

Artist *Implicated* in the Appropriation of Canonical Genius!

(“Mock” Press Release)

Topher, a single-name artist at UC Santa Cruz, controversially incorporates (some say appropriates) the work of geniuses like Leonardo da Vinci and Picasso into his digital media work. “Why not?” he says, “These guys were good... they are in the canon, after all.” At a recent showing, some activist fellow artists critiqued the work, referencing the “dominant heterosexual-white-male-genius influence”, and hinting at hidden fascist meanings. When asked to comment, Topher stated “Well, I’m a white male genius-wanna-be, so I think it makes sense to reference others of my kind. If I was a black-female-lesbian artist referencing other black-female-lesbian artists, would anyone critique it on those merits?” When pressed as to why he persists in these tendencies, he replied “Because I’m a closet revolutionary. Since the dominant ideology in the arts at UC Santa Cruz is feminist-socialism, and even though I consider myself a materialist feminist and Marxist at heart, I just gotta buck the system.”

One of Topher’s recent digital collages, named *RAMO: Leonardo Line of Flight*, incorporated transparent layers of architectural and natural imagery, combined with a mechanical illustration from the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci. When asked what could possibly be learned by referencing such tiredly famous personalities in his work, and whether this is just an annoying phase he is going through on his way to more original production, he said “I think it seems patronizing to say this is some kind of phase I’m going through till I get to my own work. This is what I am engaging in now. As a creative artist I consider anything in my perceptive experience to be up for grabs to collage into my work, especially if I can get around the legal copyright. Look, Dali and Duchamp referenced Leonardo, and no one gave them a hard time. Damn... two more white-male-geniuses... can you not print that? By the way, did I mention an ancestor of mine was a good friend of Galileo’s?”

In his latest showing, Topher presented a multi-media 3D assemblage incorporating digital photographic printing, laser etching on plexiglass, found objects, and digitally processed video. The piece, named *Medi-a-tated Picasso Hall of Wandering 1.0*, displayed a bewildering amount of references to mixed reviews. When queried as to whether he is trying to make his viewers heads hurt with all the stuff going on, “I don’t know, I think I am just tired of seeing minimalist digital media, so I went maximalist instead. Maybe it will start a New Baroque Media trend. I would have added more, but I ran out of time for the showing.”

The piece in question contains references to Picasso’s cubist period, as well as spatial explorations, vanishing points, and ritualistic meditational references. In some video of a meditational walk through the desert, audio of repetitive footfalls can be heard crunching on the sand, making one critic claim it reminded them of a disturbing mechanical washing machine sound. What was he going for with these references, and why is the title so obviously written on the piece? “Since I have been engaged in exploring the same

perspectival illusion of space that Picasso explored, I think it makes sense to playfully reference him in both the title and by incorporating a cute drawing of one of his characters. I consider it the same as quoting a famous author in a scholarly paper. It is a visual quote.” He continues, “The work progresses in both spatial dimensions and technological illusion through the frame to the video doorway, which plays a meditative walk I did last summer through the desert. The video and sound was intended to produce a meditative time-based media experience, which is ritualistic and repetitive by nature. Perhaps it says something about us that it sounds mechanical. In addition, I am playing with several theatre references, including a technique called Rep and Rev, or repetition and revision by Susan Parks, while also playing with the perceptual framing of the proscenium and the perspectival illusion of depth.”

I don't know... it looks kind of wonky to this reviewer (and don't get me started on the presumptuous memes, religious cyborgs, and gendered singularities in his theory). But go see for yourself what the controversy is all about. The “artist” currently known as Topher will be showing sporadically all year at UC Santa Cruz, unless they shut him down by refusing to give him a thesis committee.