

# The New York Times

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ORIGINAL MODEL T'S | ADAM SHECTER

For most children, watching Saturday morning cartoons is neither life changing nor particularly traumatic. Not so for the artist Adam Shecter. "I was deeply affected by cartoons, especially the imported anime ones," he said. "In the pre-Disney version of 'The Little Mermaid,' she commits suicide at the end, and it was so tragic and queer I became sort of hooked after that." That juxtaposition of contrasting emotional registers — where seemingly lighthearted animation meets deeper, darker themes — has been fueling Shecter's art over the last several years.

The resulting work combines digital and hand-drawn elements in mysterious and captivating ways. Shecter's animations are striking not only for the aforementioned mixture of innocence and gravity, but also for the collage-like visual language, which allows the artist, in his words, "to construct worlds that are as maximal as possible." Both imperatives are clear in the sci-fi video animation "Last Men," shown in June at the Lower East Side's Eleven Rivington gallery, in which an animated Yellow Submarine-like spacecraft chugs away through footage of breaking waves, blue skies and tall grass. Since less isn't always more, there are also screen-saver-esque geometrical forms floating in a black space and images of soldiers rushing ominously toward obscure duty. If it sounds like a jumble, it is — and yet one of Shecter's gifts is to mine clarity from chaos. Some of his visual gestures overwhelm, though lurking beneath their crowded surfaces is a fine, building narrative.

In another video from 2011, "Fox Signal (No More Suicides)," Shecter interprets a poem by Matthea Harvey by superimposing the image of a worried-looking cartoon fox on a grainy television broadcast transmission over a screen roll of Harvey's words. Shecter's signature visual overload makes this work read like a haunting fable, albeit one whose lesson is far from self-evident.

Despite the deliberate lack of a clear moral, Shecter is still interested in "making work that's available to people, both literally and symbolically." And this desire for engagement with his audience is evident in the short, appealing vignette the artist made for his T project, in which the logo becomes a primping and winking mash-up of 1950s greaser and Wildean dandy. Working in Flash, Shecter conveyed the "performative, choreographed swoop" of the Times's font by turning the T's top into a shellacked lock of hair. The anthropomorphizing of an inanimate object or animal is, of course, a mainstay of the cartoon world, from SpongeBob SquarePants to Towelie in "South Park." Like the rest of his work, however, Shecter's T man isn't just a humorous lark. He's also a clever comment: on the Times's visibility, and maybe even more so on the inventive ways in which popular culture can be repurposed.