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The *Exciting Tales of Science: Mechanical Life* exhibit at the Wallace L.

Anderson Gallery allows its viewers to delve into the mechanical world of artists Tom Haney, J Shea and Nemo Gould and the complexities behind their kinetic sculptures. Through their portfolios, websites, biographies and interviews, each artist explains the vast process and hidden details behind their work. Each artist adds his own unique piece of information to the understanding of mechanics being interwoven with art. The resources as a whole allow the viewer to reflect upon the meaning beneath the resurgence of this art form.

Upon walking into the exhibit the viewer may feel as if he or she is walking into a Tim Burton inspired toy store. Almost every piece of artwork has some movement or action, something the viewer can push a button to make it do, which makes the space inviting to the curious. Yet there is an eerie aspect to the exhibit, to which Shea's work contributes greatly. The artists' work presented together allows each to build off each other. They create one space that has a simple layout, but once the artist looks deeper into each piece, reveals a mass of complexity with wires and gears, nuts and bolts.

Tom Haney's work is unique in that it is mechanically complex on the inside, but the outside has been fleshed out and covered to give them a human-like quality. They have a rustic texture, in their paint and clothing, as if they are from a past era. Each figure is carved of wood that gives it a blocky yet realistic shape. Haney brings together his love for the mechanical by using woodworking to make many of his pieces and adding elements of motion. *Defender of the Aquifer* is interesting, as a simple fuel filter inspired his creation. The backpack part and the gun look like real threatening weapons. The

viewer feels like the defender is tracking his or her movement, keeping his gun aimed and ready. Another piece of Haney's that was inspired by something interesting is his *Out of the Darkness* piece that began with the colorful lanterns. The box the piece is contained in makes the viewer feel as if they are looking in on the scene of this woman lighting the way with the beautiful lanterns. The lanterns give a warm quality to the piece and the woman's movement is gentle, revealing that mechanical movement can be graceful. Haney even put his scrap wood to use in the textured fence behind the woman. His work clearly demonstrates his values of reconnecting to the past, using old methods of creation, bringing life to found objects and allowing him to use many methods of art making. Haney's use of woodworking, "practically a lost art in our world", demonstrates his commitment to tradition. His work, *Schematics*, demonstrates his method of approach potently to his viewers, revealing that all his creations start as rough sketches and mathematical problems. This piece exposes how Haney transitions from having an idea to creating the actual piece.

The work of J. Shea has an overall appearance of grungy metal with a science fiction and steampunk quality. Each piece seems to be a melding of metals and other random materials. Shea uses bulkier pieces of metal with very thin pieces, creating a fragile and unbalanced look expressed in his piece *Doghouse*. The house sits on stilt pieces that make it appear as if it could tumble over any minute. The thin pieces of wire or metal he uses to wrap around his pieces give them motion for the viewer's eye to travel along, especially his mobile pieces. His work reflects a different era, which the copper color adds to by making each piece look tarnished. Shea's combination of bulky pieces with thin can be seen in *Hope*. The piece looks as if it is moving through the air

with each bend and twist Shea shaped into the metal. The thin portions make this piece look fragile as well. Shea reveals that the process of finding the pieces he will use is random and often the pieces find him. He believes that the found objects may have had value to someone in the past but have no value in today's culture, leaving him with the chance to give them purpose.

Completely embracing that his work "appeals to the seven year old boy", Gould's work does express a toy-like quality. Many of his pieces could substitute as the evil villain in a comic strip. Gould explains that the goal of his work is to recreate child-like pieces that allow adults to use their imagination again. He is a collector of anything interesting and repurposes these random pieces by creating artwork out of them. This method of creating allows him to work with a wide range of materials, which presents him with a new challenge each time. His work allows him to explore with mechanics and technology. Gould reveals the process of finding and preparing his objects is equally as difficult and time consuming as constructing them. His viewers can understand and appreciate the obstacles he must overcome through the news link on his website where pictures are posted of parts he is stuck on or experimenting with, such as forming the correct shape for his cuttlefish project. It is interesting to see the objects before and after creation, the process of turning a few objects into one smooth coherent piece. His piece *The Pollinator* gives the viewer a peek into a small window where they can witness a scene of natural science. The bee jerkily buzzes around pollinating flowers, creating an interesting juxtaposition of an organic concept created in a very mechanical way. Gould's *The Ankle Biter* is amusing and intimidating as its position on the floor makes the viewer wonder if the piece is going to suddenly come alive and actually bite his or her ankle with

its dentures. These two pieces alone were composed of a range of found objects from an electric sander, teapot spouts and dentures to other unrelated materials such as a timer case and a real bumblebee. In each piece Gould creates an eclectic combination of items one would consider incapable of being paired with other items to create one balanced piece of artwork.

The underlying message connecting the three of these artists is their ability to reveal, through their work, items deemed useless can be revived. Each artist, Gould and Haney in particular with their motion pieces, finds a way to actually make his work come to life. The resurgence of this type of work expresses the need to return to the past. It encourages others to dig in and turn items inside out. It urges them to discover how the “guts” and gears work. Nowadays, people embrace technology without considering what goes on inside that makes it function. Everything is compacted into a nicely fitting case allowing consumers to only deal with the surface. This work inspires viewers to look beyond the cover and tinker. By being created out of found objects, it serves to comment on society’s lack of value and throw away mindset. Even the most unassuming items can become a vital part of something unexpected. These artists encourage viewers to examine objects deeper and realize the potential they still embody.