

ChickieNobs

Oryx and Crake inspires the most disturbing and yet intriguing ideas. A future society which progressed tremendously in medicine, research and food production encounters plenty of ethical issues. Most of the issues arise due to the unsettling feeling of the uncanny. For example, the new creation of a species such as the ChickieNobs allows people to grow their own chicken like a plant. It does not have a head or brain and is purely meant for growing either breast tissue or leg tissue. Therefore, I wanted to recreate the ChickieNobs for myself using the interpretation I've gathered while reading the book as well as my own interpretation of the uncanny. My *purpose* is to deliver the same feeling and image I have experienced during the reading of the novel to other individuals.

Creating a ChickieNobs plant as a sculpture is one of the best *forms* to deliver this message. The art of sculpting is so broad and can include a variety of medium, size, texture and color. I can also bring it in as a display and for a second pretend to be Crake who creates his little creatures in his own lab. Although this method is less scientific, I would have definitely loved to create an actual ChickieNob through genetical engineering because that future sounds very interesting. However, creating a free-standing sculpture of the uncanny is a lot more in my grasp.

I have tried multiple types of medium for my sculpture before settling on a final piece. I have tried simple plaster of Paris sculpting, but the sculpture was way too stiff and didn't feel organic or natural. Then, I've tried using clay for molding the sculpture but the clay hardened up after a couple days and did not hold the same fluidity I wanted. I have considered using actual chicken parts in my sculpture but those would have rotted by the time I needed to present it.

Therefore, I have settled on an interesting middle ground of using flour clay/puddy as the main medium for the ChickieNobs while mixing the sculpture with other mediums such as wires and aluminum foil for structural support.

The *method* I employed while realizing this project was thinking about the overarching ideas and questions that keep popping up in all the previous books/poems/stories we read this semester. What do we define as human? My first idea was recreating the image of a perfect human being which was quite ambitious. I don't think it will even answer as many questions about the actual nature of a human being as much as how a people will think and feel upon the presence of the uncanny. Figuring out exactly where that line is through trial and error of adding and subtracting features to a sculpture would literally mold the definition of a Chickenob, as well as of a chicken.

The *audience* are preferably the students in our class as well as anyone who has read *Oryx and Crake* or pondered on the definition of a human being before. At best, if the project does not answer any of my most pressing questions at least I can push people out of their comfort zones and gain a new perspective on life for the day. The perfect *condition* for this project to be presented is in an early morning college English class where my audience are half asleep and exhausted from their finals. I hope this project wakes them up and help them realize their own boundaries of the uncanny.

The entire *process* from conception to its completion was mostly spend trying different mediums and ideas out. After I have decided on what I wanted to make the sculpture out of I quickly realized that I had to give up some of my more ambitious ideas. I decided to settle on a simple free-standing ChickieNobs plant in a pot sculpture. Around 12 different batches of clay was handmade by me and took a lot of my cooking resources. The recipe is not that different

from a regular bread recipe and creates a soft and pliable medium that can hold its shape for a very long time. This allowed me to go back several times and fix up any mistakes I have made on the way.

I have decided to create the chicken leg ChickieNobs and have the description of the ChickieNobs from the book guide my imagination. One line in particular was my starting point. "What they were looking at was a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing." (Oryx and Crake). The one thing I found very disturbing and unappealing were the bulbous structures. Therefore, I wanted to have a main plant body have a bulb-like stem, almost like a cactus. However, the thick fleshy tubes and whitish-yellow skin seemed a bit too boring. I have then decided to look for inspiration from some of my favorite plants.

The lotus plant has some of the most interesting and disturbing seed heads in the plant family. These plants are often linked to Tropolophobia, an irrational fear of holes. These holes can be various in size, have something in them or be empty or even be in different shapes such as the honeycomb. Therefore, I applied these unsettling features to the ChickieNobs. By allowing the chicken legs to grow straight out of these holes it creates the same feeling of uneasiness.

The whitish-yellow color of the ChickieNobs also seemed unsatisfactory to me and I have decided to add more pinks, browns, blacks and reds into the plant. This creates a more fleshy and wounded kind of appearance and really enhances the aesthetic of ripping away a chicken leg out of the bulb. I'm sure if some plants and trees had the same ability to disgust us when we tore their parts away, there would be less of a carbon footprint on planet earth today.