



THE GUBU SAGA INSTALLATION

The Gubu Saga Installation is a novel using physical objects instead of words. It is approximately 20 square meters and contains about 600 dolls in jars, which are arranged in a progression of 60 diorama type sections, to form a readable story.

The dolls are made of clay but have been amended with found items, such as; rusty metal, degraded rags, shards of broken glass, wires and bits of broken computer circuitry.

The plot concerns a fictional character, called The Narrator, who is instructed to build the shrine, telling his story and the history of his people. The Gubu Saga installation is the physical object this fictional character constructs.

Being a novel, The Gubu Saga Installation has been constructed using literary ideas and methodology and a sort of 'character art', whereby, I get into character, as an actor would, but instead of saying the character's words or acting as the character would behave, I, while in character, make the objects that the character would have made, using the materials and ideas available to him, given his fictional time and place.

L.E.D. lights make me deeply ill. The experience feels as if I'm moving through varying degrees of concussion and at its worst it is horrific, as if the electrics in my brain have gone haywire. This began in 2011, as L.E.D. became ubiquitous. I had to cut L.E.D. screens and lights out of my life completely. Once I started to avoid L.E.D. screens and lights I began to feel better, But I felt as if I'd been experimented on, disconnected and exiled in my own space. As I recovered I became driven by a tactile need to make objects with my hands. While The Gubu Saga is not specifically about my story, I did, as an actor would, pour my own experience into the object I was making. The concepts behind the Gubu Saga, its methodology

and mode of construction are all affected by each other and my experiences.

The head is the main motif and many of the heads have metal implants or scaring above the left eyes. Most have had their mouths sealed, gagged or stapled shut. In head-hunter ideology the mouth of the shrunken head is often sealed to stop the victims spirit escaping and wreaking vengeance. This is a visceral manifestation of silencing victims, be they individuals, societies, cultures or groups. Within the mythology of the piece, the sealed mouth represents the head-hunting past, but it also represents the tech enabled future, as the individual sinks into a New World Mind of complete, perhaps unavoidable, connectivity.

The plot of the novel sees the Narrator being placed in a research facility, where he is subject to experimentation based on cranial implants. The doctors are developing mind connection devices, in order to cure psychotic patients. When the facility is destroyed, he is instructed to build a shrine to his people's history. I envisioned him working away, on his own, in a hut in the forest, scavenging through the ruins of the bombed out facility for the materials he needed.

I made The Gubu Saga Installation as a physical object that would be as close, as is possible, to being the shrine The Narrator builds, in that fictional story. At this point, having worked out the characters and the plot, I didn't write it down on paper. Instead I wrote it in material form, using physical objects, and instead of using art theory, (Which I didn't know), I used literary theory and methods, and applied them to the installation I was constructing. For example, I had to develop an art style, which, like a writing style, had to be appropriate for the story and the characters it represented. On the stage, a character's words and actions must be consistent with, and be a product of, their personality. So too with The Gubu Saga Installation. If it was constructed by a fictional character, it must be a product of that character's personality and situation. What he makes, and importantly, how he makes it, must be a product of his mind and abilities in the same way that his words and actions would be if he were a stage character. The Narrator is not a trained artist, therefore, he must operate in the autodidactic manner of an outsider artist.

One of the most fascinating aspects of such outsider artists is their ability/need to focus on one single project for years, perhaps decades. This is very much the case with Gubu saga. It has taken over 10,000 hours and will need at least 50,000 hours to complete. In order to create it in the manner of a self-thought artist, I used the fact that I wasn't a trained artist myself, and made sure that I learned how to make The Gubu Saga installation in the same way the fictional narrator would have learned how to make the fictional shrine, in the story, so I could authentically replicate his learning process and the successes and failures that would go along with that. Above all I must avoid schooled art techniques and knowing art school references. But there is more to a character than just their personality. The social history of their place and people would provide the context of their existence and would have to be understood for the character to be fully realized. As I created the history and cultural context of The Narrator's people, I adapted his personality and individual context. When I had his culture context, as fed through his individual personality, I could understand The Narrator, to the point where I could 'get into character', and become him, in order to make the objects he would create.

Many of the dolls, in the installation, resemble shrunken heads and have wires or augmentation protruding from their skulls. This is because The Narrator, who is from a culture that, historically, practiced head-hunting, has witnessed horrific experimentation. His art is a response to and a physicalization of, these experiments. He doesn't fully understand the technology involved but he does attempt to replicate it in his shrine and the dolls he makes.

The Narrator feels that bits of rusted tech or broken circuit board are power or totem items, and he gathers them for later use. My disability came in handy at this point. L.E.D. car headlights and daytime running lights hurt me severely, so when I'm walking on the street, I can't look up, in case I see an L.E.D. light. I have no choice. I must wear a wide brimmed hat and look down at the ground. This is appalling, but I do find a great many interesting bits of tech debris, which feeds into the methodology of the piece. If I'm to make the installation in the style of The Narrator, using materials and ideas available to him, I must gather and construct it in character and, therefore, I need to know, instinctively, what he'd pick up

or discard, and why. And I must understand how, each individual impulsive choice would fit into, and shape, the overall project. If he is scavenging through the burnt out wreckage of a research facility, I must replicate this by gathering tech debris from our civilization, which must be imbedded in the installation in a manner consistent with The Narrator's objectives. He is telling a story that deals with history and tech evolution, so the installation begins, in the initial panels (chapters), with the most basic tech, such as; straw, stones and shells, then develops through different tech phases until it concludes with computer debris, in abstract configuration, as he attempts to represent the evolution of The New World Mind, a vast telepathic internet, connecting all living things, in harmonious order. Although, a contemporary Orwell, might suggest, all are connected but some are more connected than others.

“And The Technium spread like ivy along the branches of The Axis Mundi, until all was connected and The New World Mind, itself assembled.

Seek, seek, seek and find order in the New World Mind. Seek, seek, seek and find Order in The New World Mind.”

- Gubu Saga

A key segment of The Gubu Saga Installation is The Axis Mundi panel. It is an alcove, featuring a tree, of about 4 square meters, along whose branches, grow a wire (The Technium). The tree has been made from storm damaged branches, found at the base of a single tree, that grows on rocks, in the liminal space where sea meets shore. The Axis Mundi features in many religions. It is the axel of the world. It is the tree of life. It is all trees, the tree of Oden, the cross of Jesus, the haggard tree on Becket's stage, the Christmas tree and the tree type diagrams used to show life and evolution in science books.

The Technium, (as coined by Kevin Kelly) is the sum total of all tech, both the physical objects and the ideas pertaining to them. In The Gubu Saga, The Technium is represented as a wire, which resembles ivy, with leaves made of broken computer circuit board. It is shown growing along and tangling around, the branches of The Axis Mundi, to the point where, we

are left wondering if it is strangling the natural order. Is the tree of life a dying thing, being strangled by the clutching weight of the unstoppable Technium? Or is the growth of technology a natural process, part of nature's raising complexity, given that The Technium evolves in a pseudo organic manner, resembling, in many ways, a living organism. As well as destroying, it brings new types of nature and life. In Gubu Sags, the religion of The Technium preaches that, The Technium will develop to the point where it will, in the future, create the universe and life. And, in a circular logic, bring about the conditions for its own evolution.

In his forest hut, The Narrator, in pseudo religious zeal, attempts to represent technology that has spun beyond his grasp, and understand his experience and the history of his people, within this process. He builds a shrine, populated with shrunken-head type dolls, with sealed mouths and rusty tech implants in their skulls. In doing so he makes, the fictional, Gubu Saga shrine, which I have also made, using physical objects. The Gubu saga Installation is a peculiar, obsessive and totemic object, that is a manifestation of The Narrator's story and his cultural context, both in its conceptual and physical construction. It is as close, as is possible, to being an art object made by a fictional character.

Gubu

