

The Museum of Vanitas:

“Exhibition of Physical Vanity and Insecurity”

Created by Lynwood James Walker Jr.



figure 1: The Vanity Set



figure 2: Some of the products of the vanity set - makeup container and a hand mirror with the purpose of seeing the viewer time reflection

figure 3: Exhibit of the Nature of Time

What is It?

My museum encompasses a study of Vanitas. I attempt to present various aspects of human existence in perspective with the infinite span of time. I am creating a booklet that will include drawings of the various exhibits that my Museum of Vanitas would include, such as exhibits on decadence, human consumption, the nature of time, the pursuit of knowledge, and the pursuit of power.

The image below (figure 3) is a drawing of the exhibit on the nature of time. Influenced by the work of Salvador Dali, Time is presented in duality with nature and the universe as the only constants of infinite measure in the human realm of perception.

I am also creating an installation piece that will be an exhibit on physical vanity. This piece is comprised of a vanity set that includes mainly products normally used to enhance physical attractiveness. The vanity set will have a haunting presence in that each piece will include a message reflecting the user's personal insecurities and motives behind using the products. For instance, the hanging mirror is cracked and on each separate cracked piece of glass are words such as "too thin", "too fat", "too tall", and "too short", meant to reflect on some of the many negative thoughts individuals have when looking into mirrors. Also, the facial cleanser will ask the user if he/she is cleansing his/her face because it's easier than cleansing the soul.

The Goal?

The goal is self-empowerment: to counteract the negative influence that the media has on how individuals feel about themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The viewer is asked to think about what tends to last longest in this life: spiritual wellness or physical attractiveness. This piece tries to get the viewer to concentrate more on being the best person he/she can be and finding absolute beauty in one's soul. Also, in this piece, I try hard to not be judgmental of what can very well be taking care of one's body. The very fine line is drawn at how people feel about themselves as a whole. This allows individuals to focus on improving themselves spiritually and finding themselves beautiful regardless of how they look, rather than simply focusing on improving looks to hide major insecurity issues.

Why?

I was initially doing this project to comment on the insecurity issues that plague many of my friends and a large portion of current human society. I wanted to produce an object that could counteract some of the negative energy produced by the media with respect to self-image. Once my instructor pointed out the parallels between my project and the art form of vanitas, I started to explore the art form more thoroughly and found it provided me with an interesting way to comment on many of the current movements in human culture.



