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New Romanticism

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NEW ROMANTICISM

By

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Professional Paper

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The not-so-terrible beauty.....	2
Personal Choices.....	9
Content.....	10
Imagery.....	11
Format.....	14
Scale.....	18
Materials.....	20
Conclusion.....	22
Bibliography.....	23

List of Images

Figure 1: <i>Monk by the Sea</i>	3
Figure 2: <i>Rain, Steam, and Speed: The Great Western Railway</i>	3
Figure 3: <i>Storm in the Rocky Mountains</i>	6
Figure 4: <i>The Bronco Buster</i>	6
Figure 5: <i>Reselect</i>	12
Figure 6: <i>Extreme</i>	13
Figure 7: <i>Detail of Diorama, The Field Museum, Chicago IL</i>	14
Figure 8: <i>Slight Warp</i>	15
Figure 9: <i>Parts Unknown</i>	16
Figure 10: <i>Struck</i>	17
Figure 11: <i>A Prayer for Clarabel</i>	18
Figure 12: <i>Breathe</i>	19
Figure 13: <i>Parts Unknown</i>	20
Figure 14: <i>Big Nothing</i>	21
Figure 15: <i>Solitude</i>	21

INTRODUCTION

Artists operate in a landscape of contradiction. It is a difficult thing to accept ambivalence without resolution, but to embrace it can be a strange sort of relief. Sometimes there aren't answers to our questions--especially when our questions deal with such nebulous ideas as love, death, and the meaning of life. Continuing to search for answers is analogous to climbing a mountain...neither makes any practical sense. The alternative, however, is to do nothing. I climb mountains, and I make visual art. My art is about what all art, in its most idealized, romanticized sense, is about--the search for meaning in the face of much evidence to the contrary.

My current work distills my own experiences into departure points for exploring universal questions. Conceptually I am attempting to resolve, or at least process, the contradictions and dualities in my own life. Visually, symbols of wilderness and civilization are the extremes I attempt to reconcile. In trying to walk a middle ground between these worlds, I am producing artwork that employs concepts, imagery and materials from both. The intent is to communicate personal conclusions while acknowledging the influences of history, culture, and the filters through which I see the world. In dialoguing with an audience, I am searching for the intersection of the deeply personal and the universal.

THE NOT-SO-TERRIBLE BEAUTY

In my life thus far I have been, among other things, a mounted guide, a hunting camp cook, and an avid trail rider and backpacker. These pursuits have taken me into some extremely isolated landscapes...the kinds of places where people are outnumbered by bears, where life apparently exists without regard for civilization. In moving through these places, having little contact with people, I observe and relate to the non-human. These interactions provide me with a perceived clarity concerning my place in the world and my approach to living. This clarity, which arrives in moments both large (panoramic vistas) and small (watching a bird fly) is a hard thing to hold on to. In every case, it seems like a gift given to me by the wilds.

I am certainly not the first person to look to Nature for clarity and inspiration. In the Western tradition, I find my closest allies in the Romantics, both European and American: visual artists such as Caspar David Friedrich and Albert Bierstadt; writers such as William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau. Romantic philosophy, which celebrates Nature while contemplating it through a veil of idealism, ultimately has more to do with humans than with the non-human. Romanticism forms the base from which Western society, especially America, views its natural surroundings. My world view is necessarily a product of this.

The Romantic sensibility rests upon the belief that in Nature, we can observe the divine. For the early proponents of Romanticism in literature and visual art, this quite literally meant the Christian God. As one might imagine, encountering a deity is an unsettling experience. In the words of William Wordsworth:

"The unfettered clouds and the region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light--
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;

Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, last, and midst, and without end." ¹

This passage describes a journey taken by the author through the Alps. Here Wordsworth conveys a classic Romantic tenet--the experience of the sublime. Before these towering mountains, gripped by terrified awe, the artist feels himself humbled before Nature. In such moments, one feels one's own insignificance, countered--if only momentarily--by a belief in the presence of an infinite intelligence. Such experiences can only be had in isolation, in subjugation before Nature. Afterwards, it becomes the artist's mission to interpret, through carefully selected imagery, the sublime experience for a wider audience.



Figure 1: Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk By The Sea*, oil on canvas, 1809



Figure 2: J.M.W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed: The Great Western Railway*, oil on canvas, 1844

¹ Wordsworth, William. "The Prelude," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th edition, ed. M.H. Abrams. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996, pp1445

The Romantic movement was active during the first half of the 19th century in multiple European countries. The ultimate goal for each localized group was the same--to evoke the divine through representation of the natural. In what is now Germany, Romanticism found its literary voice in poets such as Goethe and Novalis. In the visual arts, the Dresden master painter Caspar David Friedrich (fig. 1) came to typify the Germanic Romantic aesthetic. In contrast to contemporaries such as Englishman J.M.W. Turner (fig. 2), who eschews realism and evokes the spiritual quality of light in many of his works, Friedrich relies on realistically rendered scenes and personal symbology to carry his thoughts on loneliness, faith, and the journey through life. In many of Friedrich's works, we find the human figure as an almost insignificant subject before the vastness of nature. These often ethereal compositions clearly convey the melding of mystery and discovery inherent to Romantic thought.

America, colonized by white Europeans, was another landscape ultimately to be interpreted through Romanticism. Until perhaps 100 years ago, America as a nation defined itself in part through the idea of the "frontier," the boundary between our civilization and a landscape existing independently of people--a wilderness, essentially. Traditionally our frontier lies to the West. Early American policies, such as the Manifest Destiny, sought to explore and civilize these landscapes. Our success on the frontier yielded a national identity built upon the ideas of hard work, freedom, and self-determination. It also yielded the end of the frontier. It is during this waning of the frontier, around the end of the 19th century, in which Romantic thought becomes important in American interpretation of the land.

Romantic thought was already a presence in our cultural identity. The writings of

Henry David Thoreau celebrate wild places in much the same way as do the European Romantics--as landscapes of introspection and epiphany, in which an austere divine presence might be encountered. As the frontier shrinks, a more nostalgic version of Romanticism becomes the philosophical means to idealize and protect a defining element of American culture. If there is no more wilderness to civilize, what happens to our national identity? Faced with the extinction of the self-made frontiersman and the finite possibilities of inhabited landscape, writers such as John Muir and politicians such as Gifford Pinchot and the colorful Teddy Roosevelt made it their business to protect and set aside these last 'pristine' places. The ethos espoused by these leaders, alongside economic concerns, produced the American Wilderness of today. In succession since the last days of the frontier, America has seen the implementation of National Parks and Monuments, the Forest Service, and the Wilderness Act, to name a few. These and other institutions exist mainly to protect and manage uninhabited landscape. To what end they do this remains a complicated issue.

In contemporary American society, the concept of 'wilderness' can basically be defined as the opposite of civilization. Americans increasingly inhabit urban and semi-urban communities, and a lack of modern convenience is now the exception rather than the norm. Familiarity, it would seem, breeds contempt. The ubiquity of contemporary culture (housing developments, vehicles, television, constant communication, etc.) has created a sentimentality concerning that which we "civilized" in the first place. The open spaces, the wilds, symbolize something we have lost along the way--a time when things were simpler and a way of life was clear. Whether this was ever true is debatable, but the symbol is no less powerful. It is used to great effect by 19th century American artists such as Albert Bierstadt (fig. 3) and Frederick Remington (fig. 4). Bierstadt, influenced

by the Hudson River School, creates melodramatic landscapes that read as a direct continuation of the Romantic practices of European artists such as John Constable and Caspar David Friedrich. Remington celebrates the “Wild West” through paintings and sculptures depicting the peoples of the American frontier, both Native and Caucasian. It should be noted that neither artist (Remington being somewhat of an exception) called the frontier their home. Rather, the impressions they presented to the public were the result of brief visits to the frontier lands. Both of these American Romantics did much to increase public interest in the frontier.



Figure 3: Albert Bierstadt, *Storm in the Rocky Mountains*, oil on canvas, 1886



Figure 4: Frederick Remington, *The Bronco Buster*, bronze, 1909

National Parks and Monuments, revered as temples to our respect for nature, came about originally with dual functions: 1) to protect elements of natural splendor and

wild habitat, and 2) to increase tourism in the West, i.e. consumer use of the railroads. The relationship between wilderness and consumer culture has ever since been inextricably entwined in this country. With the decline of local production industries, the human inhabitants of the American wilds became ever more dependent on tourism. Today, our Romantic idea of wilderness packages and sells any number of products: vacations, real estate, vehicles, apparel. The wilds have become a place to "get away from it all," whatever "it all" may be. Present still is the idea that there are lessons to be learned from Nature. However, in our culture, the wilderness has become less a place to encounter the divine and more a place to encounter oneself, wearing moisture-wicking fabrics.

It must also be acknowledged that Romanticism has always been associated with the leisured class of society, be it 19th century England or contemporary America. Those who toil on the land seldom find the time to relax and contemplate it. While at Walden Pond, Thoreau got most of his food from town. In our country, where people in general live comfortably, get their food from the grocery store, and in large part spend their working hours in front of computer screens, the call of the wilds is all the more powerful.

At the heart of the Romantic sensibility is pervasive doubt. That is to say, a Romantic strives to believe in the ideals set forth--that the divine is apparent in Nature, that we are all a part of something larger, that illumination is possible. But recall the tiny, overwhelmed figures in Friedrich's paintings; the melancholy poetry and often disastrous lives of the English Romantics...these are conflicted souls, struggling to look on the bright side of things. From my own perspective as a kind of contemporary Romantic, the small moments of clarity I achieve in my life are faced with many an adversary: my post-modern life, the state of the world we live in, my own cynical sense of humor. Not least

of these adversaries is the fact that I have taken it upon myself to dissect my world view in cultural and historical terms. But to be a Romantic is to believe, or at least to try to believe, even when you're fairly sure there's nothing to believe in. What is seductive in wilderness is that it is a symbol of what exists before us, after us, and without reference to us. I am still moved by this, despite it all.

PERSONAL CHOICES

It is midday and we have ridden up the mountain to check the water level in the reservoir. He hasn't said more than is absolutely necessary to me for more days than I can remember; even the fact that I wanted to come on this ride seems an annoyance to him. I ride my black gelding, Digger, whose other role in my life lately is a big, warm shoulder to cry on when no one is looking. It is clear and hot, and the sun beats on us as we ride through the sagebrush across the tabletop mountain. Digger's hooves break the sage and the scent of it is all around me...this is the scent that will transport me back to this time, this place, long after I have left it for good.

Their presence is at first a cloud of crows. As we ride closer, out of the twisted, weather-worn aspens, their huge forms rise from the sage, in themselves their own tombstones. They are elk, we realize, as our dogs begin to circle and bark. Young, one can tell from their antlers, but very large...impressive. They lie in a makeshift circle, their spindly legs overlapping in a bizarre embrace. They are newly dead.

How is this possible, both of us wonder, without speaking to one another. Our first thought, which both of us will communicate later to others, is that they were poached. This is not the work of a natural predator, and their death is apparently so unnatural...more so because they are adult males who have died side-by-side. But their antlers, still spikes, are intact; other than the marring left by gastric bursting and their eyes, lost to crows, they are untouched.

The next conclusion, which we reach simultaneously but do not acknowledge to one another, is lightning. There are storms almost every week on this mountain. This is the history that we both invent, without concurrence: In a violent storm, these two animals, strong, but young and inexperienced, agreed and sought shelter in the center of a

sage field. They were struck, and died instantly, their bodies collapsing where they stood.

This day, as I sit on my horse, experiencing what I name "awe" in the presence of this magnificent loss of life, I look across this scene at a person whom I have loved, whom I still love but cannot reach, and I realize that we two humans are so much like these animals that lie dead before us. To find a solution in another person, to trust in their judgment, to have them lead you to disaster. There is no blame...there is reality. When I catch his eye, always briefly, I can see that he understands. They thought they might be safe. They left the trees...they huddled together, frightened and hopeful, two huge children. In hindsight, the eventuality of their end seems palpable to me.

Later, he will see a drawing I have made of this scene, and look away uncomfortably. Our eventuality, his and mine, both of us so huge and proud, will be just as predictable.

Content

The above narrative, painful and deeply personal, is one of many that I present in my visual artwork. When I had this experience, I was very committed in practice to ephemeral installations in the landscape. My landscape then was the Colorado River valley. It became apparent to me, soon after the above narrative, that I could not stay there...what I was left with was a desire to hold on to the experiences in that landscape that, even as they occurred, seemed to define me as an individual.

How then to communicate such a singular scene, so sad, yet eventually looked back upon as another rite of passage, another experience that teaches the 'way of the world,' even though the lesson seems ever more unclear. What is the point of any of this, I continually ask. This question is asked in the personal context of a wonderful life, full

of emotional support, without significant hardship or suffering. In the world, there is pain, there is death. There is worse than death. There will be my death. Is that OK? It must be... it's true.

The experiences and narratives that inform my art represent those times when I'm able to accept the contradictions of life: that things can be funny and horrible, sad and beautiful, that in the face of so much that confuses and upsets me, I still love being alive. There is no resolution to most of life's great quandaries, but there doesn't really need to be. Sometimes I can see this, and it makes me feel fine.

My search for meaning and personal fulfillment is melodramatic, and ultimately a little self-important. It's not as if no one has ever asked these questions before. I think it is a dangerous thing to take oneself too seriously, yet I come close to doing just that quite often. In my artwork, as in my life, I use humor to temper my own seriousness.

Imagery

There is so much imagery in one's life, so much personal iconography. And then there is distance...the sense of something once so deeply felt but now looked back upon, almost sentimentally, intentionally preserved but drying up all the same. I began making objects, after four years of avoiding them altogether, out of the need to catalogue and preserve my experiences. The satisfaction of being able to materially produce an image realized in my mind assuages that which I have lost, have re-experienced, and continue to lose.

As an artist, I have always been interested in the landscape as both material and subject matter. My early landscape-based installation work consistently dealt with a sense of place and quiet moments of contemplation in the natural world. My messages were conveyed through process-oriented, site-based interventions (fig. 5).



Figure 5: *Reselect*, documentation of site-specific intervention, dimensions variable, 2005

The work was available to an audience only through documentation. The pieces themselves were left on-site, at the mercy of their situations. More recently, I have felt the need to create works that can be viewed by an audience in first-person. This has as much to do with a personal desire for ownership of my experiences as it does with a need to communicate directly with viewers. I bring to these objects and installations the same sensibilities that went into my landscape-based work.

My current body of work relies heavily on specific imagery—landscape, wildlife etc. All compositions and the characters therein are drawn, at least in part, from personal experience. This is not to say, "I saw this elk, so I made a sculpture of an elk." Rather, I play the traditional role of the Romantic artist, rearranging, distilling, and stitching together pieces of experience into compositions I feel are readable for my audience. Much as Friedrich sketched outdoors and combined ideal elements into his paintings, the imagery I select is suited to the overall message of the artwork. Narrative plays an important part, but is employed in varying degrees. For example, *Extreme* (fig.6) grew out of my observations of mountain goats in Glacier National Park. This experience was the inspiration for the work. The narrative put forth by the piece relies more on the freezing of a moment in time...the predicament faced by this particularly ambitious goat creates a story around itself, meant to evoke themes concerning ambition, isolation, and

human folly. In my work, animals become surrogates for humans: myself, those in my life. Sometimes the decisions we make in life aren't thought out as well as they could be; we only think we know what we want.



Figure 6: *Extreme*, mixed media, 16" x 14" x 8", 2006

Wilderness and wildlife imagery are consistently present in my work. Both landscapes and animals are recognizably rendered, and serve multiple functions. In creating a system of symbols, I choose those which will evoke my narratives while remaining accessible to an audience. Not surprisingly, bears, bull elk, birds of prey, cougars, etc. are reliable as symbols of untamed wilderness. They are also readily engaged as characters in an allegory...usually, I am asking the audience to put themselves in the place of the animal in question. That I choose to idealize, distort, and "cute them up" can be seen as a comment on how we as humans view other creatures. For the most part, we try to understand them only on our terms, not theirs. Bears don't care about being cute, and elk don't care about being beautiful. We care for them.

My time spent tending other creatures and observing them in the wild has produced many thoughts on where we as species converge and differ. In our thinking, animals are exempted from the expectation that they define some grand justification for

their lives...living is enough. Perhaps in empathizing with them and anthropomorphizing them in my work, I am really seeking relief from my own searching.

Format

The manner in which an audience engages my work is very important to me. This consideration enters into my work on multiple levels. I consider the traditional methods of display for similar concepts. In some cases, the work I am creating deals with melodramatic subject matter in the context of *vista* and optical perspective. The tradition of diorama seems an obvious mode of display for such themes. Developed by L.J.M. Daguerre in 1822, diorama and its related medium, panorama, employ objects in the round along with trompe l'oeil perspective to create convincing space. Famous examples include Carl Akeley's wildlife displays in New York City's Museum of Natural History and Chicago's Field Museum (fig. 7). The presence of actual taxidermy animals in these displays is all too appropriate. To display life in observable detail, it is necessary to kill it, literally and figuratively. The audience is presented with an arrested moment in time, arranged at the artist's discretion.



Figure 7: Detail of diorama at the Field Museum, Chicago, IL

In diorama I find many intriguing possibilities for my own work. The medium allows me a great deal of initial control over a viewer's contact with my art. I am able to dictate how and in what order it should be viewed. *Slight Warp* (fig. 8) is an example of

this. A small box diorama with a spy hole, it was available for viewing by only one person at a time. My intent was to give the viewer an image that was singular, just for them.

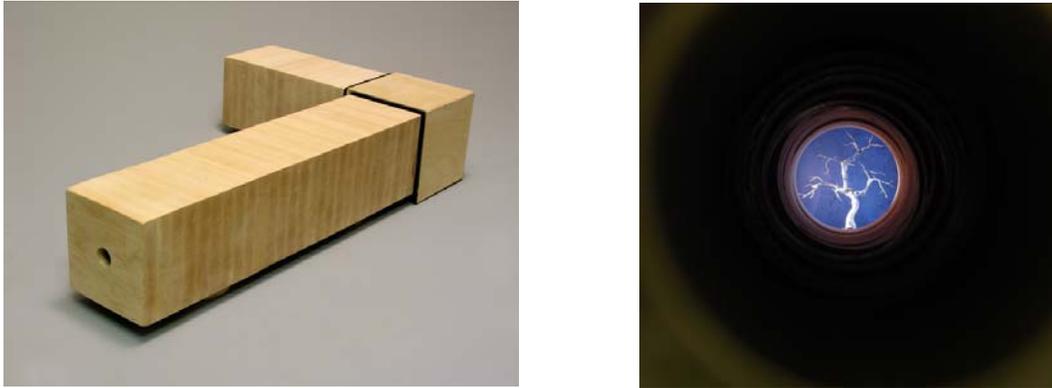


Figure 8: *Slight Warp*, maple and mixed media, 8'' x 1.5' x 2', 2006

I also find it interesting, after the initial viewing of a piece, to let the audience engage the diorama from different angles, thus allowing the pictorial coherence to break down. This is a direct allusion to the idea of *vista*, or a view that crumbles as you walk into it. This is also a comment on perspective, both in its mechanical and psychological senses. Linear perspective necessarily breaks down with the penetration of the picture plane—it is completely dependent on a single vantage point. Similarly, it is more difficult (even impossible) to reach a single conclusion about an event or idea when considering it from multiple conceptual angles. For me, this echoes the post-modern contention that “reality” is a construct, a combination of culture, personal experience, and other influences on our individual consciousness. In presenting an audience with an idealized vantage point and then allowing them to break it, I am playing with the idea that verifiable reality does not exist. In *Parts Unknown* (fig.9), I give viewers complete access to a diorama, but I give only one vantage point that makes classic pictorial sense. By this decision, I am voicing the opinion that idealism or correctness does not always equal truth.



Figure 9: *Parts Unknown*, cast iron and mixed media, dimensions variable, 2007

Diorama seems an ideal medium for these concepts. I find it appropriate to employ a deprecated technology to convey a message steeped in Romanticism, which is not the most current approach to life. The two elements complement and comment on one another.

I also make work which falls more into the 'object' category. When making formal and display decisions about these works, I often try to reference the tradition of the souvenir. Similarly to diorama, the souvenir's origins are in presenting evidence or in recreating an exotic experience. Museums in part began as collections of bizarre objects in the homes of Europe's most certified weirdos. Narwhal ivories, tiny carved fruit stones, and even human horns were displayed as proof of extraordinary achievement and/or experience. The desired effect was to portray the collector as a worldly, well-traveled individual with a penchant for the fantastic. In later times, collecting became a means to both showcase precious, interesting objects and to display material wealth.

I think of myself as a collector of Romantic experiences. I purposefully choose paths that will bring me more of them. As I have said, the clarity I sometimes achieve in isolation is a difficult thing to hold on to in my everyday life. I regard many of my works as souvenirs of these experiences.

When creating these works, I often begin with a found object, in general furniture or shelving. This serves a dual function: 1) the found object dictates certain formal decisions about the fabricated portion (scale, materials, color), and the result is a dialogue between my own aesthetic and what is appropriate to the situation (much as in installation work); 2) the found objects I use often reference domestic and decorative traditions, and work as foils to the wilderness imagery I set against them, creating a desired visual and conceptual tension.

For example, *Struck* (fig. 10) consists of a miniature landscape set into a Queen Anne style coffee table. In the landscape, the viewer encounters a pair of cast iron bull elk, who have died mysteriously. The inspiration for this piece was an event in my life in which I discovered a similar scene, which came to symbolize the wasting away of a relationship that had been very important to me. In displaying this piece, I wanted the viewer to be clear on how to approach it. I wanted to give the impression of hovering above this situation, of achieving a sort of reflective space from it. A coffee table seemed a natural choice. They are familiar objects with a very specific knee-height, which are generally engaged by sitting at or standing over them. The lack of chairs in the display forced the standing position. The sumptuous Queen Anne style reinforced the idea that I am struggling to bring this strange, haunting experience "indoors" in order to talk about it.



Figure 10: *Struck*, cast iron and mixed media, 2' x 2.5' x 2.5', 2006

At times form is directly influenced by content. *A Prayer for Clarabel* (fig.11) is a commemorative piece, which I think of as a kind of emotional “band-aid” for a sad experience. The idea for the piece came out of the death of an animal I felt an affinity with. In envisioning a happier ending for this turkey, Clarabel, I chose to place her on a mountaintop as a sage, reading a book of great learning. The form of the piece is the result of a dialogue with a found object (the miniature table) and my research of traditional Chinese scholar rocks, which are contemplated during meditation in some Eastern practices.



Figure 11: *A Prayer For Clarabel*, mixed media, 12" x 9" x 6", 2005

Scale

Scale is always a factor in my work. In larger installation works and dioramas, manipulation of scale is used mainly to reinforce convincing perspective, and later to indicate that perspective breaks down after leaving an intended viewpoint. In objects, I use miniature to echo the tradition of the collectible. Miniature objects are overwhelmingly precious and attractive for any number of reasons: the allure of the handcrafted, the "cute factor", etc. One wants to put them in ones' pocket; to approach

them and appreciate them on an intimate level. This palatability is useful for combining with thoughts on rather negative themes: isolation, melancholy, death. For example, in *Breathe* (fig. 12), a miniature aspen tree dies slowly inside of a bell jar. The theme of the piece is certainly not a happy or hopeful one, yet the scale and minute detail of the object itself remains attractive to the viewer. Miniature is also a way for me to convey a sense of humor--to make light of the heavy-handed content in my work, to make it less serious.



Figure 12: *Breathe*, mixed media, 8" x 4" x 4", 2006

In both cases, scale is a function of distance. I mean this in both a physical and emotional sense. Vast spaces tend to be austere and almost frightening. They don't invite you in, and retain the sublimity that has been so watered down since the days of the first Romantics. It is this idea that I am referencing in works such as *Parts Unknown*. In this particular installation, the feeling of vastness and empty desolation is reinforced by a recording emitting from the landscape itself, consisting of a howling wind under which a lonely, spaghetti western whistle fades in and out. The miniature deer (fig. 13), which reinforce linear perspective when viewed from the correct vantage point, seem all the more lost and lonely when viewed close up.



Figure 13: *Parts Unknown* (miniature deer), cast iron and mixed media, dimensions variable, 2007

In neither case does the audience become a participant in the narrative. In the case of diorama, this possibility of participation breaks down as soon as the viewer enters the picture plane...elements cease to be part of a pictorial whole. In the case of miniature objects, the discrepancy in scale between humans and miniatures makes participation absurd. Consequently, I use scale to maintain my boundaries.

Materials

I use contrasting materials in the same way I use the contrast of wilderness and domestic aesthetic, of vast and tiny spaces. As a sculptor, I am aware of the historical background of many materials, and I like to choose materials in part based on this. Bronze, for example, has references to Classical sculpture as well as the precious, commemorative keepsake. As material it carries a great deal of authority. Iron retains a few of the conceptual properties of bronze, but contains more connections to the domestic from its use in the production of decorative flourishes, stoves, bathroom fixtures, and children's toys. Both materials are traditionally used to create multiples. I generally don't make production molds and gamble on casting original waxes. This is risky, but reinforces for me the precious nature of these objects and therefore the experiences and concerns they represent.

Cast metal is a "serious" material in sculptural terms. It amuses me to juxtapose

bronze and iron with materials that have overt reference to hobby culture: mixed media trees, decorator moss, wax and paper, etc. This creates an interesting material tension and evokes the relationship between opposites: wilderness and domestic, eternal and ephemeral. In *Big Nothing* (fig.14), three scaled train-set models of deer peer over the edge of a miniature handmade decorative cast-iron shelf. This piece is intended as, among other things, a comment on the commercialism of the wilderness experience. In *Solitude* (fig. 15), several cast bronze wildlife figurines inhabit mixed-media landscapes, which are set atop decorative wall sconces. This piece is intended to comment on the similarities that we humans read between ourselves and our wild counterparts, and the limitations that sentimentality and nostalgia places on us all.



Figure 14: *Big Nothing*, cast iron and mixed media, 2.5" x 5" x 2", 2006



Figure 15: *Solitude* (detail), bronze and mixed media, 14" x 7" x 4", 2006

CONCLUSION

It is normal, indeed common, to have deep questions about life and the meaning of it all. These are human questions. However, how we as individuals choose to ask and process these questions varies greatly. My personal solution is to make art about the experiences that define me, but this in itself is not enough. I believe that artists in all mediums create out of a need to communicate. This is certainly so for me. Although I remain attracted to isolation, and truly need the wild situations that provide me with my content and subject matter, I need interaction with other humans just as much. Making art and climbing mountains are actions that affirm my own existence. I generally do both of these things by myself. But I have a need to share these experiences with other people. There is nothing more satisfying than hearing from a viewer that they have understood me, despite our different backgrounds, educations, lives. In these moments, when I have communicated and been heard, I believe in the convergence of the personal and the universal. It is a comforting thing, and ultimately, this is the real reason why I make art.

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