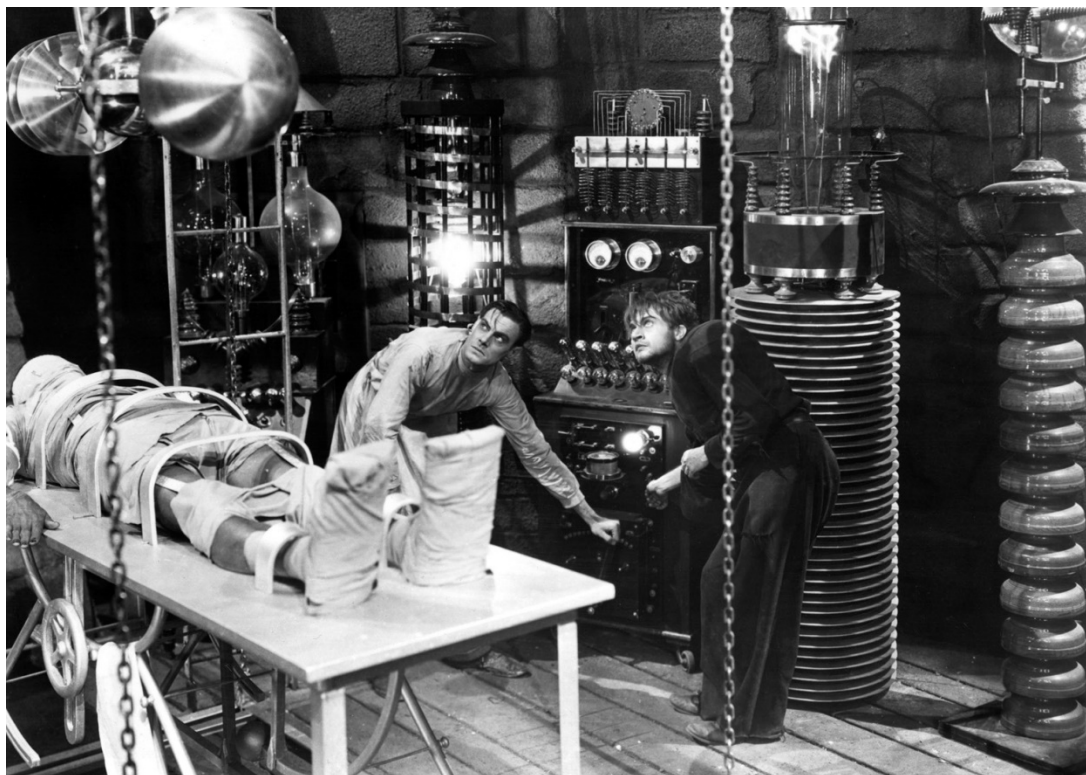


# Gerald Saul, Quick and Dirty presentation hosted by the Dunlop Art Gallery and the Creative City Centre, November 7, 2017, Regina, SK, Canada





I like monsters. Not because they are scary, but because they are fiction, they are constructed by us from things we understand into something we don't. Some people argue that certain monsters must follow certain rules, but as an artist, this is difficult to swallow. We crave a bit of confusion.



As a kid, as an amateur, one of the first films I was involved in making was called King Klod vs Klodzilla. I recall that our attempt to make the figure breath fire by blowing gasoline through a straw in the back of the head ended in a failure. Monsters are unpredictability and required us to adapt.





My desire to make up new rules for how monsters work continued. One of my earlier “professional” films was Angst where I presented many of my own thoughts on vampires in a technological society, powerful but still slaves to human foibles.



I entered grad school with a project pitched at relating the Frankenstein monster to artistic creation. While my thesis deviated from this, my first class project was Crave, about the fragmented body from the point of view of a bandaged hand. I brought my own industrial accident damaged hand in as my first self-representation as a monster.





Also in grad school, I began working with puppets and a film called *The Golem of Socks*. In this project, I began to consider the responsibilities of creating monsters. Every choice has relevance and though we guide what they become, we lose control and ownership over them once the creatures are created.



In 2001 I underwent even more surgery. I felt un-made and even more monstrous by the end of it. I felt the anger and wanted to place blame on someone. I am a monster and I want to make more monsters.



But later in 2001 I was a collaborator on my greatest monster. We go into acts of creation quite blind. There is unexposed film, blank screens, and empty canvases. I really didn't know what I was getting myself into with this one, but piece by piece I began to build it... I mean "him".





At first it seemed like the child might just be a blank canvas - that whatever we do or say or teach will simply make him into that thing. I supposed I didn't read my Mary Shelley as carefully as I thought.



I soon realized that creation is scary. To a little kid, William found my role as a zombie in *Springtime for Zombies* to be shattering. He would scream and force me to turn it off. My monster was afraid that I could be a monster. I found myself actively seeing all films and images through his eyes, fresh and full of questions.



- My monsters become more fanciful. Removable masks were more reassuring than make up and moaning. I began to bring William behind the scenes, to learn how to make, which allows the made thing to be more understandable.





Even if you've never raised a child, you all have been one at some point in your past, so you know they are not as sweet as they appear, and they are not complete. Unlike the components of a Lego kit, assembly is not confined to one day or even one place. You cannot understand a person by understanding the pieces that went into him. That is what makes him a monster.



I began to put William into the films as well. At first, this was just fun boy-dad garage stuff. Instead of making a go-cart, we made a movie. Scripts were suggested by William, which was charming but I soon determined that I didn't want to put 40 hours of work into creating a film based on the ramblings of a six year old.



I began to take him under my wing in even more ways. He became the sidekick of my own ridiculous character and sat in on the writing and editing of the projects. Here he is as Sawboy.





I began to put words into his mouth such as the shot-by-shot reconstruction of Jean Luc Godard's *All the Boys are Called Patrick*, retitled to be about William.



By the time he was 12, he'd learned enough about filmmaking to think he knew it all. When he told me that movies were all too predictable, we began our weekly foray into international cinema. This fall he began to fashion himself after Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein.



We performed the roles of creator and monster on screen in Thomas Edison's Stitchpunk Frankenstein where the creator discovers that his monster has more sophisticated ideas than his own. In 2012, this was not true, but is certainly prophetic.





- By the time I shot the sequel in 2016, William's ideas were as bizarre as my own, making him yet another cook in a pot that became a beautiful boiled over mess. My job had changed. Both at the university and at home, I realized that the film works that I make are nothing compared to the minds that I make, or at least that I change. The act of creation shifts away from creation of work to the creation of creators.



William had become a natural at moving between *playing* a monster and *creating* a monster. The effect on his imagination and storytelling by the hundreds of Fellini, Bergman, Godard, Kurosawa, Lynch, Coen, Tati, Ruiz, Cocteau films as well as a full spectrum of German expressionism we'd watched had transformed him into a peer.



This year we began in earnest to collaborate. The trivial nature of these faux bubble gum comics is outweighed by the importance of this new working relationship.





So what have I built? I know what he has been taught. I know what he has watched and read and experienced. I do not understand what he has become. This portrait of me that he drew earlier this year does not correspond to my own self image except in how I continue to try to see things through his eyes.