David Torres II

Artist Statement

Film, video games, animation, and the networked globalization of images are the lingua franca of our time. These mediums, in particular film and gaming, don't merely reflect back the world or point out our interaction, but directly model it. I am interested in the history of stories where the unseen forces of morality are at work. The PTSD factor embedded in culture has drawn me to the idea of the "hero" as an empathic ideal for people to aspire to. I am also interested in the illusion and delusional discussions that surround the complexities of the racial, sexual, religious, aging; old and young identities in culture. As a way of investigating these identities I created "Riakman", an alter-ego, designed under the influences of 1990's anime, video games, and my father's middle school drawings. Riakman's birth later expanded into the Sunkeepers, a race of warriors fueled by the cosmic power of the sun! Through worldbuilding and storytelling, I re-link pathways between high art and popular culture. Through the Sunkeepers, I tell stories within my fictional planet "Runetech" about a way of being in the world. Exploring a narrative with an embedded nostalgia for the future is the illusion I use to contend with the disillusions that exist within culture today.

I admire artist such as Matthew Barney, Trenton Doyle Hancock, and Henry Darger, specifically how they immerse audiences into their fictional worlds through color, form, and mark-making. French Director Alain Resnais (especially his film Hiroshima Mon Amour) influences my studio practice as well. Over the years I have adopted the psychological and psychokinetic devices of both Resnais' films and of anime such as Mamoro Oshi's *Ghost in the Shell* and Angel's Egg inorder to immerse audiences into the world of my Sunkeepers Saga. Video games such as *Dark Souls* and *Final Fantasy* do something similar while also, emphasizing the textures of their characters and architecture through a handicraft and technocraft sensibility. These handicraft and technocraft sensibilties are important to me as I feel it is a powerful tool needed to ground my fictional world and its stories within the internal subconscious space of my

audience. In my body of work that pertains to drawing, mark making plays a larger a role in communicating the psychological framework of both the characters and setting. Mangaka such as Kentaro Miura lay out a pathway for how I can investigate themes of good vs evil through the formal framework of depicting value. This back & forth between different mediums and influences culminates in the aesthetic sensibility of the Sunkeepers Saga.

My stories deal with the trials and tribulations of entering a world filled with rules and a history that is unknown. Many of the inhabitants of Runetech suffer from a great amnesia after the fall of the Sunkeeper empire. Only those who were favored by the Eternal Flame (the life force of the planet), or apostles sent from the void (ancient beings who are **partly** responsible for Runetech's current situation!) remember the true history of the land. Previous episodic animations such as *Enter Sliff's Fortress*, and *Riakman Reborn Part I & II* show the journey of Riakman as he learns and contends with the dark history of the world that he was born into, while at the same time finding his own memory and voice within it. In traditional stories revolving around the hero's journey the world is often painted in a way which it is obvious to identify between forces that are good or evil, and it is clear how the hero must find their direction in that world. I challenge this by blurring the lines of what is understood as good and evil as more information on the history of Runetech is revealed to both the protagonist and the audience. By doing so, I can contemplate my own morality and ethics while asking myself "what is humanity"? and "what is my purpose existing in a world that is governed by rules built upon an unclear history"?