

# Educator Guide: Mark Mothersbaugh, *Myopia*

September 25, 2015 – January 9, 2016

## artist bio

- Born: 1950, Akron Ohio
- Education: Went to Kent State University in 1968, started as a printmaker
- Musician, composer, singer, artist and co-founder of DEVO.
- Composer for movie and television scores including "Pee-wee's Playhouse," "The Lego Movie" and many films by the director Wes Anderson.
- His process often starts with a drawing—he then uses the computer to generate prints, rugs, animations, sculptures, etc.

## exhibition

- This exhibition includes documentation and music from Mark Mothersbaugh's DEVO days as well as prints, drawings, paintings, sculptures, rugs and video animations. It also includes newly-produced musical and sculptural installations and most notably, a life-long series of postcard-sized works.
- The title of the exhibition, *Myopia*, refers to the vision defect Mothersbaugh was diagnosed with when he was 7.
- He began working on "Beautiful Mutants" series in the early 1990s. He digitally edits vintage photographs to present the symmetrical reflection of one side of a subject's body and face. He places many of these in old daguerreotype frames to heighten the eerie effect. This series explores symmetry and how humans are not really symmetrical.
- Mothersbaugh began the Orchestrion series while writing music for Wes Anderson's movie, "Moonrise Kingdom". He collected antique duck calls and dismantled organ pipes to create these electronic, music machines.

## materials

- Digitally altered photographs, antique frames, a redesigned automobile and ceramic sculptures.
- Orchestrions –vintage organ pipes, vintage bird calls, electronics, steel, wood
- Prints, drawings, collage
- Rugs –woven nylon fibers
- Collection of artifacts from Mothersbaugh's life –letters, books, posters, video

"I got a pair of glasses when I was seven and I saw the world—it all just came into focus in one moment."



## discussion

### BEFORE VIEWING

- Discover the artist Mark Mothersbaugh and preview some of the work you will see on your *Myopia* exhibition tour. <http://markmothersbaughart.com/art/>
- What is beauty? Discuss symmetry and the role it plays in beauty. Where do you see symmetry in nature?
- How is his work inspired by the world we live in today/contemporary culture?
- What do you think the Orchestriions are made from? What materials can you identify? What items would you use to make your own music machine?

### AFTER VIEWING

- Why do you think Mothersbaugh called his series "Beautiful Mutants? What does the word "mutant" mean to you? What do you think it means to Mark?
- Mark Mothersbaugh enjoys experimenting with art, music and technology. What examples of this did you see in the *Myopia* exhibition?
- The artist loves repetition, order and symmetry, where did you find examples of this in his work?
- Mothersbaugh was very interested in the Dada art movement. Introduce this movement to the students and ask them to think of similarities or examples of inspiration in Mark's work.

## key words & themes

- Symmetry and Mutation
- Simple Machines and Technology
- Sound and Music
- Contemporary Culture and Animation

## activities (follow the link for full lesson plan)

### • **Faces of Symmetry:**

<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/files/learn/markmotherbaugh-facesofsymmetry.pdf>

### • **Kaleidoscope Portraits:**

<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/files/learn/markmotherbaugh-kaleidoscopeportraits.pdf>

### • **Orchestriions and Creative Solutions:**

<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/files/learn/markmothersbaugh-orchestriionsandcreativesolutionslessonplan.pdf>

### • **Animated Rugs:**

<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/files/learn/markmothersbaugh-ruganimation.pdf>

*"I found that almost everyone has half of their face that, when you make it symmetrical, looks more innocent or cuter or more beautiful. Then they also have a side that looks more dark, malevolent and more evil and grotesque. I became really fascinated with that."*

\*\*\* This exhibition contains some mature content. Docents have been trained to avoid works with more adult themes. All educators have been given free admission to view the exhibition in advance.