

Nurture Vs. Nature

The question of Nurture vs. Nature asks whether a person's a product of environment or biology. The answer is both. Human existence consists of two parts; mentality and biology. Genetics, the laws of physics, and environmental conditions dictate both mental and biological processes. The only difference is the current thresholds that we can change our mentality or biology.

Mentalities are easier to change than most of us like to perceive. It's comforting to believe that our living philosophies are unalterably unique, and simultaneously universal. Actually, we only believe something when it's reinforced by others; thus we behave like everyone else to be part of the society. The proof is as evident as considering when a society as a whole decides on behavioral change. It's as simple as bell-bottoms going in and out of style, or as globally complicated as WWII. Consider how many Jews died because of a simple shift in fundamental German thought. Of course, anti-Semitism existed prior to WWII. However, would the German people have committed genocide against Jews on those feelings, if Nazi propaganda had not skewed their thinking? Taken away from constant reinforcements from our society's behavioral rules, a person would feel less or more apt to behave in a specific way. Taken away from all behavioral cues, we would revert to chimpanzee behavior. Our society's based on a hierarchy similar to chimpanzee social structure; we just have words and missiles instead of sticks and grunts.

Aside from sharing similarities in societal structure, people share many genetic sequences with chimps. However, specific attributes and abilities are basic, and unique, to the physical format of a human. The abilities of this physical format can be enhanced by things such as steroids, but these enhancements don't change the fact that a person still has only two eyes, two arms, two legs, and so on. Likewise, plastic surgery is a form of denying biology but works mostly at surface value only; the organs below still limit lifespan despite a youthful mask. Barring future technological advancements in genetic enhancement or deformation (depending on your point of view), most changes we make biologically still result in a human being. The fear of these advancements in genetic technology is an indication that our biological imperative to survive is our threshold for physical change. Simply put, we don't want to jeopardize being human by changing the physical things that make us Human.

What interests me about the Nurture vs. Nature argument is not only the fact that human existence can be reduced to a simple binary system of thought and biology. It is also that those two elements interact with one another. They can create more when coupled together than separately on their own. Each element can also threaten the very existence of the other element. A person's vanity can force them to starve their bodies for a physical ideal. From the perspective of these realizations, I began seeing binary systems in my life that have influenced my artwork, or reflect a similar development as that of my work.



BINARY

Binary Systems In My Work

An important binary system that has affected my artwork is binary code. The combination of 1 and 0 has spawned an entire information revolution, and forced the art world to deal with an expansion of media. For me, a computer has become as common place in the creative process as a paintbrush or drawing pad. I gain greatly from the speed it affords me when working through ideas. The push and pull between the programming of the computer and my own sense of design can often create something neither it nor I would have come up with separately. I just have to be careful not to let the limitations and qualities of the program dictate what I create.

My work in general is also an example of a binary thought process. Because of my background in illustration I have never really lost my interest in painting despite the fact that I do the majority of my work in sculpture. This means I do two dimensional works as well as three dimensional works. There is a clear difference between my thought process as a Painter or Graphic Designer when compared my process making sculpture. In realization of my binary obsessions, I have consciously created certain works in my thesis exhibit with attributes of both two and three dimensional work. These pieces have their own unique aesthetic value.

The most important binary system to my work is the schism of culture often felt by the first generation children of immigrants like myself. My view of society is that of conflicting cultures; the culture of my parents and the culture I live in. I am acutely aware that the more I assimilate to the culture I live in, the less I will understand my parents' culture. But it's inevitable that I must assimilate as much as possible in order to succeed in the culture I live in. I work toward this goal with the undeniable knowledge that I will never be able to assimilate fully because of my ties to my parents. This struggle between cultures has dramatically changed my perspective. I find I have the benefit and curse of always being an objective outsider whether I am with family or with the American culture I am immersed in. This cultural schism affects my art by providing subject matter and by molding my creative process. I spent a lifetime comparing cultures; in hindsight it's no surprise that I create binary comparisons.

