

Recreating 'Heady Monster': The Sensations of a Five-Year-Old

Concept

For my Heritage Jam submission, I chose to delve into the world of material history to recreate my first strong memory- my fifth birthday at Canada's Wonderland. During this visit, I won my favourite toy, who I lovingly named 'Heady Monster,' despite the obvious fact that he is clearly a dinosaur. 30 years now having passed since Heady came into my life, everytime that I hold him, I am transported back to that day, the sounds, smells, tastes, emotions- everything returns. I wanted to try and create something that captures that memory beyond the written page or a single sense.

I chose the medium of crochet for my re-creation as it literally involves the weaving of fibres and the interconnection of different parts to create something whole. As Historians, we are called upon to portray heritage and history in ways that do not just convey facts and figures but that help people to understand the emotions, tensions, passions and other necessary sensations that add context to the decisions and events being presented. My project is an attempt to portray my complete memory from that day but also what I feel now as an adult looking back. From the smells of funnel cake, to dancing with Fred Flintstone to 'The Twist,' right on down to the chlorine and water from getting splashed on a ride, I have attempted to the best of my somewhat limited abilities during lock down to show these things in my project.

The largest component of the project is the recreated 'Heady Monster' toy which I crocheted. I have enclosed the pattern that I used to create the toy. I attempted to find a pattern that was similar to what I needed and then to augment it to better resemble the original. I purchased a pattern that was similar from a creator, which I have cited below. I have highlighted where my pattern differs from the original source. The recreation is not a perfect match, nor is that exactly the point. The crocheted 'Heady' is larger than the original, this was done intentionally, to visually illustrate how memory and interpretation often lead to experiences being a little 'larger than life,' or as an adult looking back on a childhood experience, how the importance of things grows with time. The pattern contains the materials used to reconstruct the toy. I attempted to keep as much of the accessory materials, for example the foot pads, toes, teeth and nose, as close to the original as possible. They are adhered using hot glue, like the original and the nose and teeth use felt, as does the original. I had used felt for the toes and foot pads but it did not look right to me, so I opted to crochet those items in their original colours in lieu of keeping to a more accurate representation.

Enhancements that were not possible at this time

Had access to material not been so restricted due to the Ontario 'Stay at Home' orders, I would have liked to scent the yarn before constructing the toy. Amusement parks offer a variety of strong scents and trying to capture and express that moment fully requires the incorporation of all the senses. This would have been accomplished by using essential oils, largely vanilla and strawberry as these are the strongest scents that I associate with that day from the funnel cake, that seemed to be everywhere. As well, I would have used a highly diluted chlorine solution to soak the white yarn used as the water throughout the park is very chlorinated and being splashed by water from a ride was a major upset to me that day and both myself and 'Heady' got wet. He was won playing the water gun game, so the smell of water is a strong olfactory connection to the memory being portrayed. Given my limited access to materials, I had to forgo this component however, I attempted to include those same scent and taste experiences through the use of the word cloud in the picture.

I also would have liked to create a soundscape for the project incorporating specific sound recollections such as the click, click, click of the wooden roller coaster track and the timed screams from riders of 'The Bat' roller coaster. Ultimately if time and resources were not a factor, I would have attempted to attend the park for ambient sounds. Given that the park is not currently operating, travel restrictions and lack of access to the necessary computer technology and programs required to create a decent soundscape this unfortunately is not included in the project as present. These things were incorporated into the word cloud portion of the final product in light of the above limitations.

Creation and Interpretation

The staging of the picture itself incorporates the original 'Heady Monster,' who has clearly seen better days, representing the time having passed and the recreation showing that the memory has not faded or tarnished with time. The polaroid pictures are an attempt to illustrate the various sensations that I experienced on the day and how they all come together to form a complete memory, contained within the walls of my own mind. As I was not able to incorporate other sensory materials that could be experienced in a virtual submission, I opted for the use of pictures and word descriptions to convey the complete memory experience of the day. I have attempted to illustrate the importance of crafting recreations and memories in a way that fully explores the various senses to give the best overall description of the sensations associated with the experience. I am attempting to present everything that I think and feel when holding the original toy.

Material history and recreation came together in this project to express all the wonder, joy, reservation and elation that five-year-old me experienced and the importance of one little toy in the life of a child. If you were to just view the original toy now (and possibly then too) without all the additional context presented, you would likely see just a cheap toy that perhaps should be tossed in the bin. This project however, attempted to contextualize this otherwise unspectacular object with the meaning and importance it has to me. 'Heady Monster,' is a truly sensational toy and I hope that this project allows you all to share in that memory experience with me and perhaps inspires the desire to think about some of your favourite things and how you might go about attempting to share them with others.

Photographs and Word Cloud

Here are close up pictures of the word cloud used to help describe the various components both tangible and emotional that I experienced on the day that I am recreating.

As well, there is a close up of the polaroid pictures that I used.

The water gun represents both the game in which I won Heady and the scent of the chlorine and water from the day.

The picture of pizza, funnel cake, and the birthday cupcake are things that I ate but also smells and tastes that I instantly connect to both the location, Canada's Wonderland and the specific memory of my birthday which is being recreated.

The towel and picture of the Splash Mountain ride are more simple in that they are both specific memories from that day as mentioned above.

The viewfinders are another memento from the actual day being recreated and help to show along with the original Heady that time as past and this in fact a memory.

Lastly the silly picture of me dancing is an attempt to show doing 'The Twist.' There was at one time an actual picture from the day of five-year-old me dancing unfortunately, I could not locate it to include so I had to improvise.

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Works Consulted

“Amigurumi Dino Crochet Pattern”, Loginova, Lolita. *Happy Crochet Pattern*. Available at <https://www.etsy.com/ca/listing/690893381/amigurumi-dino-crochet-pattern-pdf>

All other materials, designs and photographs are my own creation.