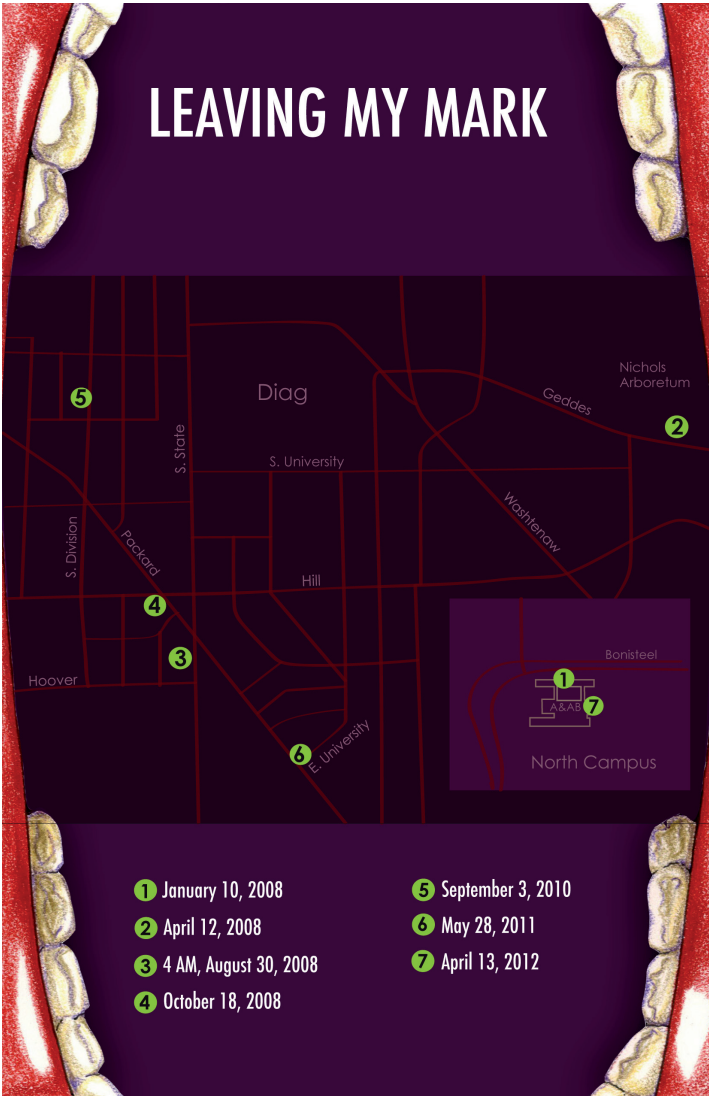


Fig. 12