**CFAI Research Grant Application**

Submitted by: Krista Hoefle, Associate Professor (Department of Art)

January 29, 2008

**Project Title:** *My Tomorrowland is an Empty Space*: On-site digital drawing at The Mutter Museum of the College of Physicians (Philadelphia, PA).

**Project Proposal:**

I am submitting an application for a Center for Academic Innovation Research Grant in support of an installation project entitled *My Tomorrowland is an Empty Space*. The CFAI Grant would provide me with resources to realize a portion of this installation project for a faculty exhibition at Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, IN) in January 2009.

Generally-speaking, I work in a variety of media including sculpture, installation, animation, and digital technologies focusing on postmodern thought related to the body--as a biological entity and a cultural idea. Through a combination of sculptural materials and methods, my installation environments undermine notions of a fixed, homogenous mind/body relationship. I present objects and other elements (projected and monitor-based animations, mixed media drawings, digital prints, etc.) that visually partition a body throughout a space, each element acting as a type of prosthesis; a series of artificial replacements that--as a whole--create an eccentric landscape. *My Tomorrowland is an Empty Space* is the title of an installation project that will thematically and aesthetically explore our perceptions of "self" as impacted by medical visualization and instrumentation. Focusing my scholarly research on cyborg identity, posthuman theory, cyberfeminism, and science-horror fiction, I will investigate issues regarding the imaging and examining of the body through technological devices and the historical development of medical instrumentation and visualization.

*My Tomorrowland is an Empty Space* will be an environment comprised of a series of objects, animations, ambient sound, and large-scale digital prints. Recently, I've started using and modifying anatomical forms, specifically bones (cast in synthetic gypsum and polyurethane rubber), displayed on top of display blocks or bases. The modification of bone elements insinuates an alternate life form or body part (cyborg or otherwise), and objects are presented in a manner reminiscent of taxonomy. For *My Tomorrowland*, I intend to create a series of more complex, extreme, anatomically modified sculptures: object hybrids of bones and other parts suggestive of undiscovered (or future) pathologies or medical anomalies. I intend to base the design of these sculptural objects on the collection of anatomical and human medical anomalies found at The Mutter Museum, located at the College of Physicians in Philadelphia, PA. The CFAI Research grant would be crucial in that it would allow me to travel to The Mutter Museum to see the collection first-hand.

Dr. Thomas Dent Mutter donated his personal collection of anatomic and pathological materials to The College of Physicians in Philadelphia in 1853. Since this primary donation, the Mutter Museum has collected over 20,000 objects that include: fluid-preserved specimens; skeletal and dried specimens; medical instruments and apparati; anatomical and pathological models in wax, paper mache, and plastic; memorabilia of famous scientists and physicians; medical illustrations, photographs, prints, and portraits. Perhaps most significant to my project, the Museum's fluid-preserved and dried specimens offer examples of pathologies and anomalies that don't exist today

(or at least to the same extent); that is to say, medical advances and innovations have eliminated or made these diseases treatable far earlier than the time of Dr. Mutter's original donation. Although the Mutter Museum has a catalog featuring highlights of the collection, much can be lost in the translation of three-dimensional objects to two-dimensional images (material quality of models in a particular lighting situations, texture and surfaces of specimens, unexpected details of objects and specimens, for example). Related to this, I intend to present my anatomically derived forms in a manner akin to a science/research museum. Analyzing the Mutter Museum's display techniques first-hand would be critical to the presentation approach I plan to use for *My Tomorrowland is an Empty Space*.

Due to the delicate and sensitive nature of the collection, the Mutter Museum does not allow photography or videography of their collection. I plan to document their collection through on site, digital drawing. Using a Wacom digital drawing tablet and my laptop, I will draw specimens, instruments, and models of the collection. Related to this, I intend to create detailed (but rough) architectural drawings of the presentation vitrines and other structures used for presentation of objects and specimens. I have already contacted the staff at the Mutter Museum for permission to use a Wacom drawing tablet and laptop. Additionally, a "behind-the-scenes" tour and access to other specimens not on display is often provided to scholars who are using the Museum for research. Although I'm primarily interested in using these drawings as the basis for the objects in *My Tomorrowland is an Empty Space*, I intend to print a suite of the drawings for exhibition outside of my project. I may also use these digital drawings as components to animations and digital prints for *My Tomorrowland* as well.

**Significance of the Project:**

Collaboration is a key component to my studio practice, and I regularly work with artists, designers, musicians, and writers in the design and fabrication of my artwork. Recently I completed two collaborative projects: working with experimental fiction writer Steve Tomasula (www.stevetomasula.com), I created an animation based on an excerpt of his book IN&OZ that premiered at the South Bend Regional Museum of Art in the group exhibition *Flatland* (Oct.-Dec. 2007); working with Jason Gresl and Lara Turner, the Department of Art's Ensemble-in-Residence I created a series of generative animations that provided a performance atmosphere during their performance "Myths and Narrative" (January 2008). Beyond using scientific objects, software, and other source materials as conceptual and aesthetic departure points, I would like to collaborate with faculty in the sciences using lab processes and materials in the fabrication of art pieces (collaborating on a series of objects that would affect the graphical data of scientific visualization software and instrumentation; working with a chemist on a series of digital prints, photographs, or animations based on chemical processes; creating generative objects using chemical or biological processes, etc). A research trip to the Mutter Museum would be an important introduction to the visual language of medical visualization and biology within an historical context, but in a setting that I'm familiar with (a museum).

Content in my advanced-level Sculpture and New Media courses would be greatly enriched as a result of my research focus. In Spring of 2007, I developed and implemented an interdisciplinary, cross-listed course for the Department of Art, working closely with Women Studies Coordinator Astrid Henry. The upper-level course--entitled

"Cyberfeminism_Creativity_Connectivity"--introduced students to cyberfeminism[1] and net+art practices. Many cyberfeminist artists use their work to analyze and critique medical visualization, imaging, and research practices in relation to the female body. In the preliminary offering of the course, I only skimmed the surface of their work within cyberfeminist art practices. Biotech Art--the fusion of lab and studio art techniques--is a rapidly growing, controversial genre of the visual arts. Although I don't foresee integrating biotech art techniques directly into course content, introducing students to the works of artists such as the Critical Art Ensemble, Eduardo Kac, and Faith Wilding through lecture and discussion would greatly enrich upper level Sculpture courses such as Art 317: Beyond Object, and Art 417: Advanced Sculpture Topics.

**Previous Work:**

In addition to the information below, I'm including prints of anatomically based objects completed during my recent sabbatical leave (Fall 2007).

***Solo exhibitions/installation projects:***

**"my corpse is not yet quite up to scratch"** solo exhibition, Vespine Gallery, Chicago, IL. July 7-29, 2006.

**"a machine designed by the devil and powered by the dead"** solo exhibition, Hanover College Art Galleries, Hanover, IN. September-October 2005.

**"Tart"** solo exhibition, Race St. Gallery, Urban Institute for Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids, MI, September-October, 2004

**"Nothing this beautiful can be real!"** solo exhibition at the Fugitive Art Center, Nashville, TN, October-November, 2003.

***Awards, Honors, and Grants:***

**Faculty Teaching Grant**, Center for Academic Innovation, Saint Mary's College. 2007-2008.

**First Tosoma.org Award**, www.tosoma.org--a net+web project space. For digital animation entitled "quickie" (www.im10yearsbehind.com/quickie.html). March 2006.

**Intercultural Travel Grant** for Student Groups led by Faculty, Center for Women's Intercultural Leadership, Saint Mary's College (to fund gvolt's attendance to Transmediale Festival, Berlin, Germany). February 1-8, 2006.

**Faculty Intercultural Travel Grant**, Center for Women's Intercultural Leadership, Saint Mary's College (for travel to Budapest, Hungary). December 26-January 6, 2006.

**Departmental Creative Use of Technology Grant**, Center for Academic Innovation, (in collaboration with Professor Julie Tourtillotte in support of Art290: Installation, Video and the Web), 2005-2006.

***Courses***

**Art 317: Beyond Object:** An upper level course dealing with both form and space, Beyond Object introduces students to techniques and concepts outside of the traditional realm of three-

[1] Cyberfeminism is a subcategory of Feminism that, among other things, is concerned with: the position of women working in technological disciplines; the unique experiences of women within technoculture; and the gendering of various technologies.

dimensional form. Students create installation strategies and form explorations that incorporate the use of light, digital video, sound, physical computing and other new technologies within a conceptual framework that is student-derived. Projects are augmented by readings and discussions of contemporary theories related to use of these medias within the genre of sculpture.

**Art 417: Advanced Sculpture Topics**-- Within "Advanced Sculpture Topics," students investigate an individualized approach to the themes and technical concerns of sculpture through creative projects. Students are strongly encouraged to create interdisciplinary connections between sculpture and other areas in their exploration of the genre. Students enrolled are given dedicated studio space within the Sculpture area in the development of their project(s), will meet regularly with faculty teaching Sculpture (and other areas relevant to their project).

**Cyberfeminism_Creativity_Connectivity:** A 3-credit crosslisted course between Department of Art and Women's Studies. Using contemporary cybertheory and cyberpunk fiction as a foundation, students explored the tools and techniques of new media through the theoretical lens of cyberfeminism. In the creation of digital art works through projects and assignments, students explored the key issues of cyberfeminism, namely: the position of women working in technological disciplines; the unique experiences of women within technoculture; and the gendering of various technologies.

**Bibliography:**


Bondeson, Jan. A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Costa, Mariarosa Dalla. Gynocide: Hysterectomy, Capitalist Patriarchy and the Medical Abuse of Women. Boston: Autonomedia, 2007.

Critical Art Ensemble. Flesh Machine; Cyborgs, Designer Babies, Eugenic Consciousness. Boston: Autonomedia, 1998.

Fernandez, Maria and Wilding, Faith. Domain errors! Cyberfeminist Practices. Boston: Autonomedia, 2003.

Lindgren, Laura and Worden, Gretchen. Mutter Museum Historic Medical Photographs. New York: Blast Books, 2007.

Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein. London: Penguin Books, orig. 1818 (reissued 2003 ed.).

Worden, Gretchen. The Mutter Museum. New York: Blast Books, 2002.


**Funding Specifics:**

Grant monies will be used to help fund travel expenses to and from the Mutter Museum of the College of Physicians (Philadelphia, PA). Additional money will go towards a Intuos3 Wacom tablet (6x8"--$369, or 9x12"--$449), and books (if possible).