THE ART OF MISCOMMUNICATION:  
A TO Z AND I,2,3

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

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Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

In my work, my curiosity about both the good and bad aspects of human society, emotions, and behaviors has lead me to further expand the various symbolic layers behind each of my created works. By using cute imagery, I draw the viewer into a satirical world of candy-coated visual aids that my narratives depict. Using issues of humanity such as violence, sex, and survival in my work, various forms of communication are combined as the main tool in each piece. My newer work has expanded to include American popular culture as well as topics related to grotesque taboos, eroticism, symbolism, and human folly.

My art has been influenced for a long time by stories, ones that were read to me at a young age. My evolution of life experiences has influenced the way that these narrative stories work. For example, stories that have been told by my peers or events that influence these stories in everyday life find their way into my work. Emphasized through a dichotomy, my new narratives, "A to Z," are stories fictionalized through my reinterpretation of the issues of the adult narrative, which spells out the child by appearing to be appealing to children, but they have the underlying adult themes earlier described as grotesque, sexually explicate, and containing human folly.
As children we cannot wait to grow up. This is the type of subconscious voice I intended to use as an element in the work of my "A to Z" series of prints, but with the added element of an adult's satirical humor. In the work, I have continued to use bright colors, large page format, and cute, cartoony imagery to create a childlike dialect within an adult's world. The adult viewer is forced to see through the eyes of a child, and the memories of reading large pages should unfold metaphors and underlying symbolism. To communicate my concept to the viewer, I decided on work that deals specifically with "A to Z" and with numbers, because of the endless possibilities that stories and images can unfold in this context. Creating a mass collection of little bits (letters and numbers), I formed a collative body of work to complete my narratives into one whole story as a communication of "miscommunication" with language and image.

Communication is one basic human instinct, and it is through the writing of language that the advancement of societies occurs. And what better way to explore communication, printmaking, and image making than though the greatest of all learning tools, the alphabet and numbers? Three key features I find of interest in the alphabet are uniqueness, simplicity, and adaptability within each culture.

The idea of printed type lies in its practical imperfections, particularly since the graphical design of the alphabet has withstood many evolutions throughout its four thousand years. Yet the essence of the meaning of each letter or symbol stays the same. (Alpha beta, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1).
As children we sometimes cannot wait to get past our "first book" in order to explore the advanced readings of Shakespeare or other great novelists. But without this basic understanding, we would not move forward into the intellectual fields of study that advance society today. By including this basic tool of communication with printmaking, I have created art that explores a range of my ideas. Letters and numbers seem simple to adults, but for children this is a doorway to the beginning of gaining conceptual knowledge of how the symbols, communication, and narratives advance visual understandings of the alphabet and numbers. In order to explore the broad range of possibilities and how "A to Z" bridges the gap between child and adult, comparisons are made to other traditions of learning and representation.

The ideas behind language and letters can have many layers. What makes "a" stand for 'A,' and why does 'A' look the way it does? Why does the alphabet start with 'A' and end in 'Z'? Why does 'B' sound like ba or be or bee? What is the purpose of pronunciation? Why do different words in language change spellings when influenced by different contexts but are pronounced with the same sound (there, they’re, their)? These questions would also be the same with numbers and statistical logic; for instance, formulas that are the same but have different applications with the same mathematical solution.
These questions are some of the things about the alphabet, numbers, and communication I have further explored in my work and that I clarify in this thesis. This series, "A to Z," is about the ABCs and probes deeper into the meaning of words, letters, sentences, images, and symbols by combining an adult sense of humor and a child's questioning nature, with the seriousness of the fine art of printmaking.
D is for Dedicated to my family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To my parents, Arthur R. Espinoza and Vicki L. Espinoza, their never-ending love and support for my art and me will never be forgotten. To my sister, Tasha A. Espinoza, she has been there for me always, and I will always be there for her no matter what the future holds for both of our lives. And to my Uncle David Espinoza, with out his help though out my growing career in art over the past six
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: Sketchbook page.2003

From the beginning, I have known I wanted to be a visual artist of some sort. From a young age and through to the present, I have been doodling on blank sheets of paper (Figure 1) or even thinking outside of the box by visualizing my tiny drawings on walls bigger than myself. This visualization has lead me to the creative outlet of the arts and printmaking as I continued to grow and understand these art forms and concepts through attending art school and graduate school. What kind of visual category does my art belong in? I still ask this question. Just like the evaluation of symbols in
the alphabet, I have gone though a lot of artistic changes while growing up. Watching science and animal documentaries on television first inspired me, and they made me want to aspire to carefully illustrate dinosaur bones along with the paleontologists. This aspiration advanced to my wanting to be a cartoonist and later evolved into wanting to be a Disney Animator. These changes lead me to advance my studies at the college level by studying to become an illustrator. I also was encouraged to move outside of my discipline through electives, not only for support as a commercial artist but into the practice of fine arts as well. I decided to continue my higher education studies in the fine art of printmaking. Growing up and going though these various artistic changes has lead me to a further understanding of my art, myself as an artist, my peers, and the influences my art has on the outside viewer.

My work has been story-based. This has been a constant in my work. Like me, my art has also gone though an evolution. Titles have been something I explored in the work preceding my alphabet series; an example is the lithograph, “Mr. Hardboiled in a pot, while Mr. Ginger Root and Mrs. Hardboiled commit suicide” (Figure 8). This absurdly long title is in combination with a scene of eggs, animals, and vegetables crowded into a surreal kitchen. Dinosaur-like chickens are playing a game of death (as if at a high diving contest) with a spilled egg carcass on the floor. Seeing this small detail, “Hardboiled” in the title and in the image, which contradicts the action, was a jump in my image making. By stretching out the title and noticing small contradictions, this revision gave me the idea to enhance these little stories and play on words into
one big series or an installation. The alphabet series has become a natural progression from my plays on narrative and image. I will expand on this print in more detail in Chapter 4: “What came first the Dino-chicken or the egg?”

The series of Alphabet prints is titled, “...And it all begins with Ass.” Chapter five, “The art of miscommunication”, sums up this alphabet series in a fragmented, neurotic, grotesque way indicating how this alphabet story is to unfold. But it is not just a snide and hypocritical body of prints; it also contains intellectual symbolism and associations that link to its conceptualization. It follows the pattern or order that I have already established with taboos throughout my earlier work. With the “A to Z!” series, I use animals, objects, and people to depict each scene in this twenty-six letter portfolio as a cliché in order to contradict or coincide with the text. I echo their loss of control through the creation process. This visual awareness brings me back to the childlike control antics within the imagery; like children, my drawings can get away with just about anything. I use these characters as tools in my artwork to imitate associations and relations with animals, human behavior, and to link the associations and relationships back to childhood behaviors.

Like many alphabet books that have been published before, communication to the viewer is the key to successful learning. Where successful communication occurs in my art is when a concept is skewed to establish more than one understanding. In “A to Z”, communication is distorted and unclear; there are mistakes and imperfections that
represent art, comic strips, and everyday activities and symbols. In making this body of work, I had to look back at what I had done up to that point in order to fully analyze what needed to be in this current body of work.
CHAPTER 2

ANALIZING MY OLD WORK:
WHAT HAPPENED TO BUNNY?

I started out naively with my earlier work. I thought that if I developed my work out of my love for the intaglio process, I could learn how to expand my intaglio techniques. I became intrigued by the amount of detail and skill that went into an intaglio plate by using the dry point method, and I planned on expanding the possibilities of this medium.

I first worked on a piece called “Ass”, a classical rendering of a donkey’s buttocks (Figure 2). Do not get me wrong; this is an elegant piece. It had everything I had worked towards in printmaking up to that point: the dark humor, the drawing style, and collage. This piece was perfect, but it was not to my satisfaction. Frustrated with this idea, I decided to work bigger: fifty-four inches by forty-eight inches to be more exact (Figure 3). I decided to spend a quarter thinking and drawing on a large piece of copper. I pulled proof after proof and nothing “was to my liking”. (Figures 4-6) So I decided to cut the plate up and abandon the print all together. I think that this was the right move. This piece was a great learning experience, but that was it; this did not get me any further.
But through the work on these proofs, I started to discover that a rabbit was again showing up on this plate, a subject and idea I was using toward the end of my senior year in undergraduate school. The rabbit was like a self-portrait, but it was also an instigator in the piece it entered. In, "If my father had a butcher shop there would be a monkey!" (Figure 7), the rabbit is the cause and effect of the entire image. I decided to explore this interactive narrative in other pieces like my chicken piece described in Chapter three, "Incident with pink soap" (figure 13). This was in the process of becoming a triptych, a linoleum cut series "Incident, Consequence, and Ending." Again the idea was abandoned because I could not work with the medium fast enough to get what I wanted the triptych to convey. I will explain in Chapter three about the chickens. "Ass" on the other hand, in Figure two, has always been at the beginning. I came to the realization of the words importance as I started to pick through my work; I only saw bunnies and chickens come and go. Ass is a funny word, and I think that is the start and end of it. My fascination with "Ass" and the words complexity and simplicity in meaning, symbolism, and definition has as many layers as it has since the word's origination it seems. My Alphabet and my number book echoed these very issues of multi-meaning, symbolism and iconology according to human folly or social taboos as are felt or implied by the word "Ass".
Figure 2: Ass... Etching  2001
Figure 3: wiping copper plate. 2001

Figure 4: wiping. detail. 2001
Figure 5: The proof. 2001

Figure 6: bunny and me. 2001
Figure 7: "If my Father had a butcher shop there would be a monkey!" Etching 2001
Little- Big Doodles

After cutting up that plate, I decided to keep working larger but towards the idea of an installation. I became more intrigued with my images as drawings and began to notice their raw honest nature as scribbled sketches on scrap paper and in my sketchbook.

In April 2002 I had an outside-of-campus exhibition where I had free reign to produce what I wanted on a gallery wall. I first drew on my studio wall with colored pencil to gain practice. This installation was a step toward my voice that was to be found in my future thesis exhibition. I had started to revert to childlike antics, like drawing on walls. In this work, a gallery mural, the congregation of sheep employs their culinary skills to create fine art as they test a half-cooked ear of an Easter chocolate bunny (Figures 8 & 9).

Figure 8: detail. Colored pencil. 2001
Figure 9: Cooking up Chocolate Bunnies. Gallery wall. 2001
Continued: Just Monkey Business

I replaced the bunnies with monkeys and later with dinosaurs as the evolution of animal motifs continued. These animals throughout my works have been a progression of my childhood memories. The alphabet and numbers are connected to these memories. By this point, I understood that my concepts in art were progressing. My work started to take on themes of public art and children’s art on walls. The idea of kitsch, nursery-room murals compared to tacky graffiti on public places or even in galleries began to get the “wheels turning” in my head. This progression of ideas began to take the drawing off the paper and gave the cartoon an importance it might not have had as a comic strip or animation. For me, I was experiencing the questioning of these two taboo issues, naive art and commercialism, art practices that are often thought of as destructive and/or meaningless. This was what I wanted to further explore in printmaking.

During the later part of my second year in graduate school, I worked on another installation. While still working with the children’s theme, I added another layer by creating bad graffiti on a painted bathroom wall (Figures 10, 11, & 12). This installation work later led to exploring more of these ideas in a childlike, space ship installation were I covered a gallery room entirely with aluminum foil and duct tape at a local gallery in Columbus, Ohio in 2003.
Figure 10: stall. 2003

Figure 11: detail. Cookie. Mixed media 2003

Figure 12: detail. Flying lizard. Mixed media 2003
This installation included the viewer within the work by having them become a part of
the space ship environment. I wanted childlike memories of playing “pretend” given
back to the viewer; the show became about the reaction to and interaction with the
work.

In addition to all of the experimentation with installation, I continued to make
prints. At this time my images became more colorful and more explicit in their violence,
as in The Uprising (Figure 13). The clown is the ringleader of this group of animals,
yet the monkey is using human legs, as stilts, to crush the clown. The animals embody
specific characteristic of puppets: they exist merely for the enjoyment of humans, so the
monkey takes the upper hand in this piece by breaking away from this mold. The
giraffes in the images are being hypocrites as they play their Hippo-Accordions to “egg
on” the event and leave this situation. This is going against the issues that the monkey is
trying to install for the betterment of the animals situation instead of just immediate
gratification. When the opportunity rises to meet the consequences of their actions, the
giraffes would deny everything to save themselves, a trait of human nature. With this
print, I was starting to develop the idea of the incomplete narrative by using a more
non-sequitur way of constructing and perhaps looking at art.

In the case of “Incident with pink soap” (Figure 14), one would speculate that
the butcher may peruse the chicken, but there is no clear intention. The viewer must
decide what comes next for the chicken. Does the soap save this plucked fowl or does it
slip straight into the cooking pot? The process of cooking and preparing chickens (or
Figure 13: The Uprising. Lithograph 2002

Figure 14: Incident with pink soap. Linoleum cut 2001
any meat product) creates a cycle that I have addressed with many of my pieces. The cycle symbolizes the essence of my work: life depends on the transition of living to dead - from life there is death and from a beginning there is an end. Just like in my “alphabet” produced later, two or more different meanings exist for similar things, often in at least two different contexts. Language with the work was becoming more nonsensical, and I felt that this dichotomy of life and death would lead to more narratives.

With this idea I decided to search the middle ground: the beginning - inception of life, such as eroticism in the piece “Kitten Suck” (Figure 15). I still was not entirely sure where all of these different narratives would take me, but I felt I was closer to understanding my choices of communication, symbolism, and incomplete stories by using them together with animals’ actions as they represented human intentions. The animals were still not enough; I knew there had to be more, and I discovered that it was language and what the words state or imply with the particular strange pictures.
CHAPTER 3

WHAT CAME FIRST THE DINO-CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

In my introduction, I mentioned that the lithograph, "Mr. Hardboiled in a pot, while Mr. Ginger root and Mrs. Hardboiled commit suicide" (Figure 16), was a catalyst that helped create the alphabet exhibition. Although I had printed this piece during winter quarter, the conceptual beginning of the alphabet with numbers idea was not fully developed until early spring quarter. The colors, the attention to details, and the extremely long title started to make me think about how my work would convey in a series or book form. I wanted to take my work past the idea of a normal children's book art and story; it seemed that this was the final breaking point in moving towards this idea. In order to have a successful learning tool in children's books, one has to have the truth or facts correct to relay a moral or lesson. I decided to take this further by creating a dichotomy between normal "facts" and alternative "facts," as if playing games.

In this piece, I drew my ideas from everyday eggs. If one boils eggs, it is common knowledge that the liquid in the egg will become solid. If the viewer looks only at the image and missed the title, the intent would be lost. I was struggling with
trying to work text into my image without the work being connected to the common comic strip. Hence, it followed that words act as the crux of my work. The next step to “the Art of Miscommunication” narrative needed to include words, which are at the foundation of the series “A to Z”.

Figure 16: Mr. Hardboiled in a pot, while Mr. Ginger root and Mrs. Hardboiled commit suicide. Lithograph and silkscreen 2002
CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE OF COMICS

As a kid, the first section of the paper I grabbed from the Sunday newspaper was the "comics section." I have been influenced by classic comic strips, like Peanuts, Calvin and Hobbes, and Garfield. I have never really thought about comics with any depth before; I have just always drawn cartoons. So I decided to learn more about this art medium and enrolled in "The History of the American Comic Strip," a class at the OSU Cartoon Library and Graphic Arts. I learned about the history, the artists, and the political and humorous aspects of the comic strip genre.

In this class I read *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud, and I started thinking about what I was doing with my art, language, and narrative. I have constantly been influenced by underground comic art by artists like Art Spiegelman and Robert Crumb, whose artwork portrays adult themes and subject matter. In the case of Spiegelman, he uses animal symbolism and the Holocaust for a narrative, and with Crumb, his character's are the portals of persons the artist knows and how the artist sees or relates to this person, be it sexual or vaguer in execution of the image.
In Chapter two, McCloud explains that “[s]ymbols are the basis of language! The visible (pictures) and invisible (language) has been the basis of all written language since civilization began...these symbols evolved away from the subject and toward the highly abstracted forms of modern language and eventually to the abstract sound based system.” (Understanding Comics, Kitchen Sink Press, 26 – 28)

This section of the text gave me the notion and courage to face my fear of words in my work and gave me the confidence I needed to work with words and pictures together. I needed to add another layer and decided to work with my ideas of children’s book art; the birth of my alphabet series began.
CHAPTER 5

THE ART OF MISCOMMUNICATION
...AND IT ALL BEGINS WITH ASS: AN ALPHABET BREAKDOWN

In my Alphabet, I claim each letter as my own by stating that ‘A’ is for... or ‘Z’ is for..., and so on. By making this first step, I begin manipulating the viewer by claiming my associations are fact. I wanted the viewer to think about the words and how I use this to create a meaning out of the absurd. How does this describe the order of the language that structures any other alphabet? What makes this so unique?

In Lewis Carroll’s, *Through the Looking-Glass*, the Red and the White Queen have an absurd, nonsensical conversation with Alice on the ABC’s, mathematics, and language: The key to this body of work develops from the type of conceptual play of “Miscommunication” about letters, sounds, phrases, numbers, and order.

To understand the many options of the alphabet, I will break my alphabet series into groups: “A” and “Z”, *Conversation Pieces, A Minimalist View*, and *The Funny Ones*. This separation allows for a clearer understanding of the whole “A to Z” series.
“"Alice said, as gravely as she could, `They might go different ways.' But she couldn't help thinking to herself, `What dreadful nonsense we are talking!'

`She can't do sums a bit!' the Queens said together, with great emphasis.

`Can you do sums?' Alice said, turning suddenly on the White Queen, for she didn't like being found fault with so much.

The Queen gasped and shut her eyes. `I can do Addition,' `if you give me time --
but I can do Subtraction, under any circumstances!'

`Of course you know your A B C?' said the Red Queen.

`To be sure I do,' said Alice.

`So do I,' the White Queen whispered; `we'll often say it over together, dear.
And I'll tell you a secret -- I can read words of one letter! Isn't that grand!
However, don't be discouraged. You'll come to it in time...”

`...She's all right again now,' said the Red Queen. `Do you know Languages?
What's the French for fiddle-dee-dee?'

`Fiddle-dee-dee's not English,' Alice replied gravely.

`Who ever said it was?' said the Red Queen.

Alice thought she saw a way out of the difficulty this time. `If you'll tell me what language "fiddle-dee-dee" is, I'll tell you the French for it!' she exclaimed triumphantly.

But the Red Queen drew herself up rather stiffly, and said `Queens never make bargains.'

`I wish Queens never asked questions,' Alice thought to herself.""
“A” and “Z”

Each letter of the alphabet came together to form one piece. I think the best way to describe what I was looking for is to start with the end and the beginning of my “Alphabet”. All of the pieces completed for this series were 30” x 22” screen-printed, mixed media prints displayed in white metal frames. I wanted the pieces to be very traditional but also have the cheesy look of cheap plastic poster frames. This was to embellish the poster look and create a dialogue with the environment as the viewer walks through the gallery.

I mixed the order of letters just like my process of working where I needed to jump back and forth between letters in order to create my quirky dialect. I also worked backwards by starting out with the letter “b” and saving “a” for the last in the series.

In the case of “a” (Figure 17), it depicts the typical phrase form of a children’s book declaring that "A is for" and "because it starts with ‘a.’ " and by using an animal that is normally associated with “a” like an ant. But of course I added a twist to the piece with a snake, which grabs the ant from its mobile pet-a-stool with the letter “a” on a pillow in order to add its own “ss” to the end of the “a,” thus spelling the word “ass.” I believe that this sets the viewer up for the eccentric diversions embedded in all twenty-six pieces.
“Z” (Figure 18) uses the same children’s book style. I started by applying the typical alphabet association with the letter, using a zebra. I state the obvious by declaring this as a known cliché. This obvious statement connected to my entire body of work is the final confirmation of the alphabet, with a twist on language, and using a short satirical narrative.

A is for Ass because it starts with the letter A

Figure 17: “A” Silkscreen and colored pencil 2003
Z is for cliche

Figure 18: "Z" Silkscreen and Digital print 2003
Conversation Pieces – O, K, P, and R

I choose these letters: O, K, P, and R, to be the more controversial or have more of a political undertone in their depictions. Through these letters, I used the topics of entertainment, religion, sex, and ethnic biases, topics which normally are censored from children as inappropriate due to understood morals, beliefs, and taboos. Why create something that has been done before in art? Why not invent something new with these ideas? I think that in this context of a children’s book, these issues and taboos lead my audience to another level with my layers of association. With my early work, my images involved communication; now the words with the image create new challenges. The words make the communication of my “miscommunication” clearer as my intentions regarding social issues, taboos, and humor in the specific narratives that I present in the exhibit.

For the letter “O” (Figure 19), I decided to use “O is for Elvis” with a depiction of Michael Jackson, the legendary “King of Pop,” one of the most influential music artist of the 1980’s whose eccentric life is now a laughing stock in entertainment. Written up in grocery store tabloids regarding plastic surgery, marriage to Priscilla Presley (Elvis’s daughter), and accusations of child molestations, these “over the top” stories seem to elevate the mystery of Jackson, his music career, and the business of America’s entertainment industry. Jackson has been a subject for art before. Jeff
Koons's, one of the most controversial visual artist alive today, had a piece entitled, "Michael Jackson and bubbles" 1988 (Appendix A). This is a golden sculpture representing Jackson at the height of his career, lounging with his legendary pet monkey, Bubbles. It places Jackson in the history of current fine art though the idolization of entertainment. As this shiny, ceramic sculpture represents modern art as the cold, white faces, it gives a disturbing twist on the issues of race, gender, and sexuality that creates and profits form the general public's fascination with Jackson's lifestyle.

This fascination with a lavish lifestyle, star power, and great wealth can be a "Never Land." Jackson ensures that he can still act like a child as he claims to have lost his childhood due to the entertainment industry, therefore showing his hollowness and fragile state, like in the Koon's piece. Throughout the world, people worship this star power as a lifestyle that is unreachable by the general public and makes Jackson almost "God-like;" he becomes an eternal superhuman icon. His life and music will surely be remembered by this generation as generations before Jackson were born with the icon of the deceased Elvis Presley, the legendary "King of Rock and Roll."

This idea of the alphabet is as old as humans themselves. The concept of icons is not new; for example, it has been ingrained in the minds of a mass population of Catholics since the birth of that religion. I use the typical Anglo-Saxon version of the religious depiction of the "son of God" or "Jesus Christ" being kicked in the face by a drawn cartoon foot in the letter "K," or "K is for a kick in the balls" (Figure 20). This piece can be taken as a humorous image, but it is also blasphemous to religious
believers. I take the slapstick nature of a cartoon realm and give the piece a sacrilegious edge something very similar to what Crumb does in much of his work. How could this be any different than a political cartoon in the newspaper when a cartoonist depicts prominent political figures in compromising positions? How could this be any different in the case of Jackson’s pictures in the tabloids?

The irony of this image “K” makes three points: self-defense, selling of religion, and language twist. In the self-defense portrayal, it is a statement of a defensive act against a dangerous situation. Alternatively, self-defense could be used to mentally filter though cult advertisement of false profits or televangelists intent to brainwash individuals into believing what they want them to believe by using Christ to mask their real intent. To accomplish salvation, one might get a free ticket to heaven if they pay $19.99 a month to a religious foundation or by purchasing fine art reproductions, books, candles and other nick-knacks, that would increase ones chances of an eternal life. To prod the viewer further, I use a slang term to identify with the “action” by reinforcing the kick to the eye “balls.” The common connotation of the word ‘balls’ is slang for a man’s genitalia, thus this image encourages associations between a slapstick cartoon characters and a violent, painful joke. The foot can also be viewed as defacing to the image of Christ, which adds to the irony of this iconic symbol. The total disregard for idea, subject, and moral value is what this piece is about superficiality by the addition of kitschy shock value to this particular piece.

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What kind of a world would be without the reproduction of life to continue the life cycle of species, without the birds and the bees? In the letter "P," I use the subject of sex as sexual taboos with a sadomasochistic fetish, like "probing an anus" (Figure 21). In this piece I use my neurotic drawing style over a flat hue of green. The feminine rabbit on stilts with high heel shoes exhibits the fetish of pain within the act of jabbing a fork-like pole into another animal's orifice, which appears to be sliced in half like a piece of meat. To reinforce this issue of meat, the depiction of "ass" in figure two, is as stated the hind-quarter of a donkey, which I wanted to be processed as if ground into the piece of paper as hamburger meat. The persona of an individual is lost, and the sexual act is the focus, like pornography where intercourse is a job behind a façade of sexual pleasure. Anal sex is also associated with same-sex preferences; this social concept is becoming a trend in American culture, entertainment, and art. These ideas have become focused for an audience today because of their minority status and the issues of suppression due to biases and misunderstandings.

Misunderstanding, as a basis, is found in my final conversational piece, "R is for Racism" (Figure 22), where the suppression is a bias based on a cultural difference. With the letter "R," the original idea for this letter's essence was a blatant use of two cats holding hands happily in a grassy knoll. I wanted it to reek with innocence and color. However, I used a bright orange border to reinforce a target color for caution.
This subtle undertone becomes a disgusting spectacle with twisted, cutely, crude biases toward black cats. The organization of color was intended to lead the viewer to form prejudices that could also come from "superstitions" which come from biases toward a miscommunication of facts. It seems we are most comfortable with and trust those things that are most familiar.

This newfound understanding of "miscommunication" throughout society forms itself in the representations of men and women, man and man, white and black, or Christen and Jew. There are biases and stereotypes in life, and all of these miscommunications of a subject or value are issues that become core to some subject matter in contemporary art.

At first I looked up words for each letter to gather ideas. I wanted to make sure the word had as many layers of symbolism and meaning as possible, such as "a" is for "ass" as much as "I" is for "ignoramus." This later evolved into my mode of working, a formula for working with the imagery and with other letters in combination with this "conversation" group's level of content.
Figure 20: “K” Silkscreen and digital print 2003
P is for probing an anus

Figure 21: “P” Silkscreen 2003
Figure 22: "R" Silkscreen 2003

R is for Racism
A Minimalist View – J, W, S, and U

For the next four letters, I used a more subtle humor by bringing intelligence to the image. I sought to bring the simple and the literal forward in these pieces.

First I state “J is for modern art” (Figure 23). I use the graphic design of the letter to depict an abstract idea used by the modernist: less is more. To have a basic start in communicating an idea of language and artist intention, the delicate pink line against the gray creates visual tension as the “j” blends into the surrounding color.

The same is true with the letter “W” and the phrase “W is for hole” (Figure 24). In this piece, a dart pierces though a plexi-glass barrier. Using this language with the piece, “hole” standing for “whole,” a simile is created with two words that sound the same but have very different meanings. A similar play on language is also repeated with the letters “S” and “U,” as both use words as images (Figures 25 and 26). With the letter “U,” I used a pun with language by stating “UN is for prefix,” and with the letter “S,” I use a run-on sentence, a mistake in writing, by combining many thoughts together to make an incorrect sentence. This piece is as sincere as I can be with my art and language, and how I am not confident with writing, words, and how I make this good, bad, and indifferent in my work as part of the “A to Z” series. This subtle evolution of form creates another miscommunication of language to my alphabet, communication often depending on the ordering of words. This was the epiphany I needed to add a sophisticated layer to the work as a complete whole.
Figure 23: “J” Silkscreen 2003
Figure 24: “W” Silkscreen and dart 2003
Figure 25: “S” Silkscreen 2003
U is for prefix

Figure 26: “U” Silkscreen 2003
The Funny Ones – B, C, M, and X

In this alphabet series, there are many humorous images; this element in my art makes the images identifiable and enjoyable. Humor is my method of telling my quirky narrative. Just like an individual trying to speak a foreign language, words can be taken out of context to mean something different. I choose to pick the letters B, C, M and X to best represent this art of miscommunication. These letters hold connections with the issues that I have previously discussed.

“B” was the first print I choose to complete and the first when I had the inspiration to produce this work for my master’s thesis and exhibition. I use the phrase “B is for blasphemous comments made to a tree” (Figure 27), but this is not a normal tree; this is an everyday ordinary piece of yard lumber being assaulted with profanities by an amputee figure. This figure is waving its arms in the air while the symbols (stars and curly lines) come from its mouth to represent the profanity. There is also a blue rectangle that covers its mouth in order to censor the words and muffle the sounds. As it starts to bend forward, the lumber seems to react to these actions and comments made by the figure, as if it is starting to sit up from a prone position.
Why is this figure cursing at the lumber? Are these words important in understanding the whole story? For the viewer, I believe this is implied profanity, and that is all the viewer needs to know.

In the letter “C is for carrots who make friends with rabbits” (Figure 28), it is exactly what the sentence describes: two giant carrots in a garden eating two rabbits. The sense of reverse cannibalism is depicted in a light-hearted way by being surrounded with bright colors. There is also defecation in this piece, an automatic reaction at the moment of death. Bodily functions are a central theme emphasizing something crude, because we as animals do this every day. Why not draw “poop” in art? As young kids it was something fascinating and funny; thus I take this naïveté into my artwork with this understanding.

The letter “M” is more like a “catch 22” when it is “poking” fun at the Mexican-American ethnic group, my own cultural and ethnic background (Figure 29). This subtle racial undertone and sarcasm here is something that I find funny. Because if one cannot make fun of themselves, then how can one make fun of others? Stereotypes are the ultimate miscommunication and communication.

The final letter in this group is the letter “X.” The letter “X” forms a made-up machine that is a paper toaster, and it creates associations to a printing press. The phrase reads “X is for an animal that doesn’t start with x” (Figure 30). The phrase itself turns the words around to contradict the letter and the subject, which is the purpose of
this alphabet. "X" is like "M is poking a Mexican," where the words have nothing to do with the image but have subtle undertones that guild the viewer to grasp an alternate but related understanding, even if it is a miscommunication between image and word.

![Illustration of a rabbit with a wooden block and a blue toothbrush]

B is for Blasphemous comments made to a tree

Figure 27: "B" Silkscreen 2003
C is for carrots who make friends with rabbits

Figure 28: “C” Silkscreen 2003
M is for poking a Mexican

Figure 29: “M” Silkscreen 2003
X is for some animal that doesn't start with an X

Figure 30: “X” Silkscreen 2003
I have only directly discussed about half of the alphabet. (See Appendix B) No one letter is more important than the other: they are a collective whole and make up one language of "Miscommunication." Working on each letter, while seeing only half of the letters at certain stages, made me anxious to see it combined in a gallery for the first time. I had a different reaction to the work as a single piece when looking at the body of work as "one" where the prints became an installation, more than just isolated single
letters. I know that some of the pieces could stand on their own and some needed to be grouped in order for the work to be interpreted by the viewer. (Figure 31)

I wanted my artist statement to also be a part of the work in order to carry the dialog being created and mimic the artwork. The toy dinosaur and the toy bear were used to communicate to the viewer just as much as the prints worked to do so on the wall (Figure 32). I wanted to create an environment for the viewer where communication could almost take place as it would in an elementary school classroom. I am not sure if this was successful, but the theme was obvious. I used street chalk to create the signage, large prints to become pages, and the use of white frames to carry the cheap look of posters along with the big number book. (Figures 33 & 34).

With this newfound love of the main course (my alphabet), there had to be room for dessert (numbers). Chapter six is dedicated to all of my thoughts of numbers as a drawn, collaged, pasted and taped, campy companion to the alphabet.
**Artist Statement:** A conversation between my childhood inspiration (a Dinosaur) and my favorite stuffed Bear from when I was a small fry.

Dino: Look at all this work! Bear, this must have taken a lifetime. All the paper and drawings. Boy! This is something to see.
Bear: yeah... lots of big, bright colors in my work
Dino: Reds and blues are my favorites
Bear: I do like my A, B, C's
Dino: and numbers... don't forget your number book too, in the gallery
Bear: yes, yes of course but don't you think that is amazing how art is open to all kinds of concepts.
Dino: con...seph...?? oh... concepts, like us for example... we are the tools for the artists imagination as a form of artistic communication.
Bear: right... like a spokesmen or one of those evangelical preachers on TV.
Dino: so how did you get the job as "artist spokesmen"?
Bear: Well you see... we go way back
Dino: ohh... that's nice. So tell me more about your work!
Bear: As children we can't wait to grow up. This is the subconscious voice I used in the body of work. I want the adult viewer to see though the eyes of a child. By using large format silkscreen prints in the form of book pages; I create the metaphors, symbolism, and human folly that go beyond the usual expectations of children's book art.
Dino: So how do you get all of this across to the viewer, it sounds really hard to do.
Bear: Oh... that's easy... by using narrative
Dino: narr--a--wa
Bear: Narrative! you know a story
Dino: can you do that in art?
Bear: yep...
Dino: Doesn't art have to be complex, a story sounds to simple
Bear: That's the whole idea.
Dino: Oh No Bear... you lost me.
Bear: you see it is all relative to these basic ordered systems that we use everyday like numbers and language (alphabet). It seems really elementary but it was complex at one time when it was all new in learning.

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Dino: So that makes this art?
Bear: yes... it is all part of discovering what my art work means and why I am an artist. From the very beginning of graduate school I used animals to depict human emotion and behavior. I wanted to take this further, which let me to breaking down language and communication, using icons and or symbols with image to create a cohesive body of Thesis work.
Dino: It sounds like you have it all figured out
Bear: It wasn't easy... I had lots of help along the way
Dino: I think we had better be quiet now, people are starting to walk into the gallery
Bear: If someone sees us talking... they might think they're going crazy
Dino: yeah who would believe that a toy Bear created all of this work anyway
Bear: It could happen... us bear folks have been known to be excellent paint-by-number artists. You have to start somewhere.

Figure 33: letters: H, I, and J. 2003

Figure 34: gallery and letters: L, M, N, O, Q, P, R, and S. 2003
CHAPTER 6

THE ART OF MISCOMMUNICATION:
THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS FROM NONE: TEN CRAZY NUMBERS

Figure 35: cover of number book 2003

What kind of alphabet would this be if it did not contain numbers, the learning tool that is taught along with the alphabet? In my number book (Figure 35), I use the same tools of communication that were used with the letter pages. I used the “campy” look by gluing, taping, and collaging in combination with raw drawing in order to continue the child-like essence of this series. This book was also my first attempt at book binding, which became my “first book,” literally, in the art making sense. This more intimate ‘book’ approach to the work was another avenue that I had explored with my “Alphabet,” but abandoned it.
The prints had to be larger than life, as if to see through the eyes of a child. The next few sub-chapters, countdown as well as breakdown some of the numbers from zero to ten. This is an anthology of the essence of my version of numbers where I use language, imagery, and symbols to guide to the reader through my artistic purpose of "Miscommunication".

Zero makes none and one makes none

Try saying the title of this chapter ten times. I added humor and intellect to the words by playing word and mind games. I realized that this intimate approach was fun but less successful than the series "A to Z." The response to this book was "hands off" in the gallery setting, something I took into consideration when I was working on the book. When looking at work in a gallery setting there is often "resistance" to touching anything because of one's etiquette when entering a gallery.

I know that learning games and repetitive activities enhance the learning process. I wanted the book to be just as interactive as the silk screens. The first two numbers created an allegory with the humor of life and death, the meaning of a start and a finish, and the mundane cycle that every human deals with day to day, like comparing the letters "A" and "Z".

In "zero" I use Newton's law of gravity; "Zero is for every action there is a reaction" (Figure 36) to accompany a macabre scene between a tiger and a ring-like
Venus flytrap. This is similar to the letter “C” in its taking of an exaggerated view on an impossible event and making it a symbolically weaker object that has dominance over the situation. The tiger is being dominated by the trainer, and the ring has no purpose but to serve both. I use the contradictory associations of the tiger as beauty and strength, by its following of orders by the trainer to jump through the hoop/ring, with the unexpected twist of it being eaten by the hoop.

In “one” (Figure 37), I use a play on words and numbers. I use a depiction of a lower case “n” next to the symbolic number “1” to form the word “none” like the beginning of my “A to Z” with the letter “a” forming “ass.” The word none describes the stick-figures demise at the corner of the second page. The idea of making fun of death is not new. The aspect of finding this funny and poking fun at death fascinates me as it did in my early work. But this is only one part of the human cycle that I explore, for example the mundane rituals of everyday life: eating, sleeping, cleaning and so on… that make up the human condition. These are a few of my thoughts behind my artwork.
Figure 36: “zero” mixed media 2003

Figure 37: “1” mixed media 2003
Discovery can be funny

This next number group is broken down into the following: a) discovery, numbers four and five and b) funny, numbers six and eight. These are two aspects in my work that are key to the visual content within the layers of symbolism and metaphor I present; these spoofs on symbols, language and, cartoons are only a select few from this number book. In “discovering,” I use symbol and icons as an abstract guild to the principles behind numbers. In the numbers four and five, I explore the meaning and visual play of these number properties. In “4” (Figure 38), I place four brown circles on the page and by connecting the dots to form a yellow field that resembles a “square,” associations to a specific object like the geometric symbol of a square are made. This becomes another link between thinking and seeing as it did in the letter “j” in the series “A to Z.”

In the number “5” (Figure 39), I use a contemplative dialect between the symbol and language. I state; “five’s positional notation is in the middle of this page;” the word “this” is crossed out and replaced with “that” to confirm the association of the language. Then the next page shows the viewer a Roman numeral “V” for five (Figure 40); the language used in these pieces is very intellectual, and only a mathematician would understand the principles of “positional notation” as stated on the page to describe the number five.
In "fun" I use the satirical humor that explores ironic statements. With the number "Six is for five flying hams and one that's not" (Figure 41), I use six cartoony depictions of hams with wings pushing the ironic statement "When pigs fly" and replacing it with my satirical interpretation. This print reflects the similar approach of the letter "b," where a tree is a piece of lumber as I used ham to replace the pig.

In the number "8," I used a cartoon character from the comic strip "Archie" by Matt Brady (Figure 42). I drew the character from a panel the way she was depicted in the strip, but added the chewed Twinkie in her open mouth gagging the words "Eight is so good...I almost pissed myself, but then it came out of my nose."

Figure 38: "4" mixed media 2003
Figure 39: "5" mixed media 2003

Figures 40: "v" mixed media 2003
I took the normal associations of this innocent character and turned it upside down by making the cartoon crude and disgusting. The Twinkie is a small cake enjoyed by many young kids, and it becomes a spoof of language and underground comics as my work can be seen as joined with their intentions.

With this grouping of numbers, I sought to give the best presentation of this "book" attribute as it becomes a part of the whole with the word play, language as communication, and humor used to better enhance the experience of the entire body of work and to imitate my "Alphabet" prints.
All about ten

"Ten is for the birds!" (Figure 43) That is all I have to say.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In “A to Z” I have explored the possibilities of concepts behind my previous work with the good and the bad and the emotions and behaviors that emphasize social aspects by using animals and cartoons to probe into these issues. By using narrative, I have expanded on popular culture as well as issues related to human folly and social taboos.

I have come to the assumption that “cute” also produces irony; I use this as a tool of communication, the cartooning whose messages often may be missed. I use this as part of the “Miscommunication,” emphasizing that cartoon imagery can be misunderstood as just surface and no substance. The word “cute” also has many layers of meaning and associations, as in the word “ass”. When I add a prefix or suffix to a word, this changes a meaning, context, and/or the (mis-) communication of an idea. This becomes the essence of the “A to Z” narrative.

This all blooms into the series “A to Z” as the alphabet and number book extends all of these issues into a whole conversation about communication with its illusion of being ill conceived. As a basic human instinct, communication has advanced from oral, to written, and later to printed material evolving to form mass
communication. This has lead humanity into using cyber/digital forms of communication with a kind of extinction of our language as well as its use in making art. I take the language of today into consideration as I do my artwork; mass forms of communication can be altered and forced upon us with news tickers on television, music, advertisements, and internet web windows flashing products and news. As a part of modern society, we are bombarded by mass media with information we filter though to make the language work for us in bits and pieces. This brutal, fast, and persuasive language becomes a part of our communication. I wanted my artwork to flash and communicate these bits. I sought for the viewer to understand some of these interruptions caused by media and our lifestyles.

There are many more discoveries along the way, and this is a start and not "the end" to the discovery of more concepts in the making of my personal artwork. With completing "A to Z," I have stepped back and formed many layers of ideas about what my work means. In order to break the rules, one has to know them and what they mean. Communication is the understanding of meaning, even by using the language of "Miscommunication" to create meaning, which I have taken to a new level of artistic understanding for myself. This has opened the doors to many more artistic endeavors that have spun off of these concepts. Throughout my schooling I was taught that learning is a process; just like my alphabet or any art I produce, this learning is always expanding and growing as a part of who I am. This is the artist I am today; who knows what kind of exciting, creative achievements my art will take in the future. The end. Is only a start toward a new beginning.
APPENDIX A:

Jeff Koons  "Michael Jackson and Bubbles"  1988
APPENDIX B: "A TO Z"
Letters: D, E, F, G, H, I, N, L, Q, T, V, and Y
H is the buddy hometown than barbwire etc.

In the flower...

Eating the moon...

N is the mountain neighborhood.
Q is for "NEVER MORE"

T is for "telephone wire"

V is for goose sandwich on rye

Y is for today's yam soup
BIOGRAPHY


