“Through studying art, I’ve learned that I can bring all my interests together to tell a story.”

When describing his family, Thomas states, “We’re kind of an intellectual family. We’re all sort of geeky like that.” Thomas is definitely the kind of kid in school who got sent out of the room frequently for talking too much and asking too many questions. He’s outgoing, precocious and when he gets excited about something he claims he can talk about it for days.

Thomas grew up in Roseville, Minnesota with his one, younger sister. His Mom is a stay-at-home Mom and his Dad is a Health Care Planning consultant. Thomas’s interest in art developed very quickly as a child. As we talk, he shares that when he was in 3rd grade, he got really “geeked” about ancient Egypt after he saw an episode of Sesame Street where the main characters met a little Egyptian ghost boy, “then I saw the movie The Prince of Egypt and I was a gonner! I knew then that I wanted to make movies and animations and I haven’t let go of that dream yet. He goes on to say, “So my first art project was a movie about Moses and I was the main character and I enlisted half the neighborhood to appear in it too. I wrote the script and did everything. It even included animation special effects. My Dad helped me and was my camera man.” This was the start of Thomas’s journey, and now as graduation looms he has made plans attend New York University and go to the Tish School for film studies.

Thomas also describes his inspiration as coming from all four corners of the earth and everything in between; spirituality, religion, other cultures, science, scaring people-he has an obsession with horror movies-philosophy, books he reads, history and
almost everything else under the sun inspires him. He is also obsessed (in a healthy way he assures me) with the act and process of creating. “When I make art, I associate with Mad Scientists, I feel like Dr. Frankenstein. I'm taking materials from the earth, the basic elements, and compiling them, cobbling them together and breathing life into them. I infuse what I make with life. That's why I like animation the best. You can actually take random objects and make a little homunculus out of them then give it life.”

Thomas describes his interest in art as an intense affinity for examining science and philosophy and imagery simultaneously. He wants to be a sort of Renaissance man like Leonardo da Vinci. Currently he pursues making sequential art that tells a story like comic book arts, filmmaking and animation. He says, “Through studying art, I've learned to tell stories, to communicate symbolically and graphically. When I make art I'm taking my ideals and translating them into visual communication, taking something divine and putting it into physical form. Through studying art, I’ve learned that I can bring all my interests together to tell a story.”

The self-portrait, Dr. Thomas Boguszewski's Castle of Delerium, Thomas submitted for exhibition clearly indicates this. In the comic book he rendered he portrays himself as a mad scientist who gets inspired to create something from disparate parts or ideas, and the pursuit of breathing life into his creation becomes maddeningly all-encompassing for him. This story Thomas illustrates is essentially a dissection of the creative process he’s learned to engage in through his pursuit of studying art. Thomas identifies with the “Mad Scientist” archetype most closely when he is making art that visually communicates about his ideas, inspirations, and stories with an audience. This piece illustrates Thomas’s belief that his creative process is both a means of breathing
life into his ideas and a means to pursue research into concepts that interest him. He explains, “Like right now I'm researching alchemy and ritualistic symbolism because these ideas are going to be incorporated into one of my projects. So through studying art I've learned to create and use a symbolic language that I can use to communicate about aspects of all I learn, about humanity, and about our existence here as a species.”

For Thomas, studying and making art is also something he considers essential to his hierarchical needs. He feels that, “Making art is almost like dreaming, because when you dream, you take all the stuff in your unconscious mind that you've experienced in a day or a week or whatever, and collage it into a cool little video that you get to watch in your head at night. And after you've had the dream and you wake up, you might not be able to consciously understand or decipher it completely, but you still get the meaning behind it on some level even if you can't articulate it” Ultimately Thomas is driven by the pursuit to recreate these little dream movies in the waking hours for everyone to see. He says, “I take the ideas I see in the world and in almost a dream-like way using time, imagination and inspiration, I can combine them and put them into a story, whether the outcome is a painting or a movie, it's all just a story about the secret order behind life.”

He concludes, “It's like with masks. Since you choose them, they show what you feel like on the inside. Since you design them, they show your inner character. So even though you wear them on the outside, it's your inner spirit coming through from the inside.”
Thomas

belts

mediums: military style cotton belts with nickel finish buckles, digital collages, resin

Thomas is a philosophical storyteller. When you talk with him it is inevitable that you will begin discussing one topic but end on a completely different note, yet where the conversation ends up is still somehow related to where it began. Through studying art Thomas has learned to use visual images to tell stories. Whether through animation, film or other forms of sequential art, Thomas’s biggest artistic thrill is telling a story, and usually his stories represent the imaginative and sometimes dark but humorous constructs of his inner mind.

To create this portrait of Thomas I was inspired by the storytelling mechanism of film and popular movies. To reference the darker, twisted subject matter that often emerges in Thomas’s stories, I digitally collaged scenes and imagery from classically famous horror movies such as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* and *Birds*, William Friedkin’s *Exorcist* and Steven Spielberg’s *Poltergeist* among others. In each of the digital collages I embedded the phrase, “Art is creating a story,” to capture what Thomas perceives he has learned to do through studying art. Then, to freeze these images forever in time similarly to how the camera is used to capture fleeting moments, I sealed the collages in resin. The utterly utilitarian, black, blank, military style, cotton belts are roughly the same width as 35mm film and they represent all the latent stories lurking in Thomas’s mind yet to be developed and shared. I affixed the resin encapsulated digital
collages onto the belt buckles to denote that the story is where Thomas’s artistic vision comes full circle, the story is what holds his art together. So, I hope that when wearing these belts, Thomas is encouraged to continue developing, directing and producing his stories for presentation to his audiences.

Thomas Boguszewski’s Castle Of Delerium

*comic book*

mediums: pencil, pen, digital photo-collage

Thomas Boguszewski

*Dr. Thomas Boguszewski’s Castle of Delirium* is a story outlining precisely why I make art. In many ways, the artwork is its own artist statement. However, while *Castle of Delirium* explains why I create art in general, I will now relate to you how I created the work and why I made certain specific choices with the concept and design of the comic book world.

**How did I make it?**

In June of 2009, I doodled the comic in a story-sketch format, wrote a script, and then came up with thumbnails for all of the pages. However, I didn’t finish the actual comic pages until July 2010. When I sat down and started sketching in 2009, the entire story came pouring from my fingertips with incredible ease, and doing the thumbnails for the pages was a blast because I could practice making layout gags and comics storytelling tricks. But when the time came to pencil the “finished” pages, I froze up, and I didn’t touch the project again for many moons.

I think the reason for this was that after improvising the comic once already, I was grasped by a terrible *boredom* at the prospect of “just drawing my thumbnails all over again.” Plus, I was intimidated at the prospect of making “a whole 24 page comic” out of nothing. I felt that each drawing I did during the penciling stage was just a means to the end of having a “finished comic” and I was afraid that such a process had no place for improvisation.

Basically, I had a poor grasp of the artistic *process*.

Over the course of the next year, I began to collect ideas and come up with the outlook that I needed. While studying the Liberal Arts at New York University, I read about
German dramatist Bertolt Brecht who theorized that a piece of “epic” theater needs to be made out of scenes that could stand as self-contained episodes. While taking a Filmmaking course over the summer I realized that the best feature films are made up of scenes that could stand alone to some degree as short films. On my way back to Minnesota I read a book on writing called “Bird by Bird,” in which author Stephanie Meyer recommends breaking any writing project into “small assignments” that one can complete one at a time. All the while, I thought about the fact that graphic novels are collections of individual chapters, which are sets individual pages, which are sequences of self-contained panels. And when I set foot in my house in June 2010, I understood what I needed to do.

Instead of attempting to draw Castle of Delirium in one go and in order, I decided that I would take an improvisational approach to each individual panel and each individual page. I would improvise the art like flexible “flesh” over the rigid, but invisible “skeleton” of thumbnails. I realized that every piece of a work has to be piece of work!

After coming to this conclusion I scripted a small sequel to Castle of Delirium. In this mini-comic, I bemoan the fact that I have an army of giant robots in my head, but all I can manage to make are tiny robots. In the end, I realize that I can build the big robots out of smaller robots that I improvise. The small robots assemble like a swarm of nanites, a complicated Power Rangers Megazord, or the cells in a Chuck Close painting until they form my big piece — a giant robot with which I can take over the world! After I started the final draft of Castle of Delirium in June 2010, I finished it almost as quickly as I finished the first draft. I was able to find so many little details that I could have fun with that I never lost interest.

In the end I found that no page is superfluous and the story would not make sense if I were to take out so much as a single panel. However, I could still look at each page of the comic out of context and enjoy it as a piece of comics storytelling. The way I see it, this is the ultimate goal of a comics artist, and seeing the piece come together in such a way was the ultimate high. After finishing Castle of Delirium, I remembered why I liked to tell stories with pictures in the first place.

What is the effect that I desire?
I love Dr. Thomas Boguszewski’s Castle of Delirium because it is not just a well-told story about a mad scientist with cool pictures and funny jokes; it is also saturated with ideas! It is an exercise in abstract thinking designed to promote abstract thinking. It’s a comic about comics, an artwork about art, and a philosophy about philosophy. It is one of the most “meta” things I have ever done.

Though my pieces always have messages, much of my best work has a “meta” component — its content somehow refers to its form. This is probably because I am interested in art’s role as a means of communication. Above all other aspects of art, I am concerned with art as language. This means that in order for me to get excited about
a story, I also have to be interested in “learning the language” that I’m telling it in. I
also seek to educate people using my art, and I do this by not only having an
educational message, but by delivering it in a way that makes the medium visible and
hopefully, learnable.

**Why did I choose to do a mindscape comic book?**

I had so much to say about why and how I create art that a single image just wouldn’t
cut it. I consider myself a storytelling artist first and foremost, so I knew from the get-
go that in order to communicate my philosophy on art and paint a picture of my
personality, I needed to weave a story. I would do an inner self-portrait where my inner
self was not a figure, but an entire dimension.

The world of *Dr. Thomas Boguszewski’s Castle of Delirium* is a “brainscape” —a
whole world set within my head! It is a representation of my inner world, which means
it is also an allegorical representation of my mind itself. If my psyche is my soul, then
the psychic dream world that surrounds me is really myself.

I developed an idea based upon research on Carl Jung and the Alchemists that every
individual really does have a whole universe inside himself. This inner world is the
inner self. I believe further that: 1. The inner world of ideas and the outer world of
nature are congruent. 2. The gestalt of nature and everything in it —also called “The
All”— is the true definition of “God.” And 3. Therefore, when actualized to be the size
and shape of nature, the human soul really is “in God’s image” or “one with God.” This
philosophy is so important to me that my stand-in character alludes to it within the
pages of *Castle of Delirium*.

The environment of *Dr. Thomas Boguszewski’s Castle of Delirium* represents my inner
world —otherwise known as my “unconscious mind” or my “big self.” To balance that,
my stand-in character, the mad-scientist narrator, represents my “consciousness,” “ego,”
or “little self.”

**Why did I depict myself as a mad scientist?**

I depict myself as a mad scientist because I simply feel like one whenever I make art. I
love to figure out how things work, whether they are in nature or in art. I consider art
and science to be intimately tied together and I could never separate them. As an artist, I
am also an inventor —I tinker with my art as I create it. When I put in a little bit of
effort into a piece, observe the results, and then make changes, I am essentially
performing a series of scientific experiments. When I make an animation and see my art
begin to move, I am known to shout, “it’s alive!” at the top of my lungs. Plus, I love to
critique and analyze things, and there isn’t an artist around who doesn’t feel like his
work is being “dissected” during critique.

I find the archetypal image of the mad scientist to be an apt and romantic analogy for
the creative human being. I believe that artists discover ideas the same way that
scientists discover truths about nature. Nothing is ever “made up.” Instead, I think the
ideas are already there—they have always been there—waiting for the scientist, shaman, or artist to dig them out of the realms of the unknown and bring them home to his people like Prometheus bringing fire down from the top of mount Olympus. The artist and the scientist are heroes in this sense; they go on a hero’s journey of discovery and bring a bit of wonder to the surface.

But mad scientists are not popularly heroes. In fact, they are among the most widely-recognized villains! This is because, in addition to having genius, “mad scientists” have the marvelous quality of being “mad!” They are insane and uncontrollable. Mad scientists break all the rules of conventional morality in the name of discovering the truth… and that’s why I love them!

I get a thrill from the dark and twisted, and I love black humor. Vincent Price is my favorite actor, and the Addams family is my idea of the perfect family. But I’m no sadist—I admire spooks, villains, and weirdoes who break every social norm… as long as they manage to be genuinely good people at the same time. Often the monsters I admire are good people purely because of their non-conformity. In such tales it’s the norms that are wrong, not the subversive weirdoes. Characters that are weird and spooky, but ultimately good, show us that when we strip away social constructs and false limitations, it becomes easier to live the life we want. We can be weird, we can be eccentric, and we can be creative.

Mad scientists often lead incredibly creative and whimsical lifestyles. To be a mad scientist is to be a renegade magician who is so wildly inventive that he is capable of turning his environment into a living extension of his imagination. Dexter’s laboratory and Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory are two examples of such living dream-worlds in fiction. As a storyteller and a showman, I truly wish to build a new world from imagination—in more ways than one! That’s precisely what I aimed to do with my mindscape: become a mad scientist with the ability to recreate the world exactly as I imagine it, and fill it with what it needs… ideas and joy.

**Why do you like alchemy so much?**

I like to take things that most people would find frivolous or silly—such as cartoons, creature features, or comic books— and find the unintentional lessons locked away in them. I take things that most people would just consider to be pure mass entertainment, such as comic books about mad scientists, and I work like an archaeologist to dig up its “philosophical gold.” “Philosophical gold” is a term from Alchemy. I make a lot of references to alchemy in *Dr. Thomas Boguszewski’s Castle of Delirium*, because I see a correlation between the creative cycle and the alchemical process of antiquity.

The alchemists weren’t just kooky pre-science chemists who wanted to turn lead into gold. Alchemy was actually a spiritual practice, and the experiments were metaphorical. Alchemy was all about taking something apart and putting it together in a new, more “pure” shape. They identified a cycle and swore up and down that this process was the process used to create something meaningful out of chaos – whether that meant turning
lead into gold, turning a bad man into a good man, or turning random materials into beautiful art.

**Why are there so many trains?**
In my view, the universe—especially the inner one—is like one great big array of *Tracks* guiding things to and fro. The idea that the mind is a system of bridges connecting islands together by “train of thought” is a visual metaphor that I have tried to explore in various projects, but I finally got a chance to try it out with *Castle of Delirium*.

I think that all arts and sciences stem from the human race’s unique ability to draw connections between ideas and things that aren’t tangibly linked. The same faculty that allows us to see faces in wood grain allows us to see pictures in pigment, hear the poetry in words, and appreciate the emotion in music. Human-brain thinking is all about connections, so I feel it is very important to illustrate this through the image of connecting trains.

Not only so the trains make a great metaphor, but also I knew that I could add to my “evil genius” persona if I depicted myself blowing up trains, crashing them together, or tying maidens to the tracks. By causing mayhem and collisions on the tracks, I symbolize the way that the best color schemes, compositions, and jokes come from the union of opposites—juxtaposition is the heart of drama, the key ingredient of creativity and a major feature of the infrastructure of the brainscape.

I christen my train “Zeitgeist,” which is a German word meaning “the spirit of the times.” The *Zeitgeist* describes a set of ideas that appears across the entire human race to independent thinkers, but at the roughly same time. It explains why there are well-documented instances of inventions being invented by two people independently, but at the same time. It explains the old idiom that “great minds think alike.” I equate the Zeitgeist to the state of the “collective unconscious,” so what would be a better name for the engine that drives my consciousness-scientist around the tracks of my unconscious-brainscape?

This world and its *Tracks* illustrate the true meaning of the “unconscious mind.” It’s as if a person’s inner world is a big interconnected web of ideas, and these ideas, like facts of nature, are there whether we’re aware of them yet or not. Billions of ideas, both private and universal, are living in this infrastructure independently of what we know or think. Our consciousnesses, which are like tiny spotlights on a huge dark disk, travel along logical pathways and encounter these ideas as we go along, as if they were waiting to be discovered.

The metaphor of the trains illustrates the notion that both brain and universe are natural machines. Our thoughts and our lives follow a path and will have an ultimate “destiny.” Yet, at the same time, we are only aware of the journey one moment at a time, so we need to keep driving the engine forward consciously if we want to complete the trip.
Who influenced me/why do I believe what I do?
It would be impossible to write about Castle of Delirium without pointing out that I was influenced by Scott McCloud or his book *Understanding Comics*, which is a graphic novel that explains how the very language of comics functions and has deeply influenced my love of meta-art. I also give credit to Stephen Nachmanovitch and his book *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, in which the author explains beyond a shadow of a doubt that the act of playing is absolutely crucial to creativity. I have already alluded to the immense influences that twentieth century psychologist Carl Jung and the long tradition of Alchemy had my views of philosophy, psychology, and spirituality. Also among them are figures such as Carl Sagan and Alan Watts, whose modern, rational takes on science and spirituality still manage to echo the works of the ancient Hermeticists. The work of Joseph Campbell has deeply informed my ideas about what *The Hero’s Journey* is and it is because of Joseph Campbell’s writing that I am able to see the spirit of the hero, shaman, and divine savior living on in both the high and low artists of today. I have already mentioned Stephanie Meyer, and would once again like to recommend her book *Bird by Bird*. The list of people who have inspired me could go on forever, but these are among the most influential. Among the people I know in real life, my friend Michael McConnell has always provided a clear and rational bounce-board for my philosophical ramblings. Plus, my friend Katharine Anderson consistently inspires me and keeps my interest in comics alive. Katharine must also take credit for coming up with the term “brainscape” for this project, and inspiring me to make one.
I once connected all of the art areas within the Dresden Art High School, and created an absorbing, huge, wild, single-screen animated horror-movie come from this conversation?

Much of my art is about drawing connections between things that seemingly should never meet — the resultant creatures could make even my mentor Dr. Frankenstein jealous. The alchemist, syntheses, was "con summed" the lesser stone. It was their sum total higher options.

I once connected the tiers of recycling with transforming robots to make a stunning animation. I also combine music with stop-motion puppetry and digital effects, 

Some of my experiments are bizarre & surreal. The concept in the same body came suddenly. I also combine music & video with stop-motion puppetry.