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Love and Freedom

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Love and Freedom

By

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ABSTRACT

I have created my thesis body of work by researching children's book illustrations and distorted portraits by various artists. My illustrations are based on my book, *The Adventures of Henry and Isabella: Battle of Proerable*, inspired by the Disney films *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *How to Build a Better Boy*, and *Kim Possible* series. My distorted portraits of friends and family represent their personality traits. Even though the illustrations and portraits follow the style of European artists Franz Marc, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee, they are distinguished from the artists' styles. The book illustrations and the accompanying short story will eventually have wooden characters and environments for children or adults. Also, the portraits of friends and family can account for my experiences with them. In addition, seascapes of the worlds in my storybooks will be created using the style of Lyonel Feininger.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Can artwork influence peoples' morals? Can artwork be both representational and abstract? I created two series of paintings. One series includes illustrations based on my storybook, *The Adventures of Henry and Isabella: Battle of Proerable*, while the other includes portraits of my friends and family. In my storybook, characters Henry and Isabella are depicted fighting robots, clones, androids, superhumans, genetically engineered creatures, and evil kings and queens. They travel to many planets and dimensions to defeat villains using their self-manufactured weapons. However, my portraits are of my friends and family. I feel close to them and can depict their personality traits through my use of color. They are freely distorted but still representational. Four of the portraits bring out the facial features of the person represented while leaving the rest of their bodies flat. The other portraits have more distorted and colorful facial features. I analyzed some academic journals, articles, and books about the abstract work of European artists Franz Marc, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee in addition to looking at their paintings. I found that Marc's subject matter turned to animals due to his belief that they symbolized human spirituality and rebirth and that colors symbolize aspects of human qualities. I also found that Marc and Kandinsky had romantic visions of primal harmony and chaos before the First World War. In addition, I found how Klee uses the devices of abstraction to express his experiences.

I started painting my two series of humanoid-themed illustrations and distorted portraits using charcoal, acrylic, and oil paints on 22x30“Stonehenge paper. I first drew out some of my paintings with charcoal on Stonehenge and then painted over them with acrylic and occasionally oil paint. After completing my first four paintings, I started mixing acrylic and white gesso and applying it to pieces of Stonehenge paper before painting on them to speed up the process of creating my book illustrations and portraits. While working on my book illustrations, I also typed up my story. Using the story, I chose significant events to create illustrations that depict my story's middle and end. I have already created illustrations that depict its beginning. I had two concepts for my exhibition. Through my exhibition, I showed a series of children's book illustrations that depict a conflict between an evil scientist with advanced weaponry and a noble medieval civilization. I also showed a series of portraits of my friends and family. I created a series of children's book illustrations about my love of action, films, and television and portraits of my friends and family about their personality traits.

CHAPTER 2

MOTIVATIONS

While watching the Disney films *The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *How to Build a Better Boy*, and the Disney series *Kim Possible*, I took notes on them. I realized that *The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader* occurs in a medieval society. The heroes only have swords, bows, arrows, and shields to fight their foes. They and their foe, the green mist, are evenly matched, which means either one could defeat the other. In addition, they use a wooden ship to go wherever they want to go. They only have a map to rely on, not a GPS. However, *Kim Possible* has a grappling hook, a laser gun, a rocket-powered snowboard, a high-tech car, a communicator, and other advanced technology to combat her foes. She defeats them in the end. In the film *How to Build a Better Boy*, two high school girls named Gabby and Mae build Albert, an android who acts like Mae's boyfriend. He has super strength and speed to combat his foes with. He easily defeats them. This indicates that they have little power to stop him. After watching the two Disney films and one television show, I wanted to paint a series of children's book illustrations depicting battles between the forces of good and evil. I wanted to show viewers that even though heroes can be evenly matched or outmatched against their foes, they are courageous in their attempts to defeat them. I wanted people to be inspired by my illustrations of heroes combating villains to remind them to do good deeds, not evil deeds. I created a series of freely distorted but still representational

portraits due to caring about them, I expressed their personalities through the colors that I used for their portraits. I used yellow for my brother Preston's face, light blue and orange for his shirt, blue for his eyebrows, black for his facial features, and red for his arms.

Each of these colors symbolizes an aspect of my brother. I determine what colors to use for my friends and family by observing how they treat me. I also created this series of portraits to capture their facial expressions while leaving their bodies abstractly painted.

Their bodies morph in all my portraits, but you can still tell they are still human beings by their facial expressions. I wanted to morph their bodies through color and shape.

CHAPTER 3

INSPIRATIONS

Franz Marc

Franz Marc (1880-1916) was born into a wealthy and artistic family. Both his father and grandparents were painters. Carroll writes that his father was a professional landscape painter, while his grandparents were amateur painters.¹ He greatly influenced modern art. Carroll also writes that he assisted in constructing the very foundations of modern art, like Vincent van Gogh.² He also was part of The Blue Rider Group. In addition, she writes that in 1911, Marc, along with Wassily Kandinsky, founded Der Blue Reiter (The Blue Rider) as a loose association of painters sharing an interest in abstracted forms and prismatic colors, which they felt had spiritual values that could neutralize the corruption and materialism of their age.³ Marc contributed significantly to the field of art.

After a trip to Paris, Franz Marc's subject matter turns to animals. While in Paris, he is inspired by the work of Vincent van Gogh, Cézanne, and Gauguin. Carroll writes that Marc was gripped with debilitating depression soon after returning from Paris, where he traveled back to in 1907 to see the works of Vincent van Gogh, Cézanne, and Gauguin, artists who would influence his work from that point forward.⁴ Also, she writes that Marc's subject matter turned to animals, symbolizing human spirituality and rebirth after this trip.⁵ She also writes that Marc believed that colors symbolized aspects of human qualities, such as yellow representing feminine, gentleness, and sensuality and

blue representing masculinity and spirituality.⁶ His paintings include animals due to his beliefs about color and spirituality.

Franz Marc focuses on animals in their natural settings. He puts them in pastoral and apocalyptic scenes, meaning they could either be having a peaceful day or facing adversity. The horse in Marc's *Horse in a Landscape* (1910) was thought of to reconnect man with nature. It was thought of as being more natural than men. It was positioned in the painting in a way that tries to help us understand its feelings. Also, the landscape is distorted, which means it is not realistic. Rosenblum writes:

In such pictures as *Horse in a Landscape* (1910) or *Dog Before the World* (1912), we have virtually an animal transposition of Friedrich's archetypal *Woman in Morning Light*. In both these cases, we see a horse or dog from behind, a vantage point which, so often in these romantic's meditations, permits genuine empathy with the depicted being, and presumably, we contemplate with the eyes and soul of a horse or dog the mysterious landscape vista beyond, a landscape which, thanks to Marc's exposure to the chromatic liberties of Parisian painting become less and less literal, substituting the rainbow colors of the spirit and the imagination for the descriptive local colors of perceived material surfaces.⁷

Through his paintings, Marc tries to reunite man with nature. Marc tries to put religion into his animal-themed pictures. He combines color and animals to create paintings that represent human spirituality. Carroll writes that to express what he called a "mystical inner construction," the compounding of these two beliefs led him to create paintings of horses, cows, sheep, and other animals set rhythmically against color-flooded

landscapes.⁸ Marc's trip to Paris led to him changing the subject matter to animals in his paintings.

Wassily Kandinsky

Wassily Kandinsky also had these ultimately romantic visions of primal harmony and chaos. Like Marc, these themes were also seen in his paintings before World War I. They expressed the same themes in their paintings. Rosenblum writes:

Wassily Kandinsky, Marc's close associate in forming the Blue Rider group in Munich, shared with him these ultimately romantic visions of primal harmony and primal chaos. Indeed, much as Marc, in 1915, became aware that his *Fate of the Animals* of 1913 was a premonition of the war, Kandinsky also later, in 1914, recognized that his *Improvisation No. 30* of 1913 (which he subtitled 'Cannons) the presence of these instruments of war and destruction, if not interpreted as illustrative, nevertheless reflected the mood of imminent international disaster pervasive in Europe in the months and years before Sarajevo. He also writes that both Marc and Kandinsky became aware that their paintings were premonitions of war, with Marc becoming aware of his *Fate of the Animals* (1913) being a premonition of war and Kandinsky recognizing that his *Improvisation No. 30* (1913) the presence of these instruments of destruction and war.⁹ Both Marc and Kandinsky's paintings relate to World War I.

One of Kandinsky's paintings is titled *With Sun* (1910). It is freely distorted but still representational. It depicts a landscape with distorted images of horses, buildings, people, and other features. It does not have an exact meaning when I look at it. Even though Kandinsky's *With Sun* is freely distorted, it is still representational.

Paul Klee

Paul Klee's landscape painting is similarly distorted. The landscape is distorted in Paul Klee's *Black Columns in a Landscape* (1919). The grass, hill, tree, and houses are all various shapes, making this an abstract but still representational painting. Klee is not realistically depicting this landscape; it can never be what you look at. However, it is not surprising that Klee's paintings would be distorted. Polson (1979) writes that “through his compositional arrangements and Klee's own words, we are told how he uses the devices of abstraction to express his experiences” (para.14).¹⁰ Through his landscape, Klee expresses his experiences.

CHAPTER 4

MY ARTWORK

Illustrations

In my storybook, the animals are humanoids, unlike the horse in Marc's *Horse in a Landscape* (1910) and Kandinsky's painting titled *With Sun* (1910). The hero, Henry, his sidekick Isabella, and the people of Proerable act like humans. They can fight their foes with weapons that they invent themselves. They can fly airships which they use for war. In my painting, *Encounter with the Worm in the Woods* (2023), you can see the captain of the guard, John, and his men face off against a giant worm on their way back to the capital of Proerable. The worm knocks two men out of a tree with shields that fire plasma bolts. One is unconscious, while the other prepares to fight the worm.

In my painting, *Encounter with the Worm in the Woods* (2023), you can see John, the captain of the guard coming upon the worm, sleeping in the middle of a dirt path. In addition to those features, there is a river behind the worm, purple rocks, a tree, and a sun in the sky. In my painting titled *Battle of Mount Anna* (2022), you can see three robots with no facial features standing atop a purple mountain. Airships with a yellow symbol are firing at them from above as they stand. In *Battle of Mount Anna* (2022), there were two tanks that two robots destroyed. In the sky, there is an airship. A tree is near the two

destroyed tanks, and the mountain is still purple. In my painting titled *The Final Battle* (2023), you can see two airships belonging to the royal guard of Proerable accidentally firing on Queen Anna's castle. One of the castle's towers has already fallen to the ground and trapped a soldier underneath it while the other tower is about to fall. This destruction is happening at night, meaning a day has ended, and a new one will start soon. The grass is green, while the bricks, the steep roofs of towers, and the wooden doors are brown. In my painting *Henry's Duel with Dr. Allen* (2023), the characters fight in an arena of castle ruins. Dr. Allen is fighting Henry using his battle suit while two robots stand behind him. Again, the robots have no facial features. Henry fires blaster bolts at Dr. Allen, who blocks them with his sword. Two flaming airships have already crashed to the ground, and others are about to do the same. These features, except my rocks, make my paintings more representational than Marc's *Horse in a Landscape* (1910). In addition, Marc sees it as more than just a person's property and a primary metaphor for ultimate truths. He uses French Impressionism and Orphism in his paintings. His sublime, apocalyptic visions are related to the work of the Romantics.

Portraits

Now, unlike my illustrations, my portraits are more distorted. Klee's portrait *Senecio* (1922) is like my portraits. While they are all freely distorted, but still representational portraits, I don't move the facial features in my portraits. In *Senecio*, he moves around the person's eyes, and the person's face is made up of shapes. However, Klee's *Senecio* and my portraits are the same in one way: the upper body of our figures is freely distorted but still representational. Like him, I use the devices of abstraction to express my experiences. In my portrait, *Sarah* (2022), my female friend's figure is freely

distorted but still representational. She has orange arms, a blue and green shirt, and rectangular purple, yellow, red, and orange hair. Purple and yellow face, brown nose and eyebrows, green and purple eyes, and purple lips. These colors show that she is joyful, motherly, intuitive, majestic, and down to earth. In my portrait titled *Ryan* (2022), my male friend has orange facial hair, a blue face, ears, and neck, purple lips, a yellow and orange shirt, and orange pants. These colors mean he is brave, kind, joyful, and intuitive. In my portrait titled *Preston* (2023), my brother has a yellow shirt, black mixed with yellow and blue facial features, black mixed with yellow glasses, an orange-purple and blue shirt, and red arms. These colors mean my brother is caring, joyful, patient, funny, and selfless. In my portrait titled *Angela* (2023), my sister has orange mixed with black facial features, orange face and neck, brown hair, and red, yellow, blue, gray, and brown shirt. These colors mean my sister is joyful, down to earth, caring, funny, thoughtful, brave, intelligent, and independent. In my portrait titled *Thea* (2023), my niece has blue mixed with black facial features, red hair, a blue face and neck, a green and yellow shirt, and pink arms. These colors mean she is precious, intelligent, observant, caring, energetic, and honest. In the portrait of my mother, *Kathy* (2023), my mom has brown mixed with black facial features, blue hair, purple, pink, and red. These colors mean she is caring, selfless, patient, precious, independent, and thoughtful. The colors I choose for the portraits represent how my friends and family interact with me.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Differently from Marc, the animals in my paintings act like humans. Also, unlike Kandinsky and Klee, my artwork is more realistic. Most of my portraits and their works of art are abstracted but still representational. However, I add apparent facial features for four out of six of my portraits, while their work lacks realistic details.

I plan to enhance my work by creating wooden characters and environments to present it in a 3-dimensional, sculptural form. I would put them into series or storybook play sets for children. If I break them into three different series, I will exhibit them with my acrylic illustrations and short story at art exhibitions. However, if I make them into playsets, I will sell them to primarily children. In addition to being wooden, they would be painted with acrylic paint. They could move the characters' arms, legs, heads, and other parts as they read my story and look at my illustrations. They could move the characters through the wooden environments as they read my story and looked at my illustrations. One wooden environment would include three trees, a river, a waterfall, moveable tree branches and purple rocks, and a sun in the sky.

In contrast, another environment would include a castle, its towers, and two airships. In addition to those two environments, a third environment would include an arena comprising the castle's ruins, six airships, three airships, two tanks, and one tree.

Just like the characters, the environments would be painted with acrylic paint. People could see my characters and environments in a 3-dimensional form.

I also plan to continue creating portraits of my friends and family, and I will create a list of more personality traits to which I would then assign colors. I will also interview my friends and family and ask them to talk about our experiences together. As we talk, I will take notes to account for experiences that reveal their personality traits to go with my portraits of them.

Lastly, I plan to study the paintings of Lyonel Feininger. Like Marc, he uses Cubist transparencies and scaffoldings to dematerialize objects into impalpable, translucent rays that evoke unworldly, spiritual realms. I would use them to inspire my creation of seascapes related to one of the worlds in my storybook. By using Cubist transparencies and scaffoldings in my illustrations, I could make some distorted illustrations for my storybook, which would form a connection with my portraits. In the future, there are several options that I could choose to alter or add to my portraits and illustrations. To me, the possibilities for them are endless.

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