

Claremont Colleges

## Scholarship @ Claremont

---

CGU MFA Theses

CGU Student Scholarship

---

Fall 11-13-2012

### Working Title

Nathanael Thomas Little  
*Claremont Graduate University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu\\_mfatheses](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_mfatheses)



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Little, Nathanael Thomas, "Working Title" (2012). *CGU MFA Theses*. 61.  
[https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu\\_mfatheses/61](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_mfatheses/61)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the CGU Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in CGU MFA Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

When one thinks about Installation Art, it is difficult to find comparisons to it in the constructs of mainstream media. One analogue is the entertainment space of the Theme Park. Both require a viewer to explore and engage the work from inside the created space, but they differ in their approach. This can be viewed as a case of convergent evolution — two species that fill a similar niche in nature, while having dissimilar genetic origins. Both grow from opposite sides of the spectrum. Installation is the descendant sculpture, growing and changing as site-specific nature or being placed into a public space becomes a key element of the work. Over time, concepts like the Light and Space movement and video art influence the genre, pushing it closer to what one sees today. Historically, the idea of the Theme Park starts with Disneyland, which unites the entertainment space of the amusement park with the visual design rules and narrative constructs of the film industry — specifically animation. Sixty years after opening, Disneyland's cultural influence has permeated many parts of society, ranging from stores and restaurants to museums and galleries. Some in fine art who find it troubling that the museum is adapting ideas used in Theme Parks. Yet, it does not have to be read as the decline of the museum or devaluing fine art's position in culture. Instead, it may be the next step in the ever-evolving state of how our culture views art.

Embracing this, *(Working Title)* actively engages in exploring what takes place when these two worlds collide. Conceived from a narrative, it focuses on the visual and physical experience of the viewer by transforming “the white box” from a space for quiet reflection into a space of playful discovery. The work is not solely about story and character, but also examines the textural space of the Theme Park. The lighting, score, ground feel, and the fabrics used on the creatures all rely on a carefully planned formal exploration of texture that extends into the walls, where the facades become flat and simple, compared to the depth and textural detail of the floor and figures. Unlike an actual Theme Park space, it never attempts to hide its artifice. One can see how the space is

constructed by looking up at the stark divide. If one looks beyond the 8-foot high construction of the work, the gallery walls remain white, bracing brackets stretch across corners, and lighting effects bleed between the rooms. The work embraces its inorganic nature rather than attempting to fully suspend disbelief.

The narrative environment of the space is a glimpse into another world: specifically a small suburban town called Arboria, dotted with tract homes, nestled on top of massive Baobab-like trees several stories above the forest floor. The primary inhabitants, furry humanoid creatures, Arborians, dwell in the trees to avoid the numerous dangers of the forest. Hunting the forest floors are large nocturnal canids known as Howling Terrors. Soaring through the Arborian sky are Greater Manned Sky Serpents; massive dragon-like beasts that eat anything that they can swallow. Sky Serpents find Arborians unpalatable. Other creatures inhabit the Arborian forest — from innocuous Turtlebugs to elusive vermin which more paranoid Arborians call “Dice Eaters.” These conspiracy theorists believe Dice Eaters plan raids on Arborian game rooms to steal dice. Surprisingly it is true, and if one could shrink down to their size, one would learn that Dice Eaters have a complex shamanistic society revolving around powerful totems: board game pieces imbued with the emotional energies of play.

Overall, the narrative is a backdrop on which the work is built, rather than the central focus of the installation. The “set-like” quality of its construction naturally opens the space to further dialogue for critique of entertainment environments like Theme Parks. While it is not the focal point of the early development of the project, it is an unavoidable aspect of the finished work. Whether this is the product of placing the work in a fine art context or merely the nature of the piece is debatable. Regardless, one is left asking, “Is this an Installation developed via the cultural lens of Theme Park attractions, or is it the other way around?” Perhaps it is both.