

Hamilton

Artist Chris Doyle Discusses Animation in Hamilton Lecture Doyle's Video "Waste Generation" On View at Wellin Museum of Art

By Esther Malisov '13 | Posted April 3, 2013

The flexibility of creating art and the limitless mediums at an artist's disposal allow for bold originality and ingenuity. Multidisciplinary artist Chris Doyle takes full advantage of the vast range of possibility in art, and he shared his unique perspective with the Hamilton community as the college's first speaker in the Artists in Conversation series. Doyle's video "Waste Generation" is on view at the [Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art](#) at Hamilton.

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Doyle's works have been exhibited at the Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College, among many others. According to the artist, animation is a blend of many disciplines, including photography, sculpture, painting, architecture, design, landscape and space. His animations span across all of these areas, and he illustrated this idea with examples from his impressive portfolio.

Doyle was inspired by Bruce Nauman's eerie, double-exposed photograph "Failing to Levitate in My Studio" to create the stop motion animation "Flight" (2005), in which he combined 225 photographs of himself suspended horizontally in mid-leap in his studio. Strung together into animation, the images create the illusion of Doyle flying around the space, arms outstretched, until he soars through a brightly-lit window. The video is short and the simulated motion somewhat crude and choppy—"A clumsy little success"—but the influence from photography is unmistakable. The finished product draws a sharp contrast between successful flight and failure as the artist clearly cannot actually fly.

To demonstrate his fascination with sculptural elements, Doyle showed a clip inspired by Gian Lorenzo Bernini's "Ecstasy of Saint Teresa." Doyle's animation, "Hotel Bernini" (2004), is a looped clip of a white hotel bed in which a flat sheet seemingly comes to life, twisting and dancing on the mattress, even physically assaulting one of the pillows. The piece is minimalist and simple, yet funny and engaging; the bed itself becomes a moving

sculpture, an unexpected work of art that is hard to look away from even as it repeats itself.

Next, Doyle addressed his love of painting and how this discipline is woven into his animation. As an example, the artist showed his animation “Apocalypse Management” (2009), based on painter Thomas Cole’s “Course of Empire.” Though he was inspired by Cole’s more traditional painting, this animation was created entirely on a computer screen. The scene in the clip is one of devastation that Doyle assembled from a collage of images from two years’ worth of disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake. In the animation, injured or dying figures complete repetitive, fruitless motions against a background of urban destruction.

Doyle has also had the chance to use building facades as his canvas, allowing him to incorporate architecture into animation. His 2000 work “LEAP” is an animation of more than 600 New Yorkers jumping as high as possible against a black backdrop. The film was projected onto 2 Columbus Circle in Manhattan. Similarly, Doyle’s “Method Air” was projected on the EMPAC building in Troy, N.Y. This animation depicts local youth skateboarding, bridging locals with a building that they rarely visit themselves. By using buildings as a temporary projection screen, Doyle toys with architecture and incorporates a distinctive theme into his work.

In his design work, Doyle is interested by human depictions of nature. He explores this theme in the Wellin Museum’s “Waste Generation” (2010), in which an initial landscape of abandoned technology and other waste in a landfill slowly transforms to greenery, which in turn gives way to abstract patterns and geometric shapes, and back to suburbia, industrialization, and more technology. Though the film has a cyclical element to it, it also expresses hope at a time when humans are doing damage to the environment they live in. The kaleidoscopic, symmetrical imagery evokes colorful design elements that complement a stylized artistic representation of nature.

In addition, Doyle has also been involved in landscape and spacial art. His “Social Structure II” (2012), an outdoor sculpture for the US embassy in Sarajevo, represents a collaborative effort with Bosnian artists to create a geometric yet personal and elegant work of art of the public to enjoy. To demonstrate his work with space, Doyle showed a video of his piece “Idyllwild” in the Catharine Clark Gallery. The work occupies an entire

room, which is left dark except for a projection of two quadrilaterals, one on the floor and the other on the ceiling, that are programmed to constantly move across the space in new ways, transforming the viewer's perception of the room just by watching this manipulation of light.

Chris Doyle's art spans many disciplines and has clearly taken on new forms throughout his career. His animations evoke a wide range of emotions and express complex ideas by combining different art mediums in a way that is both beautiful and memorable.