

How Can I Make Art

Eliot



A panther was found dead in North America. Only the schoolteacher that came across it knew it had died, but a few more people might have sensed that it was gone. The panther had been in good health. It wasn't an old animal, so the reason for its death must have been a fight or some cruel fate that the devil and god thought was necessary. Either way, it must have needed to die because when it took its last breath another panther was born, this one in Columbia or Ecuador or another country nearby.

This second panther grew quickly, almost too quickly, and within a few years was approaching its full size and was fast and muscular. It was capable of swift and quiet kills, but tired quickly because it didn't understand the meaning of its actions. The panther would often find itself alone, wanting to kill and to not kill each so intensely that it forgot to feel its own hunger. It would kill and unkill in its mind until it tore the yellow eyes from the river and saw that the fish had gone. The fish had gone and new fish had replaced it. Still, as the sun sunk into the earth, the black fur felt the rhythm of its heart knot itself into unknown hunger as it rode through the reeds on the familiar path towards the tree where it slept.

The tree grew and ungreww, and grew and shrank, and the panther shrunk into the widest branch as it prayed to god and to the devil that he would wake up close enough to the ground that he could climb down safely. He was a good climber and the tree had never been so high that it was a problem. Still, the idea that the tree was a different height every morning scared him. How tall could it get? Could it get high enough to hide the earth under fog?

Sleep came easily that night. The panther's coat shone in the moonlight as its chest rose and fell, and one by one the tree's branches detached themselves and formed a neat pile somewhere out of the way. Life became a dream and the panther found itself in a strange and beautiful place, consumed with the unmistakable feeling of having been there before. In this world the panther felt the special power only present in proximity to perfection, but looking around he could not see anything perfect. On the contrary, this was a world based in parallels, where the flow of time was dictated by whatever was important.

When it awoke the panther was looking down into a sea of fog so thick that only a few branches were discernable below before the entire trunk was enveloped in grey. The panther began to climb down; because fog doesn't exist only where you can see it, it exists all around but will keep its mystery at a distance as if one's own eyes were omitting light to see through its grey darkness. This must not have been fog though, because when the panther had descended three limbs, the fog showed no signs of revealing any more of the tree. It stood its ground, pulsing as if liquid while it lapped gently against the tree's branch and onto the black paws, bringing them in and out of view. The panther knew the tree very well, well enough to know that there was a strong branch only a few feet below. Why not jump? The panther had a feeling that this grey mass could not easily be blown away by ordinary wind.

There was no branch, or any other branches or leaves, the animal discovered as it fell through the thick grey towards an unknown bottom. It was a long fall, long enough for

the panther to consider why it wasn't afraid. It would make sense if the fall ended in death. But somehow the peculiarity of the morning coupled with an inexplicable feeling of unfinished business gave the panther hope as it continued its journey downwards. The fog began to clear, and the black fur stood on end as adrenaline flooded the animal's body. For a split second a large city surrounded by mountains was visible before everything got too close and the rush of air ended with the sound of flesh hitting pavement.

* * * * *

My final project explores how artists combine the known and the unknown to create something new.

Around 108 billion people have lived on Earth. For survival, every person is equipped with a unique way of figuring out how the world works. Whether you believe in fate or not, we all end up trying to make our lives better by changing how we see the situations we encounter. When we encounter a new problem, we reference similar or parallel situations to find a solution. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation very similar to thousands before it. In these instances, our muscle memory comes into effect. For many philosophical or aesthetic problems, we tend to operate on the other end of the spectrum from muscle memory, looking for answers in unlikely places. Finding a solution in a seemingly unrelated problem tends to produce the most interesting results. New solutions are called innovation.

Everything has the potential to assist everything else. The fractal nature of the world allows the human brain to make parallels between ideas. Small ideas can assist large ideas. This is called a metaphor. To one person, a boat might be a perfect metaphor for a large issue in that person's life. The purpose of a metaphor is to show a common essence between two ideas in order to clarify understanding. -- Specifically, I am looking at how this system affects art. Artistic decisions are unlike others we make because there is no right answer. We also can't check art off our list of things we want to do before we die. It never ends.

I used to create or conceptualize art without considering its relationship to the world. That might have been a good thing. I don't know. I do know that I am interested right now in learning why I like the art that I like. As I approach the end of my adolescence, I've found that I've spent more time observing other people and therefore less time thinking about myself. I have been undergoing a subconscious reality-check that has brought my ideas down from wherever they were into the world.

Artists are their ideas and, therefore, artists exist within their art. This renders an artist extremely vulnerable. Every element of a work of art says something about the artist. If you make huge art, you're saying you have a huge idea. If you make incomprehensible art, you're choosing to tell people something they can't understand. Suggesting these things is not necessarily bad, depending on the context.

As a teenager, I'm not going to pretend that my history of artistic awareness has provided me with enough knowledge to make the best art in the world. If I want to gain

as much control over art as a whole, I want to learn every aspect at once. I don't think there's any way for me to control the flow of the part of me that would make conceptual art. I'm going to think about stuff whether I like it or not. I can, however, attempt to keep up with that development with the development of my craft. This is why I chose this idea and this project. I want to take a break from thinking about the world and instead look at basic aesthetic decisions and their implications. I want to know exactly what my art is. I want ultimate clarity so that I can move on to another project with more control.

Lil Ugly Mane is a rapper from Richmond, Virginia. He produces under the name Shawn Kemp. His music is a perfect example of how an artist can use a crazy amount of research and knowledge of the art made before him as a foundation for his own ideas. Ugly Mane says in interviews (that have recently been removed from the internet) that he grew up listening to and idolizing the art and character of rappers like Memphis-based Three 6 Mafia and Raekwon of the Wu-Tang Clan. I am intrigued by his approach to the genre of "Hip-Hop, the most progressive music of the bunch." In his first album, *Playaz Circle*, Ugly Mane creates a grounding of fearlessness and fearsomeness, accompanied by classic dirty-south flow and sinisterly complex lyrics. His next and much more famous album, *Mista Thug Isolation*, displays the full range of his mastery in the production, flow, and attitude of the mid-to-late nineties rap music he loves.

In the last year, there has been an interesting plot twist to Lil Ugly Mane's career. The artist states that "Lil Ugly Mane is a defunct project" and will be dropping a final album sometime in 2014. The chorus of "On Doing An Evil Deed Blues" reads:

*"Art is imitation
Creation is forever
Innovation is spontaneous never
A lot of rappers put they work in so you could be clever
Everything is everything is everything is everything ever."*

This song is his most recent release, and essentially sums up my research question. The artist has made it clear through his Facebook page and interviews that its existence marks the beginning of the end of Lil Ugly Mane's career as a rapper.

Ugly Mane has shown mastery of a wide range of art forms. He has only played a handful of shows, and has never filmed an interview. I hypothesize that he is an extremely intelligent and creative individual that set out to live Hip-Hop, but once he got there he didn't find what he was looking for.

*"Cause we move ahead every 30 seconds
So how's it been 40 years and all we fucking rap about is weapons?"*

* * * * *

The panther felt intense pain conduct through everything on the right side of its body. The impact must have broken at least a few ribs, if not both of the legs that collided with the asphalt. However, most of the pain subsided within the following minutes, and the

panther found that it was able to stand. There seemed to be no lasting injuries from the impossibly long fall.

The first thing it noticed was another panther lying only a few feet away. This panther was dead. Its skin sagged, as if something had tried to pull it straight off the meat. Other than that, it looked healthy. Its fur, though dirty, had a nice texture and the muscles looked well used. It was smaller and younger than the live panther, which made it very young. It saddened and scared the live panther to see such a thing.

The next thing the live panther noticed was that the asphalt belonged to a school yard, with a colorful play structure in one corner and green-and-red bushes surrounding the area. The panther spent a while on the play structure, which was much larger and more entertaining than those from South America. Then, noting the strange cubic quality of the bushes on its way out of the yard, the live panther went to find some food to eat.

Bibliography

Allen, Jim. *4-wheeler's Bible*. St. Paul, MN: MBI Pub., 2002. Print.

Cherry. Dir. William Strobeck. Perf. Tyshawn Jones and Sage Elsesser. Supreme, n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.

Espir. Web log post. *ESPIR I QFK*. Tumblr, n.d. Web. 22 Apr. 2014.

Gucci Mane and Young Thug. *Young Thugga Mane LaFlare*. 1017 Brick Squad, 2014. MP3.

Lil Ugly Mane. *Playaz Circle*. Self Released, 2011. MP3.

Lil Ugly Mane. *Mista Thug Isolation*. Self Released, 2012. MP3.

Lil Ugly Mane. "On Doing An Evil Deed Blues." Self Released. 2013. MP3.

Maclay, Elise, Bev Doolittle, and Betty Ballantine. *The Art of Bev Doolittle*. Trumbull, CT: Greenwich Workshop, 1990. Print.

Murakami, Haruki. *IQ84*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. Print.

No Love. Dir. Death Grips. Perf. Death Grips. Third Worlds/Harvest Records, 2014. Online Video.

Orlemann, Eric C. *Caterpillar Chronicle: The History of the World's Greatest Earthmovers*. Osceola, WI: MBI, 2000. Print.

Slayer. *Reign in Blood*. Deaf Jam, 1986. MP3.