Sacred Industry

Joshua Heimsoth

Fort Hays State University, heimsothjoshua@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses

Part of the Art Practice Commons, Ceramic Arts Commons, and the Sculpture Commons

Recommended Citation

DOI: 10.58809/TWGY1098
Available at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses/3188

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository. For more information, please contact ScholarsRepository@fhsu.edu.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thesis Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shrines/Altars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Reliquaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Observatories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Flange Pots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Artist Biography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
President of Fort Hays University - Tisa Mason PhD
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences - Dr. Paul Fabor
Dean of Graduate School - Dr. Angela Pool Funai

Karrie Simpson Voth MFA Department Chair of Art & Design
Linda Ganstrom MFA Ceramics, Professor Art & Design,
Committee Chair
Tobias Flores MFA Sculpture, Professor Art & Design
Amy Schmierbach MFA Drawing, Professor Art & Design
Dr. Bradley Will PhD Assistant Dean College of Arts,
Humanities, & Social Sciences

THIS CATALOG IS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF FINE ARTS.
In my body of work the main themes that consistently reoccur are sculptures with a post industrial aesthetic, shrines/altars that are religious in origin or works that combine both concepts. The title “Sacred Industry” is a reference to these themes and an observation that our society seems to treat industry as sacred, or even religious and most religions seem to mirror many practices of corporations. Both religion and industry are capable of very positive things and each has contributed beautiful additions to cultures throughout the world. But these same entities are also responsible for great suffering. Neither is inherently bad, but blind trust in either is dangerous and examples abound throughout time from the crusades to DDT that both parties should be viewed through a lens of sensible caution.

Within my work you will see filigree and pulpits, bolted flanges and welds. All of my work incorporates the aesthetics of industry, religion or both. Going past the surface I infuse each piece with something from these two major sources that has sparked my interest and lingered long enough to incubate into a concept for my art. It may be extremely serious dealing with death on a global scale or poking fun at the absurd transparency of corporate greed. Through all my pieces I present a viewpoint that is honest about its biases and encourage the viewer to draw a conclusion independently for themselves. In a world insidiously laced with propaganda and personal bias I believe it is important to respect my audience as intelligent people with the ability to draw conclusions about my commentary on their own. In my work I show a small cross section of the beauty found in utilitarian industrial design and the intentional opulence of religious art while drawing attention to the absurdities that exist within both power structures.
Shrines and altars seem to be synonymous with all major religions. My earliest exposure to them was as a child in my local church. It was Lutheran which is one notch off from Catholicism and while they lacked the overt opulence of renaissance era cathedrals, the altars at my church were still quite ornate. As I grew and became more interested in religion as a medium for art I started to appreciate the beauty in many world religions and their contributions to the world of fine art. Many of the altars I built have been informed by my heavy exposure to Western styles, but you can still find dashes of Eastern influence peppered in as I have grown to appreciate multiple aesthetics in religious art. The pieces in this show reflect my appreciation of the ageless beauty of faith based art but take that aesthetic and use it to make a more personal and individualized statement.
WHAT CAN YOU QUOTE MORE, THE HOLY TRINITY OR THE HOLY TRILOGY?
This is a mashup of a traditional Christian church with the main tower from Jabba the Hutts' palace. Placed within the center of the tower is a platform designed to house an Icthorian from Star Wars lore sporting a saintly halo to further blend the two different themes. Star Wars is a striking contrast to Christian iconography but is mainly being used as a representation of pop culture. If you personally are a fan of Harry Potter or a disciple of sports statistics ask yourself the same question using the title like a Mad Lib. Self reflection is a key theme of most religions and is never a bad tool to have in your repertoire.
A hybrid altar/fortune teller, this sculpture has a predominantly Christian sensibility to its design with the exception of the Armadillo at its center. The Armadillo features my love of Renaissance and Byzantine era halos while featuring a hovering, multi armed pose that is an intentional reference to the types of gods found in Eastern religions. Type a question into the enchanted keyboard and the Armadillo will give its response back on the holy black and green screen above. As with most religions you will always receive an answer even if it is not the one you are looking for.
ALL KNOWING ARMADILLO OF OMNISCIENCE
In 2019 Twitter, the NBA and China combined for a controversy that is still being discussed today. It boils down to the topics of censorship and corporate greed. The spirit of said controversy has been distilled into this sculpture of a Chinese Pagoda and an ATM fused together. The summary of this saga is the commissioner of the NBA Eric Silver choosing to expand into the Chinese market to make more money at the cost of censorship and free speech. It is a long interesting back and forth of human rights vs corporate greed. I encourage you to research the story for yourself if you are intrigued by what you see.

CERAMIC, FOUND OBJECTS 24X16X16
CERAMIC, WOOD, METAL  90X36X22
Not all worship is centered around religion. This shrine focuses on an industrial aesthetic instead of a spiritual motif. Functional design and repetition of form have a beauty all their own and while they may not be as flashy as their religious counterparts, industry has the capacity to mobilize for tremendous good just as the church can. However, when industry is used to enrich a very minute section of the populace to obscene levels the mechanisms of our ingenuity become problematic. This shrine was built from the bones of a bathroom vanity but the mirror has been replaced with a large amalgamation of gears and rivets leaving you to stare into the golden face of the riches generated by the modern industrial world which is not the typical reflection we are comfortable with.
This is a continuation of the thought process of the Vanity Shrine about technology allowing for the accumulation of unprecedented amounts of wealth by a tiny percentage of the population. Mark Zuckerberg has both wealth and influence over the general public in a manner akin to the pharaohs. Just as the pharaohs were given burial masks and their organs preserved to exist in the afterlife, in an era of such technological advancement where futurists like Ray Kurzweil predict being able to download human consciousness into machines within the next decade, people of immense means such as Zuckerberg could potentially live on forever. Jokes abound about his android-like behaviour before congress so what better way for Zuckerberg to put his fortune to real use than to immortalize himself within a shrine that future generations may come pay homage to. His death mask is styled to look human with a robotic flare and his consciousness exists within the cables and circuitry of his own shrine so he is free to travel the ether of the online world/afterlife. The one thing money can never buy is time...unless you are a billionaire with questionable business ethics.
This is a continuation of the thought process of the Vanity Shrine about technology allowing for the accumulation of...the general public in a manner akin to the pharaohs. Just as the pharaohs were given burial masks and their organs prese
Dial a Deity is a cross religion rumination on prayer and communication with the Almighty. All religions communicate with their gods but in an age of cutting edge science why not streamline the process combining cutting edge tech with old world flare? Interwoven through the candlesticks and decorations are wires feeding into the central figure that leads to a powerful antenna array at the top. Just pick up the outgoing phone, use the Deity Directory to call the divinity of your choice. If they don’t pick up you can just wait for a call on the incoming line, or maybe they love you so much they already answered before you placed the call. It’s also possible your particular deity never existed. You should probably make a call and straighten this all out.
This piece is a cross of modern technology and the mysteries of lost ancient power sources. If only we could find remnants of the fabled power sources of cities like Atlantis or Lemuria we could harness them to produce clean efficient energy for all of our modern conveniences. That sounds like a much easier plan than laboring to clean up the planet and work for a better future.
CERAMIC, STEEL  24X16X16
Chubby mohawked buddha is exactly the kind of entity we need this century. A peace seeking advocate of sustainable energy with the magical powers to make that energy feasible without huge government subsidies. Plus his chrome mohawk makes him relatable with the younger generation.
CERAMIC, STEEL, PLASTIC 34X20X15
This shrine is about Martin Luther, the dichotomy of his life and my hatred of propaganda. The 95 Theses were a landmark in Western history. Luthers’ tireless work at the literal risk of his own life has had an incalculable impact on the quality of living and religious freedom of every generation to come after him. He was an amazing person and overall his contributions to humanity are overwhelmingly positive. But did you know he hated the Jewish people of Germany so much he lobbied the Crown to have them all removed from the country? Or that Hitler quoted such writings in his speeches in the 1930’s during his rise to power? You have to dig deep to find these facts and they are an important part of who Martin Luther was as a person. His life is amazingly interesting but his flaws make him more relatable as a fallible person like the rest of us. I dislike when portions of the truth are suppressed and media outlets hope we are too dumb to figure out the truth. It happens every day, this is just a glaring example to illustrate the overall point. The church lies. The media lies. It is our job as intelligent individuals to be informed so as not to be controlled.
This is a conceptual sister to Luther. It is about government propaganda, the industrial might of America and the media lying to the public. The M2 Sherman was the standard main battle tank of the Allies during WW2. It was touted to the American public as a match to anything the Nazis had and was an unstoppable war winner. In reality it was a death trap. When up against the vastly superior German Tiger the kill ratios were sometimes as high as 10:1 in favor of the Axis. Many many men died horrifically in the under armoured and out gunned machine. But the United States produced nearly 50,000 Shermans by the end of the war while Germany produced less than 3,000 Tigers. We won by weight of numbers and unbelievable sacrifice. It was not public knowledge until decades later the truth of the situation. The government lies. The media lies. It is our job as intelligent individuals to be informed so as not to be controlled.
CERAMIC, STEEL, WOOD  38X18X9
Relics, the remains of saintly individuals such as bones, clothing or items associated with them are found within Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism. Pieces of the cross of Jesus or fingerbones from a particularly holy man are common examples. The idea of relics is a fascinating one, but even as a practicing Christian they seem to put off a sort of snake oil vibe to me. They are an engaging concept and can be found in movies, books and pulp comics. It seems one of the keys to being a relic is being so old no one is still alive to verify their authenticity. Just as St Marky Z was a glimpse into the future to view the burial mask of Zuckerberg, my “Holy Reliquaries of the 20th Century” are examples of things I believe will pass into legend and could potentially one day be venerated by the coming lizard race that will inherit the Earth.
HOLY RELIQUARY: TOTALLY LEGITIMATE PIECES OF NOTRE-DAME

All that burned wood during the cleanup had to go somewhere right? My brothers’ cousins’ nephew lives in France and he mailed me a couple pieces to preserve. While the burning of the cathedral meant the loss of priceless items of world heritage, the fact that nearly 1 billion dollars has been pledged to restore it while countless people die of starvation in the world each day seems like a poor look for organized religion.
I would equate the spark plugs of the Enola Gay to the foot bones of an apostle. Just as their feet gave them the ability to travel spreading the news of the gospel so to the plugs gave the Enola Gay the detonation of her cylinders necessary to carry the world into the atomic age. While her sleek aluminum body is an impressive sight even today her spark plugs were an integral part of her construction and much more reasonably sized to fit in a holy reliquary. When discussing watershed moments of the 20th century worth enshrining the dropping of the first atomic bomb is definitely high on the list.
I would equate the spark plugs of the Enola Gay to the foot bones of an apostle. Just as their feet gave them the ability to carry the world into the atomic age. While her sleek aluminum body is an impressive sight even today, her spark plug...
Laika was the name of the dog that was the first living thing to orbit the earth. She was a stray taken off the streets of Moscow for the Soviet space program and was used to study different effects of launch and orbital flight. She died well before re-entry so burning up in the atmosphere didn’t bother her. The charred bones of the goodest girl to ever float in a low gravity environment are sure to garner the level of fame needed to qualify as a saint in the service of science.
CERAMIC, WOOD, COPPER, FOUND OBJECTS  60X32X8
When discussing relics of the 20th century one cannot leave out the rise of the most prominent, Hollywood centric religion to ever grow out of a mediocre science fiction author’s mind, Scientology! On the left you will see an early prototype E-meter Hubbard developed during the 50’s. Later models would be cleaner and more streamlined but as with most prototypes you can see the functionality is there but the design has not yet hit its’ peak. On the right you will see a master recording of the record Hubbard wrote, performed and produced entitled “Space Jazz”. It was billed as the first ever soundtrack to a book and was intended to be played while reading his classic novel “Battlefield Earth”.
The observatories began as a concept rooted in the comics and cartoons of my youth. Whenever a hero inevitably tracked down the baddy for a final confrontation their lair was always something super cool like an old harpoon factory or domed stellar observatory. I loved those setpieces and wanted to pay homage to them. But as I worked on the series they began to evolve into a more mature interpretation of that old cartoon theme. The villains of my youth such as Ilsa Haupstein and Lex Luthor have been replaced by adult level antagonists such as corporate greed and unethical business practices. In addition to those ideas the planet works on a much different time scale than any short lived human and their plans. Every factory, Server farm or strip mine humanity makes will eventually be reclaimed by nature. Entire ancient cities went undiscovered for centuries in South American because they were swallowed by the tenacity of the rainforest. I believe that science and technology have improved the quality of life for virtually everyone on the planet but we also tend to abuse that power and view ourselves as the masters of the planet. But when it comes to the immense power of the Earth from super volcanoes to tsunamis to the unending persistence of plants, it may take 400 years but in the end, nature always wins.
NATURE ALWAYS WINS;
LAIR OF FABRICATION
CERAMIC  20X18X10
NATURE ALWAYS WINS:
DATA MINING DEPOT

CERAMIC 32X24X12
NATURE ALWAYS WINS: DEN OF AUTOMATION

CERAMIC 20X18X10
NATURE ALWAYS WINS:
TOWER OF INDUSTRY

CERAMIC AND STEEL  84X32X36
The Flange pot series is a combination of my love of ceramics and industrial components. I love throwing on the wheel, exploring vibrant glaze combinations and building on a fairly big scale. As I started to make things that were as large as my kiln could hold I was faced with a dilemma of how to continue to grow my art to the sizes I wanted to make without mortgaging my house to build or buy an ultra large kiln. The solution came from the industrial sector. Everything that is too big to fit on a semi trailer such as mining trucks or wind turbines must be shipped in pieces and assembled on sight. So I began to engineer my largest pieces as individual parts and bolted them together after they were fired. This modular design philosophy opened up a new world when it came to my ceramic pieces. I started engineering them with metal sections to fit between the ceramic parts. From the very first time I bolted a steel flange to a ceramic part something in my brain said “yes, this makes 100% sense.” His series leans more into the beauty of metal, clay and industrial design influences. It is more about shape, form and color than the preachiness of pieces like Dial a Deity or the Pagoda ATM. That’s not to say they are neutral but I feel like these works are calmer and more about the beauty of the medium than some of my more narrative works.
FLANGE POT #8: HALLOWED VASE OF EMPTINESS
FLANGE POT #2: SUB PRIME BALANCING ACT

CERAMIC AND STEEL  36X18X20
FLANGE POT #12: INFINITE REFLECTIONS IN A UNIVERSE WITHOUT FREE WILL
FLANGE POT #3: ELECTRICALLY DIVINED
CERAMIC AND STEEL  80X38X32
FLANGE POT #10: EVERYTHING I DO IS METAL

CERAMIC AND STEEL  36X18X20
FLANGE POT #2008: SCREAMY BOI: TOO OBNOXIOUS

CERAMIC AND STEEL 88X32X50
Remember in 2008 when the housing bubble burst and car companies didn’t understand how to balance their checkbooks and the banking industry unapologetically asked for huge bailouts from the very same taxpayers they had just given terrible loans to with no personal accountability? This guy screaming in your face that he needs your money to fix the fact he lost your previous money is the distillation of that event.
It looks like a sinister doomsday device designed by a mad scientist to send out a pulse that erases all conscious thought and turns every being on the planet into a mindless automaton that will obey their masters every command. But in reality it shoots a pleasant smelling aerosol out of its nose once every 15 minutes.
STEEL, WOOD, CERAMIC  48X33X36
Marketing, public relations, and consumer psychologists already do a great job at convincing us their companies are good or at least neutral entities. Using our personal data is a subject of controversy now but in 20 years we will be so desensitized to it we won’t mind a 7 ft tall robot following us around all day and collecting our data as long as it still comes with free shipping. Paying for delivery will be the only crime in the far future.
ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Joshua Brooks Heimsoth has been working in mixed media sculpture with ceramics at its core for the past 15 years. The roots of Joshua's work began at a young age growing up in a very Christian family on a small farm in rural Missouri. Religion was always present in the form of both church and school and industrial influences abounded being raised to operate, maintain, and repair a myriad of farm implements from tractors to balers to feed grinders. Joshua was never far from divine iconography or rivets and gears. After his first encounter with Jules Verne in the 6th grade he was drawn towards all things science fiction, pulp and comic book. During nightly chores of feeding and checking cows he often piloted Lego starships of his own design or donned a cheap Halloween cape and black mud boots (the closest thing to Batman's costume he had) and went off in search of adventure, in addition to newborn calves. An active imagination and interest in the past were the hallmarks that started him down a path of exploring the beauty, horror and contradictions found throughout history, specifically within religion and industry which were a constant in his life. These themes would incubate for the duration of his childhood before eventually being given a clear voice through his art.

Joshua's love of art and desire to share that passion led him to pursue a Bachelor's degree in art education from Missouri State. Upon graduation in 2006, he secured a job...
AT SMITH-COTTON HIGH SCHOOL AND SPENT THE NEXT FOUR YEARS DEVELOPING HIS CLASSES AND ESTABLISHING HIMSELF AS A RELIABLE AND INTELLIGENT MEMBER OF THE FACULTY. IN 2010 HE ENROLLED IN A MASTERS OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION PROGRAM THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI WITH AN EMPHASIS ON STUDIO ART, PREDOMINANTLY CERAMICS AND SCULPTURE. UPON GRADUATION HE THOUGHT HE WAS DONE WITH COLLEGE AND DID NOT HAVE TO ENGAGE IN THE RIGORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION EVER AGAIN. HE BEGAN TO FOCUS HIS NEWLY FOUND SPARE TIME ON A SIDE BUSINESS AS A PRODUCTION POTTER. OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS HE BEGAN TO FIND HIS NICHE IN THE WORLD OF STEAMPUNK CONVENTIONS AND FINE ART FESTIVALS AROUND THE MIDWEST. AS HIS SUCCESS GREW HE BEGAN TO WONDER IF HE HAD WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO HOLD HIS OWN WITH LEGITIMATE PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS. JOSHUA SET A PERSONAL CHALLENGE TO HIMSELF OF APPLYING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL TO SEE IF HE HAD THE TALENT TO BE ACCEPTED. IN THE FALL OF 2017 HE STARTED HIS FIRST MFA CLASS AND BEGAN THE MOST CHALLENGING AND REWARDING DEGREE OF HIS LIFE.

JOSHUA HAS TAUGHT CERAMICS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL FOR 15 YEARS AND CONTINUES WORK ON THE FAMILY FARM WHILE RAISING 2 CHILDREN AND TOO MANY PETS. HIS UPBRINGING IN A POOR WORKING-CLASS FAMILY IS WHERE HE DEVELOPED HIS STRONG WORK ETHIC WHICH HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL TO HIS SUCCESS. IN ADDITION TO TEACHING, BEING A DAD, MAKING SCULPTURE AND FARMING JOSHUA IS ALSO A REGULAR AT THE GYM AND BELIEVES PART OF BEING A WELL-BALANCED PERSON IS TO CONSTANTLY CHALLENGE BOTH THE BODY AND THE MIND.
Fort Hays State University  
FHSU Scholars Repository  
Non-Exclusive License Author Agreement

I hereby grant Fort Hays State University an irrevocable, non-exclusive, perpetual license to include my thesis ("the Thesis") in FHSU Scholars Repository, FHSU’s institutional repository ("the Repository").

I hold the copyright to this document and agree to permit this document to be posted in the Repository, and made available to the public in any format in perpetuity.

I warrant that the posting of the Thesis does not infringe any copyright, nor violate any proprietary rights, nor contains any libelous matter, nor invade the privacy of any person or third party, nor otherwise violate FHSU Scholars Repository policies.

I agree that Fort Hays State University may translate the Thesis to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation and access. In addition, I agree that Fort Hays State University may keep more than one copy of the Thesis for purposes of security, back-up, and preservation.

I agree that authorized readers of the Thesis have the right to use the Thesis for non-commercial, academic purposes, as defined by the "fair use" doctrine of U.S. copyright law, so long as all attributions and copyright statements are retained.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, both during and after the term of this Agreement, I agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Fort Hays State University and its directors, officers, faculty, employees, affiliates, and agents, past or present, against all losses, claims, demands, actions, causes of action, suits, liabilities, damages, expenses, fees and costs (including but not limited to reasonable attorney’s fees) arising out of or relating to any actual or alleged misrepresentation or breach of any warranty contained in this Agreement, or any infringement of the Thesis on any third party’s patent, trademark, copyright or trade secret.

I understand that once deposited in the Repository, the Thesis may not be removed.

Thesis: Sacred Industry  
Author: Joshua Brooks Heimsoth  
Signature:  
Date: 10/01/21