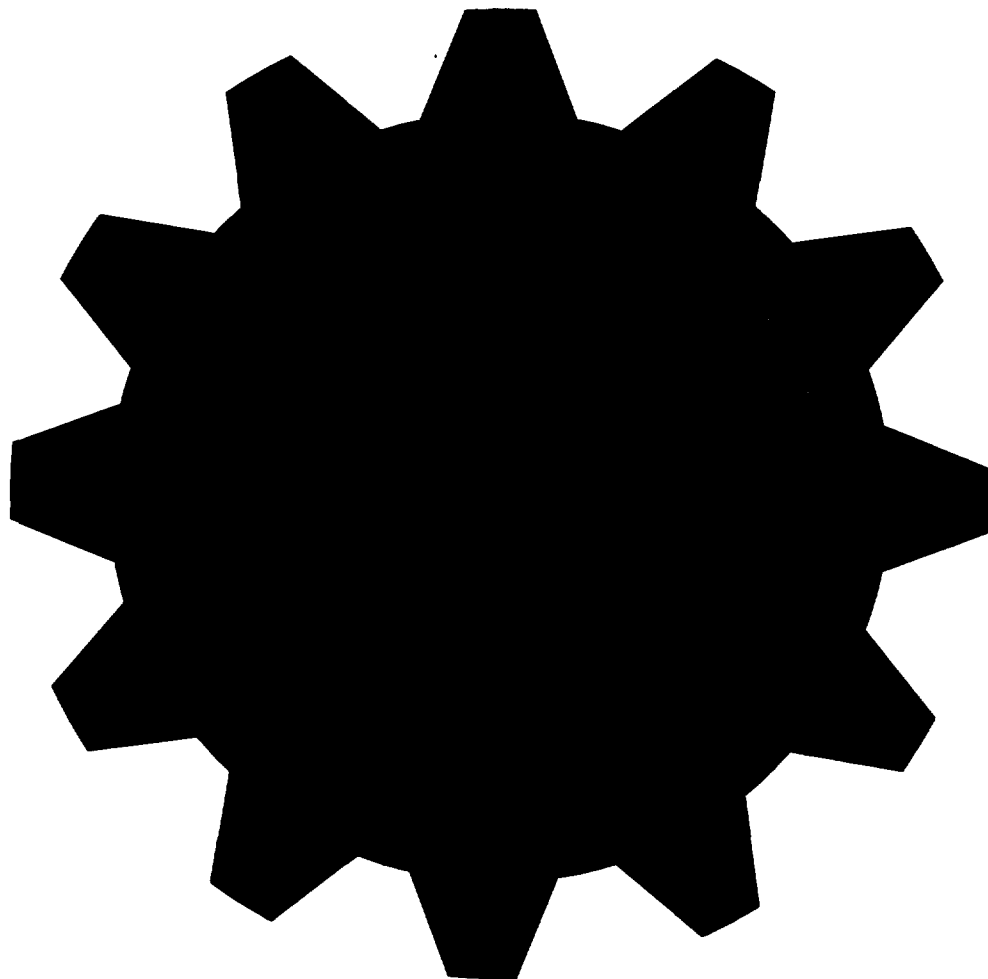


# **Retrograde Evolution**



**Senior Project and Honors Thesis  
of  
Brian Heim**

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**Proposal**

The idea behind this project is the progressive downfall of humanity and the ecology because of the tampering of mankind. The story follows that as civilization progresses and damages the ecology, several species of animals will become extinct. To make a stopgap repair to the eco-system, mankind creates mechanical constructs to temporarily replace the extinct species until a way to bring them back is found. The point of view that I used was that of an artist in the future looking back at what the world was and what it has become in his time.

My goal in the technique aspect of this series is to combine my rendering ability with a looser style that allows the materials to work on their own. This fusion of styles will allow the pieces to have a depth and texture that my past works usually lack, while still allowing me the satisfaction of knowing that I got to challenge my skills. I have chosen to use watercolor, charcoal and pastel as the main media for this series. This allows me to improve as I go while not jumping into something completely unknown. There are five works in this series. Each is done on a 22 x 30 piece of cold press Arches paper.

## **Background**

The main tendency of my work is to follow the form of a story. Whenever I work on a piece for an extended period of time, I begin to form a story around it. Because of this tendency, I find myself drawn to and influenced by story oriented art, such as comic books and story illustrations. This has given my past works a strong sense of drama, stylization, and surrealism, along with a general aversion to abstraction. Some of the artists who I have taken inspiration from and have been influenced by are Jim Warren, Sorayama, Rene' Magritte. All these artists are surrealists. I am most moved in their works by the sense of unlimited imagination. Their purpose is to make the impossible visible, to show and unbridled view of the imaginative power of the human mind. I am also influenced by the works and ideals of Leonardo da Vinci. He has a masterful grasp of the human form and how it fits into it's environment. He, like the surrealists, shows a powerful sense of imagination , but focused it in revolutionizing his world. He was not content with just being an artist but was also a scientist, philosopher and inventor. I admire this ideal and try to focus it into my work method by constantly learning new forms of expression and technique and trying to use them in revolutionary ways.

When I first began to conceptualize this project, I had a much more illustrative and straightforward approach in mind where the main focus was going to be on rendering technique. After beginning the project however, I looked at some of the works of Jim Dine. I am drawn to some of his works because of the effects that using different media next to each other have. I observed that the more textured an area is, the more it appears to come forward on the picture plane and recedes as an area gets flatter. I use this technique in my pieces to enhance the quality of the illustration without attempting to render objects photo-realistically. I tried to vary the compositions of the work, from works with strong symmetry and visual balance to works with more visual flow and irregularity. To keep the series consistent, I chose to repeat a number of compositional elements through the series.

On the level of the foundation composition, I used a patterned border motif in each piece. This is to keep a general sense of rigidity and formality to the works that will convey the sense of the scientific to the viewer. The pattern in the border of each piece is intended to relate to the images of the inner panel. The pattern might be a symbolic, abstracted, stylized, or surrealistic image of some aspect of each creature. For example, in Hook in the River I used a stylized water surface for the border that focuses on the environment of the creature, but in Greased Lightning I used a pattern of red and yellow lightning bolts that not only implies the speed of the animal, but also has an African feel in order to imply the environment of the creature as well. The other elements that are used to unify the series are a rendering of the mechanical creature that is meant to be illustrative, a skeleton of the original creature that is to be symbolic of the species that became extinct, and a map of where the individual species would be found while they were alive as an "I was here" message. Each piece also has a color scheme that is used to evoke an emotional response from the viewer to each creature and convey a feeling of what the creature was and will be. I experimented with the effects of combining different media, such as watercolor, colored pencil, charcoal, and pastel. The goal in this experimentation was to find ways that different media can support and compliment each other.

## Evaluation

I will evaluate the pieces in the order that they were created.

### Rust: Arctic Tern (22 x 29)

This piece shows my first experiment with this style. The general process is to layout the drawing, do a watercolor underpainting, render the mechanical creature in charcoal, draw over the watercolor with pastels, then do any collage or overpainting work last.

In this piece, the main focus is on the mechanical arctic tern whose wingspread covers the left to right descending diagonal of the page. As the eye is drawn downward, it passes the element of a bird skull, facing the opposite direction of the mechanical bird. Rendered in black and white pastel and surrounded by a light blue halo, it has a glowing, supernatural aspect. After passing there, one ends up seeing a map of the earth surrounded by a dark red line. Across the globe is an area of chrome green that shows the migration route of this particular species of bird. The border of this piece is a fragmented pattern of light blue over light yellow-orange and dark blue over maroon. As this pattern crosses certain sections, the colors of the pattern switch creating a negative effect.

This piece was very influential on the rest of the series. It was here, especially in the circle around the bird's head that I noticed that dimensional effect of placing pastel next to watercolor. Also in this piece is the first example of using a rough, loose technique to reveal layers of color, as is shown in the border pattern.

Although this piece was very positively influential on the later works, I consider it the least of the series. The color scheme and composition are more haphazard than I would have liked, and the rendering of the bird isn't as proficient as later renderings.

**Hook in the River: Brown Trout (22 x 29)**

This piece has a very strong visual flow. The composition of the United States map with the chrome green area is placed on the right side of the page and overlaps the top border slightly. Directly below this is the skeleton of a trout facing left. The eye is brought across this to the tail of the mechanical fish on the left side which arcs up and to the right where it faces the center of a fan done only in watercolor which draws the eye back out and across the entire picture plane. The color scheme is dominantly blues and teals with orange and yellow highlights and accents.

This is a strong piece. I am pleased with the visual flow of the composition. The rendering of the mechanical fish is proficient yet not distracting. The accents in yellow and orange give the blues a greater richness and provide an exciting visual hook to guide the viewer around the page.

Greased Lightning: Cheetah (22 x 29)

What this piece lacks in the visual flow of Hook in the River, it makes up for it in its powerful color scheme. Done in reds, oranges, and yellows with blue accents this color scheme confronts the viewer with the passion and vigor that I think is fitting of this predator. The composition, in contrast is very stable. The open-mouthed mechanical cheetah head on the left faces right and guides the eye to the skeleton of a standing cheetah with is above a map of Africa with the area of former cheetah population marked in chrome green. The border is done in a pattern of red and yellow lightning bolts that are shaded lighter and darker in different areas to create a dimensional effect.

A Day in the Sun: Dragonfly (22 x 29)

This piece breaks from the rest of the series in that it lacks the elements of a skeleton and a map. This was done because the exoskeleton of this insect would be duplicate to the mechanical body and there is no known map of where dragonflies can be found. Hence, having only one main element besides the border, I chose a symmetrical composition which I think is fitting of the beauty and complexity of the dragonfly. The border is done in a red over purple hexagonal pattern that is repeated in two circles on either side of the dragonfly's tail which represent the structure of the eyes of the insect.

Left by itself, this one is least effective in conveying my intention. I like the straightforward symmetrical composition and the complex pattern of the wings and the border. When placed with the other pieces, I don't find the lack of the other elements that important and find that it supports the others in conveying my intentions.



Man Home Man: Human (22 x 29)

I broke away from the rest of the series in this piece. While still maintaining the series' unifying elements, I used them in ways that the other pieces didn't. The composition is very visually balanced. On the left side of the piece is a collage of a series of photocopies of Eadweard Muybridge's Man Descending an Incline. This is the first use of collage in the series. These are oriented to flow down the page so that as the figure descends the slope in the progressive frames, it also progresses down the picture plane. To the right of this is a human skeleton with the head looking down, its right foot hidden behind the border, and its left arm raised to the center where it joins the hand of the opposing mechanical figure. Below the linked hands, in the center of the page is the image of a red gear with a globe inside. From the spokes of the gear are faint lines that radiate out from the center. To the right of this image is the rendering of the mechanical human. Its head is facing towards the skeleton and its right arm reaches up to meet the opposing skeletal figure's hand above the globe in gear image. To the right of this image is the outline of a hammer and scissors. They are done in exposed watercolor and matches the shadings of the photocopies on the opposing side and are outlined with pastel to set them above the background. The border is of organic fields of gray flesh surrounded by dark red. The flesh colored areas are outlined in light green, yellow and orange to set them above the maroon. The border is tilted to the left so that the central frame is skewed to the rest of the picture.

This piece is very strong in conveying a sense of uneasiness and can be uncomfortable to look at. The visual elements in the picture are so balanced that the tilting of the border and the two figures creates an uneasy visual flow. This effect is intended to make the viewer think about the series and what impact its message has on humanity.

## Summary

This is a strong series. It has a purpose, it is visually interesting, and it compels the viewer to think. Certain pieces may be stronger than others, but I find the overall effect is of a strong, effective series.

Although this project turned into something that I hadn't originally intended it to be, it allowed me to do something in my Senior Project that I hadn't expected to do. Learn and improve. I expected this to be just a useless showing of what abilities that I have. I got much more out of it. This project has allowed me to experiment with various media and discover new ways of using them. I have been able to break away from the rigid boundaries of realism and push it to a more free and surrealistic level. I have begun to solve what has been a discrepancy for me and my work. I get the most out of my work when I know that I am expending an effort and challenging my skills, yet I get the most positive feedback from pieces that I relax more with. I learned to sort of go with the flow and have faith that my convictions will come through in the end.

From this point, I would like to apply some of the techniques that I have learned from my senior project to other kinds of pieces. I want to keep a realistic edge to my work, but I am now more open to the possibilities of the spontaneous and impressioned. I still intend to work realistically but now I know that certain liberties can and should be taken to make a work more realistic seeming without making it look photographic.

## **Bibliography**

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**Goals:** To use my background in art and skills in drafting, computers and film to become a professional animator. Other possibilities are illustration and cartooning

**Education:** Ball State University, B.F.A. Drawing and Honors

**Employment:** 1995 to present: Subcontractor, Hiron's Graphic Design firm, Muncie, IN.  
1994 to 1995: Desk Manager, Swinford Hall, BSU  
1992 to 1994: Desk Attendant, Swinford Hall, BSU  
Summer 1994: Professional Framer, Ben Franklin Jasper, IN  
Summer 1992: Office Assistant, St. Joseph's Hospital  
Huntingburg, IN

## Other Skills:

### Computer:

#### IBM:

Windows  
Lotus 123  
Word Perfect

#### Macintosh:

Quark Express  
Photoshop 3.0.5  
Freehand 5.0  
Premiere 4.0  
Netscape

#### Video:

Video Toaster  
Lightwave Computer Animator  
Avid System

Very quick at learning new computer programs  
Adept with photocopiers  
Use of standard cash registers

**Freelance Work:** 1995: 911: The Number to Know 21 page coloring book for Huntingburg Press.  
1996: Series of 12 cartoon adds for Planned Parenthood.  
1995 to Present: Run **Virtue Productions** which I use to sell prints of my artwork.

## Exhibitions:

### Solo

1996 *Shine*. Kremp Gallery. Jasper IN  
1996 *Retrograde Evolution*. MT Cup. Muncie, IN

### Juried

1995 *Dubois County Art Guild Show*. Kremp Gallery. Jasper, IN  
1994 *Dubois County Art Guild Show*. Kremp Gallery. Jasper, IN

### Invitational

1996 *Lines of Resolution*, Muncie, IN  
1994 *Water Media*, Muncie, IN  
1993 *Water Media*, Muncie, IN

**Awards:**

1996 Graduated Suma Cum from Ball State University  
1995 First and Third place in upper division of Dubois County Art Guild Show.  
1995 Dean's List for Fall and Spring Semester  
1994 Placed second and Honorable Mention in upper division of Dubois County Art Guild Show.  
1994 Inducted into the National Golden Key Honors Society.  
1994 Dean's List for Fall and Spring Semester.  
1993 Departmental Honors in Art  
1993 Dean's List for Fall and Spring Semester  
1992 Dean's List for Fall and Spring Semester  
1991 Deans' List for Fall Semester  
1991 Inducted into the National Honors Society  
1991 Named Outstanding Male Art Student, Southridge High School, Huntingburg, IN.

**References:**

John Gee - Associate Professor of Art, Ball State University  
Mark Sawrie - Associate Professor of Art, Ball State University  
Bill Mendel - Owner of **The Son Shop**, Jasper, IN  
Glenn Zimmerman - Director of Animation, **Paws Inc.** Muncie, IN  
Les Lorey - Owner of **Ben Franklin**, Jasper, IN