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Human heir

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· HUMAN *HEIR* ·

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by
Andrew Jay Saluti
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For Dad and Papa,
The two mechanics of my life.

· Acknowledgements ·

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· Abstract ·

Human *heir* catalogues the mechanism as living being through character and interaction. The life of basic machines such as hand tools and anvils is characterized by the interaction with other mechanical forms and the collaboration with their creator, the human machine. The concepts of function, personality, relevance, and existence are observed on seemingly lifeless elements, and the simplicity of the human mechanism is explored.

· Human *heir* ·

In every mechanism, there is a soul. The life of a hand tool can be traced by the dents and scratches in the head of a hammer; by the wearing of the handle. Each machine that we create takes on an individual character that defines its existence. Inversely, there is a basic mechanical structure to human function. The action produced by the muscle is mirrored by the pneumatics of a lift; and the heart- a basic pump. As complex as the human psyche is, there is a quiet irony to the utterly simplistic mechanics that engineer the human body. These are the two rudimentary principles that have fueled my work for the past three years.

· The Humanity of the Mechanism ·

The imagery explores and defines the machine: the character of individual mechanisms, and the functional construction that render the organic mechanical. Much like the personification that George Orwell gives the animals that take over *Animal Farm*, my work is a visual representation of the society and humanity of the machine. More than anything else, the imagery defines personality- individual human emotions played out using mechanical participants. Part of that definition comes from the interaction between the different characters. An anvil hung upside down seems helpless as it is suspended- barely held by a series of transparent parallel clamps. The strength of the character is confined by its vices, and yet it would fall if the clamps were to let go. It is this helplessness, solitude, anxiety, empathy, that is illustrated in the interaction between each mechanism.

I can't think of any other mechanical object that is a better metaphor for the human character than the anvil. As a tool, the anvil is built to be versatile: it shapes white hot metal and supports fine detail. It withstands blow after blow, yet is so easily nicked and scratched. The anvil stands solid; proud. Its majestic nose outstretched in a regal, almost elitist state. The anvil is unrelenting in completing its job. And for all its strength and rigidity, the anvil stands elegant, shapely and sexy. The anvil is an individual among anvils. As it ages it weathers, losing its once slick form. From age it builds its soul. Always gaining

experience, gathering wisdom. Every day something new is learned, created, molded from it's being, and every day a new dent, a new flaw is displayed. With wisdom comes wear, and from experience comes intolerance. The anvil takes the life journey: a wide-eyed, receptive adolescent eventually becomes like the stubborn old man, set in his way. The anvil's work ethic that shapes its personality and its character. The physical composition is steel, but in every other aspect the anvil's soul outweighs its stature. Its humanity transcends a shell of inanimation.

· The Mechanism of Humanity ·

Another part of what defines the soul of the mechanism is the connection with man. As the anvil inherits all the emotions and ideosyncracies that define "human", the mechanical man breaks down the human body into an absurdly simple machine. The Lego Man is the ideal reproduction of humanity as if defined by a machine looking back at it's creator. By placing this mechanical man in a Masterwork setting (a setting inspired by a previously completed work of art), the setting becomes recognizable, but the characters have changed. Instead of seeing humans modeled as in the original, the stoic and seemingly emotionless mechanical Lego men have taken their place. What was initially recognizable as a Rembrandt painting takes on a new and different meaning. The captioned text and position of the characters (which are modeled directly from the original) sufficiently elude to the Masterwork but capture a new conceptual element. In it's simplicity the Lego Man, like any other autocratic creature, has advantages and disadvantages. It's physical ability has been reduced to the bare essential of movement. A unified, single jointed arm (although perhaps this is compensated with the full rotation wrists). No fingers, but snap clasping hands- allowing the ability to only handle a limited grouping of certain correctly designed objects. Legs, like the arms, are also simplified into single jointed appendages: from waist to foot one piece. A uniformly hollow torso to which visual variables can be added for aesthetics or gender distinction but are hardly necessary for existence. Although distinctly opposite from the soul of the anvil, the Lego man is not without emotion. The most important innovation is the removable and adjustable heads. They are given the ability to present an emotional

response, but more importantly are able to exchange it at a whim. These human reproductions have the facade of emotional form, but are in truth purely functional.

. . . .

As a printmaker, building presses- designing and constructing my own machines- becomes a catharsis for both the craft and the concept of the work. The craft of printmaking is just as important to me as the conceptual element of the art. All of my work on paper is editioned, utilizing both traditional (drypoint, mezzotint, etching) and modern (inkjet, photo etching) techniques. Although the connection between man and machine transcends artmaking, it is the almost unavoidable collaboration between the two components in the art and craft of printmaking that is particularly significant to my work. My prints illustrate the broad range of these mechanisms we have created. They are defined by the human characteristics that result not only from their own life experience, but also their experiences in collaborating and interacting with man and machine. In my prints, these machines begin to interact with other machines independently, without the human catalyst. It is then that the mechanism creates its own society, its own genus, its own civilization.

In my sculptural work I define humanity as having a ‘god complex’. I am referring to a characteristic that is nurtured by humanity- that humanity has an innate appetite to create, a need to make something from nothing. To fulfill that desire, humanity created the machine- created it as an extension of our own capabilities (or incapacities as the case may be); created it as a reaction and solution to our own inadequacies, as a servant. In this creation, humanity in essence becomes a secular god. A god to the machine. My own “divinity” stems from the creation of the press. In building a series of my own presses to make my work with, I become the “god” to the machines that I have constructed. And in the action of using the presses to do my work, the interaction between man and machine can be described as the interaction between creator and created.

The element of drawing is just as important as the craft of printmaking. I have always believed that the concepts of drawing and composition are fundamental: whether it be in sculpture, digital imaging or printmaking. Drawing is the main source of character in much of the work- the weight and emotion of an anvil changes from heavy and dense to light and transparent through the layering of the linework. I believe that working both with

two dimensional and three dimensional media, my drawing has become more developed. The rendering of forms and space has been enhanced by the manipulation of the physical models: working with the weight of the anvil has allowed me to better re-create that weight on paper. I also believe that drawing can and should go hand in hand with digital or photographic elements. One of the basic facets of my work is the idea of interaction, relationship. This interaction is mirrored by the combination of drawing and the digital elements. The digital forms usually take on the role of a background or a setting- an atmospheric element, an underlying current, and sometimes a foreshadowing evolution. The drawing takes on the character, the emotion, the personality of each character.

. . .

Human *heir* is the observation and cataloging of the personality of the machine. Through the interaction of man and machine, as well as the interaction between machine and machine, Human *heir* illustrates the life experiences of humanity through the mechanism it created.



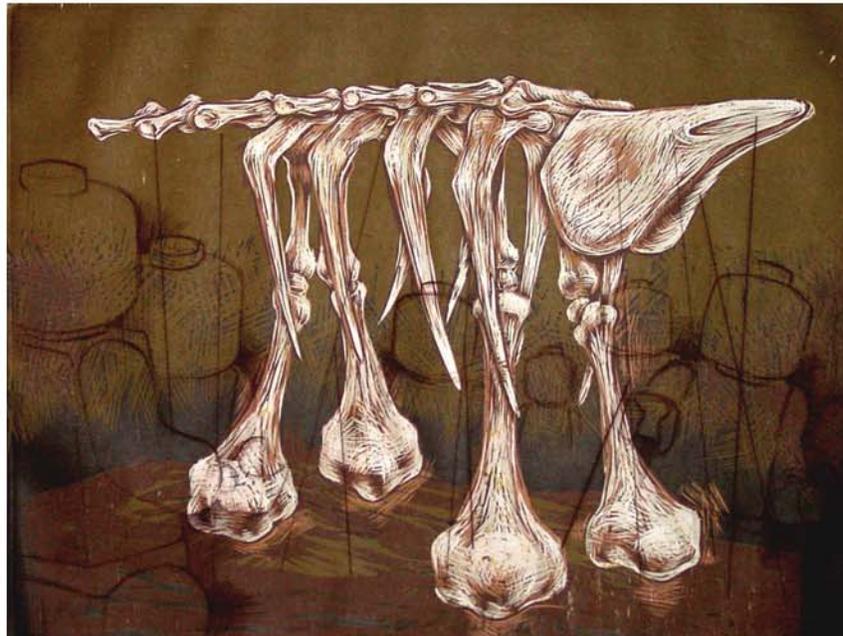
Slide 1. *Classic Problem (I have unexpectedly Quit)*



Slide 2. Parallel Vices



Slide 3. *Would You Like to Play a game?*



Slide 4. *The Relic*



• Portrait •

Slide 5. *Portrait as D.V.*



The Enlightenment of Automatic Mechanization.

(DETAIL) Doctor *Nicolaus Tulp* demonstrating the anatomy of the detachable arm.

Slide 6. Fig. 5: *The Enlightenment of Automatic Mechanization*

· Vita ·

Andrew Saluti was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 26, 1977. The first son of Jay and Jean Saluti, he has two brothers, Charlie and Frankie. Andrew was raised in Sandwich, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, where he attended the Henry T. Wing Elementary School and Sandwich High School. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University, graduating *Cum Laude* in May of 1999. Andrew then went on to attend graduate school at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and will be awarded a Master of Fine Arts degree in May 2002