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ETERNAL SEPTEMBER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts in Sculpture at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Corcoran College of Art + Design, 2008

Director:

Michael Jones McKean, Assistant Professor, Department of Sculpture + Extended Media

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2010

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Abstract

ETERNAL SEPTEMBER

By Benjamin Jurgensen, MFA in Sculpture + Extended Media

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010.

Major Director: Michael Jones McKean Assistant Professor, Sculpture + Extended Media

A series of digitally inflected texts –

September that never ends, some French belles, 1950/1986/1996, Ted Turner, being SO FUCKING FUTURE, The Gilmore Girls, Fic, FanFic, Sapphic, ctrl-c/v, “falsehood”, memes, Robert Gober, INTP, thought control, a “line of flight”, speed, and light refracting on all of it

Eternal September



eternal september
milled foam, epoxy, mdf, paper mache, acrylic & enamel paint

September That Never Ended

From *The Jargon File (Version 4.4.7)*¹

All time since September 1993. One of the seasonal rhythms of the Usenet used to be the annual September influx of clueless newbies who, lacking any sense of netiquette, made a general nuisance of themselves. This coincided with people starting college, getting their first internet accounts, and plunging in without bothering to learn what was acceptable. These relatively small drafts of newbies could be assimilated within a few months. But in September 1993, AOL users became able to post to Usenet, nearly overwhelming the old-timers' capacity to acculturate them; to those who nostalgically recall the period before, this triggered an inexorable decline in the quality of discussions on newsgroups. Syn. Eternal September.

¹ Raymond, Eric, ed. September that Never Ended. <http://www.catb.org/~esr/jargon/html/S/September-that-never-ended.html> (accessed May 15, 2010).

Seeing the Liberty Bell

On July 3rd 1996 there was a group of tourists from Annecy-le-Vieux standing in the queue outside of Independence Hall. Together, their grandfathers cast fifty-five replicas of the Liberty Bell in the Paccard Bell Foundry. We were separated by at least 30 people, but the queue's complexity lined us up every few minutes.

Ted Turner had just spoken on behalf of the United Nations Foundation. He didn't mention raising bison on the largest privately owned plot of land in the United States. The girls from Annecy-le-Vieux saw him speak, but his southern drawl kept them from understanding the scale of his endeavors. They were into Jane Fonda, underdressed for a state park, and too young to be smoking.

Due to drought the year before, The National Park Service banned smoking on most parkland, States followed suit. My Grandmother had been evading smoking bans as sport since the mid 80's. When we became aligned with the girls from Annecy-le-Vieux she relit a half smoked Doral and enjoyed it undetected.

The tallest girl in the group had her belly button pierced, displaying it proudly below a cropped tank top. The hair on the small of her back was dark and directional. While she sat on the railing, beads of sweat formed just above the waist of her rolled shorts. I was reciting state capitals and Mom put her hand on my shoulder.

We were about to see the Liberty Bell.

So Fucking Future

A found image, rotated 23° clockwise when viewed from the top, becomes an object.



Case Mod For Alexis / Rory



case mod for alexis / rory
mdf, epoxy, acrylic & enamel paint

Gilmore!

A Rory Gilmore¹ inspired real person fiction², femslash³ poem written in loose⁴ Sapphic verse⁵.

teen thespian resisting private fictions
soon denying indiscrete friendish acts of
naked birthed milfiness, screaming Rory
sensual oneness

¹ Rory Gilmore, short for Lorelai Leigh Gilmore, is a fictional character on the serial teen dramedy *The Gilmore Girls*. The show premiered on October 5, 2000, and ended its seventh season on May 15, 2007. The show features two female leads, Lauren Graham as Lorelai Gilmore and Alexis Bledel as her daughter Rory. The main action of the show takes place in the fictional Connecticut town of Stars Hollow, or in reality, Midwest Street on the Warner Brothers back-lot. Midwest Street was built in 1945 for the film *Saratoga Trunk* and has been the main set for several television shows and movies, including *The Waltons*, and *The Music Man*. For *The Music Man*, Midwest Street was dressed as River City, Iowa, a fictional town based on Mason City, Iowa. In the musical sequence for “You Got Trouble”, Harrold Hill alerts Ewart Dunlop of the threat imposed by the Pleez–All pool hall next to his own Dunlop Market. Dunlop Market recently became Doose’s Market, owned by Taylor Doose the town selectman of Stars Hollow.

In later episodes of *The Gilmore Girls*, due to Rory’s attending college, the show prominently features a replica of the Yale campus. Rory’s Yale, located on soundstage 14 across the lot from Midwest Street, was built specifically for the filming of the fifth through seventh seasons. Many of the buildings on the actual Yale’s campus are Gothically styled, but were built in the twentieth century. These buildings were aged with acid washes and other faux techniques to increase their authenticity.

Alexis Bledel attended NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts for one year, while her characters have attended Yale University (Rory Gilmore in *The Gilmore Girls*, 2007), The Rhode Island School of Design (Lena Kaligaris in *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants II*, 2008), and The University of California, Berkeley (Ryden Malby in *Post Grad*, 2009).

In the final episode of *The Gilmore Girls* (Original Air Date: May 15, 2007) Rory is hired by an online magazine as a reporter to follow the 2008 presidential campaign. Her first assignment is to cover Illinois Senator, Barack Obama’s, announcement of his candidacy for President of the United States (May 2, 2007).

² Real Person Fiction (RPF) or actorfic is a type of fan fiction in which real people become characters in established fictional environments. The “real people” most often involved in contemporary RPF are actors and musicians. RPF narratives are often of the slash variety, a type of fan fiction romantically involving two characters not involved in a studio script. For example, in alternate second and third seasons of *The Gilmore Girls*, Milo Ventimiglia might replace Jess Mariana as Rory’s love interest.

³ Femslash or saffic is a type of slash fiction where two female characters are paired in a homosexual relationship. This differs from RPF in that the characters paired are fictional, with the possibility of their ideology, sexuality, and environment shifting. For example, a Rory Gilmore/Buffy Summers femslash narrative may involve Rory becoming aroused by Buffy slaying the forces of darkness in front of Stars Hollow’s own Dunlop Market.

⁴ hey-yo!

⁵ Sapphic Verse is a style of Greek lyric poetry named after Sappho of Lesbos. Sappho was a Greek poet who developed a distinct lyric style based around a four line stanza. A Sapphic stanza consists of three eleven syllable verses followed by a five syllable verse. The first three lines share the same meter: trochee, trochee, dactyl, trochee, trochee. The fourth line has a unique meter; dactyl, trochee. Sappho is most known for her name and birthplace which have become adjectives for female homosexuality.

Copy / Paste

The texts in the following exercise have been pasted directly from an adjacent digital source. The heading included with each text is an imagined but probable lineage.

Erewhon: or, Over the Range¹ >

Erewhon: or, Over the Range(The Modern Library Edition)² >

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/19063>³ >

http://str.typepad.com/weblog/2006/11/the_sled_test_w.html⁴ >

Surely if a machine is able to reproduce another machine systematically, we may say that it has a reproductive system. What is a reproductive system, if it be not a system for reproduction? And how few of the machines are there which have not been produced systematically by other machines? But it is man that makes them do so. Yes; but is it not insects that make many of the plants reproductive, and would not whole families of plants die out if their fertilization was not effected by a class of agents utterly foreign to themselves? Does any one say that the red clover has no reproductive system because the humble bee (and the humble bee only) must aid and abet it before it can reproduce? No one. The humble bee is a part of the reproductive system of the clover

¹ Anonymous. *Erewhon: or, Over the Range*. London, 1872.

² Butler, Samuel. *Erewhon: or, Over the Range*. New York: The Modern Library, 1927.

³ Butler, Samuel. *Erewhon by Samuel Butler*. September 1, 1999. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1906> (accessed March 5, 2010).

⁴ Montano, Tony. *The SLED Test - Who Created It?* November 26, 2006.

http://str.typepad.com/weblog/2006/11/the_sled_test_w.html (accessed March 18, 2010)

The Ways of Paradox & Other Essays (1st Edition)¹ >
The Ways of Paradox & Other Essays (Revised Edition)² >
Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid³ >
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quine's_paradox⁴ >
<http://twitter.com/theRemix/status/1940796065>⁵ >

*"Yields falsehood when preceded by its quotation" yields falsehood
when preceded by its quotation*

¹ Quine, Willard Van Orman. The Ways of a Paradox, and Other Essays. 1st Edition. New York: Random House, 1966.

² Quine, Willard Van Orman. The Ways of Paradox, and Other Essays (Revised Edition). 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

³ Hofstadter, Douglas R. Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

⁴ Wikipedia. Quine's Paradox. April 8, 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quine's_paradox (accessed May 15, 2010).

⁵ theRemix. Twitter. May 27, 2009. <http://twitter.com/theRemix/status/1940796065> (accessed May 15, 2010).

The Selfish Gene¹ >

The Selfish Gene (Second Edition)² >

<http://rubinghscience.org/memetics/dawkinsmemes.html>³ >

The new soup is the soup of human culture. We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation. 'Mimeme' comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like 'gene'. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to meme.(2) If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to 'memory', or to the French word même. It should be pronounced to rhyme with 'cream'.

Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passed it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and his lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain. As my colleague N.K. Humphrey neatly summed up an earlier draft of this chapter: '... memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically.(3) When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell. And this isn't just a way of talking -- the meme for, say, "belief in life after death" is actually realized physically, millions of times over, as a structure in the nervous systems of individual men the world over.

¹ Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. 1st Edition. Oxford University Press, 1976

² Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2006.

³ Rubingh, Menno. *Chapter 11 from Richard Dawkins, 'The Selfish Gene'*. 1999.

<http://www.rubinghscience.org/memetics/dawkinsmemes.html> (accessed March 18, 2010)

Sink



sink
mdf, epoxy, acrylic & enamel paint

Dulamel

Robert Gober made variations on sinks without drains from 1984 to 1986. In 1989 he made a drain without a sink. In 2005 he cast a hand-modeled quart bucket of Benjamin Moore's Dulamel paint in lead crystal. According to Gober each sink is coated multiple times with Dulamel and then hand sanded to its final surface.¹ Benjamin Moore is in currently discontinuing alkyd-based products; Dulamel is only available in gallons.

¹ Vischer, Theodora, ed. Robert Gober: Sculptures and Installations 1979-2007. Basel: Steidl/Schaulager, 2007.

Everything

My father (b. 1950) and I (b. 1986) recently took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment. The scoring showed us to be of the same personality type, INTP. According to the assessment booklet, “The MBTI instrument measures your preferences on four dichotomies: extraversion–introversion, sensing–intuition, thinking–feeling, and judging–perceiving”.

extraversion – E / introversion – I / sensing – S / intuition – N / thinking – T / feeling – F /
judging – J / perceiving – P

IiNnTtPp

The two Meyers-Briggs personality types combined above are set in Calisto MT, one upper case and one lower. Calisto MT is a typeface designed by Ron Carpenter (b. 1950) in 1986 for the Monotype foundry.¹ The font was designed to be used at all sizes, for both body and display text. Calisto MT is recognizable, in part, because of the disproportionately large x-height of its lowercase characters. X-height is the average height of a lowercase character, without ascenders or descenders. Generally the x-height is one half of the cap-height, or the height of a capital letter.²

¹ Calisto. <http://typedia.com/explore/typeface/calisto/> (accessed May 15, 2010).

² Kunz, Willi. *Typography: macro- and microaesthetics*. New York: Arthur Niggli, 1998.

Toxoplasma Gondii

The *Toxoplasma Gondii* parasite is the third largest cause of death from food born illness in the United States. More than 60 million people in the United States carry the parasite, but most of these 60 million do not exhibit what would be considered medical symptoms.¹ A new study by Kevin Lafferty proposes that these infected individuals may exhibit behavioral symptoms, for which there is no clear system of measurement.

Domesticated cats play a large role in the spreading of *Toxoplasma* to humans. The *Toxoplasma* parasite can only be spread through ingestion, and is passed to humans when microscopic particles of cat feces come in contact with food that is later consumed. Cats, like humans, are only infected by ingesting the parasite, and become infected when they consume infected mice or birds. Unlike humans, cats can host the parasite, as their stomach is the one place *Toxoplasma* is known to reproduce.

Highly limited reproductive conditions and reliance on ingestion as its sole means to spread were evolutionary problems the *Toxoplasma* parasite needed to overcome. To spread, and therefore survive, the parasite has evolved a system of traveling from its original host to new feline stomachs where it is able to reproduce freely. This system is based on the parasite's ability to, once ingested, control the thought patterns of the small animals feeding on and in proximity to the host's feces.

It has been proven that mice infected with *Toxoplasma* develop a fondness for cats, and in the wild become less fearful of their predators and therefore easier prey. When an infected mouse is ingested by a non-host cat, the parasite is able to reproduce, adding another cat to its collection of propagators.²

Due in part to the popularity of cats on the Internet and in part to a popular episode of the podcast *Radiolab*³, an urban legend has emerged. The legend loosens the science surrounding *Toxoplasma*, and proposes symptoms to be similar in humans and mice. But, because humans aren't prey, the parasite's control induces a more benign symptom, an unnatural fondness for cats. The affection shown by cat lovers being nothing more than a display of intensified dopamine release caused by parasitic infection.

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Toxoplasmosis. January 11, 2008. <http://www.cdc.gov/toxoplasmosis/> (accessed May 10, 2010).

² Lafferty, Kevin D. "Can the common brain parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, influence human culture?" Proceedings of the Royal Society, June 2006.

³ Abumrad, Jad, and Robert Krulwich. Parasites. Comp. WNYC Radio Lab. 2009. Podcast

IRL



irl
milled foam, epoxy, mdf, acrylic & enamel paint

Stimulants

The walls in my efficiency are off white, like wool. On the counter in the kitchen is a mason jar filled with nootropics. These stimulants are pure, they reflect all light.

My friend's friend said nootropics make him more productive, enhancing his memory and cognition. I think he's full of shit, but I still take them.

It's nice to know the walls aren't white.

The Horizontal Rule

Everything that moves has a trajectory, the line an object follows as it moves through space. Trajectories can be simple, like a ball thrown. They can also be complex, like a person's movement through a year. In both examples, simple and complex, the trajectory is contingent on certain rules. These rules or terms are those through which we interact with the world. A simple example like the path of a ball through space is dependent on an almost infinite number of factors, the most significant being the conditions of the physical world. The trajectory of a ball in space is necessarily an arc, because a condition of being in space is a kind of contract with gravity. The ball, to be a ball or any object, must be of the world and therefore fall.

For the ball to remain endlessly in flight it would have to change the conditions in which it exists. It would have to exist in an environment where the conditions of its moving would allow it to deny that arc, to remain parallel with some kind of equivalent horizon. The ball would need a "line of flight"¹, a changing of terms through which it is understood as a ball. Here, the ball becomes a bad example, unless it's a thinking ball, like a human canon-ball, some kind of Knievel, more interested in flying than a feat.

The terms through which objects are understood have changed as the site of experience expands. This expansion is occurring as new space-time relationships emerge in networked environments, most notably the Internet. As an example, the relationship of the body to the horizon line has been extended into virtual space by a digital equivalent, the horizontal rule. Things moving online embody a new kind of motion, a sequential / vertical / horizontal motion. A motion that is relative to two environments, two horizons, virtual motion in the sense that it is not movement relative to physical space, but is undeniably real. Here the orientations and trajectories of things are first relative to the horizontal rule, the actual horizon acting only to orient the physical bodies of users.

An HTML element called the horizontal rule is often used to divide content on webpage. It is subtle and unique. The horizontal rule is an empty element, meaning it does not contain other information, it simply tells a browser to complete a specific action. The most commonly used empty element is the line break or `
` element. The line break adds a line of empty space between the content above and below it. The horizontal rule or `<hr />` is unique in that the browser renders it as an object or visible page element. This element, in standards compliant browsers, is a two-pixel line made of nested L shapes, one rotated 90 degrees clockwise, the other rotated 90 degrees counter clockwise. The two rotated L shapes are both horizontally offset by one pixel allowing the foot of their L to nest alongside what would be, if not rotated, the beginning of the L's downward stroke. The top L is a dark grey rendered by the browser's interpretation of the hexadecimal value `#9A9A9A`. The bottom L is lighter, rendered by the hexadecimal value `#EEEEEE`. The offset and color differentiation are meant to depict depth.

¹ Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

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<http://www.cdc.gov/toxoplasmosis/> (accessed May 10, 2010).

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http://str.typepad.com/weblog/2006/11/the_sled_test_w.html (accessed March 18, 2010)

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Vita

Born July 31, 1986 in Charleston, South Carolina

Education

Master of Fine Arts – Sculpture + Extended Media
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Bachelor of Fine Arts – Sculpture
Corcoran College of Art + Design, Washington, DC

Awards

2008-2010

Graduate Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University

2008

Ann Elson Memorial Prize, Corcoran College of Art + Design

Ethel Lorraine Bernstein Memorial Award, Corcoran College of Art + Design

2007

Undergraduate Fellowship Recipient, Virginia Museum of Fine Art

Martha Von Hirsch Memorial Scholarship, Corcoran College of Art + Design

Linda Rosenbaum Scholarship, Corcoran College of Art + Design

2006

Lolo Sarnoff Prize, Corcoran College of Art + Design

2004-2008

Koenig Scholarship Award, Corcoran College of Art + Design

Selected Exhibitions

2010

Graduate Thesis Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA

2009

6th Annual Transformer Benefit Auction, Mexican Cultural Institute, Washington, DC
Glenn Beck, FAB Gallery - VCU Department of Sculpture + Extended Media, Richmond, VA

Good People, Bad Behavior, G Fine Art, Washington, DC

Victor Charlie Udon, VCU Department of Sculpture + Extended Media, Richmond, VA

Viva Comet Unis, VCU Department of Sculpture + Extended Media, Richmond, VA

2008

Scope Hamptons, Meat Market Gallery, East Hampton, NY
Don't Ready to Die Anymore, Meat Market Gallery, Washington, DC (Solo Exhibition)
5th Annual Transformer Benefit Auction, Transformer Gallery, Washington, DC
Senior Thesis Exhibition, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
All Senior Show, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Performance Week 2008, Meat Market Gallery, Washington, DC
wall / paper, Transformer Gallery, Washington, DC

2007

Aqua Art Miami, Wynwood, Meat Market Gallery, Miami, FL
Juried Undergraduate Exhibition, Black Rock Center for the Arts, Germantown, MD
4th Annual Transformer Benefit Auction, Transformer Gallery, Washington, DC
Conscious Inaction, Meat Market Gallery, Washington, DC
Useless, Project 4 Gallery, Washington, DC
ArtDC Art Fair, Washington, DC
Performance Week Auction, Meat Market Gallery, Washington, DC

2006

DC-KNEW2, Emerging Artist Show, Knew Gallery, Washington, DC
Juried Undergraduate Exhibition, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC