

BERTRAM HENRY SHADDUCK

Jocko Homo Heavenbound, 1924/2014

Copy of reprinted pamphlet

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEVO-OBSESSO ARCHIVES

Knowing his interest in offbeat artifacts, Mothersbaugh's printmaking professor gave him a copy of the 1920 religious pamphlet *Jocko Homo Heavenbound*, an anti-evolution screed. Featuring an illustration of the devil with "D-evolution" on his chest, this pamphlet was foundational for the philosophy behind the band DEVO. "Jocko Homo," or ape man, was the title of the band's name check song.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Press photograph from the film *Island of Lost Souls*,
featuring Bela Lugosi as Sayer of the Law, 1932/2014

Copy of original photograph

COURTESY RONALD V. BORST/HOLLYWOOD MOVIE POSTERS

Mothersbaugh and the members of the band DEVO saw the 1932 science fiction horror film *Island of Lost Souls* as an analogy for contemporary society. In the film, human-like beasts are asked to dutifully follow the commands of their master.

OSCAR KISS MAERTH

In the Beginning Was the End, 1971

Book

COLLECTION OF MARK MOTHERSBAUGH, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

In 1974, Mothersbaugh and fellow DEVO band mates became fascinated by the pseudoscientific book *The Beginning Was the End*, which claimed that humans came into being when apes ate the brains of other apes. According to the author, this practice gave rise to the oversized brain of humans, the cause of their ultimate downfall.

ED DORN

Dick & Pat Flyswatter and Fan, 1973

Lithograph print and newspaper

COLLECTION OF JENNIFER DORN DENVER, COLORADO

Poet Ed Dorn, the Kent State University visiting professor who gave DEVO their first opportunity to perform on stage, believed in the political power of art. His Dick & Pat Flyswatter and Fan was a finely printed and folded facsimile of a newspaper bearing the image of Pat and Richard Nixon. Using parody to address important matters of the day, DEVO's first supporter was also an implicit role model for the band.

DEVO

The Waltz, 1974

Broadside, lino and letterpress

COLLECTION OF JENNIFER DORN, DENVER, COLORADO

DEVO contributed the text for this broadside, part of a portfolio mainly featuring poets who participated in the 1974 Kent State Creative Arts Festival. The finely rendered bee linocut that frames the writing was created by Michael Myers, a radical printmaker at Zephyrus Image Press in San Francisco. Zephyrus used fine-art techniques to create inexpensive, often politically charged prints that were widely distributed. DEVO's contribution had a deliberately unrefined quality, exemplifying their heretical role within the poetry community.

ED SANDERS

Fuck You 5.5, 1963

Mimeograph magazine

COURTESY JOHAN KUGELBERG/BOO HOORAY, NEW YORK

Published by musician and poet Ed Sanders, *Fuck You* was the preeminent periodical of the growing mimeograph revolution in the 1960s. It was a network of small press and amateur publications that provided an important alternative platform for Beat poets and other vanguard writers. The DIY spirit of literary publishing in the 1960s provided a model for the independent self-promoting attitude embraced by DEVO and the broader punk rock movement.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Shelly's, 1974

Bound mimeograph booklet

COLLECTION OF JADE DELLINGER, TAMPA, FLORIDA

Mothersbaugh and other members of DEVO were frequent contributors to the literary magazine *Shelly's*, assembled by the circle of poets who frequented Shelly's Book Bar, in Kent, Ohio. The band played at the bar for the launch of the publication in 1974. Spiral-bound publications like *Shelly's* were part of the mimeograph revolution thriving in Ohio at the time.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Shelly's, 1974

Bound mimeograph booklet

COURTESY THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART DENVER

Mothersbaugh created the illustrations and Gerald Casale the lyrics for the left-handed page of this spread in the *Shelly's* literary journal. The raw impudence of their page contrasts sharply with Alex Gildzen's experimentally refined poetry on the opposite side, an indication of how Mothersbaugh and Casale aggressively defied the conventions of the poetry community that embraced them. The pages displayed here show selections from Mark Mothersbaugh's book *My Struggle, Booji Boy*.

My Struggle pages minus 14, minus 12, minus 10, 0, 17, and 46, 1974

Collage

COURTESY THE ARTIST

Including bizarre fantasies and nonsensical passages, the writing in *My Struggle* bears a strong resemblance to Jack Kerouac's "spontaneous prose," where, according to Kerouac: "sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret ideawords, blowing (as per jazz musician) on subject of image."

My Struggle, 1974

Book

COURTESY THE ARTIST

Mothersbaugh's 280-page volume compiles much of the artist's early writings and collages. Written pseudonymously by his alter ego, Booji Boy, it is part artist's book, part zine, and part surrealist memoir. Though it ultimately defies categorization, it can be seen as a parody of the archetypical "great book," the epic struggle of modern man attempting to understand his world.

DEVO

Come Back Jonee, 1978

Record jacket with 7 inch single

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEVO-OBSESSO ARCHIVES © DEVO, INC.

Mothersbaugh designed the cover art for DEVO's single "Come Back Jonee," which referenced the cover art of Andy Warhol designed for the Velvet Underground & Nico album, featuring a banana peel sticker. A send up of fine art, Mothersbaugh replaced the portrait bust head with a potato shape with the cratered surface of the moon.

DEVO

Jocko Homo/Mongoloid, 1978

Record jacket with 7 inch single

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEVO-OBSESSO ARCHIVES AD THE MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART DENVER

DEVO's first vinyl record, produced independently, features an elaborate three-panel gatefold interior with images of snorkeling gear and a page of lyrics in the schmaltzy style of musical theater songbooks.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Early DEVO performance featuring Gerald V. Casale, Bob Mothersbaugh, Jim Mothersbaugh, and Mark Mothersbaugh, 1974

Film transferred to DVD

COLLECTION OF MARK MOTHERSBAUGH, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

This early performance of DEVO features the jarring sounds of an electronic drum set created with practice pads and contact microphones by DEVO's first drummer, Mark Mothersbaugh's brother Jim Mothersbaugh. According to Mark, "In the early days of DEVO, Jim had a lot to do with helping me push the sound of DEVO away from generic guitar/drums. We made a conscious effort to look for sounds that were more like what we were hearing on TV when footage from Vietnam was scaring the crap out of us with Huey helicopters bringing body bags onto an aircraft carrier or machine guns making these dull, thuddy sounds, which were part of the culture at the time."

CHUCK STATLER AND DEVO

In the Beginning Was the End: The Truth About De-Evolution, 1976

Film transferred to DVD

COURTESY THE ARTIST. © CHUCK STATLER AND DEVO, INC.

As artists, DEVO identified more closely with film than music. In an interview with William Burroughs for Trouser Press magazine, Mark explained that DEVO only pursued popular music because “we couldn’t be filmmakers because we couldn’t afford the equipment.” DEVO’s first film, *In the Beginning Was the End: The Truth About De-Evolution*, fulfilled their aspiration to incorporate music into a broader narrative that more fully expressed their ideas and artistic interests. The film was directed by Chuck Statler, a fellow student who would go on to create music videos for MTV, which launched five years later.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Poster for screening of John Water's film *Pink Flamingos* at Kent State, featuring a performance by DEVO, 1975/2014

Copy of original poster

COURTESY KENT STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

In one of their earliest public appearances, DEVO was invited to perform at a campus screening of John Waters' 1972 film *Pink Flamingos*, about a competition for "The Filthiest Person Alive." With Waters' interest in baseness echoing DEVO's theory of deevolution, both Waters' and DEVO embraced the lowbrow legacy of the Beats, which aimed to undermine mainstream America's notions of success.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Home footage of DEVO performance at Kent State University, 1973

Film transferred to DVD

© DEVO, INC.

In the first live performance of DEVO (then called "Sextet DEVO") in 1973, Gerald Casale appears in a butcher's coat and Mothersbaugh in a chimpanzee mask and a white doctor's robe. The set opened with Mothersbaugh playing an eerie version of "Here Comes Peter Cottontail" on keyboard. At one point in the performance, Mothersbaugh unleashed a long sequence of repetitive alarm like sounds as if the keyboard had malfunctioned. DEVO imagined themselves not so much as a band as an artistic mutation of one.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

DEVO in rubber factory, 1970/2014

Copy of original photograph

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEVO-OBSESSO ARCHIVES

Developing their own retort to Andy Warhol's "factory," Mothersbaugh and his bandmates donned construction outfits and photographed themselves in an actual factory in the troubled post-industrial city of Akron, Ohio.

WALLACE BERMAN

Untitled, 1964-1976

Offset lithograph

COURTESY OF PRIVATE COLLECTION, DENVER, COLORADO

Beat artist Wallace Berman created this photo-collaged postcard of his longtime collaborator Michael McClure to publicize one of McClure's poetry readings. Created a decade before DEVO emerged, this work was an important precursor to the aesthetics of the band. Combining repetition and mutation, the two essential elements of the band's visual identity, the postcard artwork exemplifies how Mothersbaugh and DEVO's notions of art and culture were part of a conversation with the countercultural artists and literary figures of a previous generation.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Christopher Brooks as Spider Rabbit in *Spider Rabbit*,
written by Michael McClure and directed by John Lion,
1968-1971/2014

Copy of original photograph

COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Beat poet Michael McClure's disquieting play *Spider Rabbit* was presented at the same festival where DEVO first performed. The play features a double-sided rabbit-spider, who alternates between saccharine pleasantries and violent assertions. Like the band's disturbing performance, McClure's play was meant to highlight the malevolent forces hiding behind the carefree demeanor of society.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Creative Arts Festival programs, 1973

Paper

COLLECTION OF MARK MOTHERSBAUGH, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

When Mothersbaugh, Gerald Casale, and their fellow band mates performed in public for the first time as "Sextet DEVO" at the 1973 Kent State Creative Arts Festival, they appeared among countercultural and Beat artists who saw art as a means of transforming modern life. Armed with a message about the de-evolution of society, though expressed in a more crude and confrontational manner, the band was aligned with the social mission of their older colleagues. They cheekily described their act as "polyrhythmic tone exercises in de-evolution."

RICHARD MYERS

Allison, 1971

Film transferred to DVD

COURTESY THE ARTIST

Richard Myers's short film presents a montage of video footage of Allison Krause, one of the four Kent State University student protestors shot to death by the National Guard on May 4, 1970. Myers's decision to focus on images of Krause suggests that he saw her death as a symbol of the cultural transformation that took place that day. Her buoyant charisma, embodying hope and innocence, coupled with her tragic demise, highlights the loss of optimism for her entire generation.

Top Row
(left to right)

Self Portrait, A, B & C, circa 1970

Offset lithograph decals

Untitled, circa 1974

Rubber stamp

Untitled, circa 1970

Offset lithographed decals

ALL WORKS COURTESY THE ARTIST

When Mothersbaugh first arrived as an art student at Kent State University, his severe nearsightedness led him to work at a small scale, since his corrective lenses distorted larger objects seen at a distance.

Attracted to printmaking, he created diminutive decals and rubber stamp artworks that could be easily reproduced and distributed, rather than formal works that would be framed and placed on gallery walls.

Artist's journal, 1971

Collage and journal

COURTESY THE ARTIST

Mothersbaugh's interest in mutants and monsters connects to his fundamental interest in escaping from the norms and systems of modern society. His early works involve manipulating found images until they are transformed into grotesque caricatures. He deeply identified with these malformed creatures, frequently donning masks while performing with friend and fellow Kent State University student Gerald Casale, with whom he later formed the band DEVO.

Artist's journal, 1971

Collage

Artist's journal, 1971

Collage

Artist's journal, 1973

Collage

ALL WORKS COURTESY THE ARTIST

Mothersbaugh's early journals are filled with nonsensical systems of counting and arranging. Deeply ambivalent about the subject, he was both attracted to systems and also critical of bureaucratic elements of modern society. His fascination with both systems and the mutations that escape them is the essential tension in his art.

Poster for DEVO concert at Max's Kansas City, featuring Booji Boy, 1977

Ink on Paper

COURTESY THE ARTIST. © DEVO, INC.

In the 1970s, a poster of Booji Boy often appeared in the background in DEVO performances on stage, in film, and in advertisements for shows. Before the red hats and uniform poses came to symbolize the band, the image of Booji Boy was their key icon.

Gut Feeling, 1977

Carter's Stickist Mucilage, 1977

Tires I, 1977

Rubberstamped ink with hand drawn additions on paper

COLLECTION OF JADE DELLINGER, TAMPA, FLORIDA

Even as Mothersbaugh increasingly dedicated his time to DEVO, he continued to make solo art works, including this series of unique rubber stamp prints. Stamps lent themselves to repetition, which was a key characteristic of both the band's image and Mothersbaugh's art.

MOSHE BRAKHA

The Booji Man, 1981/2014

Archival pigment print

COURTESY THE ARTIST

In the early 1980s, DEVO's strict uniformity had become their signature feature. However, even when DEVO's image became more tightly defined by perfectly matching costumes and identical poses, Booji Boy came to symbolize freedom and nonconformity.

My Struggle page 279, 1974

Collage

COURTESY THE ARTIST

The image on the picture disc of DEVO's *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are DEVO!* features Mothersbaugh wearing a doctor's coat and swimming goggles, the same outfit he wore in *In the Beginning Was the End: The Truth About De-Evolution*, DEVO's first film. In his early years, Mothersbaugh was captivated by the subject of medicine and many of the pages of his book *My Struggle* featured collaged images from outdated medical books. Since doctors represented the pinnacle of professionalism and dignity at the time, his parody of medical subjects was partly an expression of his antiauthoritarianism.

Video and production stills from various DEVO music video productions, circa 1976-1981/2014

Digital print

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM:

"Love Without Anger," 1981. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"Through Being Cool," 1981. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"Girl U Want," 1980. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"Freedom of Choice," 1980. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"Freedom of Choice," 1980. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"Freedom of Choice," 1980. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"In the Beginning Was the End: The Truth About De-Evolution," 1976. Directed by Chuck Statler. © Chuck Statler and DEVO, Inc.

"Whip it," 1980. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

"Beautiful World," 1981. Directed by Gerald V. Casale. © DEVO, Inc.

These video stills demonstrate the range of artful staging and costuming in DEVO's music videos. When MTV was founded, in 1981, as a television station dedicated to music videos, DEVO was one of the most prominent bands featured, as they were among the only bands who already possessed a stock of videos. According to Mothersbaugh, when MTV was first launched, "I believed it was going to be a whole new venue for the Kraftwerks, David Bowies, DEVOs, and all the interesting conceptual bands of the world. I thought...there was going to be a new world that was overrun with art students. I thought MTV was going to be small art films."

DEVO

Program for DEVO film screening, circa 1980

Paper

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEVO-OBSESSO ARCHIVES

Even as DEVO was gaining popularity as a band, they believed that film was the most appropriate way to get their message out to the world. Gerald Casale, who directed many of DEVO's films, explained their aspirations: "DEVO would be like the Three Stooges. You'd watch these films that were music-driven with stories. We were going to put out one a year—we didn't even want a record deal."

DEVO

DEVO: The Complete Truth About De-Evolution, 1993

Laserdisc with cover

COURTESY THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART DENVER. © DEVO, INC.

DEVO learned about the imminent release of the laser disc in 1977, which promised easy access to high-quality home video. They believed this new technology would become the medium of their art, which combined moving images and music.

DEVO

Honda Scooter commercial featuring DEVO, 1982-1984

Original print

COLLECTION OF KENT WILHELMI

A key component of the philosophy DEVO developed in the wake of the student shooting at Kent State University is that modern society has degenerated so much that "opposites and rebellion are obsolete." In a world where both protest and mainstream politics are neutralized, as both become reduced to simple content for commercial media, DEVO believed that it was no longer meaningful to attempt to resist the modern system of media and commerce. Instead, they attempted to participate in the system with such exaggerated enthusiasm that their involvement would be understood as an aesthetic act.

DEVO

Interview (excerpt from press packet), 1979/2014

Reproduction

COURTESY MARK MOTHERSBAUGH

DEVO's press packet and promotional materials expressed the band's artful mystique, capturing both their humor and their political motivations.

DEVO

Shout! LP sleeve catalogue, late 1984

Lithograph

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEV-OBSESSO ARCHIVES. © DEVO, INC.

DEVO simultaneously criticized and participated in the commercialization of pop culture. The band heavily promoted merchandise to its fans.

Untitled postcards, circa 1975

Offset print and ink on cards

COURTESY THE ARTIST

In the mid-1970s, Mothersbaugh made photo-collage prints, which he traded with other anti-establishment artists who wanted to take art outside the gallery and museum context. Expanding beyond ordinary practices of the “mail art” movement, Mothersbaugh also took out classified advertisements in popular magazines to sell his postcards to general audiences.

Letter to Mark Mothersbaugh from Ron Brown with payment for postcards, 1974

Paper

COLLECTION OF MARK MOTHERSBAUGH, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Though Mothersbaugh “sold” his lithograph postcards through classified advertisements in *Rolling Stone* magazine, he did not list a price. This customer voluntarily sent cash for shipping and handling.

Grid of 16 Lucas Cows, late 1960s

Decals

COURTESY THE ARTIST

When Mothersbaugh first began to post art decals around the Kent State University campus in the late 1960s, the concept of “street art” did not yet exist, and graffiti was primarily used as a form of political activism. Mothersbaugh posted art decals in public places alongside other handbills such as flyers for student protest groups and leaflets for campus social events.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Mark Mothersbaugh and Jerry Casale in Unit Services Stamp Shop, 1970s/2014

Copy of original photograph

COURTESY MICHAEL PILMER/DEVO-OBSESSO ARCHIVES

Mothersbaugh and Gerald Casale opened a shop called Unit Services in a shopping mall in Akron, Ohio, where they sold rubber stamps in order to raise the funds to finance their first film.

You Need Real Love? (Cuba 10) Self Portrait, 1978

Screenprint

COURTESY THE ARTIST

When DEVO's touring demands slowed down in the late 1980s, Mothersbaugh returned to printmaking. Using his postcard drawings and collages, which he had been making privately over the past several years, as source material, he exhibited these prints in alternative galleries and dance clubs in New York and elsewhere. Though he continued to create the original images at a small scale, the printmaking process allowed him to enlarge his works. He began to bring to his visual art the same interest in spectacle that he embodied in DEVO.

NEIL YOUNG

Booji Boy clip from *Human Highway*, 1982

Digital video

COURTESY SHAKEY PRODUCTIONS

In the 1982 experimental film *Human Highway*, co-directed by Neil Young and artist/actor Dean Stockwell, DEVO played a janitorial crew handling radioactive waste and performing the song "Worried Man." The film, which also featured Russ Tamblyn, Dennis Hopper, and Sally Kirkland, epitomized the intersection between art, music, and entertainment at the time.

PAUL REUBENS

Theme for *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, 1986

Film transferred to DVD

MUSIC BY MARK MOTHERSBAUGH. COURTESY HERMAN WORLD, INC.

In 1986, Mothersbaugh began scoring the television show *Pee-wee's Playhouse*. Paul Reubens's man-child character Pee-wee grew out of his performance with the Los Angeles comedy troupe The Groundlings. Mothersbaugh met Reubens because they were both involved in the Los Angeles punk and lowbrow art scene.

Postcard Superhero Series #001, 1985

Screenprints in fluorescent and phosphorescent ink

COURTESY THE ARTIST

After years of developing elaborate staging and continuously changing costumes for DEVO, Mothersbaugh created a series of prints with images that appear to change in shifting lighting conditions. He displayed these theatrical prints at the Psychedelic Solutions gallery in New York, whose program included a mix of rock posters and lowbrow art.

Ruby Kusturd, 2009-2014

30,090-carat carved ruby and highly polished bronze

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JAMES ZIGRAS

The soft ice cream swirl of the upper portion of this sculpture consists of the world's largest crystal ruby. Mothersbaugh had the gem carved to poke fun at both fine jewelry and fine art. The sculpture's ludicrousness demonstrates his longtime interest in creating a sensation.

Three Brothers, All with Butterfly Ears, 2004

Corrected photograph

COURTESY THE ARTIST

In his beautiful mutant series, Mothersbaugh manipulates antique photographs and returns them to historical frames. This amusing body of work continues his interest in defacing humorless images and creating oddball characters.

Artist's journal, 1973-1974

Ink and collage

COURTESY THE ARTIST

This spread from Mothersbaugh's early journal reveals his longtime interest in mirroring and doubling.

“Scrapping and Yelling” from the movie *The Royal Tenenbaums*, directed by Wes Anderson, 2001

Mp3, 2:09

COURTESY THE ARTIST

The musical notation for Mothersbaugh’s piece “Let Me Tell you About a Boat” in the movie *Life Aquatic* is a mirror image of the notation for “Scrapping and Yelling” in *The Royal Tenenbaums*.

6 ideas, 1997-2005

Inkjet prints

COURTESY THE ARTIST

The tension between humans and technology continues to be an important theme running through Mothersbaugh's art. His drawings and collages are filled with cyborgs, robots, scientific contraptions, and machines used for mass destruction and warfare.

BRUCE CONNER

27 PUNK PHOTOS: 26 DEVO: AIRBORNE, 1978

Gelatin silver print

COURTESY CONNER FAMILY TRUST, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

For Mothersbaugh, technology has its own aesthetics, and is not just a means to an end. While performing with DEVO, he attaches his effects pedals and dials to the face of the guitar itself, creating a kind of guitar prosthesis, or mutant guitar.

DEVO

Adventures of the Smart Patrol, 1996

Film transferred to DVD

COURTESY THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART DENVER

In 1995 DEVO released an interactive CD-ROM, which at the time was a state-of-the-art edge digital disc format featuring digital animated performances of the band. Beginning with electronic drums and synthesizers, DEVO regularly incorporated new inventions into their music and performance to both mock and exploit modern technology. In this video clip from the CD-ROM, the band, disguised as very old men, is playing "Mechanical Man," an early DEVO song about the technocratic nature of modern life.

Untitled (Self Portrait), 1975

Offset ink on card

COURTESY THE ARTIST

This early postcard of an old medical illustration featuring human legs in braces, provocatively labeled "self-portrait," is suggestive of Mothersbaugh's belief that malfunction is a source of invention.

Artist's journal, 1971

Ink and journal

COURTESY THE ARTIST

This 1971 journal page features Mothersbaugh's invented character Mr. Magic working on an earthworm rocket. Mothersbaugh points out in his text that Mr. Magic is inventing a rocket to take people to the moon, even though such a rocket has already been invented. This example reveals his lifelong exploration of the relationship between humans and technology. For him it is more than a means to greater efficiency—it is a tool for imagination.

Untitled, 1975

Offset print on card

COURTESY THE ARTIST

This selection of early postcards demonstrates Mothersbaugh's view of technology as a form of prosthetics. In his view, machines impose artistic restrictions that, instead of limiting creativity, offer new opportunities for invention.

Circuit-bent calculator, 2014

Recreated instrument

COURTESY THE ARTIST

While in DEVO, Mothersbaugh frequently manipulated existing instruments as well as created devices to generate new sounds. Mothersbaugh used this calculator/instrument in several live DEVO performances.

