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Man And Technology: The Glitch In Nature's System

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MAN AND TECHNOLOGY:
THE GLITCH IN NATURE'S SYSTEM

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts
Visual Arts

by
Carey W. Morton
May 2018

Accepted by:
David M. Detrich, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

This work acknowledges the tangible and intangible attributes found in the complex relationship between man and nature. The human capability of manipulating the environment continues to grow at an exponential rate. The technology by which this is achieved has progressed to unprecedented heights. While this evolution has made leaps and bounds in the continuous struggle to achieve mastery over the natural world, advancements in technology challenge the very foundations of human experience.

Processing this phenomenon through my own background in the rural American South, there is a nostalgic and anthropologic component to the display and content of the installations as a whole. My first-hand experiences working with the land has informed my position that technology and digital media expansion contributes to the growing gap between contemporary society and nature.

Gravitating toward found objects, such as common landscaping tools and building materials, the objects are emblematic of Southern working class culture, as well as metaphors for a more instinctive connection between man and the environment. The tools themselves require direct human interaction and physical energy that is often strenuous and labor intensive. This is an almost antiquated experience that has given way to the current rise of technological prowess.

This process of heavy-handed, intense manipulation of the outside world is reflected in my choice of steel, wood, and stone as the material basis into which found objects and natural forms gradually merge. Rather than using truly digital components to

represent technology, I chose highly tactile, primitive materials. These require an intensive process that echoes mythical ancestral struggles between mankind and the forces of nature. These sculptures are a personal meditative experience through which my unique connection to intuitive impulse, energy, physicality, and the interaction of the self with elemental materials challenges my awareness and connection to nature.

To allude to the intangibility of the digital while concentrating in three-dimensional materials and space, I looked to the building block of digital design: the polygon. Black, angular, geometric forms are signifiers for the digital side of technology in a minimal, abstracted way. Their synthetic, planar features are contrasted with organic materials from nature such as driftwood and corporeal imagery of animal and human figures. Topics such as Transhumanism and Biophilia are explored through the union of man, nature, and technology. These seemingly disparate subjects and forms are merged in relatively large-scale sculptures that encapsulate the simultaneous conflict and symbiosis, of nature, technology, and the human element. Transitions between industrious material such as steel to wood, and organic iconography creates a visual metaphor of natural experience in the path of transitions to come in the digital age.

These pieces advance the unique idiosyncrasy sculpture practice employs to communicate between the viewer and the work, through a first-hand interface. This relationship challenges the common filtered exchange through flat, digital screens, by offering authentic experience with the “realness” of sculpture. These explorations converge with the goal of cultivating awareness of one’s individual confrontation with

the fundamental questions of human beings' position in relation to nature, technology, the self, and the cosmos.

DEDICATION

To Ryan Calloway, artist, mentor and friend. Your generosity, zeal for life, and drive for the betterment of your craft, your community, and your family are truly inspiring.

To my father Greg, your support and work ethic instilled in me the importance of working with one's hands, and the skills to bring work to fruition.

To my mother Trina, your saint-like patience and support in the face of adversity is a beacon of meaning.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: MAN, NATURE, AND TECHNOLOGY

This work acknowledges the tangible and intangible attributes within the complex relationship between man, nature, and technology. The human capability of manipulating the environment continues to grow at an exponential rate. The technology by which this is achieved has progressed to unprecedented heights. While this evolution has made leaps and bounds in the continuous struggle to achieve mastery over the natural world, advancements in technology challenge the very foundations of human experience.

Mankind's relationship with nature is increasingly mediated and augmented by technology. In his book *Technological Nature*, Professor of Psychology Peter H. Kahn addresses these concerns, stating that what he terms "technologic nature" have begun to replace "actual nature", as technologies in various ways mediate, augment, or simulate the natural world. Video, live webcams of nature, robotic animals, and immersive, virtual environments are replacing their tangible, actual, counterparts. As technologic nature becomes increasingly popular and accessible, the gap between the physical and psychological relationship between man and the environment widens. (Kahn, 37)

This dichotomy has been termed as "Biophilia" by the American Biologist, researcher, theorist and naturalist, Dr. E.O Wilson. Referring to what he and his colleagues postulated as a fundamental human need to seek out and affiliate with "life and lifelike Processes." (Kellert, Wilson 1) Automobiles, for instance, having replaced horse drawn carriages, are often named after animals like Mustang, Ram, Impala etc.

This could be humanity's genetic propensity for Biophilic relationships representing the transference of power from nature to the machine.

Processing this phenomenon through my own cultural experience in the rural American South, I have an instinctive reaction to the issues and questions imposed by these developments. Does it matter in this fast-paced contemporary society that the physical and psychological framework of the human species is increasingly adapted to simulated versions of natural experience? To advocate for the necessity of such natural faculties as instinct, I must answer; "Yes, it does."

CHAPTER TWO

THE REALITY OF SCULPTURE: PROCESS, MATERIAL, AND FORM

When facing the contention between these forces, one cannot help but question how the rise in technologic nature and its implications affect the self. This goes well beyond the notion of what it means to be human, but further asks; “What does it mean to be *this* human, right here, *me*, right now?” What is the role of art and the artist in a society that seems skewed towards a filtered, albeit safer, version of life experience? The pursuit of answers to these vital questions was a major influence on the process, material, and subject matter of this work.

Sculpture is a unique method of communicative technology, which exists as a bridge between seemingly opposed forces. Utilizing real, tangible, material explorations, complex treatment of linear form, combined with mass and suggested volumetric space, sculpture proclaims the inherent *realness* of waking life in a way that only the three-dimensional activation of space can. This is directly important in a time where visual misinformation is filtered through the second-hand interface based on the flat screens of computers, televisions, and phones. Sculpture provides a unique sensation of reality that other media can only describe.

The gallery then becomes an environment where seemingly overlooked materials, sensations, forms, and subject matter can be experienced directly, without the filter of technologic nature. Consciously choosing steel, wood, and stone as the material basis for the work called for a direct exploration of my own environment for the acquisition of

material, as well as an unavoidable, physically demanding crafting process. While working in this way I became increasingly aware of my personal connection to intuitive impulse, energy, and physicality.

Throughout my sculptural practice I manipulate elements like fire, water, and electricity, applied in conjunction with physical force through hand tools. This ongoing process reminds one of our forbearer's close connections with the natural world. Even through this endeavor, I found myself falling for the comfort and allure of technologic nature so commonplace in contemporary society. However, as an active and conscious observer, I remained aware of this sensation and its effect on my personal constitution. It is this sensitivity and personal awareness of the effects technology and media saturation might have on an individual that I seek to elicit in the viewer.

The use of found objects, such as common landscaping tools and building materials, allows for a semblance of the recognizable to permeate through each piece. These objects, emblematic of southern working-class culture, are a specific entry point to my target audience. They remain relatable even in cases where the resulting sculptural work is daunting, chaotic, and the objects rendered inert. As in the case of *So it goes...* (*Gungnir, Ascalon, Rhongomiant, and Death's Scythe.*) (Fig. 1.1).

Formally speaking, the combination of these divergent forms and the spectrum of transition from object to fabricated structures, fluctuate from highly integrated, as seen in *Cycles*, (Fig. 2.1) to a more disordered, fragmented transition as seen in the figurative *Transcendence* (Fig. 3.1). These amalgamations of form, material, and subject matter can be seen as a three dimensional representations of a “glitch”, imagery commonly

associated with the malfunction of technological systems. When the simulated versions of nature depicted on flat screens encounter a sudden irregularity the “realness” of the simulation breaks down.

I am interested in exploring the ramifications of entanglement between a glitch in technologic nature and actual nature. Adhering to my advocating for tangible materiality and process, an unexpected glitch in my own process arose. How does one represent the intangible world of the digital through three-dimensional material in reality? To solve this problem, at least in a provisional way, I looked to the building blocks of digital design itself, the polygon.

In the early stages of graphic development, simulated environments used the polygon as a means of rendering form. It is interesting to note that when immersed in a digital universe, like a video game or virtual space, one can often magnify or zoom as far as the confines of the simulation allows. This can result in a glitch of sorts as pixelated, polygonal forms begin to emerge revealing the indications of a digital simulated version of reality.

Similarly, reality, when observed at its highest magnification reveals the Atom, the building block of matter. Perhaps by some serendipitous coincidence early representations of atomic structure coincide with polygonal forms. The polygon motif is carried throughout the sculptural series as an invasive, virus-like force in the *Materia Prima* Installation. Crafted in wood, the planar aspects of their geometry alludes to the sensation that these forms do not belong in the natural world (*Fig. 4.1*).

Installed throughout the gallery as well as permeating other sculptures, as seen in *Beast of Burden*, (Fig. 5.1) their invasiveness is further enhanced by the stark contrast between the white gallery space and their deep black surface. Upon closer inspection the wood from which they are crafted shows through in subtle fashion, as intricate surface imperfections in the wood grain catch the light. This subtle variance in finish challenges viewer perception of what is “real” and what is fabricated. As virtual technology grows and our understanding of true nature versus technologic nature blurs, the question of what is real or digital becomes increasingly hard to answer.

CHAPTER THREE

A MYTHIC UNDERTAKING

Mankind, against impossible odds, has continually found a path through the trials and tribulations beset by the natural world. Devoid of claws, fangs, or fur, the survival of man has been dependent on the unique human faculties of imagination and its application through technology. In its earliest stages, materials from nature were examined and reinterpreted into extensions of human physicality.

In order to manipulate and interact with the forces of nature, a stone became a hammer to build or to destroy. A humble tree branch in capable hands could be used to find sustenance beneath the earth's surface. Eventually the mastery of fire distinguished mankind distinctly from other earthlings. Imagination, coupled with the simultaneity of conflict and symbiosis between man and nature, propelled the species to an arguably mythic distinction.

Fire is so significant a progenitor of technological progress and symbol for the triumph of ingenuity over natural power that it is inculcated into ancient myth and legend, traversing cultural barriers. Looking through the lens of my cultural background and personal ancestral heritage, I found great inspiration in the imagery and teachings within the myths and legends commonly associated with Western heritage. Greco-Roman, Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon, Native-American, and Nordic myths were processed through my own unique experiences in the rural American South and comparatively entwined.

For the Greeks, Prometheus was said to have stolen heavenly fire from the gods. In the Book of Enoch, the angel Azazel teaches early man all manner of machinations and the use of fire (Frazer, 193). This mythical significance is present within the only truly figurative sculpture in the series, titled *Transcendence*. Crafted in steel, wood, and clothing, the piece stands in a monumental gesture analogous to modernist formality and classical mythic statuary. At its lowest visual level the base encapsulates a bed of ash and charred wood. This material becomes a signifier for the flames or lack thereof that has seemingly reduced this once natural organic material to its current state. As the title suggests, this component archives a resultant state of transformation.

As the line of sight transitions from the burned wood towards the sculpture proper, a secondary level is revealed. A shallow basin containing used motor oil adds an additional link to the primitive connection to fire. Beyond their elemental connections, these materials are a reference to the spirit of Modernism and industrial progress. From coal to oil and oil to energy, these materials are fundamental factors emblematic of a technological and industrious society; by-products of human progress.

The transformation continues, as an abstracted human form emerges from the oil. The right leg, made of commonplace clothing is life-like and familiar. This contrasts the abstracted, geometric left leg, a form that continues through the torso and chest to finally transmute into a desolate tree gesturing towards the sky. The dark geometric abstractions of the human figure are reminiscent of futurist works such as Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, to more contemporary work in the vein of Antony Gormely and Toby Ziegler. By engaging with the investigation of the relationship of the human body

to space, it participates in the continual oscillation between abstraction and figuration in classical compositions and the contemporary state of digital obfuscation (Ziegler, Simonleegallery.com)

Boccioni sought to fabricate the seemingly intangible and short-lived experiences of speed and motion that the human form activates within its environment. Interestingly, this resulted in abstracted figurative forms that seem more machine than man. A manifestation of Dynamism, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* is in itself static yet through the careful manipulation of form in space suggests motion and transformation (Tate, tate.org). This formal exploration of figurative abstraction in order to suggest transformative movement is an important aspect to my man/machine hybrid sculpture *Transcendence*. Antony Gormley's work is iconic for its abstraction of the human figure, with the intention of challenging the viewer's relationship to his or her own physicality, space, and sense of self. Using metal as the primary material, Gormley's figures are abstracted and simplified into geometric configurations. His recent work utilizes computer generated imagery to abstract the human form into digitized hybrids of space that are then cast in iron as seen in his sculpture *Stay* (Gormley, antonygormley.com).

These works allow a viewer to relate through the shared figurative form of the body, while the boldness in material speaks to the tangible "realness" that the presence of the sculpture activates. The subversive clash and dichotomous unity involved in the digital manipulation of the human figure into such weighted and primal materials is a constituent I found myself engaging within my own work. Continuing the hybridization and transformative essence of man, machine, and technology, Toby Ziegler expands on

this territory in contemporary fashion. Imagery, that through endless reproduction has passed into the visual subconscious is appropriated, and with the use of computer programs rendered into modular planes. These images are then fabricated in three dimensions. Ziegler's sculptures occupy an uneasy territory between the familiar and the strange, between the digital and the real (Ziegler, simonleegallery.com).

My continuation of this artistic territory can be seen in varying degrees throughout all of the work in the series, but is most evident in the interaction of *Materia Prima* and *Transcendence*. The use of polygon forms is in this digital age, congruent to a computer-generated simulation of natural form. Geometric shapes begin to permeate the gallery and continue their invasiveness by transfiguring and fragmenting the human form of *Transcendence* into a hybrid edifice. Elements of industrial progress, natural material, and human physicality combine with ambiguous tension. This tension emphasizes the constant flux between man, nature, and technology, and correlates to current socio-political issues born in the wake of rapid technology and media growth. Whether this transition is positive or negative is left to the viewer to examine.

Though to deny mankind its esteem in progress would be a dereliction, I do not regard humanity and its faculties of ingenuity and amelioration as completely independent from nature. One could argue that technology in one form is not all that divergent from nature itself. Humans, with our innate capacity for creativity and problem solving, have devised ways to enhance our senses, and therefore altering our experiences and capabilities in the natural world.

Conceivably, like the cocoon to the caterpillar, the web to the spider, or the dam to the beaver, the concurrence of mankind, technology, and the natural world are part of the same harmonious cycle. Perhaps this is “the natural way” of things; a change within human psychology and our interaction with media is the logical manifestation of an ongoing evolutionary process. Perhaps it is not. In any case, I find it increasingly vital that the growing expansion of technology, the digital world, and its affect on our external as well as internal nature be more closely examined.

Ray Kurzweil, in his prolific book, *The Singularity is Near*, theorizes that in the near future human beings will be limited by imagination alone. Advancements in nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality will bring a dawning of a new world, free of linear distinctions between human and machine, reality, or virtual reality. Kurzweil further portends that aging and illness will be reversed, pollution halted, hunger and poverty a thing of the past. Consciousness itself will be redefined, and no longer limited to biological systems or the confines of nature (Kurzweil 227-258).

Kurzweil’s tone is optimistic and utopian, seeing this future as the next logical stage in human evolution. It is perhaps a testament to humanity’s hubris, however, to embrace such drastic changes to the fundamental core of existence without question. In the Greek myth, Icarus sought to escape imprisonment by soaring to freedom on wings of his own design. Ignoring the teachings and warnings of his father, Icarus flew too near the Sun and descended as the champion of his own demise (Bulfinch 129-131). Perhaps there is still relevance to ancestral wisdom rooted in traditions more integrated with nature that may offer guidance in this tumultuous territory.

These ideas and questions are explored within the sculpture, *So it goes...* (*Gungnir, Ascalon, Rhongomiant, and Death's Scythe*). A rake, a shovel, a pitchfork and a scythe are tools that have maintained their usefulness, yet are overlooked in their simplicity; these artifacts are neglected as time moves forward in a society where hands grow more accustomed to phones and computers rather than to tools with which to work the land. As a native to the rural American South I have used these items countless times, and witnessed the results. Hand tools embody an inherent quality that makes reference to work and physicality, coupled with the will of the user to conquer, or if left unchecked, destroy nature.

Made with the quintessence of functionality at their core, their presence is a memento of the hand that wielded them. Each tool stands proxy to human physicality. Positioned to suggest their function in kind, the inherent content of these objects further alludes to early forms of technological manipulation. Each tool requires first-hand human interaction that is physical, strenuous, and real.

The energy, physical suffering, and willpower evoked by such instruments is metaphoric to the ancestral struggles of generations past as they sought to harness nature. Each tool is named after fabled weaponry from myth to further compliment the respect for these characteristics: *Gungnir*, the spear of Odin that never missed its target, *Ascalon*, the spear Saint George used to slay the dragon, *Rhongomiant*, the spear from Arthurian legend, and the nameless weapon that symbolizes the unstoppable equalizer of time, *Death's Scythe*. These legendary items were used to alter the metaphysical planes they inhabited in order to serve society. They are referenced in this sculpture in order to

endow seemingly ordinary objects with extraordinary meaning, as well as paying respect to those who, with their mythic efforts, paved the way for our current existence.

I see this piece as emblematic of my grandparents, and to the lineage of generations before them. Their way of life served the incalculably important task of ensuring my parents', and in turn, my own place in the world. This is already threatened by the expansion of technologic nature. *So it goes...* is a visual acknowledgment of the wisdom of our ancestors. Asking that we do not make the same mistake as Icarus who in his haste, excitement, and arrogance failed to heed Daedalus' warning and teachings.

In similar fashion to *Transcendence*, visual transformation is incorporated, as the recognizable aspects of the tools become further abstracted into a more aggressive dynamism. This geometric expansion and activation of space is a metaphor of the 20th century's propensity for breaking away from convention in a glitch-like state. For the purposes of my work I am interested in defining the glitch as an unforeseen anomaly that arises in any accepted system. Specifically, nature and reality are the systems that the work navigates.

CHAPTER FOUR.

PROGRESS, MODERNISM, AND DYSTOPIA

I find it personally ironic, and perhaps quite revealing to my philosophic and artistic position that while taking part in this isochronal interaction between nature, technologic advancement, and the human condition, my material and subject matter of choice suggests iconography of nostalgia and an adherence to more traditional artistic subject matter. Nature, mythology, religion, and formal fundamentals were historically rejected during the last push for technological progress during the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial revolution paved the way for the Modernist era in art history. This art movement rejected tradition in favor of innovation and experimentation in material, in order to create artwork that better reflected modern progress. Commonly associated with utopian views, Modernism was in general associated with idealized visions of life and a belief in progress. These characteristics were venerated by the Futurists, who celebrated the advancement of 20th century technology with the goal to destroy older forms of culture in order to demonstrate the beauty of modern life (Modernism art team, artstory.org). The author of the '*Futurist Manifesto*' Filippo Marinetti, summed up these ideals stating, "...a roaring car that seems to run on explosives is more beautiful than the victory of Samothrace." (Marinetti, 1-4)

Futurism's enthusiasm for modernity and the machine ultimately led many of its champions to celebrate the arrival of the First World War (Art Story Contributors, artstory.org/futurism). After all, if one roaring engine is more beautiful than mythic

statuary, then the carnage in the wake of a thousand missile-clad tanks must be the magnum opus of futurism's progress. The correlations between this philosophy to that of researchers and heroes of technological growth, such as Kursweil, is considerably distinct, yet not often addressed.

In the same way that denying Mankind its well-earned acclaim by thriving in the face of nature's unending challenges, I do not wish to discount the steps Modernism and the Futurists made in the evolution of artistic practice. Much of the schema in which my work partakes owes its fruition to Modernism and the Futurist's emphasis on process and materials. I even find some common ground with their interest in the importance of violence and change. As Marinetti further illustrated "...there is no longer any beauty except that of struggle. Any work of art that lacks a sense of aggression can never be a masterpiece." (Marinetti, 2)

Though I do not adhere to this proclamation as absolute, I see a parallel in the formal qualities as well as subject matter in my work as always gravitating towards qualities of aggression. This is exemplified in *Beast of Burden*, with the dominant nature and predatory aspects to the animal form. In *Materia Prima* as the dark, ominous forms invade the once calm and tranquil white space of the gallery. In *Transcendence* as the human figure is transformed and simultaneously destroyed as it gestures upward. Even in its diffident object-hood, *Cycles* is aggressively buried under jagged rock. Furthermore, when activating its mechanical revolutions, one cannot dissociate the sensation of roasting some relic on a spit. Lastly and most notably, the expansive, chaotic angles of *So*

It Goes...(*Gungnir, Ascalon, Rhongomiant, and Death's Scythe*) culminates to sharp, threatening, objects of antiquity.

Violence is natural, and in many ways necessary for progression both in the internal and the external. It is my stance however, that nothing is more violent, more unstoppable, and more awe-inspiring than the forces of nature. It is here where my bond with the formalities of Futurism returns to traditionalist teaching and subject matter. It seems to me that Kurzweil and his contemporaries, who consider human ingenuity and progress commendable, are forgetting that no matter what unimaginable feats man and our technological prowess might achieve, all still operates within the system of nature.

Arguably, no one understood this more than our distant ancestors who immortalized their knowledge and respect for the forces of nature through Myth and depictions of nature's sublime beauty and wrath. It is perhaps this constant reverence for the duality of nature that fuels another innate tendency of my process and subject matter towards the dystopian. This is once again in direct antithesis to the modernist proclivity for utopian ideals achieved through technological advancement. The dystopian aesthetic can be seen throughout all of the sculpture, as there is a sense of nostalgia in the display and surface treatment of the materials. Nothing is clean or polished to a uniformity that might be associated with a well-oiled machine; instead the natural patina indicating an inherent struggle with time and the elements is accentuated.

The Dystopian undertones of destruction being unleashed by mankind losing control of both nature and technology is replete in popular culture, and has always been a major influence on my work. Director Ridley Scott openly incorporated the designs of

Futurist architect Sant'Ella in what is now held to be one of the most iconic Dystopian films of all time (The Vintage News, thevintagenews.com). *Blade Runner* centered on the rise and fall of technologic progress and the subsequent dismantling of what it means to be human. These Dystopian qualities of popular culture were conscious inspirations for *Beast of Burden*.

A displaced beast stands triumphantly on a truck door taken from a crash site. The innate material essence of the truck door cannot be divorced from the indication of its origin. That is to say: upon encountering this object, the viewer must confront the distinction that the door is a part of something no longer whole. Where did it come from? What was the outcome of the crash? Was anyone hurt? These questions are all incorporated into the intrinsic characteristics of the door's presence within the gallery space, bringing with it visceral undertones of impact, speed, and violence.

This narrative is further enhanced by the incorporation of the bestial form and dead tree within the installation. Made of steel, foam and Bondo, the animal and the door are comprised of the same base materials, suggesting an intrinsic link on the effects these two opposing forces might have on each other. Inspired by the mythic chimera, the beast is similar in form to a wolf, hyena, deer, and a bull, exuding qualities of both predator and prey. The animal in the context of the exhibition stands as a monument to the animalistic, instinctive attributes between man and nature. Being of more traditionally referential subject matter, this animal form comparatively paired with the truck door speaks to tradition, myth, and nature opposing the industrial, technological progress associated with futurism.

The only truly natural material within the piece, a large, dead, cedar tree, provides a context for these seemingly disparate subjects to exist. The forms become intertwined in a tenuous relationship, further enhanced by the use of gravity and balance. A narrative can be crafted, informed by the commonplace experience of passing an animal recently struck by the odd vehicle. This is a simultaneous reference to a cultural experience in the provincial south. The three objects become parts of an equation, showcasing interconnectivity too often overlooked in everyday life.

What is natural and what is artificial? What constitutes a normal cycle playing out its purposed course? What is the unforeseen anomaly that may effect these natural cycles? Living in the south, the image of deer and other animals crashing into cars and trucks along the road is not uncommon. It has to a degree become a natural event, arguably part of an ongoing complex cycle between man, nature, and technology. There is a hint at some underlying unity not to be completely discerned, but rather questioned as one may question the very nature of the “real”. This piece was first in a series of works that combines several binaries into unified sculptures intent on cultivating awareness of mankind’s affect on the environment, and what role the human element might play in altering reality through growing technology.

This dystopian cycle of balance is expressed in a more integrated fashion in *Cycles*. On a large axis where one would expect to see a globe, we find another glitch-like form. This form is comprised of a large, organic wood burl on one hemisphere, contrasted with angular, prism forms on the other. References to the synthetic, the

simulated, or the virtual are balanced with the natural and the organic. Capitalizing on repetition and variation, an abstracted reflection is created.

A hand-operated, mechanical component attached to the central axis allows a viewer to interact with the piece. As the glitch rotates on its central axis the viewer becomes incorporated into the work as participant and observer, as well as the source of energy and action. Similarities to the natural rotation of the Earth, as seen on commonplace globes, are suggested. Diverse formal aspects between the two hemispheres imply conflict while the kinetic action of rotation simultaneously creates a sense of balance and unification.

Here the human element is directly seen and experienced first-hand. This continuous cycle places the viewer in an intimate position within the sculpture. One's personal affect on this microcosmic representation of both the natural world and the digital are brought into question. This may be interpreted as a meditative action of contemplation, or perhaps like the exponential growth of the digital age, it is a struggle to control. Each individual's psyche is brought into play as a determining factor in understanding his or her place in society and nature.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

These works are a contemplation of what it means to be human in the face of technological growth. My personal experiences and heritage in the American South, in connecting to the environment, and cultural and psychological impact on traditionalist ideals have influenced a personal bias towards a more visceral, hands-on approach to life. This resonates with the pedagogy and visual record of myth suffused throughout the sculptures.

These sculptures are grand narratives, pulling from my personal observations, and allowing the viewer to consider their hand in our history as well as the future that is to come. Through technological advances, humans have operated in unity as well as discord to natural forces. Much in the same way the development of human nature adapts to forces of uncontrollable change, each piece is an intuitive, process-driven response to current issues surrounding the interplay between man, nature and what might become a dystopian, technological future.

By using recognizable objects as symbols for eras I hold to be more self-aware to the duality of nature, my work allows for the ordinary to become extraordinary. The sculptures are a reminder not to overlook the value in a traditional connection to nature in the face of technology and media saturation. These works are metaphoric gestures encouraging self-examination on the role one may play, as technology and nature continue to oscillate, declaring the significance of where we've come from.

FIGURES



Figure 1.1

So It Goes...
(*Gungnir, Ascalon, Rhongomiant, and Death's Scythe*)



Figure 2.1

Cycles



Figure 3.1
transcendence



Figure 4.1

Materia Prima



Figure 5.1 Beast of Burden

INSTALLATION AND DETAIL VIEWS















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