

## Fine Arts

# World Building

The attempt to exhaustively survey a place that isn't there

**Thesis for BA degree in Fine Arts  
Brynjúlfur Þorsteinsson**

**Spring 2016**

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## **Extraction**

This essay aims to explain the concept and importance of ‘World Building’. It is an introduction on me, both as a person, and as an artist, as well as explains the effect the concept has had on my life through my formative years and the effect it has had through my artistic education.

It goes on into my role models, my influences, how the concept can be seen in their respective works, and the impacts they yield.

It concludes by stating my view on the world and what art could/should do, and how I reached that conclusion.

Happy reading.

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# World Building

## Foreword

I know that if I tie a towel around my neck and jump of the balcony of my childhood home, I will be able to fly (for a brief and magical moment) before reality pulls me back and into the ground. I know how to hand my sister the milk across the breakfast table with the power of the force, with lackluster success, and I know how to scream my lungs out to power-up high enough to blast a Kamehameha wave through my hands, while having the cops called on me.

I know I can't fly. I know I can't ever become a Jedi (or what looks way more fun, a Sith) and I know I will (almost) never impress girls with my chi blasting skills. But why do I know what they are? We know these things exist? Where did they come from and why do I know how they work?

Worlds are created everyday with our own imagination and how we perceive the world around us, my reality is not the same as yours and that is more than ok, but these fantastical worlds are a nexus point for us all.

I make art based on these ideals. I make up beings, that turn into characters, that turn into cultures, that turn into cities, that turn into planets, that then turn into clusters of stars, and so forth. I can go as wide as my mind allows, before I reach insanity, and as small and detailed, before I close in on the same limit. Last year, 2015, I had a solo exhibition, in where I made three copper plate etchings of living walking cities. These cities took inspiration from real world architecture, which gave the images both scale and reliability to the real world. Upon viewing them you could see all the small blocks, houses, towers, churches and stadiums; as if they were really lived in. The point of the art piece was to, at least, make you wonder what it would be like to see these things in reality, as well as wonder about the people that lived there, or used to live there.

Authors of fiction are world builders. They make rules, languages, cultures, planets and galaxies far, far away, and from these worlds stories are born. If done well, we can interpret the worlds as well as the characters within them, and for some of us, we understand these worlds better than the one we are currently living in. These worlds move us emotionally and physically, they help us to do things we never

thought we were capable of, and sometimes even help us gain a new perspective of our real world.

This essay will go through small project where I will build myself as a character, with key life-events as building blocks for a world, for you as the reader, to understand why I, as an artist, am working with this concept in fine arts; as well as explain the concept of world building, its effect on us, our perception of reality and its importance and prevalence in contemporary art.

Even if you don't like fiction or art, this essay also aims to blow your fucking mind on how you think the real world works and shatter the very foundation of your own identity. Let's begin.

## **Chapter 1: Character Building and Development**

World building in and of itself is great, but without direction or narrative these new worlds can be daunting for fresh eyes. That is why an anchor point is necessary, something that is grounded in reality and makes the world relatable to us. This is usually done through a living being or a character, and so for the sake this project, I will use myself as a test subject.

My name is Brynjúlfur Þorsteinsson, and I am an artist and a builder of worlds.

Let me explain to you my background to show you why I make worlds and what my life is made out of:

**A death of a father**, who was the world to me and my role model.

**Bullying throughout my junior and high school life**, which just a few years ago I managed to work through.

**A severe fungal infection forcing me to be bedridden for 4 years**, of, arguably, the most transformative time in a person's life.

**A vast collection of video games and Japanese comics.**

**A fight to stay in school**, for fear of being forgotten.

**And a lot of people, for whatever reason, believing in me.**

Putting your life in categories or sections like this has the risk of making you feel small, simplistic and insignificant. But I challenge anyone to do it, to see themselves

without their ego, without the drama. It is a refreshing and broader perspective, leading to a more concrete character development.

Speaking of, character developments are an integral part in world building, for a narrative to move forward, so the viewer feels like he/she is getting to know the world the character is in a bit better. To feel the sense of realism and reliability.

The young university from Canada, which has been climbing the ladder of Times Higher Education (THE) ranking system as of late, University of Victoria has a concise description of the two basic character developments:

A **flat character**... is defined by a single quality without much individualizing detail. A **round character** is a complex individual incapable of being easily defined. The degree to which characters are given roundness and individual complexity depends upon their function in the plot... - Even fully rounded characters can often be seen as developments of types, like Shakespeare's Falstaff, who derives in part from the Vice of the medieval morality play and in part from the **miles gloria** or boastful soldier of Roman comedy... - The distinction between flat and rounded characters, while useful, should not obscure the fact that there is a continuum of levels of character development; many characters will fall between the two poles, lightly sketched, or even **caricatured**.<sup>1</sup>

So, while avoiding becoming too flat or too caricatured, let us develop my *character* as objectively as I can by explaining my exposition.

**A death of a father.** This establishes trauma, and impact on the *character*'s life. The viewer can feel related to the *character* right away, either through a loss of their own or just by the fact that they also have a parent. The character is now an underdog in relation to the people around him and has to face a new harsher world. This is also a very common character trait for super heroes.

Now our *character* is without a role model and a father figure and will be forced to wander the world without a guide for manhood on his own.

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<sup>1</sup> "Character and Characterization", *Uvic.ca*, 13. January, 2016 .  
[web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/LTCharacter.html](http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/LTCharacter.html)

**Bullying throughout my junior and high school life.** Our *character* has to also come into terms that life does not pull its punches. Verbal and physical abuse become a part of his daily life. Depression sets in.

It's not looking too good for our *character*. But most stories, that are not written by older, pessimistic writers with a drinking problem, have something called a “*rising action*”. A rising action is when a narrative has been building up to something (good or bad) and yields a reward to the reader for their time invested.<sup>2</sup>

But before that can happen, our *character* must go through one last hurdle.

**A severe fungal infection forcing me to be bedridden for 4 years.** Our *character* slowly becomes ill over the course of 4 years, each year worse than the one before. Doctors are unable to find out what is wrong with him so they subscribe him onto antibiotics, forcing him to retire into his bedroom for the majority of the time.

There our *character*, confined to his bed, escapes into different worlds, to find solace from his reality.

Enter-

**A vast collection of video games and Japanese comics.** While all this is happening, our character has been collecting Japanese comics (manga) and videogames. Both mediums are easy to digest during the worst episodes of his sickness, helping him forget his current state.

With these two mediums, our *character* is able to learn about different cultures, learn about various types of narratives, is able keep up with pop-culture, gain a social understanding (in the context of which they are presented), and is able to finally find and establish his own role models.

**Fighting to stay in school.** While all this is happening our *character* has only a single trait which shows us that he has not given into apathy and depression, he wants to stay in school.

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<sup>2</sup> George Hartley, “George Hartley's Glossary of Fiction Terms”, *Ohio.edu*, 13. January, 2016.

[http://www.ohio.edu/people/hartleyg/ref/fiction/fiction\\_terms.html](http://www.ohio.edu/people/hartleyg/ref/fiction/fiction_terms.html)

Not out of hope for a brighter future, rather out of fear of being forgotten.

He learns that there is a new program in Reykjavík's School of Visual Arts, which allows him to graduate in just two years. Feeling like this is the chance for him to get back on track in his education; our *character* applies to the school, gets in and sets off on his journey into the world of art.

**And a lot of people, for whatever reason, believing in me.** Our *character* would not be here writing back to us if it were not for the help of (now it feels like) countless people who had faith in him. Our *character* feels like the faith might be misplaced, but only due to his lack of self-belief, a struggle most humans deal with on a regular basis, and is this essay, in and of itself, a testament of the struggle in question.

Our *character* feels he has an obligation to succeed for the sake of the people that helped him along his way, and is now using them as a striving point for him to continue his work.

What I hope I have done here, is establish a character development through a biographical narrative of my own life, in very broad strokes, by counting up key events in my life that built up my reality. What I strive to achieve with my art is to create pieces of art powerful enough so that the viewer could, even though just for a moment, suspend his reality for another, the one presented before him. A new wonderful, colorful world.

## **Chapter 2: The act of World Building**

The act of world building has always been very intriguing to me. Through the life events I just built for you, I was surrounded by imaginary worlds for years, and each day I visited them again and again. Over time I came to realize that these worlds did not just pop up one day, that they were indeed, made by someone else, a person, and that is when I understood “world building” as a concept.

Today there is a hunger for new worlds. Just visit your next bookstore and you will find a plethora of fiction writing, turn on the television and you will see endless programs of made up characters and their worlds, or go online and play in a literal world like, “*World of Warcraft*” or “*Second Life*”. And let us not forget the, now world’s largest box office release, which you went as far as to market themselves onto

oranges; *Star Wars: the Force Awakens*. It is the idea, that we are taught as children, that anything is possible and that anything can happen, that draws us to these fresh new worlds.

These worlds then correlate into our reality, giving us the blueprints for what we want in our own worlds and serve as a guideline to a better one. This is very prevalent when science fiction creates an idea for new technology, a prime example is from *Star Trek The Next Generation*; where Lieutenant Commander Geordi Laforge uses a tablet computer (what they called *Personal Access Data Devices*, or *PADDs*) to punch in coordinates for the next star system. Other Starfleet personnel used them to watch video and listen to music—just the things we use tablets for today.

Or when the famous science fiction writer, M. John Harrison, was credited to be an inspiration for the ‘*God Particle*’ or the ‘*Higgs boson*’, through his “*Light*” novel series.<sup>3</sup>

Even though I am not a fan of Harrison, I do respect him and his place in the science fiction community. Harrison is a writer and being a writer requires one to be a builder of worlds, he however does have a pessimistic point of view on the concept:

Worldbuilding is dull. Worldbuilding literalises the urge to invent.

Worldbuilding gives an unnecessary permission for acts of writing (indeed, for acts of reading). Worldbuilding numbs the reader’s ability to fulfil their part of the bargain, because it believes that it has to do everything around here if anything is going to get done.

Harrison continues on in his blog and says:

“ [World Building] It is the attempt to exhaustively survey a place that isn’t there. A good writer would never try to do that...”<sup>4</sup>

I think Harrison is a pessimistic world builder for what it does to the type of stories he likes to write. He feels like the audience’s (or reader’s) participation diminishes if everything is laid out for them.

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Lea, “M John Harrison: a life in writing”, *The Guardian*, 20. July, 2012, last viewed 13. January.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/jul/20/m-john-harrison-life-in-writing>

<sup>4</sup> M John Harrison, “very afraid”, *Uncle Zip’s Window*, 27. January, 2007, last viewed 13. January, 2016.

But this is where I agree with Harrison, his stance in regard to his audience, they are not stupid and Harrison feels like they do not need to be fed, he respects them.

What I want to do with my art is virtually to do the exact opposite of what Harrison does, “*To exhaustively survey a place that isn’t there*”. And I think it works because I am not confined to the single medium of writing, but also everything. Whatever works.

But what does this all have to do with the world of art? Everything.

An artist who makes a piece of art, no matter what it is, is, whether he/she wants to admit it or not, is creating atmosphere around their piece and thusly creating a world. To survey a place that wasn’t there before, to make something that was not there before. It can be a canvas, a performance, a video installation, a sculpture or any form of combination of any medium, but it will take space and create new space around itself. That is what world building is.

Now before I introduce some artists who do this quite blatantly with critical acclaim, I would like to explain the reason I specifically read Japanese comics or ‘manga’. Manga a type of comics where everything is allowed, it didn’t have to be about superheroes to be popular, and they were held in a higher regard, in their culture, for it.

For that we have one man, and one man alone to thank for that, Osamu Tezuka, also known as the ‘God of Manga’.

The eldest child of Yukata and Fumiko Tezuka was born on November 3, 1928, into a changing world. Before Osamu Tezuka died, he was to contribute to that change in an overwhelmingly positive way, helping to lay the foundations for the 21st century image of a “cool Japan” and influencing the development of generations of artists in two pop culture formats that would spread across the globe - animation and manga.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> McCarthy, Helen, *The Art of Osamu Tezuka: God of Manga*, New York, Abrams, 2009.

## Chapter 3: Influences; Japan

*Tezuka* was a successful self publishing comic book author from Japan. After WW II, he was printing and selling them as cheaply as possible to make them accessible to everyone in his, then, war torn country. *Tezuka* wrote over 700 novels, with extensive diversity in his stories. Everything from ‘Astro Boy’; a robot boy who saves the world, to ‘Buddah’; a unique interpretation of the life of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, to short stories that communicated what *Tezuka* was feeling in regards to his government and how poorly they were handling post-war Japan, something he could not do in any other open medium. With his skill as a storyteller and world builder *Tezuka* pushed the boundaries of what comics were and what they could do, paving the way for comic artists in generations to come. *Tezuka* wanted to make people happy with his stories and keep their spirits up while their reality had been shattered, giving them worlds to visit so that they could, even for just a moment, forget their immediate and painful situation, to remind them that life can also be interesting and enjoyable.

For obvious reasons, *Tezuka*’s ideals resonated with me, since he created comics for the reason I read them. *Tezuka*’s influence is vast, both in the graphic novel world and in pop culture, especially within his own country, so it is not so surprising that when I begin studying art, I came across an artist from the same country, that would transform the way I think about art forever.

*Takashi Murakami* is a contemporary Japanese artist. Working in fine arts media, such as painting and sculpture, as well as what is conventionally considered commercial media, fashion, merchandise, and animation, *Murakami* is known for blurring the line between *high* and *low arts*. *Murakami* also coined the term “Superflat”, which describes both the aesthetic characteristics of the Japanese artistic tradition and the nature of post-war Japanese culture and society. *Superflat* is also used as a moniker to describe *Murakami*’s own artistic style and that of other Japanese artists he has influenced.

‘*Low art*’ in this context, is comics. I stated before that ‘*manga*’ was held in higher regard than traditional western comics, which is true, but only when compared within its own genre. Much like anywhere in the world in the 2000’s, comics, manga and graphic novels were, and to some degree still are, regarded as ‘*low art*’. This

blurring of the lines and pulling manga into the world of fine art, was something I dreamed of doing, but there was an artist that was already doing it, laying the groundwork for other artists to push the boundaries of fine arts.

*Murakami* is not only a talented artist, but also a very brilliant marketing strategist. His collaboration with Louis Vuitton, designing a handbag, caught the eyes of many, many with a lot of money and fame (even though they have been discontinued)<sup>6</sup>. Murakami went on to make a music-video and cover art for one of the world's biggest stars; Kanye West (and I suggest you give that article a read).<sup>7</sup>

In his newest book, “*Murakami Ego*”, Murakami speaks about his heroes in marketing and quality:

A very good example of what I have in mind is Steven Spielberg. Spielberg is the greatest B-movie director: He can get the money and make incredible movies. He has a very strong desire for quality, has a major impact on the industry, and knows how to make use of marketing strategies - just like George Lucas. Serious movie people have no respect for Lucas, but he has reinvented the industry. Lucas and Spielberg are my heroes. I try to work like them: I want to be honest, use my resources to keep the quality of my work at the highest level, and develop new marketing ideas.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lauren Milligan, “Vuitton Discontinues Multicoloured Monogram”, Vogue News, 17. July, 2015, last viewed 13. January, 2016.

<http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2015/07/17/louis-vuitton-discontinues-multi-coloured-monogram-takashi-murakami>

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Lasane, “Takashi Murakami met Kanye Because of His Sculpture of a Woman With Enormous Breasts”, Complex.com, 5. December, 2014, last viewed 13. January, 2016.  
[www.complex.com/style/2014/12/takashi-murakami-met-kanye-because-of-his-sculpture-of-a-woman-with-enormous-breasts](http://www.complex.com/style/2014/12/takashi-murakami-met-kanye-because-of-his-sculpture-of-a-woman-with-enormous-breasts)

<sup>8</sup> Murakami, *Takashi, Murakami Ego*, New York, Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2012.

I believe marketing is a very adamant factor when making art. Critics might say art should be made for art's sake and that any aim to sell your art is a travesty and a stroke of impurity, but you still need to eat, and marketing your art allows you to eat.

Even *Murakami* goes on to explain his view on the matter at the end of his book:

In the art world, critics always connect entertainment with guilt, amusement with superficiality. I think my work is the answer to that criticism. Which doesn't mean that I make work only to amuse. Taking architecture as an analogy, you could say that my paintings are like buildings: On the surface, they appear very light and flimsy, but they're actually made of very solid materials underneath. The depth is visual.<sup>9</sup>

The way I read *Murakami's* thoughts from this, is that he is aware of the silly, surrealistic, anime style his work presents at first glance, but they are a representation of "cool Japan" which are ideals originated with the godfather, *Tezuka*. Anime is one of Japan's main cultural exports and it's highest in entertainment. *Murakami* is aware of this and the power Anime has for its country, so he treats his art with the same economical mindset.<sup>10</sup>

This point is strengthened when *Murakami* finishes his book by saying:

I get a sense of fulfillment whenever strangers buy my work or merchandise. It's a compliment that transcends words. Art is a constant give and take between cultural signifiers, and I'm constantly importing and exporting art as both merchandise and culture. I think there are a lot of people who take greater pleasure from these transactions of the heart. Whenever I support or directly mediate this process to ensure that it goes smoothly my happiness is in direct proportion to the amount of work and effort put into the project.

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<sup>9</sup> Murakami, *Takashi, Murakami Ego*.

<sup>10</sup> Aika Nanao, "Is Anime Japan's Most Influencial Export?", video (mp4.), 2:41, last viwed 13. January 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WORZFIs0s4E>

Through his career, *Murakami* has been able to add to *Tezuka*'s idea of "cool Japan" as an act of world building for both Japan and the world itself, to see it in a post-war-new light.

But not all artists from Japan are in it for commerce, or to work with the past, as I found out when I was introduced to, the human transcending artist, Mariko Mori.

*Mariko Mori* is an internationally acclaimed artist. Her practice explores universal questions at the intersection of life, death, reality and technology. While studying at Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo in the late 1980s, *Mori* worked as a fashion model. It was at that time that she had her first exhibitions. *Mori*'s early works, such as her photograph *Play with Me*, use her own body as the subject, and she costumes herself as sexualized, technological alien woman in everyday scenes. The juxtaposition of Eastern mythology with Western culture is a common theme in *Mori*'s works, often through layering photography and digital imaging, such as in her 1995 installation *Birth of a Star*. Later works, such as *Wave UFO*, show her transcending her early roles, abandoning realistic urban scenes for more alien, and not so alien ideas creating whole new scenes for her work.

*Wave UFO* is the work that drew me to *Mori* in the first place. Taking three years to build, 1999-2001, it is a smoothly designed sculpture, with an almost egg-like or drop-like shape, presented as a spaceship, which you were allowed to enter. It measures 34 feet long x 17 feet wide x 14 feet tall and is made of fiberglass. The structure is three-dimensional and in front of it stands a small staircase in the shape of lily pads that leads audiences to a small, circular opening, which is an entry into an interior capsule. The door of the entry is a clear, oval-shaped bubble that can electronically slide in a horizontal direction to open and shut the entry into the interior capsule. The piece is now on a global tour.

One of the critic, Howard Rutkowski, an art advisor, an independent curator and co-founder of the art consultancy Fortune Cookie Projects, stated in an interview:

When [Mori] started creating these total environments, that is when I felt there was something really special happening here - So you enter into a room and, you are not simply looking at things hanging on a wall, you are entering a

completely alien universe. So it's total immersion, you are swallowed up by it, and I think that is a pretty spectacular way of engaging.<sup>11</sup>

With such, almost sci-fi elements throughout her works, it's not surprising where *Mori's* influences come from, as she explains in an interview with the Bloomberg Business:

"I used to like *Astro Boy* very much and *animation* from TV that were especially futuristic. And I remember playing in my room, making everything futuristic."<sup>12</sup>

These types of immersion experiences, that are nothing else than world building, a piece that changes your perception of your world, is what I look to create with my art in the very near future. The costume designs and performances of *Mori's* earlier work, are things I wish she would bring back at some point, since they are also a very big source of inspiration to me, but I do respect the direction she is going as an artist.

Not only is *Mori* under similar influences as me and my heroes, being one of them herself, but she also subscribes to a work ethic which I admire immensely:

I always challenge myself by not repeating myself, in a way. Doing different media in new technologies or presenting new ideas, so if you hate it, I'll feel sad, but you know I think the work itself also has its own life. I think any artwork is a reflection of your mind. Depends on who you are when you see the work, people will interpret the work differently, that's quite interesting about it.<sup>13</sup>

One of *Mori's* newest sculpture series, *Cyclicscape*, is *Mori's* interpretation on a relatively new scientific theory about the universe and our knowledge of our own reality. When asked about *Cyclicscape*, *Mori* goes on to explain:

*String theory*, suggest that there is a multi universe, and a parallel universe. In a way each sculpture represents a new universe. so we have five sculptures here, so we have five universes.- It's not talking about the physicality of the universe but kind of its energy flow, it's coming back to the same spot again, like an endless circle of the life in the universe.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bloomberg Business, "Brilliant Ideas: Mariko Mori", video (mp4.), 24:02, last viewed 13. January 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpeErOB0Q10>

<sup>12</sup> Bloomberg Business, "Brilliant Ideas: Mariko Mori".

<sup>13</sup> Bloomberg Business, "Brilliant Ideas: Mariko Mori".

<sup>14</sup> Bloomberg Business, "Brilliant Ideas: Mariko Mori".

World building through science, technology and art, make *Mariko Mori* a tremendous force in the art world and an endless source of inspiration. I will end my chapter on *Mori* and Japan with a quote from her, which I agree with wholeheartedly:

“The greatest thing about artwork is that there are no linguistics, it is a international visual language, that could reach anybody in the world.”<sup>15</sup>

#### **Chapter 4: Influences; The Chapman Brothers**

*Jake & Dinos Chapman* make iconoclastic sculpture, prints and installations that examine, with searing wit and energy, contemporary politics, religion and morality. Working together since their graduation from the Royal College of Art in 1990, the *Chapmans* first received critical acclaim in 1991 for a diorama sculpture entitled *Disasters of War* created by remodeled plastic figurines enacting scenes from Goya's *Disasters of War* etchings. Later they took a single scene from the work and meticulously transformed it into a *Great Deeds Against the Dead*, a life-size tableaux of reworked fiberglass mannequins depicting three castrated and mutilated soldiers tied to a tree.

Their most ambitious work, I think, *Hell*, was an immense tabletop tableaux, littered with over 30,000 remodeled, 2-inch-high figures, many in Nazi uniform and performing heinous acts of cruelty. The work was supposed to combine historical, religious and mythic narratives to present an apocalyptic representation of the twentieth-century. This work was later destroyed in the MOMART fire in 2004, but the *Chapmans* would make another, more ambitious piece, in scale and detail - the result of which was *Fucking Hell*.

It is not so much the material, media or intent that I value within the work of the *Chapman* brothers. To be frank, their focus on trying to shock people with their art, I think, is being a hindrance for them to grow as artists, so I think it isn't so much their focus, as critics would lead you to believe. What I do value about their art is what they want to achieve as artist.

As *Jake Chapman* puts it:

“What work of art does, and how well it does it”

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<sup>15</sup> Bloomberg Business, “Brilliant Ideas: Mariko Mori”.

The *Chapman's* have been going on art tangents in recent years, buying art by Francisco Goya and even Adolf Hitler, with the intention to modify them themselves. The argument can be made that by buying and modifying existing works of art, that they are destroying them, and thusly erasing history, and to be honest, I would agree with you, but I think it's worth exploring as an artistic medium, especially after I heard a Louisiana Channel interview with the *Chapman's* where they explained their reasoning:

If a work of art has a latent meaning to it, an apparent sense of self expression. That you could look at Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and see those as an expression of madness or insanity. That somehow in the working of the surface, that the manipulation paint, that somehow there is this sense that the work is motivated by this terrible pain and torment that the artist goes through. We were kind of thinking: "Well if that's the case with Van Gogh's paintings, maybe you should be able to look at Hitler paintings and see, you know, that there should be some kind of index of things to come, in the work before he, you know before he went on to become a mass murderer, of epic magnitude.<sup>16</sup>

I admire the imagination of the duo to reach such an interesting and methodical question in regards to art, which why they have an entire chapter dedicated to them here. To be fair, this reasoning could just as well be something made up to allow them to continue their path of artistic destruction, but even if that is the case, this reason alone gives me the idea of depth I wish to delve into within my own artistic agenda.

Now their art modifications have not much to do with world building in art, but their piece, *The Sum of all Evil*, cannot be denied that category.

*The Sum of all Evil*' could basically be described as a *Warhammer* model makers wet dream on an acid trip gone wrong. Encased in a display case, is a sculpture of Hell itself, with the ever so popular character of Ronald McDonald, depicted, repeatedly, in various religious poses with, and sometimes a part of, piles of corpses. Orcs are

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<sup>16</sup> Louisiana Channel, "Jake and Dinos Chapman: Hitler Turning in his Grave", video (mp4.), 11:03, last viewed 13. January, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBvfgJWC0WA>

being dragged behind speedboats, powered human devouring dolphins, on to dry land, and there are more bodies covering the ground in this hellish landscape than the ground itself. With a burnt down McDonald's sign peaking from under the apocalyptic decay, the piece seems to remind the public of its contemporary consumerism, as well to serve as a reminder of global presences companies like McDonald's have.

*The Sum of all Evil*, is by far my favorite piece by the *Chapman's*, for its direct use of world building. Its comment on global consumerism and brand recognition brings us to the final chapter of this essay.

### **Conclusion: Real Life World Building**

World building is no exclusive to fantastic fiction or art, but is also a staple of real world fiction.

World building in the real world is extremely popular today, being it's very own fantasy, making it such a very powerful tool. As I said before, fantastic world building can have notable impact on the real world, but I didn't talk about the more menacing aspect of it, namely '*Political World Building*', a constructed world built by politics, media and marketing.

Our main man Harrison puts it best, saying:

-We already live in a fantasy world constructed by advertising, branding, news media, politics and the built or prosthetic environment. -The act of narcissistic fantasy represented by the word "L'Oreal" already exists well upstream of any written or performed act of fantasy. JK Rowling & JRR Tolkien have done well for themselves, but -neither of them is anywhere near as successful at worldbuilding as the geniuses who devised "Coke", or "The Catholic Church".

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And this is what my *character* has learnt throughout. My *character* and my world do not serve the purpose of becoming as big or imposing as either of those things, but I

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<sup>17</sup> M John Harrison, "very afraid".

did want to draw attention to how big a part marketing plays in real world building. Advertisements are everywhere, even art, and never have they been more apparent than on our social media feed. Social media is nothing more than personal world building online. How we represent ourselves in an online environment is nothing like the way we behave in the real world, and if you claim to be the odd one out, the congratulations, you win nothing, but I am happy for you, be the exception that proves the rule.

I am not saying there is something wrong with representing yourself differently in different environments, people tend to behave in a certain manner around their parents and in a completely different manner around their friends, what I am saying is: it is important to not only know the difference, but also notice it - so you can be in power of it. World building is done every day, by everyone and everything. World building is a tool, we all have access to it, but we rarely use it correctly, and to its full potential.

I want my work to have a lasting impact on your world. I want my work to have influences on future generations and their world building. I want my work to be for people to buy and take with them into their worlds. I want my work to grow and evolve for each medium. I want my work to take you on fantastical journeys through space and time. I want my work to evoke questions of morality and reality, and I want my work to make you aware of your own awesomeness within your own built world.

Hi, my name is Brynjúlfur Þorsteinsson, I am an artist and a builder of worlds.

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