The Murmur of the World

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Beginning this assignment, I decided I wanted to build a model inside of a pre-existing piece of furniture. This guided me towards the theme of Sense in Nonsense, with the concept of making sense in something that otherwise makes no sense. I was inspired by Graeme Base's use of cryptography and hidden codes and imagery to create a highly detailed pieces. This, when paired with Clarice Beckett's beautification of mundane streetscapes caused me to consider a cryptography focused town as a central point. I designed scenes set in different stores and locations, linking it back to the idea of building something inside furniture. Early in the project I bought an old cupboard which helped narrow my focus down and anchor me in my idea. I had difficulties pulling together all my ideas into one finished piece, but my last artist, Felicia Chiao helped me pull together storytelling in my works, creating characterisation and staging in the way they use environments in their artwork.

I was inspired by puzzle platform games like Little Nightmares in the layout of my model, using the different shelves as separate areas that work together to tell one story. Further inspiration was taken from layouts of cities in Splatoon, Adventure Time, and Arcane, drawing from the intermingling of features and structures of the towns. As a starting point, I began designing the model as if it were the setting of a book, constructing short storylines and comics to tell a story. I decided to consider the idea of an alien planet as my setting, exploring ideas of alienation, community, and the harmony between features of my work.

When I began setting out the story behind my model, I took inspiration from the collected poems The Idylls of the King by Alfred Tennyson which retells the legend of King Arthur and his knights. I took specific inspiration from the poem 'Enid' where one of the knights, Geraint, enters a small valley town referred to as a 'bourg' where the townsfolk are alienated to Geraint due to their excitement over a tournament the day after which they call the 'Sparrow-Hawk'. Geraint does not understand this and grows infuriated, declaring, 'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk! Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead! Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg the murmur of the world. What is it to me?' I found this last part specifically interesting as a concept, considering a small, tight knit community when seen from an outsider's perspective, and took a similar approach with my model.

The story behind my model focuses the two purple holograms arriving on a new planet, alienated by the residents in blue who are all busily doing their own things. Inspiration is taken from 'Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg the murmur of the world' as the purple character finds a disconnect with the other characters who continue with their mundane tasks, as if the comings and goings of their land are the 'murmur of the world' and therefore commonplace, rather than isolating. Sense in Nonsense is taken in a literal way, with the loud clutter of the artwork pushing detail into every possible space and creating a closeness of the features which can be hard to focus on when viewing the model as a whole. However, focusing on small parts of the model allows viewers to appreciate the detail, revealing scenes, messages, and miniature interactions. It is further implemented with the fish; a symbol of the subconsciousness and unknown, pushing the idea of mystery and alienation of the purple characters. Colour is also used, tying together the blue characters, and the purple characters, creating a rift that reveals further alienation.

Another connection to Sense in Nonsense is seen in how signs and graffiti is written in an alien language, creating a disconnect between viewers and the artwork to further push the idea of alienation. However, the use of the translator key allows viewers to connect, reaching out to the model in a way that unites them, revealing hidden messages and secrets of the townscapes. Many of the phrases translate to empowering messages seen during rebellions, revealing the aftermath of a war, and several people communicating. There's a childish voice, seen in the purple and blue whose colours connect to the characters around the model. Another voice is detailed in a red colour, and the final seen in the black on coloured graffiti. These create different layers and tones to the model and a sense in the nonsense that collates information into sections.

Further inspiration for this model is taken from the ruins of Helike excavated in Greece. Helike was the cult residence of Poseidon Helikonios and the assumed inspiration of Plato's 'Atlantis'. Its ruins were lost under layers of silt and sand after a flood submerged the town in whole, preserving it underwater. When archaeologists rediscovered the ruins, they found several towns built above and below it, showing perfectly preserved ruins of numerous dynasties and eras. This layering of towns inspired me to use the layout of the cupboard to create different levels of focus. I found the concept of Helike's excavation extremely inspiring for this assignment, incorporating numerous imagery of fish to push the connection between the ruins and the model I created.

As someone who enjoys telling stories, I found the use of model making extremely effective in expressing the meaning of my artwork. The use of structure and volume was helpful in creating layers and allowed me to consider my artists of inspiration in a different way to if I was making a two dimensional artwork. It also pushed me out of my comfort zone to work on something so large, allowing me to try different things I usually wouldn't think of doing. Overall, the experience allowed me to express creativity in a way I had not tried before.